

The Most Excellent Way

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

*The Christian Solution to Chemical Dependency
“Becoming GOD-Dependent”*

MINISTRY MANUAL

“And now I will show you

The Most Excellent Way . . .”

1 Corinthians 12:31

*. . . Love,
Acceptance &
Forgiveness*

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INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY HEADQUARTERS

19361 Brookhurst St ~ S161, Huntington Beach, CA 92646 USA

800-548-8854

Websites: www.tmewcf.org | www.mostexcellentway.org

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PART I

“WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO”

• INTRODUCTION

“The Most Excellent Way” Ministry Manual (Leader’s Manual) is designed to be a guideline for your church or organization to successfully start a restoration ministry for those who are addicted to drugs, alcohol, tobacco, pornography, sex, gambling, and other life-controlling problems (eating disorders, codependency, etc.).

The Meeting Leader is accountable to his/her pastor, director, or their designee — *not* “The Most Excellent Way” International Director.

The weekly Fellowship/Support Meeting guidelines are for a one-and-one-half-hour meeting, providing time for prayer, Bible teaching and sharing by the group.

No one is expected to continue attending the meetings once they are strong enough in the Lord to pass through the “revolving door” into a daily walk with Him, free of addiction — this can occur within thirty days or up to one year. Our goal is to win and disciple new believers, and encourage them in the Word of God, so they will desire to become responsible members of your church or organization, their family and community.

Once you decide to begin “The Most Excellent Way” ministry in your church or organization, PLEASE provide us with the following information:

1. Name, address and telephone number of meeting leaders;
2. Meeting day, time, location;
3. Appropriate telephone numbers, so we are able to provide accurate information to those looking for a Christian meeting in your area.

In order to be good stewards of this ministry, we must rely on you for up-to-date information. PLEASE let us know of changes as they occur, or if you discontinue meetings.

The USA Meeting List is updated every four to six weeks and posted on our website.

If you have any questions, please email me at director@mostexcellentway.org or call 800-548-8854, Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Pacific Time.

May our Lord richly bless you as you minister in *the most excellent way*.

Sincerely In Christ,

Glenn Wright
Pastor / Director

- **OUR MISSION — THE LOST SHEEP**

“The Most Excellent Way” has a singular mission: to find the lost sheep who are wandering aimlessly under the bondage of life-dominating sins — the addicts and their families — to bring them into the fold.

These lost sheep can be found in church pews, in homes, on the streets, in a hospital ward, behind prison bars, in secular recovery meetings, in Sunday school classes, etc.

“The Most Excellent Way“ is a body of *born again* believers who understand the plight of lost sheep — we too were once lost. We have experienced the difficult struggle to be free of our self-centered addiction. Jesus, our Shepherd, did not find us in church. He found most of us in the company of worldly sheep. We gather together to lick our wounds, to feed our souls and to help each other to follow our Shepherd into the fold. We rejoice as each reclaimed sheep is mature enough to venture over their stile into greener pastures, ready to fulfill their individual mission. Those of us who remain understand we will never complete our mission until there are no more drugs — or until our Shepherd comes for us!

Then Jesus told them this parable:

*“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them.
Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country
and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?
And when he finds it,
he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home.
Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says,
‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’
I tell you that in the same way there will be more
rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than
over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”
Luke 15:3-7 NIV*

“The Most Excellent Way” is to help churches and ministries reach this particular multitude of lost sheep for Jesus’ sake. May we help you?

- **OUR BEGINNING**

“The Most Excellent Way” began in 1986 as a small prayer group seeking God’s will for our desire to minister to those addicted to drugs and alcohol, and their families. Awareness of our group spread by word of mouth within our church and participation increased. Our prayer meeting soon evolved into a regularly scheduled Fellowship/Support Meeting.

With Jesus Christ as our *only power* and the Holy Spirit as our *guide*, the meetings steadily grew. Meetings for the spouses and parents of the addicted dependent soon followed.

The Christian alternatives to chemical dependency practiced in “The Most Excellent Way” are Biblical principles based entirely upon God’s Word.

We are privileged to see the miraculous work of God in so many lives year after year. As we remain committed to making ourselves and the Fellowship/Support Meetings available, He brings the hurting people and He does the restoring. God receives all the glory!

• OUR VISION

The vision of “The Most Excellent Way” is to reach out to people affected by drugs, alcohol and other addictions, through Christian churches, missionaries, Christian organizations, rescue missions, jails, prisons, rehab facilities, etc. Our vision is international in scope: the United States and the world.

“The Most Excellent Way” equips those people God has called from within the church to minister to addicts, alcoholics and their families. We provide the training and materials needed to disciple these people through regular weekly Fellowship/Support Meetings. The meetings have been extremely fruitful since their inception in early 1986. Attendees are encouraged to attend church, join home fellowships, attend church activities, read their Bibles, share their fears, challenges, and praise reports, and to pray for one another.

The basis for all Fellowship/Support Meetings is *love, acceptance and forgiveness* through God’s Word and His people. We have found that addicted individuals believe they will not be accepted in the church. In fact, they fear outright rejection from “good” people. They are full of shame, guilt, and hopelessness, and are often helpless, without the love of God in their lives. Our vision is to show them they are loved, accepted and forgiven by God the Father, through Jesus Christ, and by their peers in the meetings.

The Word of God, and what it teaches us about a new way of life in Christ, is the focus of “The Most Excellent Way” ministry.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

II Timothy 3:16-17 NIV

“The Most Excellent Way” is a “revolving door” ministry — attendees may need to participate in meetings for as little time as a few weeks, or for a few months, even for a year.

At anytime during this period, they may choose to pass through the “door” into the church, becoming involved in church activities or other church ministries, home fellowships, etc. Attendees are encouraged to attend Sunday services from the beginning.

- **OUR NAME**

“The Most Excellent Way” from I Corinthians 12:31 (NIV) has proved to be a name that is remembered. Should God confirm that your church or ministry is called to provide “The Christian Solution to Drug Dependency,” we would be pleased if you use “The Most Excellent Way.”

Whether or not you choose to use “The Most Excellent Way” name, we will also make available to you our study guides, newsletter, meeting hand-outs, tracts, etc.

- **OUR ORGANIZATION**

“The Most Excellent Way Christian Fellowship” is an incorporated, not-for-profit, inter-and non-denominational, para-church organization. In general, we do not engage in fund-raising, nor do we solicit aid from government agencies or secular entities. All contributions for God’s work in this ministry are tax deductible, and are used solely to *win-disciple-mend-send* people in the name of Jesus.

WIN New Christians TO Christ — We evangelize.

*Jesus said to His disciples: “Go into all the world
and preach the good news to all creation.”*

Mark 16:15 NIV

*“For [we are] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,
for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”*

Romans 1:16 NKJV

DISCIPLE New Christians IN Christ — We teach and practice God’s Word.

*Jesus said: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father,
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.
And surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age.”*

Matthew 28:18-20 NIV

*“For the word of God is living and powerful,
and sharper than any two-edged sword,
piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow,
and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*

Hebrews 4:12 NKJV

MEND New Christians WITH Christ — We encourage and support active application of the Word of God — putting off the old lifestyle habits and putting on Christ.

*Jesus said: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed;
to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”*

Luke 4:18-19 NKJV

*Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues,
preaching the gospel of the kingdom,
and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

Matt 9:35-36 NKJV

*“But we all, with unveiled face,
beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,
are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,
just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*

2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJV

SEND Christians FOR Christ — We tell others about our Savior who makes His people whole.

*Jesus said: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;
and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem,
and in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the ends of the earth.”*

Acts 1:8 NIV

*Jesus said: “You ARE the salt of the earth;
... You ARE the light of the world.
... Let your light so shine before men,
that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

Matthew 5:13-16 NKJV

IT’S ALL ABOUT JESUS!

- **OUR BELIEFS**

We believe a person can be *totally freed* from addiction and compulsive behavior *only* by the power and love of God’s indwelling Holy Spirit, through faith in Jesus Christ.

We believe alcoholism, drugs/pornography/sexual addictions, eating disorders, and codependency are life-controlling sin, *not* disease. We do *not* believe in arguing the point. Arguing breeds judging, legalism, moralizing and division — all of which are counter-productive to the truth of God’s Word, His grace and love. After attending fellowship meetings and reading their Bibles, after awhile those who come from A.A., N.A., and Al-Anon, etc., acknowledge that their addictions are indeed sin.

We believe all addictions are the consequence of the habitual practices of the sin nature — “the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16 NKJV).

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Galatians 5:19-21 NKJV

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

Galatians 5:22-25 NKJV

• WE LOVE, ACCEPT & FORGIVE

With the Word of God as our sole authority, with *love*, *acceptance* and *forgiveness* as our motives, “The Most Excellent Way” reaches out to:

- Drug dependent Christians and unbelievers.
- Back-sliding Christians.
- Spouses, parents, friends and adult children of addicted individuals.
- Children living in homes where there is drug abuse or life-controlling addiction.

The quality of love we desire to share is God’s *agape* — the ability to accept and forgive one another just as God, the Father, accepts and forgives us because of our faith in Jesus.

Jesus said: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are My disciples if you love one another.”
John 13:34-35 NIV

We accept one another just as we are — committed Christian or rebel, sober or stoned, clean or dirty, reverent or obnoxious. Anyone desiring freedom from addictive and compulsive behavior is welcomed into “The Most Excellent Way” Support/Fellowship Meetings by the grace of God.

“We love because He first loved us.”
I John 4:19 NIV

• WE DISCIPLE

Understanding the principle and practice of *surrender* are the basic needs for new Believers and those who love them. *Who* or *what* we surrender to is the key to change. The process of permanently changing the outward compulsive habits and destructive behaviors is accomplished from the inside out. We view “recovery” and “sanity” as *sanctification* and *healing*.

“The Most Excellent Way” restoration principles are centered upon Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, specifically the Beatitudes. One psychiatrist (at least) views the Sermon as the answer:

“I believe the following to be true: If you were to take the sum total of all the authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental [health] — if you were to combine them, and refine them, and [remove] all the excess [words] — if you were to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6 and 7). And it would [be much less by] comparison. For nearly two thousand years, the Christian world has been holding in its hands the complete answer... Here rests the blueprint for a successful human life, with optimum mental health and contentment.”
— James T. Fischer, M.D.

With Christ’s Sermon as our foundation, we learn:

- To *examine our hearts* and attitudes in order to behave with self-control;
- To be *renewed* in our minds in order to think before we act; and
- To live the spiritual life by *putting off* the old, natural man and *putting on* the new, spiritual man.

The “Attitudes of Victorious Living” are our outline for permanent change and a new way of life.

Jesus said:

***“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you.”***

Matthew 6:33 KJV

God promises His Word will not return void. We strive to live and share Biblical principles with others with an attitude of *love, acceptance* and *forgiveness*

• WE SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER

“The Most Excellent Way” Fellowship/Support Meetings are held regularly each week, with Jesus as our only power and His Holy Spirit as our guide.

Many participants of the Fellowship/Support Meetings have attended A.A. and Al-Anon meetings, and come to “The Most Excellent Way” seeking a safe harbor in which to freely express their faith in Jesus. Others are backsliding Christians — timid and shame-faced — who God draws back into His Church. Still others, the unbelievers, come and find Christ, His genuine love, *eternal hope*, and peer support.

*“LET US draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith,
having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty
conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

²³*LET US hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.*

²⁴*And LET US consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*

²⁵*LET US not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but
LET US encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Hebrews 10:22-25 NIV

Family & Friends Fellowship & Support Meetings help spouses and parents to stop trying to control, fix and blame their dependent loved ones for their own misery. They receive loving support and learn how others — who have placed their *focus on Jesus* — are coping with and changing their turbulent lifestyles.

The Children’s Meeting is an alternative to childcare — a unique environment in which youngster’s freely express their feelings of fear, hopelessness, guilt and frustration typically felt by children of addicted parents. We validate our kids for who they are, and assure them that Jesus will never leave them nor forsake them.

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...
who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble
with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”*

II Corinthians 1:3-4 NIV

● WE FELLOWSHIP

“The Most Excellent Way” Ministry Fellowship Team consists of those people who regularly attend the Support Meetings. These are the people who are always watchful for those who need encouragement and prayer. They are often new believers, eager to share the hope and strength they have received from Jesus by attending the meetings.

In contrast to the casual attendee, these people are eager to be disciplined in God’s Word and exhibit steady growth and commitment to the body of Christ. With the exception of the Support/Ministry Team monthly meetings, these people are included in all Ministry functions and recreational activities (picnics, potlucks, beach parties, seasonal celebrations, retreats, etc.).

If after a year of being straight and sober, an attendee continues to be committed to the Fellowship/Support Meetings and exhibits Christian maturity, he/she may be called to join the Support/Ministry Team. However, since “The Most Excellent Way” is a *revolving door* ministry — most come through and experience new life in Christ, then go on to live Christ-centered lives with their families and in their churches.



May God richly bless you as you minister in “The Most Excellent Way!”

PART II

“THE CHURCH’S & ORGANIZATION’S RESPONSIBILITY”

The information in this section will help your church or organization implement “The Most Excellent Way” Fellowship/Support Meetings, and will answer questions which may arise as you begin ministering to addicted individuals and their families. If we have overlooked something, please let us know — our combined experiences will help others to establish a successful ministry. May God bless you as you reach out in Christ’s love!

• THE CHURCH’S COMMITMENT

Drug and alcohol addiction are the enemy’s major tool today for destroying God’s children, their marriages and relationships. When we enter into this ministering opportunity, we become involved in frontline spiritual warfare. The workers need the moral, spiritual and prayer support of the pastor, staff and church body. The church’s commitment to this ministry is extremely important.

The church should be willing to supply easy-to-read and easy-to-comprehend Bibles for use at Fellowship/Support Meetings, and to be given or sold to those who request one.

The church should pray regularly and specifically for the ministry team, their spouses and children, and for those who will attend the Fellowship/Support Meetings.

The church should be willing to offer friendship to people who begin attending church services and activities as a result of attending church sponsored Fellowship Meetings — no matter how strange or unsavory these people may appear.

Fellowship Meeting times and places should be clearly noted in church bulletins, newsletters, etc. Announcements from the pulpit should be made regularly, with pastoral and staff encouragement for people to attend Fellowship/Support Meetings to receive help and to give help.

The church should be willing to cover expenses that Fellowship/Support Meeting collections may not meet, i.e., coffee, tokens, literature, childcare, etc.

Again, the most important responsibilities of the church are commitment to the success of the ministry, and commitment to pray for the ministry.

• SELECTING A LEADER FOR THE MINISTRY

Your candidates for Meeting Leader will be *born again* believer with a minimum of one year of being clean and sober, exhibiting consistent Christian growth, before being considered for leadership in “The Most Excellent Way.” The Meeting Leader should:

1. Attend church regularly, participate in Bible study classes, and provide some service to the body;
2. Encourage church attendance by immediate family members;
3. Have a believing spouse and children;
4. Be a responsible spouse and parent;
5. Be gainfully employed;
6. Demonstrate spiritual growth and maturity;
7. Have some leadership experience in the church, employment or other organizations.
8. Not have pending legal requirements, i.e., court ordered drug/alcohol classes, pending court appearances, drug related probation, etc.

Selection of the meeting (or ministry) leader is at the discretion of the sponsoring church's senior pastor (or organization's director) or his designee. Other points to be considered:

- If candidate has a history of backsliding into drugs and alcohol, then an appropriate period of time must elapse to be certain it will not reoccur.
- A candidate who attended A.A. or N.A. before becoming a believer will understand how a structured meeting is run, and will have insight about how to deal with other individuals struggling with addiction. (This experience has no value if the candidate still believes in the *disease excuse*.)
- A candidate who attended Al-Anon, usually the spouse of an drug-addicted individual, should believe that "codependency" is sin, not an *emotional disease* or *excuse* to blame the addict/alcoholic for her lot in life. (We're all sinners who need *the Savior*.)

"The Most Excellent Way" meeting and/or ministry leaders are accountable to the leadership of the church or organization, *not* to anyone at "The Most Excellent Way" ministry headquarters. "The Most Excellent Way" is a ministry *of* the church or organization that provides the Fellowship/Support Meetings. We are available to answer questions, counsel, encourage, and provide ministering resources to the church, organization, and/or appointed ministry leaders, as needed.

We trust the Lord that the integrity of "The Most Excellent Way" will be safeguarded by those who use its name.

• THE MINISTRY TEAM

Once the Meeting or Ministry Leader has been selected by the pastor, it is time to announce to the body and community that "The Most Excellent Way" addiction ministry will begin. By simply announcing from the pulpit the pastor's interest in this ministry, and by publishing the first meeting date and time in the church bulletin, your Ministry Team should have its beginnings.

The first meeting should be a time to get acquainted with each other, to pray together, and to present the way the meeting works to those interested in joining the Ministry Team. Your church body should already include people who are interested in reaching out in love to the addicted individuals and their families. These people usually are successfully delivered from addiction. They may be the spouse, parent, sibling or child of one who is addicted. Some of these people will have sought help from AA, NA or Al-Anon. This is good experience, but not required. Sound Scripture knowledge is most important.

The Ministry Team members must be willing:

1. To meet together once a month, or as often as necessary, to pray, exchange ideas, information and insights, and to discuss ministry business.
2. To pray for the ministry, each other, meeting leaders and the Prayer Requests received from Fellowship Meeting attendees.
3. To disciple meeting attendees by exchanging telephone numbers (men with men; women with women); by calling to encourage them; by inviting them to church services, into home fellowships, and Bible studies; and inviting them back to the Fellowship/Support Meetings.
4. To become a friend and confidant to recovering dependents and family members.
5. To provide transportation as needed for attendees to meetings and Sunday services.
6. To meet as a team before Fellowship Meetings to pray for the people who will be attending and for the meeting leader.

A good Ministry Team will plan special ministry activities for Fellowship Meeting attendees such as, picnics, potlucks, retreats, and seasonal parties. Opening your homes for some of these activities is an excellent ice breaker for newcomers. Recovering people and their families feel more comfortable with those who have had similar experiences.

• PUBLISHING YOUR MEETING ON OUR WEBSITE

In order to add your meeting to online “The Most Excellent Way” Fellowship/Support Meeting U.S.A List and/or San Diego County List, we must receive a completed Ministry Team Application from the Meeting Leader — see page ii. Please photocopy the application, complete it and mail to: The Most Excellent Way, 1177 Pacifica Place, Encinitas, CA 92024. ►

PART III**“MEETING & MINISTRY LEADER’S RESPONSIBILITIES”****• RESPONSIBILITIES TO “THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY”**

The Meeting Leader’s responsibilities to “The Most Excellent Way” ministry’s director are limited to the following:

1. Commitment to the Word of God and teaching of sound Biblical doctrine.
2. Timely reporting of new information and changes to ministry headquarters of any changes in meeting day, time, location, meeting information telephone numbers, ministry team members’ names and addresses (for newsletter mailing list), etc.
3. If there is a “The Most Excellent Way” Area Director for his state, the Meeting Leader is responsible for notifying him of meeting changes.
4. Commitment to raising up an Assistant Meeting Leader to insure “The Most Excellent Way” ministry will not flounder or be discontinued for the lack of a Meeting Leader.

We request Meeting Leaders contact us at ministry headquarters whenever they have questions, problems, prayer requests, praise reports, etc. We appreciate the opportunity to encourage and support Meeting Leaders — and to thank and praise the Lord for His work in this ministry.

• RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE CHURCH OR ORGANIZATION

The Meeting Leader reports to and is accountable to the pastor, director (whoever is in charge of the organization), or their designee. The Meeting Leader should meet with this person periodically to report on the progress and status of the ministry.

General responsibilities of the Meeting Leader include:

1. Organize a Ministry Team to support the ministry with prayer and participation at the Fellowship/Support Meetings. (See the ministry team information in Part II of this manual.)
2. **IMPORTANT!** Raise up and train an Assistant Meeting Leader to facilitate the meeting when the leader is absent due to illness, vacation, etc. The trainee should be encouraged to lead the meeting and to give the Bible study periodically to gain practical experience.
3. **SCHEDULED MEETINGS MUST NEVER BE CANCELLED BECAUSE THERE IS NO LEADER AVAILABLE!** If the Meeting Leader is unable to lead a regularly scheduled meeting, it his/her responsibility to find a substitute. Ideally, the Assistant Meeting Leader would be available.

If not, the Meeting Leader is responsible for notifying the pastor or director so he can assign someone from his leadership team to open the meeting. It is more important that a meeting be available than it be run perfectly. The Holy Spirit will compensate for lack of training, and the Meeting Guidelines provide format.

4. The Meeting Leader is responsible for providing his/her pastor or director with a written report containing pertinent information regarding the Fellowship/Support Meeting, including:
 - Recommendations for Assistant Meeting Leader candidates.
 - Names and phone numbers of Ministry Team members.
 - Advance notification if unable to lead a regularly scheduled meeting.
 - Advance notification if and when the Meeting Leader plans to leave the ministry.

This information will aid the pastor or director in making certain there is no interruption in the regular meeting schedule, so that attendees will not be disappointed and become discouraged. (Unfortunately, some Meeting Leaders have lacked the commitment and maturity to make sure the ministry continued after they decided to move on.)

“The Most Excellent Way” is not only a revolving door for those who attend meetings, but a training ground for those who desire to surrender to and serve the Lord in a position of leadership. Meeting / Ministry Leaders are servants first.

• **QUALIFICATIONS FOR ASSISTANT MEETING LEADERS**

The following are a few characteristics to look for in candidates for Assistant Meeting Leaders:

- Born again believer demonstrating continual spiritual growth;
- Six months to one year clean and sober;
- Regular attendance at Fellowship/Support Meetings and ministry events;
- Willingness to help with meeting set-up (chairs, coffee, etc.), and provides transportation for others to and from meetings;
- Willingness to encourage and pray with others;
- Responsible spouse and parent;
- Gainfully employed;
- Regular church and fellowship attendance;
- Growing in the knowledge and practice of the Word of God.

Pray to seek God’s will, and seek the counsel of the pastor, before deciding on candidates for Assistant Meeting Leader leadership roles.

***“Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands,
And do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.”
I Timothy 5:22 NIV***

- **MEETINGS FOR MEN & WOMEN**

The first of your “The Most Excellent Way” meetings will consist of men and women dealing with addiction, and their spouses. As soon as women with Meeting Leader qualifications become available, a second meeting for *women only* should be started. We have found that gender is more important than the reason for attending meetings — whether the women are dealing with their own addiction or that of their husband, boy friend, etc., they need the support, encouragement, and the Biblical encouragement of other women. Sensitive relationship problems cannot be easily addressed by women in mixed company or among strangers.

Pray that the Lord raises up leaders for all meetings.

During the meeting, the Meeting Leader may obtain attendees’ phone numbers by them writing the information on a Prayer Request form or slip of paper. **DO NOT PASS AROUND A SINGLE SHEET OF PAPER FOR ALL TO USE**, to avoid tempting men and women to copy down information about one another. The information may be passed on to the Ministry Team members to call and encourage the people to return to the meetings — men call men, women call women. No exceptions!

- **WHO SHOULD ATTEND FELLOWSHIP/SUPPORT MEETINGS?**

Anyone with a desire to attend should be welcomed! The curious, the desperate, the cynic, the drunk, the stoned — *no one* should be turned away from your Fellowship/Support Meeting.

No one should be turned away from a meeting because they are using drugs or alcohol. The love of our Lord shines through others in the Fellowship/Support Meeting, and the hearing of His Word will cause most of these people to come back again and again. The Holy Spirit will help them to quit. In one case, a young man attended “The Most Excellent Way” meetings for more than a year stoned on crystal meth before he quit. He has now been straight since 1988. This is not an unusual occurrence.

There will be those people who will refuse to go to church, to pray, or even speak in the meeting. Don't be concerned — give them to the Lord. In His time, you will witness His miracle as the unresponsive people go through metamorphosis.

Individuals and families will come from other churches, from A.A., N.A., Al-Anon and A.C.A. Please welcome them all in Jesus’ Name. Some will return to their church, some will be saved, some will return to drugs. . . The general principle: *no one is turned away from “The Most Excellent Way” meetings.*

• TEACHING THE WORD

The key to successful meetings and growth in meeting attendance depends not on advertising, but on the effective teaching the Word of God. To do this, the meeting leader must spend time in prayer and study.

The Lord knows the hearts, the troubles, the trials, and the needs of the people attending your Fellowship/Support Meetings. He can and will lead you to those scriptures He wants you to use as you study for and prepare your Bible study.

Someone once said he needed to spend from 12 to 20 hours in preparation for a one hour Bible study class. We trust the Holy Spirit will guide you in determining the minimum time you will need to spend preparing for the 20 to 30 minute study. If you allow yourself just a single hour, or no preparation time at all, don't expect God to use you. The key to any good, genuine Bible message is the incarnation of the Word in and through the heart of the speaker. There are times for all of us when we are unable to prepare sufficiently — God knows our hearts, and will pull us through if we have previously been faithful to prepare for two, three, or even four hours.

To help you prepare your study, we have provided the Topics list with scriptures printed out for each topic. We suggest you read the scriptures before and after the ones referenced in order to understand their Biblical context. We also suggest you use *Strong's Concordance* and *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* to enrich your personal study experience.

Included in the Manual is an outline of the “Ten Attitudes of Victorious Living.” This is a condensed version of what is taught in depth over a ten to twelve week period. The outline should be used as a guide in preparing your Bible study as it addresses each Beatitude. The Holy Spirit teaches us and causes us to remember scripture — He will lead you to what He wants you to teach through prayer and study.

The Fellowship/Support Meeting guidelines set forth in “The Most Excellent Way” ministry manual have proven to be effective. We recommend the procedures be followed conscientiously and consistently. You should, of course, make notes as you study. However, we have found that extensive notes used to deliver the message hinders what the Spirit wants to say through you. Keep your notes to a minimum and use them only to jog your memory, then the Holy Spirit will do the rest from the Word you have stored in your heart.

“If anyone speaks, he should do so as one speaking the very words of God.

***If any serves, he should do it with the strength God provides,
so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ,
to Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.”***

I Peter 4:11 NIV

DO NOT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT by teaching and preaching man's philosophy (twelve steps, psychology, new age, “recovery” psycho-babble). “The Most Excellent Way” meeting leader must be submitted to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and committed to rightly dividing the Word of God.

*My brethren, let not many of you become teachers,
knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

James 3:1 NKJV

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine,
for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

2 Timothy 3:16-4:5 NKJV

*I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ,
who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:*

²Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season.

Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

*3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine,
but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears,
they will heap up for themselves teachers;*

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

*5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions,
do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

2 Timothy 4 NKJV

CAUTION: In our zealotness, pastor and layman can overdo it by extending their teaching to 40, 50, or even 60 minutes. It is also difficult for newcomers just coming off drugs to absorb more than 20-30 minutes of Bible study. If you do this, newcomers will be turned off and may not return. Many of the people attending these meetings are really hurting and need the opportunity to share their needs, and to learn from others how the Lord has helped them overcome similar problems. Remember, the Holy Spirit will also use others in the meeting to share the Word.

IMPORTANT: Fellowship/Support Meeting “business” — including the Bible study — should be completed within 45-60 minutes, allowing 30 to 45 minutes for group participation (sharing).

• **SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS**

The Fellowship/Support Meeting guidelines set forth in “The Most Excellent Way” Ministry manual have proven to be effective. We recommend the procedures be followed conscientiously and consistently to create a comfortable environment for attendees. Recovering people need structure in their lives — lives that until now have been lived based upon emotional whims. The Scriptures and statements bring encouragement when repeated week after week — for the leaders as well as the attendees.

The following information is offered to help make your Fellowship/Support Meeting most successful:

- 1. ARRIVE EARLY!** The meeting leader and team members should arrive early enough to organize the meeting room, to make coffee, to set out literature, and to pray for the leader, attendees and a successful meeting.

2. **BEGIN ON TIME!** The leader and team members should be seated and ready to begin on time. Don't linger outside talking — set the example. Don't wait for people to arrive before beginning — waiting just a couple of minutes one week will stretch to five minutes the next week, etc.
3. **CLOSE ON TIME!** People come to the meeting expecting it to be over at the designated time. If the meeting is allowed to run over, people may feel obligated to remain while being resentful toward the leader for not closing on time.

The Children's Meeting and childcare teachers expect the children to be picked up promptly. The children are usually tired and anxious, and the teachers must remain to clean the room. An extended Fellowship/Support Meeting creates unnecessary inconvenience and hardship for others.

If the meeting leader who does not end the meeting on time because he believes everyone has not had an opportunity to share, must ask himself if he: (1) began the meeting on time; (2) kept his Bible study within the 20-30 minute time frame; and (3) was effective in monitoring the time each attendee shared. We have found that attendees who want very much to share will manage to do so.

If someone wants to share and didn't have the opportunity, he should be encouraged to stay after the meeting for fellowship. Usually if someone isn't able to share a positive experience during the meeting, he will seek out the person who triggered the thought to give encouragement after the meeting.

4. **ANNIVERSARIES & TOKENS.** In "The Most Excellent Way" Fellowship/Support Meetings we award 30-, 60-, 90-day, 6-and 9-month, and one-year tokens to those who have maintained sobriety for that time period. Recipients are very encouraged when they receive their token, especially since many have been using drugs and alcohol since their childhood. To have 30 day's sobriety is a miracle! And they always give the glory to the Lord!

You may order ministry tokens from the ministry headquarters. Tokens have "The Most Excellent Way" LOVE logo on one side, with a Scripture on the second side for each time period. There are six tokens in six colors. There is also a "welcome" token for first-timers.

Yearly anniversaries are also celebrated at Fellowship/Support Meetings with a cake and candles for the number of years of sobriety. The cake may be homemade or from a bakery.

Remember, people experiencing change in their lives need all the encouragement they can receive — you don't want to forget tokens and anniversaries.

NOTE: We believe that receiving tokens should not be the goal of meeting attendance. It is merely a tool to help new Believers acknowledge their spiritual growth. When the meeting leader awards a token, it his opportunity to tell the group that the goal of being a Christian is to become more and more like Christ. "The Most Excellent Way" is not about "celebrating recovery" — we celebrate Jesus! This is the essence of renewing the mind: putting off old, worldly traditions and putting on Christ.

5. **SMOKING.** Many recovering alcoholics/addicts smoke cigarettes. Consider your church's position on smoking and make a brief statement at the beginning of the meeting if you decide to request there be no smoking. If you decide to allow smoking in designated outdoor areas, you may want to provide "butt cans." Attempt to discourage people from leaving the room to go outside and smoke—their leaving and returning disrupts the meeting.
6. **IMPROMPTU PRAYER.** In some meetings, you will have people who will break down as they share — usually newcomers. We suggest that the meeting leader motion to a few of the team members in the meeting to go with him to that person to pray, then and there.

Impromptu prayer should be at the discretion of the meeting leader. Special prayer can be postponed until after the meeting as well. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

7. **DIFFICULT PEOPLE.** From time to time, you will have someone in your meeting who wants to do all the talking. Without realizing it, they may go on and on for ten to fifteen minutes. **It is the meeting leader's responsibility to interrupt such people** and lovingly explain that they have gone over the allotted time, and that others need time to share.

If time permits, these people may share again later in the meeting. This usually resolves the problem. However, if someone continues with this behavior in subsequent meetings, the meeting leader or someone on the Ministry Team should take the person aside after the meeting and quietly explain that they are in effect disrupting the meeting by monopolizing the time others need for sharing. If the person disagrees or continues the same behavior, he or she must be asked not to return to the meetings until they agree to give consideration to others. Offer to pray with the person to seek the Lord's help in the matter.

If an intoxicated person disrupts the meeting, he should be asked to be still — he should be ministered to after the meeting. If the person becomes belligerent or argumentative, the leader and/or support members should take the person outside to quiet him down, ask him to leave, or give him coffee to allow time for him to become sober (time, not coffee, sobers). Offer to take the person to a detox facility (if there is one available in your community) and encourage him to return to the meetings after detoxification. Be sure to follow-up with this person in detox.

8. **"WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING."** There may come a time when you will discover that a man who seems to be trustworthy is in reality a wolf in sheep's clothing. He maintains sobriety and says all the right things, but has not completely surrendered all his old ways to the Lord. He may seem an excellent candidate for the Fellowship/Ministry Team — he is zealous, helpful, friendly and he attends Fellowship Meetings regularly. The problem: he preys upon the women. This is common in A.A. and N.A. meetings.

Healing women are extremely vulnerable to male attention. If a woman is deceived by such a wolf, she will be reluctant to say anything because of her shame and fear of being misjudged or rejected by the group. Be watchful! Be protective of the women who attend your Fellowship/Support Meetings. If you discover a wolf, the matter should be referred to and handled by the church's pastoral staff.

9. **BAD LANGUAGE.** Occasionally, someone new to your meeting will use offensive language when they share — they may have attended A.A. or N.A. meetings where foul language is acceptable, and “Jesus Christ” are swear words. Again, the leader or ministry team member should speak to the person after the meeting, explaining that such language offends people and offends our Lord. Simply asking them to be more careful next time will usually solve the problem. Again, *everyone* should be treated with love.
10. **SIGN-IN SHEETS.** Local courts, probation and parole departments and social services require people convicted of drug and alcohol related offenses to attend regular A.A. or N.A. meetings for a designated period of time. “The Most Excellent Way” meetings are an acceptable alternative. When asked to verify someone's meeting attendance, simply write their name (if they haven't), “The Most Excellent Way,” the meeting date and your signature. If they don't have a form, a slip of paper, a Prayer Request form, or brochure signed and dated will usually be accepted.

CAUTION: Do not sign for past meetings unless you are certain the person was in attendance, and try not to sign for past meetings too often. It simply does not encourage the person to become responsible.

• **DISCIPLESHIP / MENTORING — FELLOWSHIP**

A.A., N.A. and Al-Anon people who have achieved sobriety — usually for at least a year — will become sponsors for newcomers. The sponsor befriends the newcomer, takes him/her to meetings, helps him/her through the tough times, watches for signs of relapse, and encourages them to continue in the A.A.12-step recovery program — *for the rest of their lives*.

The method “The Most Excellent Way” follows is to win, disciple, mend and send new Believers — the focus is freedom from bondage and new life by faith in Jesus Christ.

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”
Galations 6:2 NIV

***Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment.
And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’
On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”***
Matthew 22:37-40 NKJV

“We love Him because He first loved us.”
1 John 4:19 NKJV

***“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.”***
Galations 6:9-10 NIV

Ministry Team members, as well as those who have experienced freedom from addictions for a few months, should be encouraged to exchange telephone numbers with newcomers. (Announce each week that phone numbers may be exchanged between members of the same sex — for obvious reasons.)

“How does a baby Christian disciple a baby Christian?” you may ask. We have found that a new Christian with a few months of victorious living is usually attending church and reading their Bible regularly. They are an important source of encouragement.

It is amazing how much encouragement and guidance they can give newcomers — sharing their new, childlike faith, praying for them, and just being someone to talk with who understands. So few people, Christians included, understand unless they have shared the experienced.

***“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,
who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those
in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.
For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives,
so also through Christ our comfort overflows.”
II Corinthians 1:3-5 NIV***

Sanctification is often a difficult process. Putting off the old life and putting on Christ can be likened to “suffering” — and we all need to be encouraged by fellow Christians to live day by day in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Of course, discipleship includes more than “recovery” from drug addiction — it’s learning and applying Biblical principles for victorious living (hopefully, with an *eternal* perspective). Newcomers should be introduced to your church’s “new believer” classes and Bible studies.

CAUTION: Many people experience miraculous healing from addiction when they become born again. Too often these people limit their encouragement to others by quoting:

***“... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;
the old has gone, the new has come!”
II Corinthians 5:17***

In spite of the truth of the Scripture and the sincere effort they make to testify of the power of God, they appear arrogant and haughty to someone who has not experienced instant healing and is struggling in their new walk of faith.

The too often overlooked fact is that whether a healing is miraculously instantaneous or laboriously maintained day by day, both require faith, continual study of God’s Word and submission to the Holy Spirit.

We believe the best witness is being an obedient servant and a willing vessel for God’s *love, acceptance* and *forgiveness*.

- **BACKSLIDING**

Many times you will learn that attendees of your Fellowship/Support Meetings have “slipped” or “backslidden.” It happens. We must accept it, lovingly welcome them back into the meetings. We must do what Jesus does: welcome back the “lost sheep.”

*“For if you forgive men when they sin against you,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
But if you do not forgive men their sins,
your Father will not forgive your sins.”*

Matthew 6:14-15 NIV

*“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive
my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?’
Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’”*

Matthew 18:21-22 NIV

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

1 John 1:9 NIV

There are many reasons why a person may slip. Don’t be reluctant to ask hard questions, in love, to help the person recognize the attitude he had before the slip. (Many addicts deceive themselves by believing they won’t be affected by a few beers since alcohol had not been their problem. The fact is that alcohol leads them back to drugs.) Continue discipling him in the Lord’s *love, acceptance* and *forgiveness* with the Word of God.

*Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,
let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way
will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*

James 5:19-20 NKJV

You may want to make a statement periodically to the attendees to express your commitment to them, i.e., *“If you’re strung out and struggling, don’t be too proud to call someone; if you slip, don’t be too proud to come back; don’t give up; please come back; we love you and the Lord loves you.”*

IMPORTANT: What will you do if you have awarded a token to someone who then backslides? (Many backslide after celebrating thirty days, six months or one year of being straight and sober.) Will you require them to begin counting from day one? (That’s what is done in A.A./N.A.) Will you let them decide? How would Jesus handle the situation? “The Most Excellent Way” is *love, acceptance* and *forgiveness*. God has shown us many times that sin is sin, and we *all* stumble in our Christian walk. His grace is indeed sufficient. Prayerfully consider each “slip” on an individual basis — God will lead you.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

“What is said in all our meetings must remain confidential!” must be stressed at each meeting. Serious problems for couples can arise if what a husband or wife shares about his/her spouse in a meeting is repeated outside the meeting. Fragile relationships and the credibility of your ministry will be jeopardized by such gossip, however innocent.

Parents of children attending “The Children’s Meeting” can also be assured that whatever their children say will be kept confidential by the teacher. The only reason for breaking confidentiality would be if the teacher believed a child was in danger of physical harm — the children are made aware of this one exception. If a child innocently breaks confidentiality to his/her parents, the parents must not allow the “gossip” to be spread. (Actually, adults are the talkers — the children are more interested in what they need to say rather than what other children are saying.)

- **RESTORATION PROGRAMS**

Some addicts and alcoholics require a residential restoration program for a period of 30 to 90 days, even a year. Those who do, should be encouraged to enter such a facility if at all possible. There are many Christian “restoration” ranches, residences, halfway houses and hospitals for men, women and teenagers.

- **COUNSELING**

There will be those who come to your meetings who will need more than meetings to overcome serious relationship problems. They should be encouraged to seek counseling from the pastoral staff or church counselors. Members of the Fellowship/Ministry Team may or may not be qualified. We recommend that lay counselors be well grounded in the Word of God. Being an ex-addict or ex-alcoholic is not adequate experience for counseling people with severe marital or emotional problems. All counseling should be under the supervision of the pastoral staff.

NOTE: The Bible is sufficient for solving all problems of living. The only counselor discussed in Scripture is the Holy Spirit. No one should presume to have the authority God has in anyone’s life.

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting
and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be
thoroughly equipped for every good work.
2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV*

- **FAMILY & FRIENDS FELLOWSHIP/SUPPORT MEETING**

The basic difference between the dependent person and the spouse or parent is the general attitude of the attendees. The dependents believe they are victims of their obsessions and must

learn to recognize that they are powerless to manage their lives without Jesus. The spouse or parent believes he/she is the victim of the addicted person in his/her life. She often says: “I don’t know why I’m here, I don’t have the problem.” Most attendees are women — *Christian* women — who believe they are trapped by their circumstances and by Biblical restrictions regarding divorce.

They are angry, hurt, tired, depressed, fearful and desperate for a way out. They have experienced rejection. They believe they are worthless and unloved. They want answers, quick solutions — they attend the meeting hoping to find a quick Christian fix for their loved one.

The challenges for the meeting leader are (1) to encourage the attendees to share their problems without allowing the meeting to become a “pity party,” and (2) help them to see they cannot change people, only themselves with the power of the Holy Spirit.

***“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.”***

Matthew 6:33 NIV

Women, because of their God-given nature, are caretakers and enablers — women are helpmates. That may explain why 80% of women remain with an addicted spouse, while 80% of men leave. Women need to become God-dependent, letting go of their idolatrous relationship with their addicted spouse or child. Their sense of self worth must now come from God, not another person.

Spouses and parents need to release their loved one to God, and learn how to stop attempting to control them with nagging, threats, manipulation, blaming and judging — behaviors which only increase the negative responses of the one they are trying to (consciously or unconsciously) control. As they begin to examine their own motives (expectations) and their own hearts (attitudes) in light of God’s Word, they begin to realize they also need to change.

IMPORTANT: The Meeting Leader and team members must *never* give advice about what action they believe a person should take. The Bible must always be used as the standard for helping anyone — Scripture will convict, encourage, or strengthen anyone who seeks God’s will for their lives. His Word is sharper than any double-edged sword and will cut through to the heart of the problem for those who are open to change and spiritual growth. (In cases of physical abuse to women and children, help in finding sanctuary should be provided.)

Remember, even newly victorious spouses (the Meeting Leader included) are *helpmates* — women “naturally” want to solve people’s problems for them. The truth is that we have a limited perception of a person — we know only what we perceive and base it upon our experiences, while God knows all.

For example: One woman may decide to separate from her addicted husband, while another may choose to trust the Lord for strength to stay and pray for her husband. They each need a safe, supportive environment in which to explore choices and, most importantly, to be loved and accepted. God’s Spirit will minister to each one through you in accordance with their need. Trust Him as you pray for them.

“But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” —Isaiah 40:31 KJV

- **“THE CHILDREN’S MEETING” AND CHILDCARE**

“The Children’s Meeting” is desperately needed, yet it is the most difficult one to provide.

We parents are so consumed with our own problems that we are often unable to recognize the difficulties our children are experiencing. We *recovering*, newborn-Christian parents are so zealous that we believe our children will vicariously benefit from our new way of life. We recognize that our sanctification and Christian walk are processes, but we don’t relate the same processes to our children.

We believe that our problems are at least in part a result of our childhood experiences, but somehow we overlook the fact that our children have had or are having the same experiences. If we dare to tell ourselves the truth, we don’t want to admit that our child may have been affected by drug and alcohol use and abuse in our homes. The truth creates feelings of guilt and shame. And the idea of placing our children in an environment of total acceptance and in-spite-of-behavior love is scary — we won’t have control — they may innocently say or do something that would cause us more guilt and shame. Yet we need caregivers for our children while we seek help for ourselves in the adult meetings. If your church is only able to provide childcare, do it! Pray for volunteers. You may need to hire caregivers (pay them from meeting collections).

To begin “The Children’s Meeting” will require special prayer. That rare person who has a tender heart for children, who is lovingly tough enough to maintain order, who through experience really understands, who is creative enough to provide an atmosphere for free expression of real need, who is Christian enough to speak truth, who is strong enough to maintain confidentiality, will be a person called of God.

***“When I was a child, I talked like a child,
I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.
When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.”
I Corinthians 13:11 NIV***

Children need the opportunity to be physically, emotionally and spiritually safe and secure as they experience the changes we parents bring into their lives — even the good changes. They need to know Jesus, just as we do. Healing is needed by the whole family, yet the children are rarely included in the process. We may acknowledge that our children somehow managed to weather the storm of chaos addicted parents create, but we fail to help them adjust to the calm after the storm.

“The Children’s Meeting” was “created” to help parents break the chain of addiction. The sins of the father do not have to be passed on to the sons — Jesus came and broke the chain. For the children, too! They need His salvation and His love, acceptance and forgiveness just as we do!



God bless you as you seek to serve in Christ’s name!

PART IV

“DEPENDENT FELLOWSHIP & SUPPORT MEETING”

“Meeting Leader’s Guidelines”

1. **INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO THE GROUP.** (It is not necessary to say you are a recovered alcoholic or addict. You are a born-again Christian. Some Meeting Leaders prefer to say: *“I am a new creation in Christ; the old has passed away, the new has come.”*)
2. **BEGIN WITH PRAYER.** Always ask the Holy Spirit to lead the Meeting.
3. **OPENING STATEMENT:** Read, or ask someone to read (page 29).
4. **ATTITUDES OF VICTORIOUS LIVING:** Ask the person on your right or left to read the first Attitude, passing the paper to the next person to read the second Attitude, etc. (page 30).
 - *“Please say your name before you begin to read.”*
5. **INTRODUCTIONS:** *“Let’s get to know one another. Beginning on my left (or right), say your name and briefly tell us why you came to this meeting. You may ‘pass’ if you do not wish to share at this time.”* (If the group is large, ask only the newcomers to introduce themselves.)
6. **TITUS 3:3-8:** Read, or ask someone to read (page 31).
7. **OFFERING:** *“The Most Excellent Way is a non-profit, self-supporting ministry. I will pass a basket around for any offering you may wish to give, although none is required. The money received is used for coffee, literature, tokens and childcare.”*
8. **PRAYER REQUESTS:** *“Please take a Prayer Request form from the basket if you would like the Ministry Team to pray for you during the week. Write out your prayer needs and put your request into the basket after the Meeting. Your prayer request will be kept confidential!”*
9. **TOKENS:** *“We have tokens to acknowledge the success of those of you who have been clean or sober for 30, 60 and 90 days, 6 and 9 months, or one year. If you let us know in advance, we will have a one-year anniversary cake for you, and will celebrate with you on the meeting night nearest your anniversary.”*



10. AWARDING TOKENS:

- *“Is there anyone present who has 30 to 59 days clean and sober?”*
- *“60 to 90 days? 90 days to 6 months? 6 months? 9 months? One year?”*
- *“Please come forward to receive your token.”* (Or take the token to him/her.) (CLAP!)
- *“Please share how you reached this spiritual plateau?”*

11. BIBLE STUDY: *“It’s time for our Bible Study. Tonight’s attitude and topic are _____.”*

Limit your Bible Study to 20-30 minutes. As Meeting Leader, you will prepare a short Bible study a day or two before the Meeting. (Pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit when preparing your study!) Your study will relate to a specific topic and to one of the Attitudes of Victorious Living. The Scriptures you use must relate to the topic and Attitude you select. Your study will be the most meaningful if you relate it to your personal experience, and how the Lord and His Word have helped you remain clean and sober.

12. DISCUSSION: *“The Meeting is now open for discussion. Please limit your sharing to 3 minutes so everyone will have an opportunity to speak. Everything said must remain CONFIDENTIAL! Please speak in the first person; we do not preach to each other, nor do we give advice unless it is requested — after the Meeting. It is okay to ask questions. You may share more than once if time permits.”*

Note to Leader: Be prepared to interrupt (in a loving way) anyone who is long-winded, preaching or argumentative. Ask if anyone who hasn’t shared would like to before you call on someone who has already shared.

13. 8:20 P.M. CHILDCARE ANNOUNCEMENT: *“Please pick-up your children from The Children’s Meeting, then return for fellowship if you wish.”***14. 8:30 P.M. ANNOUNCEMENT:**

- *“We will now end the Meeting with prayer. If you wish personal prayer, please come forward after the meeting and the Ministry Team will pray with you.”*
- *“We encourage each of you to exchange telephone numbers with one another (men with men, women with women), and to be available for each other for fellowship, encouragement and prayer between meetings.”*
- *“We encourage you to regularly attend the church of your choice, if you’re not already doing so, in order to continue your growth in the knowledge of God’s Will for your life.”*

15. CLOSE MEETING WITH PRAYER. *God bless you!*

PART IV
DEPENDENT FELLOWSHIP/SUPPORT MEETING
“Opening Statement”

- “The Most Excellent Way” is LOVE according to I Corinthians 12:31 and 13:3-8.
- “The Most Excellent Way” is a loving group of men and women affected directly or indirectly by drugs, alcohol or other life-dominating sin.
- We utilize Biblical principles to overcome the guilt, frustration, hopelessness, fear and shame associated with addictive behavior, remembering the admonition of the Scriptures:

*“Beware lest anyone take you captive through philosophy and empty deceit,
according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles
of the world, and not according to Christ.”
Colossians 2:8 NKJV*

- We believe a person can become totally free from addiction and compulsive behavior *only* by the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ Jesus.
- “The Most Excellent Way” is to be reconciled to God, the Father, through belief in Jesus Christ.
- We believe that through meetings such as this we will grow in our faith in Christ. We will become healthy, joy-filled and productive children of God with the support of others who understand what we have lived through, and by applying Biblical principles to our lives.
- We gain a better understanding of the sin nature and how to change our attitudes and behavior.
- “The Most Excellent Way” is a personal relationship with Jesus:

*Jesus said:
“The thief [the devil] does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy;
I have come that they might have life,
and that they might have it more abundantly.”
John 10:10 NKJV*

PART IV

DEPENDENT FELLOWSHIP/SUPPORT MEETING

“Ten Attitudes of Victorious Living”

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

EPHESIANS 2:5 NIV

1 • Attitude of HUMILITY

Jesus said: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

MATTHEW 5:3 NIV

I admit I am powerless over the affects of drugs and alcohol, and self-centered behavior — my life is unmanageable.

2 • Attitude of REPENTANCE

Jesus said: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” *MATTHEW 5:4 NIV*

I believe Jesus Christ can and will create in me a new way of life.

3 • Attitude of SUBMISSIVENESS

Jesus said: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” *MATTHEW 5:5 NIV*

I give my will and my life to Jesus Christ.

4 • Attitude of HONESTY

Jesus said: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” *MATTHEW 5:6 NIV*

I honestly examine myself in the light of God’s Word.

5 • Attitude of MERCY

Jesus said: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” *MATTHEW 5:7 NIV*

I humbly ask God’s forgiveness for my sinful past. I am able to forgive those who have hurt me.

6 • Attitude of OBEDIENCE

Jesus said: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” *MATTHEW 5:8 NIV*

I desire to live under the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit — day by day.

7 • Attitude of RECONCILIATION

Jesus said: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”

MATTHEW 5:9 NIV

I ask forgiveness from all those I have hurt or dealt with unfairly.

8 • Attitude of FAITH

Jesus said: “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

MATTHEW 5:10 NIV

I trust in the power of Jesus Christ when I face hardship and trials.

9 • Attitude of PERSEVERANCE

Jesus said: “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven . . .”

MATTHEW 5:11-12 NIV

I stand firm in my faith that Jesus is in control of all things.

10 • Attitude of a LOVING SERVANT

Jesus said: “You ARE the salt of the Earth . . . You ARE the light of the world . . . let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

MATTHEW 5:13-16 NIV

As a new creation in Christ, I share with others the Good News of a risen Savior who makes His people whole.



“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

MATTHEW 6:33 KJV

PART IV
DEPENDENT FELLOWSHIP/SUPPORT MEETING
“Titus 3:3-8”

*“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.
He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal
by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously
through Jesus Christ our Savior,
so that having been justified by His grace,
we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.
This is a trustworthy saying.
And I want you to stress these things,
so that those who have trusted in God may be careful
to devote themselves to doing what is good.
These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.”*



PART V

“FAMILY & FRIENDS FELLOWSHIP & SUPPORT MEETING”

“Meeting Leader’s Guidelines”

1. **INTRODUCE YOURSELF.**
2. **BEGIN WITH PRAYER.** *Always ask the Holy Spirit to lead the Meeting.*
3. **OPENING STATEMENT:** Read, or ask someone to read (page 35).
4. **ATTITUDES OF VICTORIOUS LIVING:** *“We believe the Lord has inspired this ministry with sound Biblical principles to help us become free from the bondage of our obsessive and compulsive attitudes and behaviors. We call these principles ‘Attitudes of Victorious Living,’ which are based upon Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Ask the person on your right or left to read the first Attitude, passing the paper to the next person to read the second Attitude, etc. (page 36).*
 - *“Please say your name before you begin to read.”*
5. **INTRODUCTIONS:** *“Let’s get to know one another. Beginning on my left (or right), say your name and briefly tell us why you came to this meeting. You may ‘pass’ if you do not wish to share at this time.”* (If the group is large, ask only the newcomers to introduce themselves.)
6. **TITUS 3:3-8:** Read, or ask someone to read (page 37).
7. **OFFERING & PRAYER REQUESTS:** *“The Most Excellent Way is a non-profit, self-supporting ministry. I will pass a basket around for any offering you may wish to give, although none is required. The money received is used for coffee, literature, tokens and childcare.”*
 - *“Please take a Prayer Request form from the basket if you would like the Ministry Team to pray for you during the week. Write out your prayer needs and put your request into the basket after the Meeting. Your prayer request will be kept confidential!”*
8. **BIBLE STUDY:** *“It’s time for our Bible Study. Tonight’s Attitude and Topic are: _____.”* Limit your study to 20-30 minutes. As Meeting Leader, you will prepare a short Bible study a day or two before the Meeting. (Pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit when preparing your study!) Your study will relate to a *specific* topic and to *one of the Attitudes*. Relate the Scriptures you use to the topic and Attitude. Your study will be the most meaningful if you relate it to your personal experience, and how the Lord and His word have helped you grow.

9. **DISCUSSION:** *“The Meeting is now open for discussion. Please limit your sharing to 3 minutes so everyone will have an opportunity to speak. Everything said must remain CONFIDENTIAL! Please speak in the first person; we do not preach to each other, nor do we give advice unless it is requested — after the Meeting. It is okay to ask questions. You may share more than once if time permits.”*

- *“We are here to encourage one another, and to accept each other just as we are. We need to feel free to express our thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment or disapproval.”*
- *“As we go around the circle, please limit your sharing to three minutes so everyone who wishes to share will have an opportunity.”*

Note to Leader: Indicate from your left or right who will begin the discussion. Sharing in order around the circle helps encourage full participation of the group, yet allows one to “pass” if he/she wishes. Be prepared to interrupt anyone who is long-winded, preaching or argumentative. Ask if anyone who hasn't shared would like to before calling on someone who has already shared.

10. **8:20 P.M. (or 10 minutes before end of meeting) ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- *“Please pick-up your children from The Children's Meeting promptly at the close of this meeting, then return for fellowship if you wish.”*
- *“We will now end the Meeting with prayer. If you desire personal prayer, please come forward after the meeting is adjourned and the Ministry Team will pray with you.”*
- *“We encourage each of you to exchange telephone numbers with one another (men with men, women with women), and to be available for each other for fellowship, encouragement and prayer between meetings.*
- *“We encourage you to regularly attend the church of your choice, if you're not already doing so, in order to continue your growth in the knowledge of God's Will for your life.”*

11. **PRAYER:** Ask if there are any special prayer needs. Have everyone stand, form a circle and hold hands as you and/or others address the specific prayer requests. (Silently ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of the problems you heard during the discussion that He wants you to lift up in prayer.)

12. **CLOSE MEETING WITH PRAYER:** *“Please join me praying, not just saying, The Lord's Prayer”* (or pray as the Holy Spirit leads). ◀

PART V

FAMILY & FRIENDS FELLOWSHIP/SUPPORT MEETING

“Opening Statement”

- “The Most Excellent Way” is LOVE according I Corinthians 12:31 and 13:3-8.
- Our purpose is to provide loving support to family members and friends of the chemically dependent who desire Biblical solutions to their relationship problems.
- We believe that by attending meetings such as this we will grow in our faith in Christ with others who understand our circumstances, and who have experienced victory in their lives through a personal relationship with Jesus.
- We utilize Biblical principles to overcome the guilt, frustration, hopelessness, fear and shame associated with addictive behavior, remembering the admonition of the Scriptures:

“Beware lest anyone take you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”
Colossians 2:8 NKJV

- We believe a person can be *totally* free from obsessive/compulsive attitudes and self-centered behavior *only* by the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ Jesus.
- “The Most Excellent Way” is to be reconciled to God, the Father, through belief in Jesus Christ, and to surrender to *His* way.
- Therefore, we choose to apply Biblical principles to our lives in order to become healthy, loving, productive, secure, joy-filled children of God.
- “The Most Excellent Way” is a personal relationship with Jesus:

Jesus said:
“The thief [the devil] does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”
John 10:10 NKJV



PART V
FAMILY & FRIENDS FELLOWSHIP/SUPPORT MEETING
“Ten Attitudes of Victorious Living”

*“Your attitude should be the same
as that of Christ Jesus.”*
EPHESIANS 2:5 NIV

1 • Attitude of HUMILITY

*Jesus said: “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*
MATTHEW 5:3 NIV

I admit I am powerless over the affects of drugs and alcohol, and self-centered behavior — my life is unmanageable.

2 • Attitude of REPENTANCE

*Jesus said: “Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.”* MATTHEW 5:4 NIV

I believe Jesus Christ can and will create in me a new way of life.

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*Jesus said: “Blessed are the meek, for they
will inherit the earth.”* MATTHEW 5:5 NIV

I give my will and my life to Jesus Christ.

4 • Attitude of HONESTY

*Jesus said: “Blessed are those who hunger
and thirst for righteousness, for they will
be filled.”* MATTHEW 5:6 NIV

I honestly examine myself in the light of God’s Word.

5 • Attitude of MERCY

*Jesus said: “Blessed are the merciful, for
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I humbly ask God’s forgiveness for my sinful past. I am able to forgive those who have hurt me.

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*Jesus said: “Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.”* MATTHEW 5:8 NIV

I desire to live under the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit — day by day.

7 • Attitude of RECONCILIATION

*Jesus said: “Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.”*

MATTHEW 5:9 NIV

I ask forgiveness from all those I have hurt or dealt with unfairly.

8 • Attitude of FAITH

*Jesus said: “Blessed are those who are
persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

MATTHEW 5:10 NIV

I trust in the power of Jesus Christ when I face hardship and trials.

9 • Attitude of PERSEVERANCE

*Jesus said: “Blessed are you when people
insult you, persecute you and falsely say
all kinds of evil against you because of
Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is
your reward in heaven . . .”*

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I stand firm in my faith that Jesus is in control of all things.

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*Jesus said: “You ARE the salt of the
earth . . . You ARE the light of the
world . . . let your light shine before men,
that they may see your good deeds and
praise your Father in heaven.”*

MATTHEW 5:13-16 NIV

As a new creation in Christ, I share with others the Good News of a risen Savior who makes His people whole.



*“But seek ye first the kingdom of God
and His righteousness; and all
these things shall be added unto you.”*
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PART V
FAMILY & FRIENDS FELLOWSHIP/SUPPORT MEETING
“Titus 3:3-8”

*“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.
He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal
by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously
through Jesus Christ our Savior,
so that having been justified by His grace,
we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.
This is a trustworthy saying.
And I want you to stress these things,
so that those who have trusted in God may be careful
to devote themselves to doing what is good.
These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.”*



PART VI
“TEN ATTITUDES OF VICTORIOUS LIVING”
Condensed Bible Study Outline

SCRIPTURES ARE FROM THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION OF THE BIBLE, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

• **CONTENTS**

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 ATTITUDE 2 • “Repentant” 6
 ATTITUDE 3 • “Submissive” 10
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• **INTRODUCTION**

“The Most Excellent Way” ministry is centered upon Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7, specifically the Beatitudes. With Christ’s Sermon as our foundation, we learn to examine our hearts and attitudes, to be renewed in our minds, and to live the *spiritual life* by *putting off* the old man and *putting on* the new, spiritual man. The ten “Attitudes of Victorious Living” are our outline for permanent change and a new way of life. We suggest using this Bible study outline, together with “Scripture Topics for Support Meetings” (Part VIII), to create meaningful Bible studies for your Support/Fellowship Meetings.

We highly recommend “Studies in the Sermon on the Mount” by D. Martyn Lloyd Jones as an excellent resource for studying, applying and teaching the Beatitudes and the entire Sermon.

- Note:
- (1) There are eight Beatitudes.
 - (2) There is a promise with each Beatitude.
 - (3) The first three Beatitudes are emptying the Christian of old attitudes, the next three are filling the Christian, and the last two are the result we can expect from the first six, i.e., (a) we become peacemakers between man and man, and between man and God; and (b) we can expect to be persecuted for we are all disciples of Christ.

The Sermon on the Mount does not mention the Holy Spirit or the blood of Christ, yet the basis for it is Calvary, and the power to live it is by the Holy Spirit. Again, keep in mind that these are not commandments to obey a “Christian Law.” The Sermon on the Mount describes the character of the truly righteous person, character that comes from a walk with the Lord. It’s the spirit of this Sermon that is important. Keeping it according to its letter is going back to the very Pharisaic righteousness that Jesus is condemning!

Millions of people think they can be saved by obeying the Sermon on the Mount. They think it is easier than trying to obey the Ten Commandments. How foolish! Nobody was ever saved by obeying any law (Galatians 2:16; 3:10-11), and the Sermon on the Mount is much more strict than Moses' Law! Under his Law, if a man murdered another, he was guilty, but Jesus says that hatred in the heart is the moral equivalent of murder. Lust is adultery in the heart.

Please keep in mind that the Beatitudes come first. They describe the kind of person who, under the power of the Spirit, can live the way Matthew 5-7 describes. Note the progression in the Beatitudes:

- Poor in spirit — this means humble before God
- Mourn — this means sorrow for sin, repentance
- Meek — waiting before God for His mercy
- Hunger and thirst — asking for God's righteousness
- Merciful — condemning self, not others
- Pure in heart — this is the result!
- Peacemakers — trying to win others to Christ
- Persecuted — this happens to all who live godly lives

There are many, many Christians who pursue correcting their "character DEFECTS." The Biblical truth is that unbelievers indeed possess character defects — in fact, their whole being is defective because of their sin nature. When we receive salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, we realize we have "character DEFICIENCIES" — it is the Holy Spirit within us who is working to produce the character of Christ. The Beatitudes and the Sermon describe the change that is happening within us — it is the daily sanctification process we experience as we surrender to God's Word and His Spirit, and the daily choices we make as we walk in the Spirit.

- **WHAT A PSYCHIATRIST SAYS ABOUT "THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT":**

"I believe the following to be true: If you were to take the sum total of all the authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental [health] if you were to combine them, and refine them, and [remove] all the excess [words] — if you were to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6 and 7). And it would [be much less by] comparison. For nearly two thousand years, the Christian world has been holding in its hands the complete answer . . . Here rests the blueprint for a successful human life, with optimum mental health and contentment." — James T. Fischer, MD

- **BIBLE STUDY PREPARATION**

As you begin to prepare your Attitude study, review the Scripture Topics table of contents and selected one or two topics to incorporate into your study. You will discover that you will have "fresh" material each time you present an Attitude.

Every message should include an opportunity for your hearers to receive Christ as Savior. —TMEW

ATTITUDE 1 • “Humility”

*Jesus said: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
Matthew 5:3*

**I admit I am powerless over the effects of drugs and alcohol,
and self-centered behavior — my life is unmanageable.**

We must be empty before we can be full. The opposite of this is self-sufficiency. Our sufficiency is not of ourselves (2 Corinthians 3:5). The world promotes self-sufficiency, yet God dwells with the person whose heart is broken (Isaiah 57:15). This does not mean false humility or cowardice; it means a proper attitude toward self, realizing how weak and sinful we are apart from Christ. Compare the two men in Luke 18:9-14.

*Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves,
but our competence comes from God.
2 Corinthians 3:5 NIV*

*For this is what the high and lofty One says — He who lives forever, whose name is holy:
“I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.
Isaiah 57:15 NIV*

*To some who were confident of their own righteousness
and looked down on everybody else,
Jesus told this parable:¹⁰
“Two men went up to the temple to pray,
one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.
¹¹The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself:
‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men —
robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector.
¹²I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’
¹³“But the tax collector stood at a distance.
He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said,
‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’
¹⁴ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other,
went home justified before God.
For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled,
and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”
Luke 18:9-14 NIV*

I. PURPOSE:

- A. We need to teach and explain that, without God, man is powerless to overcome life-controlling sins, such as drugs, alcohol, pornography, gambling, smoking, self-pity, etc.

Why? Because man has a sin nature and is *spiritually dead*. Man lives in such a *weakened condition* that he doesn't have the power to change his life without God's help. God created Adam to be dependent upon Him for *all* things. At the Fall, man became independent — a characteristic of the sin nature — he rejected God, deciding he could take care of himself.

- B. Men and women can come to realize that God-dependency, instead of self-dependency, is the answer to *all* life's problems.
- C. Man needs to become poor in spirit not rich in spirit. *Poor* here means a poverty stricken condition wherein when we find ourselves in the presence of God we realize our utter *nothingness*; we realize we need to totally rely on God to meet all our needs.
- D. Our pride has been diminished to a *humble attitude* before God and man. When we become *totally* submissive to His will, we are indeed *poor in spirit*.

II. APPLICATION:

- A. Why are we powerless and why has life become unmanageable?
1. Compulsive or obsessive behavior is our sin nature reacting to the human condition.
 2. It is the "normal" condition of man in his fallen state (he is in a state of sin).
 3. We were created to be dependent upon our Creator for all things.
 4. We have blocked out God. By trying to change on our own, we have given up trying to change. We limit God.
 5. We need to admit our powerlessness so God can do His work in us.
- B. Dependence upon God allows Him to manage all things. The idea is to surrender the omnipotent ego and to accept that we are powerless.
1. Jesus said: "*Without Me ye can do nothing.*" — *John 15:5 KJV*
- C. In his fallen state, man is selfish and self-centered. He wants to control his life and those around him so he will feel better, have things the way he wants and take the pleasures of this world.
1. He or she is on the throne — Jesus is not.
 2. We are taking care of *self*. When we relinquish the throne to Jesus, our **ATTITUDES** can change to those set forth for us in The Sermon on the Mount.
 3. I Corinthians 13:11 — "*When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.*"

- D. Jesus said the man who has these attitudes (the beatitudes) will be blessed (happy). These are the attitudes of the mind of Christ.
1. Scripture says we should have the mind, or attitudes, of Christ:
Romans 12:2 KJV — *“And be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*
 2. **Philippians 2:5** — *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”*
 3. We have the power and authority of the Holy Spirit (Christ in us):
Ephesians 1:18-23 — *“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength,²⁰ which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms,²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given not only in the present age but also in the one to come.²² And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the Church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.”*
- E. **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**
1. What does “poor in spirit” mean? In the Greek, it means “a poverty stricken condition.” It means an attitude of humility.
 - a) As we find ourselves face-to-face with God, we are aware of our utter nothingness and total sinfulness:
Romans 3:23 — *“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”*
Romans 6:23 — *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
 - b) We become aware of our total dependence upon Him; total reliance on God for everything. We find we cannot, do not want to be self-reliant.
 - c) This “poor in spirit” attitude means an attitude of emptiness as He must first empty us of pride, self-reliance, self-centeredness.
 - d) It means our confidence is now in God — we willingly submit to His will for our lives.
 - e) Totally dependent upon God for all we need — trusting God, not ourselves or our spouse, or certain old friends, or drugs and alcohol, or any other addiction.
 - f) When we totally trust God for everything, then we will know we are “poor in spirit.”



May God richly bless you as you choose to live His Way!

ATTITUDE 2 • “Repentant”

*Jesus said: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”
Matthew 5:4*

I believe Jesus Christ can and will create in me a new way of life.

This is sincere sorrow for sin, our sin and the sins of others. How careless we are about sin! We excuse it, yet God hates it, and sin breaks God's heart. Beware of the sorrow of this world. Peter mourned with godly sorrow and was forgiven; Judas had remorse — the sorrow of this world — and he took his life.

*Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it.
Though I did regret it — I see that my letter hurt you,
but only for a little while — yet now I am happy,
not because you were made sorry,
but because your sorrow led you to repentance.
For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us.
2 Corinthians 7:8-9 NIV*

I. PURPOSE:

- A. We need to help people understand that by believing in Christ Jesus they can be set free from the bondage of drugs and alcohol, or any other life-controlling sins.
- B. Christ came to die for our sins so that we could be forgiven if we are willing to repent. Therefore, if we believe that God loves us enough to send His son to die for our sins, that He is risen and lives, then we can be set free.
- C. This second Attitude is to teach that sin must be dealt with and Jesus is the answer. He can make the difference. Having Him in our lives gives us the power or ability to be delivered from life-controlling sins.
- D. Those who mourn are mourning over their sins. The attitude is a repentant attitude because of sin — with forgiveness we are comforted.
 - 1. We are *blessed* to know our sins are forgiven — blessed, happy, joyful, to know our sins are wiped away.
- E. We are comforted because as a result of seeking forgiveness we receive comfort.

II. APPLICATION:

- A. The Word indicates that Jesus is *able*:
 - 1. **Matthew 28:18** — “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”
 - 2. **I Corinthians 5:17** — “Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

3. We have found that if we have experienced rebirth by faith, we have a spirit that is alive to God and no longer God-rejecting — we have become sin-rejecting.

John 3:3-6 — *Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

⁴*“How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born.”*

⁵*Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*

⁶*Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”*

Romans 10:9-10 — *“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”*

- B. The Spirit of God indwelling us, in conjunction with our spirit, empowers us to say “NO” to sin.

1. He who is truly born of God will not habitually practice sin, i.e., continue using drugs and alcohol, or any other addiction or self-centered behavior.

I John 3:9 KJV — *“Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”*

2. With acceptance and belief (trust) in Christ, we received the power of His resurrection. Wherein we can use that power and authority He has given us to put to death the sins of the flesh and change our attitudes and behavior. This power and authority is the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:18-23 — *“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints,*

¹⁹*and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength,*

²⁰*which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms,*

²¹*far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given not only in the present age but also in the one to come.*

²²*And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church,*

²³*which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.”*

- C. To believe is to have faith. To have faith is to trust in His resurrection power to restore us spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically to a sober life, a victorious life in Him. The “key” then is having faith or trusting that God can and will deliver us from the bondage of drugs and alcohol, or other addictions.

Hebrews 11:6 — *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”*

- D. “Recovery” is the *sanctification* process, a functioning of the Holy Spirit in us. He is sanctifying, separating us from the world and desires of the flesh unto God, to serve Him and obey Him. Study of the Word sanctifies us:

John 17:17 — “*Sanctify them by the truth; your word is the truth.*”

- E. Jesus came to give life in abundance, not to take it away (or to make us miserable).

1. **John 10:10** KJV — “*The thief cometh not but to steal and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.*”
2. **John 15:7** KJV— “*If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.*”
3. **Luke 11:9-10** KJV — “*And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given unto you: Seek and ye shall find; Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*”

Seeking through prayer and study of the Word opens the door to God, then we can ask, find and receive.

- F. “***Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.***”

1. What does *mourn* mean spiritually? It means *sorrow for sin or condemning sin, grief or lamenting for sin.*
 - a. **Romans 7:24** KJV — “*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?*”
 - b. The cry of a grief-stricken man: **Romans 7:19** KJV — “*For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.*”
2. Blessed (happy) is he who mourns. How can this be?
 - a. This is known as a paradox: (A statement that is seemingly contradictory to common sense, yet it is perhaps indeed true.)
 - b. Having seen our sinfulness and hopeless quest to be righteous (sober, healthy, functional), we look for a Savior and repent.
 - c. In repenting for and mourning over our sins we know it leads to salvation and hope for righteousness in Christ Jesus, NOT in ourselves.
3. Having Christ and His righteousness within us, we can be free — He sets us free to lead a productive, joyful, happy life in peace and hope.
 - a. **John 8:31-32** — “*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*”
John 8:36 — “*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*”
John 14:6 — “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*”

- b. We will be comforted by:
- 1) Our eternal hope:
I John 3:2-3 — *“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”*
 - 2) Our faith in Christ:
II Corinthians 5:7 — *“We live by faith, not by sight.”*
 - 3) Our knowledge that our sins are forgiven:
I John 1:9 — *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*
 - 4) Our knowledge that the indwelling Holy Spirit comforts us:
Romans 8:3-4 — *“For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.”*
 - 3) Encouraged by these things, our grief and mourning is replaced with faith and trust in God. We experience His comfort.



May God richly bless you as you choose to live His Way!

ATTITUDE 3 • “Submissive”

*Jesus said: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”
Matthew 5:5*

I give my will and my life to Jesus Christ.

Meekness is not weakness! Jesus was meek, yet He drove the changers from the temple. Moses was meek (Numbers 12:3), yet he judged sinners and even faced Aaron with his sin. Meekness means not asserting my own rights, but living for the glory of God. Christians are to show meekness — we are prone to be self-willed. Meekness is strength of character, as was Jesus.

I. PURPOSE:

- A. With this attitude we preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This attitude is meant for anyone in the meeting who has not asked the Lord into their heart or life, or a backslidden Christian to rededicate his/her life to Christ.

It means to *relinquish self will* for our lives to Jesus and make Him Lord of our life.
- B. This attitude may be used to preach the Gospel. Ask if there is anyone who wants to accept Christ. If so, they can stay and pray with the leaders after the meeting. An invitation needs to be given.
- C. The invitation should be given at each meeting when newcomers are present. The leader can ask everyone to close their eyes as the leader prays, then he can ask for those who want to accept Christ to raise their hands. He can then lead them in the sinner’s prayer. He can make contact after the meeting to encourage anyone who has accepted the Lord.
- D. A *meek* attitude is one that is submissive to the will of God — a tempered spirit — one that can be molded into the image and likeness of Jesus.
- E. A *meek spirit* is one that is *gentle* and *yielded* to Christ, *strong* in Christ and *self-controlled* by His spirit — a life submitted to God and His will for our lives.

II. APPLICATION:

- A. What does it mean to you to turn your life and will over to Jesus Christ?
 - 1. It means to relinquish self-will, your self-serving attitude over to Him — and to TRUST that He can and will care for you because of His great love for you.
 - 2. You must trust/believe that He did come not just to sacrifice His life for your sins, but to give you a new and abundant life.

John 10:10b — Jesus said: “*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*”

- B. Jesus is *the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6)*. It is His way of life that He wants you to have. His way — not your way.
1. Total dependence upon Him — not on yourself.
 2. We learned He will create in us a new way of life if we believe (have faith) He can and will.
- C. **Romans 1:17** — *“The righteous will live by faith.”*
- Galations 3:11** — *“Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”*
- Proverbs 3:5** — *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”*
1. Relinquish the throne of your life to Him, He will do the rest.
 2. **Romans 10:17** — *“So, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing, by the Word of God.”*
 3. **Hebrews 11:1** — *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”*
- D. It is by and through His Word that we learn to live the victorious life and are SANCTIFIED, cleansed, strengthened and empowered to live that life.
1. **John 17:17 KJV** — *“Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.”*
 2. Trust and faith go together. Faith is trusting in God and His provision for our lives.
- E. What are God’s provisions?
1. The Word — shows His will and way for our lives.
 2. Holy Spirit — teaches, sanctifies, comforts and encourages us; and convicts us of sin.
 3. Fellowship — communing with other Christians.
 4. Prayer — communing (talking) with God.
- F. Without God’s provisions, there is no: Life — Help — Love — Power — Growth — Patience — Peace — Trust (Faith) — Hope — Self-control.
- G. When Christ rose from death, He broke Satan’s power of sin and death and the curse of the power of sin and death over us.
1. PUT ON the new, PUT OFF the old: it’s about choice!
- Ephesians 4:22-24** — *“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*
- Colossians 3:5-14** — *“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.
⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.
⁷You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.*

⁸*But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language from your lips.*

⁹*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.*

¹¹*Here there is not Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

¹²*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

¹³*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

¹⁴*And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."*

- H. When we believe in Jesus with our total inner self, with our own volition (will), making a firm decision, a choice, a true commitment — we are spiritually reborn, regenerated instantly into a new abundant life with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- I. By turning our will and our life over to Christ, we're changed by faith. We willingly do it to pursue what God, through His love and grace, has promised us: an abundant life, a supernatural life in Christ and the Holy Spirit — to transform us by the renewing of our mind into the children of God:
 - 1. As we seek His righteousness, we learn from Him a proper attitude and behavior.
 - 2. We have peace and prosperity in our lives because of His power, protection, love, joy and provision. He meets our every need.
- J. ***"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."***

What does it mean to be *meek*? *Meek* is translated from the Greek to mean: Gentleness — Kindness — Mildness — Moderation — To be molded; therefore, yielded to God.

- 1. *Meekness* is free from harshness, sternness and violence. It is a self-controlled inner strength resulting from walking with God — Christ in us. It's the same controlled strength Christ demonstrated when He went to the cross for our sins.
 - 2. It is a tempered spirit with which we accept God's dealings with us as good, without disputing or resisting.
 - 3. It is associated with humility and self-control. It is not self-assertive, not preoccupied with self at all.
 - 4. We can be as meek as Christ was because we have the infinite resources of God Himself within us, through prayer and the Word.
- K. We are co-heirs with Christ of all that God created:

Romans 8:16-17 — *"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory."*



May God richly bless you as you choose to live His Way!

ATTITUDE 4 • “Honesty”

*Jesus said: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”
Matthew 5:6*

I honestly examine myself in the light of God’s word.

A true Christian has an appetite for spiritual things. Ask people what they desire and you will know what they are like. If they are in “recovery,” they are admitting they are pursuing life in the flesh. When we become “born again,” we are enabled to seek and receive spiritual fruit. The Biblical truth that God sees us in the righteousness of Christ should be our motivation to please Him by being filled with His righteousness.

*“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.
⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.
¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.
¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.
¹³Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:7-14 NIV*

I. PURPOSE:

- A. This attitude is the developing within the child of God, by the Holy Spirit, a craving for righteousness. It is part of the sanctification process. Generally, as soon as one accepts Christ they begin to desire, hunger and thirst for righteousness in their life. This is accomplished as they seek the Lord through His Word, prayer, church attendance, fellowship and worship.
- B. We need to show people that we seldom know what is in our own hearts, therefore, we need to take the responsibility to find out if we want to grow spiritually. We can ask God to help us examine our hearts to see if there is any wickedness in us:

Psalms 139:23-24 — “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

1. We must be willing to let go of everything in our pasts that will hinder what the Lord desires to do in our lives, i.e., unforgiveness, anger, bitterness, wrath, hatred, etc. — sins and toxic attitudes that result from others not living up to our expectations, and sins that result from the evil and/or selfish behavior of others.
 2. **Luke 4:18** KJV — Jesus said: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”*

Jesus desires to release us from the bondage of our old life — the hurts from society, loved ones, even resulting from our sinful choices.

Psalm 147:3 KJV — *He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.*
- B. It may be helpful to write down what is in our heart. The Bible says, in effect, that we do not know our own hearts.
1. We may be carrying around burdens we do not even know about or recognize:

Jeremiah 17:9 — *“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”*

Jeremiah 17:10 — *“I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind . . . ”*
 2. **Proverbs 21:2** — *“All a man’s ways seem right to him, but the Lord weighs the heart.”*
 3. **Psalm 139:23-24** KJV — *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”*
 4. **I Corinthians 11:27-29** KJV — *“Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. BUT let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself . . . ”*
 5. We can avoid God’s chastisement by trials when we judge (examine) ourselves, confess our sins, acknowledge them to Him, and repent.

I Corinthians 11:31 — *“But if we judge ourselves rightly we should not be judged.”*
- C. We should not be surprised when we experience attitudes of resentment, anger, bitterness, hatred, etc., because the behavior of others, and/or because of our negative behavior, and/or because of our circumstances. Each incident is an opportunity to grow in grace.
1. It allows us to seek forgiveness from God for each of these problems, and allows Him to take the unforgiveness from us and heal the wounds.
 2. It provides the opportunity for us to put off unforgiveness we harbor against others.

3. We can choose to take responsibility for the choices of our past that have contributed to our circumstances, or we can childishly blame people, places and things. The former promotes spiritual growth, the later is simply living in the flesh.

D. Beware of the philosophies of men — .

*“But there were also false prophets among the people,
just as there will be false teachers among you.*

*They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign
Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves.*

²*Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.*

³*In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up.*

*Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has
not been sleeping.” — 2 Peter 2:1-3 NIV*

“These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm.

Blackest darkness is reserved for them.

¹⁸*For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful
human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.*

¹⁹*They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity —
for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.*

²⁰*If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome,
they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.*

²¹*It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness,
than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command
that was passed on to them.*

²²*Of them the proverbs are true: ‘A dog returns to its vomit,’ and,
‘A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.’” — 2 Peter 2:17-22 NIV*

Jesus said: *“No one can serve two masters . Either he will hate the one and love the
other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.” — Matthew 6:24 NIV*

1. We may have become sober in an A.A. program before being “born again,” and credit the program for our “recovery.” Too many Christians have more allegiance to Bill W. than they do to the Savior of their souls. They may not “despise” Jesus, but they do not honor Him with devotion to His Word. They are double-minded.
2. Many say the 12-steps of A.A. are Biblical, therefore, the steps are appropriate for Christians to follow. This is simply a lie of the devil to deceive God’s children. Just as he cunningly deceived Eve in the Garden, he deceives Christians.
3. A.A. may clean them up, but in The Most Excellent Way, we lift them up! The 12 steps focus on changing behavior from the outside, while promoting the negative philosophy of “recovery” — a philosophy based on the fear of relapse.
4. The 12 steps focus on self-effort — Jesus’ Beatitudes are only realized in our lives by dying to self and surrendering self to God’s Holy Spirit.
5. Examine yourself: Who are you serving? Who are you living to please? What do you hunger and thirst for?

- E. **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”**
1. What does it mean to be “filled?” This is the first beatitude wherein God begins to fill us with the spiritual “Bread of Life,” Jesus Christ, which include:
 - a. His attitudes
 - b. His conduct/behavior
 - c. His emotions
 - d. His Word
 - e. His will for our lives
 2. We seek to be emptied of . . .

Galations 5:19-21a — *“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. . . .”*

. . . To be filled with:

Galations 5:22-23a — *“But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”*
 3. Jesus used the words *hunger and thirst* metaphorically here to illustrate the idea of how a Christian yearns for righteousness within himself:
 - a. A hunger and thirst for spiritual things;
 - b. We have a filling by the Holy Spirit;
 - c. We are being filled with a continuous desire for righteousness in our lives;
 - d. We desire the righteousness of Christ, of God Himself, because we are filled with the imputed righteousness of Christ;
 - e. We hate sin just as God hates it, and we want to curtail the desires of the flesh.
- F. We are blessed (happy) as we see evil, selfish thoughts, attitudes and behaviors changed to righteous thoughts, attitudes and behaviors; and we rejoice in our salvation and a loving God who heals the brokenhearted and binds up our wounds.
- II Corinthians 10:4-5** — *“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*
- G. **Ephesians 4:22-24** — *“You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitudes of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*



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ATTITUDE 5 • “Merciful”

*Jesus said: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”
Matthew 5:7*

**I humbly ask God’s forgiveness for my sinful past.
I am able to forgive those who have hurt me.**

Being “merciful” is the working of the biblical principle of sowing and reaping. If we show mercy, because Christ has been merciful to us, then mercy will come back to us (see Luke 16:1-13). We do not earn mercy, but we must have hearts prepared to receive it.

*Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom,
¹³because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful.
Mercy triumphs over judgment!
James 2:12-13 NIV*

*“A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings trouble on himself.”
Proverbs 11:17 NIV*

I. PURPOSE:

- A. It is a merciful act to forgive those who have hurt me. Just as God is merciful to forgive us our sins which have hurt Him, He expects us to do the same.
Matthew 6:14-15 — *Jesus said: “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*
- B. To forgive those who know they have hurt us is showing mercy towards them.
- C. When we forgive, we are cleansed of guilt, shame, anger, resentment, bitterness and hatred. To carry these around with us can cause us to not grow spiritually. They affect our attitudes and relationships. This part of our life needs to be dealt with as soon as possible.
- D. Scripturally, it is not necessary to go to the person who has hurt you and ask forgiveness for your feelings toward him/her, as they may not even know you have hurt them, and you could cause more hurt. It is only necessary to ask God to forgive you. However, if you have hurt them, you need to *reconcile* with them.
Matthew 5:23-24 — *Jesus said: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”*
- E. You must also forgive those who know they have deliberately hurt us, and continue to hurt us. Jesus commands us to show love even to our enemies:

Matthew 5:44 — *“But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you be sons of your Father in heaven.”*

Luke 6:27-28 — *Jesus said: “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”*

- F. When studying and applying this Attitude, it is important to realize that some of the times you have been hurt by others are based upon your own perceptions and expectations. The *natural man* is selfish and self-centered. The actions and words of those who you’ve hurt, and have hurt you, are the by-product of selfishness. It is also *natural* to have *self-centered expectations* of others who are not able, inclined, or willing to do or say what would satisfy our expectations, even if they are aware of our expectations. We have made, and do make, excuses for our shortcomings — our failure to meet the expectations of others.

Isaiah 6:5 — *For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips ...*

- G. We must be willing to be merciful, not vengeful!

Matthew 7:1-5 — Jesus said: *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.*

²*For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

³*Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s [mother’s, father’s, husband’s, wife’s] eye and pay not attention to the plank in your own eye?*

⁴*How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye.*

⁵*You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

- H. What would Jesus do? What did He do for you? Follow His example!

II. APPLICATION:

- A. From your Spirit-led self-examination in Attitude 4, you will find that there are many people who have hurt you deeply.
1. To hold onto our hurt, pain and unforgiveness will cause our attitudes, our mind to not reflect the attitude and mind of Christ.
 2. In fact, to hold onto the sin of unforgiveness results in resentment, anger, bitterness and hatred, is not only sinful, but blocks God’s healing work in us; and blocks the healing of relationships.
 3. The enemy and our sin nature can and will use these feelings (emotions), attitudes and behaviors (sins) to obstruct our spiritual growth, and restoration of relationships with family and friends.
 4. We must rid ourselves of these poisons.

B. Scriptures in Matthew dealing with forgiveness:

1. **Matthew 6:12** — The Lord’s Prayer says: *“Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.”*

Debts (trespasses) are sins. This model prayer implies a daily act of asking for forgiveness of our sins from our Heavenly Father. *As we also have forgiven* implies an obligation to forgive; it implies we should have already forgiven anyone who has sinned against us before we pray.

2. **Matthew 6:14-15** — *Jesus said: “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*
3. **Matthew 18:21-22** — *Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”*

In the original Greek, it really says that we should continually forgive our brother just as God continually forgives us our sins.

C. Blaming others, murmuring and complaining about others, is sinning against God, for He created them also. He loves them. He knows whether they will be healed and saved at some future date — we do not know. God tells us to love even our enemies and pray for them. We must obey.

D. As we go through our spiritual examination, we should ask forgiveness for the sin of unforgiveness, as well as any other sins we learn about ourselves as a result of our self-examination.

1. **I John 1:9** — *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*
2. Confessing, being forgiven, and forgiving sins of others against us, cleanses, purges and purifies us from all unrighteousness — producing healing — causing us to become more and more like Jesus.

E. We should not carry any sin around with us for any time at all. If we confess it to God and to a brother or sister, the enemy cannot use it against us.

1. Carrying sin or unforgiveness produces guilt, shame and negative attitudes.
2. The enemy will use guilt, shame and unforgiveness to cause disastrous relationship problems.

F. God can cleanse the heart from ALL unrighteousness.

Mark 7:20-23 — *“What comes out of a man is what makes him unclean. For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean.”*

G. As we continue to *“hunger and thirst for righteousness,”* we will repent (turn from) and confess our past sins as the Holy Spirit brings them to mind.

- H. We may discover that our heart harbors wrong attitudes that continue to resurface, even after we have repented and received forgiveness. Bring these attitudes and behaviors out in the open, and allow others to pray for your victory.

James 5:16 — *“Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”*

I. ***“Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.”***

1. Again, we are being filled — this time with mercy. This “mercy” is not just possessed of pity, but is *actively* compassionate and merciful:
 - a. *Active*, as the Father who gave His only begotten Son;
 - b. *Active*, as the Son who gave His life for us;
 - c. *Active*, as the good Samaritan.
2. As God has forgiven us and always has mercy toward us, Jesus expects us to have an attitude of compassion and mercy toward all men — even our enemies.
3. We receive the mercy of God’s forgiveness! We must be merciful and forgive those who have harmed us.

OR

May God richly bless you as you choose to live His Way!

ATTITUDE 6 • “Obedient”

*Jesus said: “Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.”
Matthew 5:8*

I desire to live under the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit — day by day.

“Pure in heart” is not sinlessness, but the truth within. It means a single heart, not divided between God and the world.

*“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”
1 John 1:8-9 NIV*

*“Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.
7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.
10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.
Psalm 51:6-13 NIV*

I. PURPOSE:

- A. With this attitude we persuade the people to be filled with the Spirit *every* day and walk in obedience to God.
- B. How is obedience accomplished? With an Attitude of total surrender to God’s will and guidance of the Holy Spirit — study and meditation of the Word, fellowship with the Lord through prayer, fellowship with Christians, church worship and teaching (hearing the Word), home fellowships, ministry to others, etc., etc., etc. If any one of these activities seems boring or unimportant to us, our hearts need further purification by God or we will grow weaker rather than stronger.

When we are weak spiritually, we’re easily tempted by the world, our fleshly desires and the enemy. The enemy is always prowling around like a lion ready to devour us. We must devour the Word to stay alive IN Christ.

I Peter 5:8 — *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*

- C. The pure in heart are obedient to God’s Word because they love Him, and now live to *please* Him.

Matthew 22:37-40 — *“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.’”*

I Timothy 1:5 — *“The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”*

- D. We are free from the contamination of sin, free to live without divided interests or loyalties.
- E. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart. The heart must be pure, honest, uncorrupted.

Psalms 24:3-5 — *“Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior.”*

- F. Here is the most comprehensive comfort of the blessed: *They shall see God.*

The happiness of seeing God is promised to those, and only those, who are pure in heart. None but the pure are capable of seeing God, nor would it be a blessing to the impure. What pleasure could an unsanctified soul take in the vision of a holy God? When our minds, motives, and principles are pure, we seek not only to have the external actions correct, but we desire to be holy in heart, and so we are. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart.

- G. An attitude of obedience will lead us into obedience to God with a pure and eager heart.

II. APPLICATION:

- A. “Guidance” does not just mean where to go, what to do and what to say but, more importantly, guided into the righteous life of Christ Jesus.
 - 1. The righteous life in Christ is the manifestation of the Christian characteristics and conduct found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6, and 7).
 - 2. One of the Holy Spirit’s functions is to mold or conform us into the image and likeness of Jesus Himself, i.e., His attitudes and conduct.
 - 3. **THIS IS OUR SANCTIFICATION PROCESS!**
- B. There are many functions of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. **HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES US.**

John 16:13 — *Jesus said: “When He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.”*

- a. We know that TRUTH is:
 - 1) Jesus, the way, the truth, the life: knowledge of Jesus-God.
 - 2) God's Word is truth: We live by the Word of God which sanctifies us and teaches us all things of God and righteous living.
- b. **John 17:17** KJV — *Jesus said: "Sanctify them through thy truth; Thy Word is truth."*
- c. **Deuteronomy 8:3** KJV — *“. . . that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."*
- d. Our spiritual life is sustained by the Word of God and His Holy Spirit.
- e. Knowing His Word, we know His way of life for us, His will for our lives.
- f. Reading the Word of God daily then leads to the abundant, victorious Christian life.
- g. **Psalms 73:24** KJV — *"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory."*

2. **HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US.**

Romans 8:13-14 — *"For if you live according to the sinful nature you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."* (And sons usually see their father, right?)

3. **HOLY SPIRIT HELPS US.**

Romans 8:26 — *"In the same way He helps us in our weaknesses."*

4. **HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES US.**

John 14:26 KJV — *Jesus said: "The comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you."*

- C. It is by the supernatural functions of the Holy Spirit indwelling — His working in our lives — that the Lord has designed a way to give us His power over sin and the power to have life. The Holy Spirit guides us, leads us, helps us, and teaches us the righteousness of Christ Jesus.
 - 1. To help in our weaknesses, infirmities and with temptations of this world. He helps to mature us spiritually.
 - 2. The KEY is to feed the Spirit through the Word, prayer and fellowship — not to feed the flesh.

3. Billy Graham tells the story about an Eskimo and his dogs. He trained the dogs to fight each other, and took them into town to fight every Saturday. Whichever dog he bet on, won. His friends asked him how he always knew which dog would win. He said, “the dog I feed during the week always wins.”
 4. How do you feed your spirit?
 5. What is your spiritual program? Do you have one?
 6. God is Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Are you born of the Spirit?
 7. Why not commit now to:
 - a. The Word?
 - b. Prayer?
 - c. Fellowship?
 - d. Church?
 - e. *The Most Excellent Way* meetings?
- D. How do we follow through on our commitments? Surely not under our own power, right? But by the power of the Holy Spirit:

Zechariah 6:6b — *“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.*”

1. **Ephesians 5:18** — *“Do not get drunk with wine which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit.”*
2. In the original language “be filled“ is a commandment. We are to be filled and we are responsible for being filled continuously.
3. “Day by day” we need to ask God to fill us with His Spirit to empower us to live the abundant life by His power, not our own. Without this daily empowering, we:
 - a. Doubt our ability to cope;
 - b. Doubt our ability to have an abundant, fulfilling life;
 - c. Become dissatisfied and discontent with our circumstances, and with others around us;
 - d. Become weak and subject to the temptations of this world;
 - e. Are easy prey for the enemy;
 - f. Fall into sin, which can separate us from life in the Spirit.

E. ***“Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.”***

What does *pure* mean? *Pure* from the Greek implies *cleansed, chaste, clean*.

F. Why is Jesus concerned with your heart?

1. The Christian walk of faith is not only a matter of doctrine, or understanding, or intellect — it is related to the condition of our heart.
2. Scripturally, the heart is the sum total of the man — the center of his being, consisting of his intellect or mind, memories, knowledge, the heart-emotions, feelings, and volition or will.
3. **Luke 6:45; Matthew 12:24** KJV — *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”*
4. Our sin nature — emanating from the heart — must be cleansed, purged and purified. This work is done by the Holy Spirit by and through our hearing, reading the Word (sanctification).
John 17:17 — *“Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.”*
5. The heart, without our (head) knowledge, can justify and rationalize wrong attitudes and behavior.
6. The heart is wicked because of the fall, because of our “inherited” sin nature. It must be sanctified by the Word and by the Holy Spirit.
7. The Word sanctifies: **Proverbs 28:9** — *“If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law [God’s Word], even his prayers are detestable.”*

G. Purify then implies cleansed, without hypocrisy. It means we have an undivided love which regards God as our highest good, and which is primarily concerned with loving God, and secondarily loving others (the two greatest commandments).

1. The *pure in heart* will *see God* implies a pictorial scene, indicating the bliss of fellowship with God in His kingdom. We may also *see* God working in our lives. We may even *see* our lives and world we live in with *godly* insight.
As Jesus presents this Beatitude, we may justly *see* God in Christ if we choose to follow Him and believe His words.
2. If we are living day-by-day in the Spirit, then we are being guided, led, taught, and sanctified (made holy) by the Spirit. We are being set apart from the world and our fleshly desires unto God.
3. We are becoming stronger in order to resist sin, evil, becoming more pure in heart, and more like Christ. Therefore, we are happier and blessed by our condition before God — being filled with His purity of emotion, thought and action.

- H. DEVELOPING NEW HABITS. We have the responsibility and choices to make. Do we yield to the sin nature or the Spirit of God?
1. We cannot blame the old man, our sin nature or the devil.
 2. We must accept that we are responsible for our heart — we will reap what we sow!
 3. IT'S ABOUT CHOICES!
 4. **Romans 14:17** KJV — *“For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”*
- I. Seek the nine FRUITS of the SPIRIT (*Galations 5:22*) by the power of the Holy Spirit:
1. LOVE
 2. JOY
 3. PEACE
 4. PATIENCE
 5. KINDNESS
 6. GOODNESS
 7. FAITHFULNESS
 8. GENTLENESS
 9. SELF-CONTROL



May God richly bless you as you choose to live His Way!

ATTITUDE 7 • “Reconciliation”

*Jesus said: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”
Matthew 5:9*

I ask forgiveness from all those I have hurt or dealt with unfairly.

*“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy;
without holiness no one will see the Lord.
See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root
grows up to cause trouble and defile many.
Hebrews 12:14-15 NIV*

I. PURPOSE

- A. **Matthew 5:23-24** — *Jesus said: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”*
- B. We must reconcile with anyone we know has something against us. This brings peace, and it is our duty as children of God.
- C. Once we make a list of the people who we know have something against us and seek them out to make amends or restitution, and to receive their forgiveness, we begin to experience the joy of being freed from the bondage of past sins. The bondage of guilt and shame from past actions affects our present attitudes toward others.
- D. Children of God are indeed new creatures — the old is past and the new has come — but that does not mean we will not suffer the consequences of broken relationships of the past. Because we are children of God, we can be *filled* with the peacemaker’s attitude and *take the action* that will please God.
- E. Webster’s dictionary defines “peacemaker” as one who makes peace, especially by *reconciling parties at variance* with one another.

Your obedience to reconcile with those you hurt or dealt with unfairly may be an influence that may cause them to receive Christ as their Savior — if not immediately, hopefully eventually.

II. APPLICATION:

- A. A peacemaker’s first responsibility is to reconcile man to God.

II Corinthians 5:18-19 — *“All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”*

- B. If we do a thorough self-examination, we will find we have hurt people, sinned against them even as they have sinned against us.
1. We may find that because of our resentments, bitterness, anger and hatred toward those who hurt us — we had in turn hurt them, and some did not even know they had hurt us.
 2. Example: We need to become peacemakers by asking them to forgive us for our resentment and anger towards them (which was reflected in the way we spoke to them and treated them).
- C. It makes no difference if they forgive us or not.
- D. The action develops humility within us, the opposite of pride — mercy relieves us of guilt.
- E. We would not — should not — seek forgiveness if the situation would only cause more damage, more hurt.
- Example: Admitting adultery to our spouse may cause unnecessary pain. God’s forgiveness and our confession to someone we can trust is sufficient in this case. God does not want us to hurt ANYONE! Always seek God’s will through prayer in each situation.
- F. By seeking peace and forgiveness, we once again defeat Satan by “creating” an atmosphere of peace and love, for he wants to use unforgiveness against us, destroying our relationships.
- G. The issue is settled, completed, cleansed. (The incident may be remembered, but the painful feelings will be forgotten, much the same as broken bones or childbirth pains.)
- H. **Matthew 5:23-24** — *Jesus said: “. . . if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there at the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”*
- I. We make a list of offenses by name of the person, and cross them off the list as we make peace with them.
- J. **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.”**

James 3:18 — *Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*

Romans 12:17-18 — *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.*

1 Peter 3:8-12 — *“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.*

⁹*Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*

¹⁰*For, ‘Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.*

¹¹*He must run from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.*

¹²*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*

1. There it is! We will be blessed (happy) and relieved if we make peace. We will experience peacefulness — God’s peace.
 2. Webster’s Dictionary defines “peacemaker“ as “one who makes peace, especially by reconciling parties at variance.”
- K. The peacemaker is a person who does not talk about people when they are offensive and difficult. He doesn’t speculate about why people are the way they are — he knows they are still being governed by the god of this world.
- L. Here again God is filling us with a peace-making heart. We become willing to go out of our way for the benefit of others in obedience to Jesus. We choose to do the right thing.
1. The peacemaker is ACTIVE, not only making peace between men and between groups (families), but making peace between God and man by bringing men to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.
 2. We become like the God of Peace and the Prince of Peace, therefore God’s children of Peace.
 3. Now you are in the position to help others. You will go out of your way to help reconcile others to God and to one another.
- M. Five things a peacemaker is NOT:
1. *Not* easy going — “live and let live.”
 2. *Not* promoting peace at any price.
 3. *Not* going out of his way to avoid trouble.
 4. *Not* an appeaser (people pleaser).
 5. *Not* satisfied with the status quo.
- N. Peacemakers are people who are done with self interest. Jesus gave up us His place in heaven, His diety, to come in the form of man. He humbled Himself to make peace between God and man, even to death on the cross.



May God richly bless you as you choose to live His Way!

ATTITUDE 8 • “Faith”

Jesus said: “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:10

I trust in the power of Jesus Christ when I face hardships and trials.

I. PURPOSE:

- A. Faith and trust are closely related. God will test us with hardships and trials that we may gain more faith in Him, to help us through other circumstances in this world. If we were not tested from time to time, would we always seek Him? In our opinion, no. We believe we need to be tested to stay close to Him and grow spiritually mature.
- B. The Bible says the righteous will *live by faith*, and Hebrews 11:6 says “*and without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.*”
- C. When we believe God and what He says in His word, He will meet our every need that pleases Him. He rewards us for our *faith* in different ways, i.e., blessings, spiritual peace and joy, materially, and/or physical, mental, emotional healing.
- D. To increase our *faith* we need to pray for more. God will supply *all our needs* when we *trust* Him to do so.
- E. *Faith* comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Again, we want to implant in those who attend our meetings that they need to stay in the Word and *grow in faith*.

Romans 10:17 — “*Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*”

Hebrews 11:1 Amplified — “*Now faith is the assurance [the confirmation, the title deed] of the things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality; perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses.*”

II. APPLICATION:

- A. Trust and faith in Jesus Christ to whom God gave all power and control is absolutely necessary to lead a victorious life.
 - 1. **Matthew 28:18** KJV — “*And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, ‘all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.’*”
 - 2. **I Peter 3:22** KJV — “*Who is gone into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him.*”

3. **Colossians 2:9-10** — “. . . for in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”
- B. What is the *power*? Do we have this power? If so, how can we make use of it?
1. **John 1:1-2** — “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.*”

This is the same power that Jesus had and used to create the universe.
 2. The same power as in the Resurrection:

Ephesians 1:17-23 KJV — “*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him:*
¹⁸*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.*
¹⁹*And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power,*
²⁰*Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places,*
²¹*Far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but in that which is to come;*
²²*And hath put all things under His feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*
²³*Which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.*”
 3. If the Spirit of Christ lives in us, then His power is within us.
 4. If we walk in the Spirit, He empowers us — gives us the power in accordance with His will — to say no to sin, to use the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, and to be bold in witnessing.
- C. When Jesus died on the cross, we died with Him to sin. When He rose, we rose as a new creation with the Spirit of God in us who believe.
1. We have the power of God in us who we can ask to help us to overcome trials and when we are tempted to use, drink, smoke, look at pornography, gamble, or any other sinful behavior.

I Corinthians 10:13 — “*No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*”
 2. God empowers us. His power strengthens us, guides us, helps us to live a victorious life for Him and others.

3. We limit God's power in our lives when we dwell on and in ourselves, instead of on and in Him; and by our lack of knowledge of His Word, wherein He illuminates *His* way of life for us: Love, Joy, Peace, Happiness . . .
4. **Jeremiah 29:11-13** — *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”*
5. Are you in the world or *in* Christ? Is Christ on the throne and in control of your life? Or are you on the throne of your out-of-control life?



May God richly bless you as you choose to live His Way!

ATTITUDE 9 • “Perseverance”

Jesus said: “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.”
Matthew 5:11-12

I stand firm in my faith that Jesus is in control of all things.

I. PURPOSE:

- A. We must instruct those the Lord leads to our meetings that as they grow in faith and step out to share their faith with others, they may be persecuted, laughed at, rejected, sworn at, etc. It will never be as much, however, as Jesus Christ endured for our sake.
- B. There are three principles with regard to the Christian that we need to see in this statement by our Lord (Matthew 5:11-12):

1. Believers are unlike everyone else who are not Christian.

Matthew 10:34 — *Jesus said: “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”*

- a. The unbeliever proves the point by persecuting Christians.
- b. Jesus was the most persecuted of all. He was different and so are we (you).

2. The Christian’s life is controlled and dominated (governed) by Christ.

- a. If we are loyal to Christ, we do everything for Christ’s sake — not for our own sakes.

- b. We live a life of righteousness.

- c. We allow Jesus to live His life in us as Paul said:

Galations 2:20 — *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”*

Philippians 1:21 — *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*

- d. I am not my own; I have been bought with a price.

- C. Your life should be controlled by thoughts of heaven and of the world to come.

1. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted the prophets before you.

2. There's the difference. Unbelievers never want to look at what is hereafter. They live for today, pleasure today, and for self only.
3. The Christian thinks about what is to come, the glory to come:

Romans 14:17 — *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit . . .*

II. APPLICATION:

- A. As Christians mature year to year, they usually increase in faith that Jesus is sufficient to take care of all their needs.

Hebrews 11:6 — *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.*

- B. He wants us to ask Him to increase our faith when we do not have enough to deal with certain trials or problems. Faith is essential in prayer:

James 1:5 — *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.*

God loves you and me just the way we are, but also enough to help us increase our faith and trust in Him. Pray for more faith!

- C. God is all powerful. He who raised the dead and created all things is sufficient for our momentary problems.

1. The Lord strengthens us and empowers us to look beyond the persecution to our reward in heaven. An eternal perspective and attitude of perseverance will bring peace in the midst of persecution.

James 1:12 — *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

Isaiah 41:10 — *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Remember, our righteous Lord Jesus sits at the right hand of God interceding for us.

2. God will keep us so that we can endure and complete the race we are running. As he persevered, He will empower us to persevere if we keep our eyes on Him.

Hebrews 12:1 — *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

I John 5:4 KJV — *For everyone born of God overcometh the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*

D. ***“Blessed are you when people insult you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me . . .”***

1. Mature Christians anticipate and welcome persecution as a sign that they indeed are Christian.

Matthew 10:22 — *All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.*

2. As we learn to walk as Christ walked, with His mind and attitudes, we begin to live our faith in Him openly, and we will begin to share that faith.

Philippians 2:5-7 KJV — *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.*

3. When we “get out of the pew” and actively serve God and man, we can expect persecution. But, HE WILL NEVER LEAVE US NOR FORSAKE US!
4. When we are filled with Him, we are willing to be persecuted and to rejoice in it as were the disciples.



May God richly bless you as you choose to live His Way!

ATTITUDE 10 • “Loving Servant”

Jesus said: “You ARE the salt of the earth.

But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?

You ARE the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.

Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to every one in the house.

*In the same way, let your light shine before men,
that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven.”*

Matthew 5:13-16

**As a new creation in Christ, I share with others the Good News
of a risen Savior, who makes His people whole.**

There are two pictures of the Christian: salt and the light. Salt speaks of inward character that influences a decaying world; light speaks of the outward testimony of good works that points to God. Our task is to keep our lives pure that we might “salt” this earth and hold back corruption so that the Gospel can get out. Our good works must accompany our dedicated lives as we let our lights shine.

I. PURPOSE:

- A. As the salt and light, we are Christ’s representatives on earth. We are His hands, His feet, and His voice, to bring the Good News of salvation and new life. If we are loving others more than ourselves, then our salt will have savor and preservative value, and our light will cause others to see Jesus in us.
- B. We should encourage very new Christians to think about their *new life* experiences as possible testimonies of the goodness of God. New believers are enthusiastic about sharing their faith, therefore, they should be encouraged to reinforce their enthusiasm with deeper knowledge and understanding of God’s Word. Provide information about resources within your church or organization, and *The Most Excellent Way*, which will help disciple them.
- C. God has given us all the *great commission*, Matthew 28:18-20. By His design, *The Most Excellent Way* meeting is a training place for evangelism.

Matthew 28:18-20 — “Then Jesus came to them and said,

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.

¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely I will be with you always, to the every end of the age.”

- D. When a *loving attitude* and *servant attitude* are clearly present in those attending meetings, they are good candidates for your ministry team. Everyone interested in serving the Lord, must be willing to learn more and more about Him — and their personal responsibilities regarding ministry. If we do not properly prepare those God sends, we will have to answer to Him.

II. APPLICATION

A. As a new creation in Christ, you **ARE** salt and light — present tense — not tomorrow or maybe someday — **NOW!**

1. Think it! Then . . .
2. Do it!
3. Feel it!

B. As a Christian, you are a bond slave of Jesus Christ and because you love Him with all your heart, and all your mind, and all your soul and all your strength, you will *do* His Word!

James 1:22-25 — *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

²³*Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror*

²⁴*and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.*

²⁵*But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.”*

C. We are commanded by Jesus to go into all the world and share the good news of a risen Savior and what He has done for us. We need to be willing to share with others what we have learned, how we have changed and what action we have chosen to take.

D. Jesus is the Light within us, and God’s Word the Salt. Let’s use them in our lives to honor our Lord and to bring His love to others.

E. **Psalm 1** —

¹*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.*

²*But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

³*He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*

⁴*Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.*

⁵*Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*

⁶*For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”*

F. We are what we *do*! Let us do what we *are*! *Be* salt and light!



May God richly bless you as you choose to live His Way!

Guide for Preparing Your Personal Testimony

*“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.
Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you
to give the reason for the hope that you have.
But do this with gentleness and respect, . . .”
I Peter 3:15*

1. Pray before you begin writing. Ask God to give you the right words and approach. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide you. This is as much God’s story as it is yours.
2. Follow a three-part outline:
 - a. Your life BEFORE knowing Christ.
 - b. HOW you came to Christ (be specific).
 - c. Your life AFTER receiving Christ (changes He has made in your life; what He means to you now).
3. Give your testimony a theme. Being freed from drugs and alcohol would be appropriate for those ministering in *The Most Excellent Way*.
4. Begin with an interesting, attention-getting sentence.
5. Close with a good conclusion.
6. Help others identify with you through past and present addiction experiences.
7. Use Scripture or a key verse: **John 14:6** — *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*
8. Avoid using the following in your message:
 - a. Negative statements about people and organizations.
 - b. References to religious denominations.
 - c. Preaching at people — this is a testimony, not a sermon.
 - d. Words that are confusing to unbelievers, such as *saved, born again, sanctified ...* (If you must use this type of word, be sure it is clearly explained.)
9. Build a flexible testimony so that you can share it in a group situation or one-on-one. A one-minute, three-minute and five-minute testimony will meet most situations.
10. Provide details so that someone else would know how to trust Christ after hearing or reading your testimony. It is important that Jesus be lifted up as the only way to eternal life.
11. Now you’re read to prepare your story. Use the outline below to quickly list the major points as the Spirit brings them to mind. When you write it out in more detail, keep it between 700 to 1000 words so you can stay within three to five minutes when you give it orally:

- a. My life before I trusted Jesus:
- b. How I came to Christ (be specific — this area needs the most detail)
- c. My life after I trusted Christ (changes He has made in my life, what He means to me now . . .)

Galatians 2:20 — *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*



God’s Model Testimony from His Word:

Careful organization helps us present an effective testimony. With guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, we can write and speak our personal testimony in a clear and interesting way. The purpose of a testimony is to point an unbeliever toward God through Jesus Christ. And He has provided a model to guide us. Consider the apostle Paul’s testimony to King Agrippa.

The sequence of Paul’s story reflects the situation he was in (prison) and the people he was speaking to (his judges). If your story is written first and the key points memorized, you will always be prepared and flexible to present your testimony in any situation!

1. Begin Respectfully

Acts 26:2-3 — *“King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, And especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.”*

Paul showed King Agrippa respect, and acknowledged the knowledge they shared about Jewish tradition. Because we are former addicts and alcoholics, we might say: “You and I have a lot in common — I was once an alcoholic.”

2. Consider the “Good” Part of Your Old Life

Acts 26:4-8 — *“The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?”*

Paul told how he was admired for his religious practices, knowing his listeners knew of his reputation. We may have been able to function in our addiction — attend school, hold a job, even attended church. We may have become clean and sober by attending A.A. meetings. If there are any good points from a worldly perspective about your old life, mention them briefly.

3. Include a Little of the “Bad” Part of Your Old Life

Acts 26:9-11 — *“I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*

And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.”

“I thought I had it all together until the bottom dropped out of my life.” Mention some specific things that describe your old life.

4. Tell How You Became a Believer

Acts 26:12-15 — *“On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.*

About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions.

We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied.”

Don’t think your own story is dull compared to Paul’s. Your conversion is as much a miracle — it’s just as important to God. Your testimony doesn’t have to be exciting, just real. Use details about your personal transaction with God.

5. Explain Changes in Your Life

Acts 26:16-18 — *[Jesus said:] “Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.*

I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them

To open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God,

so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”

Acts 26:19-22 — *“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.*

First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also,

I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.

But I have had God’s help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike.

I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—”

Describe the most striking change in your life, as Paul did — he stopped persecuting Christians and became one. Show the effects of your being *born again*. Be realistic. Don’t imply that faith in Jesus ends life’s problems — rather that He enables you to live through problems with peace and confidence.

6. Include the Good News

Acts 26:23-26 — *“That the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to His own people and to the Gentiles.*

At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. ‘You are out of your mind, Paul!’ he shouted.

‘Your great learning is driving you insane.’

‘I am not insane, most excellent Festus,’ Paul replied. ‘What I am saying is true and reasonable.

The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner.’”

Christ's story, His death for our sins and His resurrection, must be interwoven into your story. Without Jesus, would your story be worth telling? Emphasize that your life is different because Christ is now your Lord and Savior.

7. Your Personal Appeal

Acts 26:27-29 — “*King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.*’
Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?’
Paul replied, ‘Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.’”

Use your listener's name and ask a question, such as: “_____, have you ever thought of Jesus in this personal way?”

Close your testimony with your favorite Scripture.



*May God richly bless you as you choose to share with others
the Good News of a risen Savior who has made you whole!*

PART VII**“MINISTERING TO SPOUSES OF ADDICTED INDIVIDUALS”****Christianity and *Codependency*****1. Christianity and “Codependency:”**

- A. Since “codependency” was originally coined to describe family members whose lives were negatively affected by an alcoholic spouse or parent, the issue needs to be addressed by this ministry — but only in a way that will cause the self-identified codependent to see the need for change in attitude — *not* as an acceptable description of a Christian.
- B. “The Most Excellent Way” does not embrace “codependency” as an acceptable description for *Christians* experiencing problems resulting from painful relationships, i.e., addicted spouses, drunkard parents.
- C. The definitions of “codependency” and “idolatry” are too similar to be overlooked or ignored.
 - 1) **Codependency:** (1) adjective, psychologically influenced or controlled by, reliant on, or needing another who is addicted to alcohol, drugs, etc., mutually dependent. (Webster’s New World College Dictionary, 1997.)
 - a) “Codependents” worship the god of self-will.
 - b) Attached and devoted to self.
 - c) Focus on failure of another to meet their *own* expectations.
 - d) The Christian’s motivation should be obedience to Christ’s commandment to love one another.
 - 2) **Idolatry:** (1) the worship of a physical object as a god; (2) immoderate attachment or devotion to something. (Webster’s Dictionary.)
- D. Abnormal (intense) self-centeredness is the common characteristic of drug addicted individuals, *and* “codependents.”

2. Biblical perspective of “Codependency”

- A. “Codependency” began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden
 - 1) Eve desired to be “like God” — independent and in control.
 - 2) Eve blamed the serpent.
 - 3) Adam blamed God.
 - a) They acknowledged no responsibility for their sin.

B. God cursed Adam and Eve for their disobedience — their excuses and blameshifting did not alter the consequences of their disobedience.

1) **Adam’s curse:**

Genesis 3:17b-19-a — *“Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plant of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground . . .”*

- a) Resulting in men having the overwhelming responsibility to provide for themselves and their families.
- b) Excuses and blameshifting will not alter (change) man’s mate.
- c) He is cursed with the psychological need to rule *without* God’s guidance.

2) **Eve’s curse:**

Genesis 3:16 — *“I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your **desire** will be for your husband, and **he will rule over you.**”*

(Physical and mental/emotional/psychological curse)

- a) Definition of DESIRE: The Hebrew word (*tesh-oo-kaw*; Strong’s 8669) translated *desire* was used only twice in the Word: “A sense of stretching out after; a longing:—*desire*” (as a wave stretching out and over the shore to pound it and control it). The Hebrew root word (*shook*; Strong’s 7783) means to run after or run over, i.e. overflow (like an ocean wave overflowing you.)
- b) The feminist movement (battle of the sexes) began in the Garden. “I am woman, hear me roar!” “God may think my husband will rule over me, but I’ll show Him!”
- c) No one *naturally* wants to be ruled over.
- d) **Genesis 4:7** — *“If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; **it desires to have you, but you must master it.**” **Desire is pictured here as a predatory animal.***
- e) Living outside the Will of God leaves us open to spiritual danger:

I Peter 5:8 — “*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*”

- C. The New Testament’s example of the modern-day attitude of “codependents” is found in Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son:

Luke 15:25-31 — “*Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.*

²⁶*So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on.*

²⁷*‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’*

²⁸*The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.*

²⁹*But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.*

³⁰*But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’*

³¹*‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.’”*

- 1) “Not fair!” Poor me! Self-pity.
 - 2) “He’s the bad guy, yet he gets the special attention.”
 - 3) “It’s not enough that you’ve always been here for me and met all my needs, Dad!”
- D. **God is not enough** for the practicing addict and alcoholic, nor is He *enough* for the “codependent”! They are obsessed with the creation rather than choosing obedience to the Creator. His love, grace and provision are circumvented by self-will.
- E. The Christian man or women who embraces the victim mentality of “codependency” is validating and exhibiting the rebellious, self-centered attitude of Adam, Eve, Cain and the prodigal’s brother.

3. Sinful Characteristics of “Codependency”

- A. The following characteristics of “codependency” are found in secular and Christian self-help, 12-step recovery publications and programs. For a Christian to justify and practice these characteristics as “normal” attitudes and behavior is to disregard or, even worse, reject God’s solutions for personal problems.
- 1) Compulsion to rescue
 - 2) Compulsion to control others
 - 3) Need to please
 - 4) Perfectionism
 - 5) Hurt
 - 6) Anger

- 7) Guilt
- 8) Blaming others
- 9) Jealousy
- 10) Fear
- 11) Withdrawal
- 12) Gossiping
- 13) Self-pity
- 14) Retaliation
- 15) Lying
- 16) Unforgiveness
- 17) Etc., etc., etc.

- B. How do these characteristics compare with Jesus' description of the Christian's attitudes? The Beatitudes? The Sermon on the Mount?
- C. What blessings does a person receive by being "codependent"? (NONE! God blesses obedience!)

4. JESUS IS THE CURE FOR SIN

- A. "Codependents" are sinners in need of a Savior.
- B. Drug addicts are sinners in need of a Savior.
- C. Alcoholics are sinners in need of a Savior.

5. MINISTERING TO "CODEPENDENTS"

- A. "The Most Excellent Way" is love. Love them, just as you do the drunk and addict! Help them see, understand, and practice the true identity they possess because of Jesus.
- B. Lovingly show them Biblical truth.
- C. Provide for their immediate needs, when appropriate, to help alleviate hardship brought about by the irresponsible addict they depend on.
- D. Encourage them to strengthen their relationship with Jesus by dying to self, and living to please Him. See "**Biblical Principles for Families and Friends**," doing the Word.
- E. Make them accountable for their sinful attitudes and behaviors — don't allow yourself to encourage their self-pity by allowing them to gossip, blameshift, and justify themselves.
- F. Encourage them to learn how to PUT OFF THE OLD and PUT ON THE NEW.
Encourage them to *be* what they are: Christians!
- G. Support their decision to stay with, or separate from, the addict/alcoholic.

- H. **Ephesians 4:22-27** — “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
²³And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
²⁴And that ye put on the new man [the new woman], which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.
²⁵Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.
²⁶Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:
²⁷Neither give place to the devil.”

Ephesians 4:29 — “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

Ephesians 4:31-32 — “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

- I. **Allow God to be enough** during the restoration process:

Isaiah 54:4-5 — “Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of our youth [immaturity] and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood [abandonment].

For your Maker is your husband—LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.”

- J. Recommend: “MY HUSBAND, MY MAKER” by Sharon Reis — best book so far for Christians who believe they are victims of their husband’s addiction. Mrs. Reis puts living with an addict—before and after—into a Biblical perspective. ♥

PART VII

“MINISTERING TO SPOUSES OF ALCOHOLICS AND ADDICTS”

A Biblical Perspective

The Most Excellent Way to minister to addicts and alcoholics is to also minister to their family members — especially the wives and husbands, children and parents. We must help the family members to trust God for their addicted love one, and give them Biblical tools to use to repair their trying relationships.

The world and the devil encourage them to believe they are victims of the chemically dependent loved one, rather than being equally responsible for their own motives, attitudes, and actions. “Codependency” is the label the world has given to those whose lives have been affected by the addiction of a loved one. The world calls addiction a disease — “codependency” is also considered a disease. *Both conditions are the result of addiction to sin.* Each condition centers on satisfying self rather than pleasing God.

When a Christian says he or she is “codependent” it is an admission of spiritual immaturity. This study is intended to help those ministering in *The Most Excellent Way* to help Christian family members to learn to minister to their loved one. As they apply Biblical truth to their own lives, their witness will be a meaningful example of the power and love of God.

As Believers, we have the unique opportunity to help reconcile families to the Lord (if unbelievers) or help restore them to a lives of peace, joy and righteousness (if believers).

II Corinthians 5:14-20 — *“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.*

¹⁵*And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.*

¹⁶*So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.*

¹⁷***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!***

¹⁸*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:*

¹⁹*That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

²⁰*We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”*

We have an opportunity to honor God as we search for solutions to the life-controlling problem of bondage to alcohol and drugs of someone we care about. **We should be clear about our motives before we act. Christ’s love should control our motives — Christ died for all of us. We should no longer live to please ourselves; we are to spend our lives pleasing Christ who died and rose again for us.**

Christians are brand new people on the inside. The Holy Spirit gives us new life, and we are not the

same anymore. We are not reformed, rehabilitated, recovered, or re-educated — we are *new* creations, living in union with Christ. We are not merely turning over a new leaf, we are living a new life under a new Master, who is sanctifying us day by day.

Galations 5:13-15 — “*You, my brothers [and sisters], were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*”

The body of Christ — the church — functions only when the members work together for the common good. If we think of our immediate family and circle of friends as a unique church — our *family church* — the Bible’s principles will become more personal. If we begin to think of our unbelieving spouse, child, friend or parent as a *potential brother or sister in Christ*, we will ultimately share a much more fulfilling relationship.



***“The Addictive Behavior of Others Gives Us the Opportunity
to Examine Ourselves in the Light of God’s Word”***

- 1. Before attempting to deal with the problems of another, we need to examine our own life before the Lord.**

Matthew 7:1-5 — *Jesus said: “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.*

²*For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

³*Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?*

⁴*How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?*

⁵*You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

Jesus tells us to examine our own motives and conduct instead of judging others. The traits that bother us in others are often habits we dislike in ourselves. Addicts and alcoholics are idolaters — their god is themselves — and they passionately serve their impotent god. Trying to change another’s behavior so that we can be happy is also self-serving.

Jesus’ statement “Do not judge” is against the kind of hypercritical, judgmental attitude that tears others down in order to build-up one’s self. It is not a blanket statement against all critical thinking, but a call to be *discerning* and not responding with negative motives and attitudes.

- 2. We are to be faithful doers of God's Word in all things, since our obedience to Him is based upon our love for Him, and not on another's behavior.**

James 1:25 — *“But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.”*

It is important to know what God’s Word says, but it is much more important to obey it. **We can measure the effectiveness of what we learn from Scripture by the effect it has on our behavior.**

John 14:15 — *Jesus said: “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”*

The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God within us, helping us live as God wants. By faith we can appropriate His power each day to obey. Jesus never promised that obeying Him would be easy. Hard work, however, can be rewarding if we value its results. The hard work and self-discipline of serving Christ is no burden to those who love Him.

3. We are to treat others in the same manner that we would like to be treated.

Matthew 7:12 — *Jesus said: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”*

In many religions, the *Golden Rule* is stated negatively: “Don’t do to others what you don’t want done to you.” Have you ever heard “Do unto others before they do unto you”? By stating it positively, Jesus made it more significant. It’s not as difficult to refrain from harming others as it is to take the initiative by doing something good for them — *especially* for an addict or alcoholic, right?

Following the Golden Rule should be based on God’s Will for someone, rather than doing something for another in order to make *ourselves feel* good. We must, again, clarify our motives before we act. What you do for an addict that he should do for himself, prevents him from experiencing the natural consequences of his actions?

4. We are to show Biblical love (*agapeo*) at all times, esteeming others as more important than ourselves.

God knows how difficult it is for us to show love to an addict or alcoholic who deliberately hurts us. Rather than focus our thoughts on loving the addict, we should focus on Jesus in order to avoid acting out our hurt, anger and hatred. If we do the right thing just because it’s right — *not do* the wrong thing just because it’s wrong — we will experience the delightful fruit of self-control.

I Corinthians 13:4-8a —

“Love is patient, love is kind.

It does not envy, it does not boast,

It is not proud. It is not rude,

It is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered,

It keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails.”

This love (*agape*) is not *natural*. It is *supernatural* and comes only by the Holy Spirit indwelling us. It is possible only if God helps us set aside our own desires and instincts, so we can give love *while expecting nothing in return*. The closer we come to Christ, the more love we will show to others.

Philippians 2:3-4 — *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*

5. We are to practice Biblical forgiveness, and to encourage Biblical reconciliation always.

Mark 11:25-26 — *Jesus said: “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. But if [you] do not forgive, neither will your Father, who is in heaven, forgive your trespasses.”*

Luke 17:3-5 — *Jesus said: “So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him. The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’”*

To rebuke does not mean to point out every sin we see; it means to bring sin to a person’s attention with the purpose of restoring him or her to God and to fellow humans. When you believe it is your task to rebuke another believer, check your attitudes before you speak. Do you love the person? Are you willing to forgive? Unless rebuke is tied to forgiveness, it will not help the sinning person. Rebuke in a loving manner, not in anger or frustration.

If the person is an unbeliever, your forgiveness may be more important to him than the Lord’s. Addicts and alcoholics are cunning and subtle manipulators, and may use your knowledge of and commitment to the Word to avoid responsibility for wrong behavior — “I’m sorry, please forgive me” can usually be interrupted “I’m sorry I got caught again.”

Rather than responding to sins against you with anger and recriminations, pray for self-control. And remember the sins against you are also against God — He will deal with the offender in His time. You need to get out of God’s way so He can convict and minister His way to the addicted person.

The disciples’ request was genuine — they wanted the faith necessary for such radical forgiveness. What is faith? It is total dependence on God, and *a willingness to do His will*. It is complete and humble obedience to God’s will, and readiness to do His will. It is trusting God to do what you cannot.

Hebrews 11:6 — *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*



**Addicted People Need to Experience Consequences for Their Actions.
They Do Not and Cannot Know the Full Effects of Their Behavior
in Their Own Lives or the Lives of Others**

6. **They are focused on gratifying their self-centered desires for the moment.
What are *you* focused on?**

I Corinthians 6:10 — *“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.”*

These are characteristics of unbelievers — the *natural* man. Christians come from old lives of one sinful behavior after another! If God can and did save us, surely He can and will save our loved ones. As Christians we may still struggle with evil desires, but we should not continue in these patterns. It is not unusual for “drunkards” to give into several of the sins listed above.

It is healthier for our walk with the Lord to acknowledge those sins He saved us from, rather than focusing on our loved one’s sins. If we rely on our relationship with the addict and alcohol for our personal joy and peace, we are “idolaters” — not the so-called “co-dependent” victims. We are “co-sinners.”

I Corinthians 6:11 — *“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.”*

The three aspects of God’s work are all part of our salvation: (1) our sins can be washed by away His spirit (“born again”); (2) we can be set apart for special use (“sanctification”); and (3) we can be pronounced not guilty (“justified”). God has provided the way — Jesus — for all of us. Even your beloved addict or alcoholic.

Galations 5:19-21 — *“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.”*

The obvious sins of the addict and alcoholic, which are often compounded, do not remove our responsibility to not rationalize away the sins we find ourselves doing — fits of rage, dissension, idolatry . . .

James 1:13-14 — *“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.”*

It is easy to blame others for our unhappiness, and for our evil (ungodly) thoughts and wrong attitudes and behaviors — (1) “It’s his fault,” (2) “I just can’t help it,” (3) “He pressured me into doing it,” (4) “I didn’t feel it was wrong,” etc.

As Christians with addicted loved ones, we often blame God for our problems. God does not *tempt* us into sin, but He will *test* us. He allows Satan to tempt us, however, in order to refine our faith and to grow in our dependence upon Christ. We can resist the temptation to sin by turning to God for strength and choosing to obey His Word.

- 7. Addicts and alcoholics are spiritually deluded and do not know the kind of person they really are. The addiction of a loved one may be the most difficult test of our time on earth — we must always look to and do the Word.**

James 1:22-24 — *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.”*

- 8. They cannot clearly discern between good and evil.**

I Corinthians 2:14-15 — *“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment.”*

Unbelievers cannot comprehend God, and they cannot grasp the concept that God’s Spirit lives within us. The backslider addict or alcoholic may know the truth, but rejects it because of his guilt and shame; and he is unable to escape his bondage without surrendering to Christ. And it is not unusual for him to lash out in anger and mock the Believer.

The Believer, on the other hand, has no excuse to ignore the Holy Spirit. When we surrender to God’s Spirit, we begin to know His thoughts, talk to Him about our situation (pray), and gain His strength to proceed in His will — *not surrender to our emotions*.

Can you say with confidence that you are being guided by the Holy Spirit and by godly motives?

- 9. Because of our commitment to the Lord and our *Biblical* love for someone enslaved to drug dependency or obsessive behavior, we are to avoid quarreling and blaming, and gossiping (telling others how bad he is).**

II Timothy 2:24-26 — *“And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”*

- 10. We are to speak the *truth in love* by telling the person of the harmful effects his behavior have on himself and others.**

Romans 6:16 — *“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?”*

All people choose a master and pattern themselves after him. Without Jesus, we would also have to serve sin. Thanks to Jesus, we can choose God as our Master, and trust Him for the outcome of the problems of our lives.

Ephesians 5:11-13 — *“Have nothing to do with the fruitless misdeeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible.”*

We deceive ourselves if we go along with the addict and alcoholic by protecting them from the natural consequences of their behavior. In our attempt to avoid worse situations, we lie or remain silent — silence is often interpreted as approval. God wants us to *stand for what is right*.

For example: Don't lie for the addict or alcoholic to cover their irresponsibility or physical problems due to use of alcohol and drugs. If he is arrested for driving under the influence, don't rescue him. God can use the embarrassment, guilt and shame in his life to bring about change.

11. If the addict or alcoholic is a Believer, use Biblical truths to reach him.

Matthew 18:15-17 — *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”*

These are Jesus' guidelines for dealing with those who sin against us — they are meant for Christians, *not* unbelievers. Jesus' words are not a license for a frontal attack on every person who hurts or slights us. They are not a license to start a destructive gossip campaign. They are designed to reconcile those who disagree.

When someone wrongs us, we often do the opposite of what Jesus instructs. We turn away in hatred or resentment, seek revenge, or gossip. By contrast, we should go to that person *first*, as difficult as that may be.

Galations 6:1 — *“Brother, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”*

“You who are spiritual” are the key words — if you are walking in Christ, you will seek to do the right thing.

12. If the person is an unbeliever, remember that he cannot understand the things of God. However, he sometimes will realize that his actions are “wrong.”

Romans 1:18-23 — *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.*

²⁰*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

²¹*For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

²²*Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools*

²³*and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.”*

Why is God angry at sin of people? **Because they have substituted the truth about Him with a fantasy of their own imagination.** They have stifled the truth of what God naturally reveals to all people in order to believe anything that supports their own self-centered life-styles.

Are you compromising the truth by following lies of world?

God cannot tolerate sin because His nature is morally perfect. He cannot ignore or condone such willful rebellion. He wants to remove the sin and restore the sinner — if the sinner does not distort or reject the truth.

Do any of us have an excuse for not believing in God? NO! God has revealed His existence (divine nature) in His creation. Every person, therefore, either accepts or rejects God. Don't be fooled. When the day comes for God to judge our response to Him, there will be no excuses. We must give our devotion and worship to Him **before** we can hope to have a positive impact on our beloved addict/alcoholic.

Everyone has an inner sense of what God requires, but they choose not to live up to it. Put another way, our moral standards are better than our behavior. If we suppress God's truth, in order to live our own way, we have no excuse. When we ignore the truth, we will have to endure the consequences.

Go back and reread the above passage from your Bible through verse 32 to get a clear picture of the inevitable downward spiral into sin. First we reject God; next we make up our own ideas of what a god should be and do; then we fall into sin — sexual sin, greed, hatred, envy, murder, fighting, lying, bitterness, gossip. Finally we grow to distrust, even hate, God. God does not cause this steady progression toward evil. Rather, when we reject Him, He allows us to live as we choose. God gives us up to experience the natural consequences of our sin. Once caught in the downward spiral, we cannot pull ourselves out. We sinners must trust Christ alone to put us on the path of escape.

How could intelligent people turn to idolatry? Idolatry begins when we reject what we know about God. Instead of looking to Him as the Creator and sustainer of life, we see ourselves as the center of the universe. We invent “gods” that are convenient projections of our own selfish plans and decrees. These gods may be wooden figures, but we tend to make gods of money, power, comfort, pleasure, spouses, children, even misrepresentations of God himself — making God in our image, instead of the reverse. The common denominator is this: idolaters worship the things God made rather than God himself.

Is there anything or anyone you think you can't live without?

Is there any priority greater than God?

Do you have a dream you would sacrifice everything to realize?

Does God take first place?

Do you worship God or idols of your own making?

When we choose to reject God, God allows us to do it. God does not usually stop us from making choices against His will. He lets us declare our supposed independence from Him, even though He knows that in time we will become *slaves* to our own rebellious choices — we lose our freedom to not sin. Does life without God look like freedom to you? Look again. There is no worse slavery than slavery to sin.

We tend to believe lies that reinforce our own selfish, personal beliefs. Today, more than ever, we need to be careful about the input we allow to form the beliefs that motivate our attitudes and actions. TV, music, movies, magazines, and the rest of the media often present sinful lifestyles and unwholesome values — we find ourselves bombarded by attitudes and beliefs totally opposed to the Bible. We must evaluate *everything* spiritually.

13. In spite of his bondage and delusion, an unbeliever can often be helped to understand the magnitude and effects of his present behavior in every area of his life.

Human beings, created in God's image, have a basic moral nature and a conscience. This truth is understood beyond religious circles. Psychologists, for example, say that the rare person who has no conscience has a serious personality disorder, one that is extremely difficult to treat. Most people instinctively know when they do wrong, but they may not care.

“What is conscience?” Pinocchio asked.

“It's that little voice inside that no one listens to,” answered Jiminy Cricket.

Some people even risk an early death for the freedom to indulge their desires now. “I know it's dangerous, but it's worth the risk;” “I know it's wrong, but I really *need* it.” For them part of the “fun” is going against God's law and moral standards, common sense and their own sense of right and wrong. But deep down inside they know they deserve punishment.

Proverbs 13:15 — *“Good understanding wins favor,
but the way of the unfaithful is hard.”*

Proverbs 13:16 — *“Every prudent man acts out of knowledge,
but a fool exposes his folly.”*

Colossians 3:25 — *“Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong,
and there is no favoritism.”*

I John 3:4 — *“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.”*

An enslaved person will often try to excuse his behavior. However, the excuses cannot cover-up the consequences since they are observable, measurable facts: lying, disease, stealing, *blaming*, hiding drugs or alcohol, broken relationships, etc.

Are you blaming anyone or anything for your own problems?

It is sometimes necessary to keep a record of the many effects and consequences of the person's behavior in order to present him with the evidence of his own bondage. This is not done in order to "remember wrongs suffered against you," which would be in violation of our goal for Biblical love (I Corinthians 13:5); but it is done with the purpose of lovingly teaching another of his focus on self and his lack of love for God and others.

Ephesians 4:25 — *"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor for we are all members of one body."*

Ephesians 5:11-12 — *"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret."*

14. Our motive for helping another must always be for their ultimate good, not for our own selfish purposes.

I Peter 3:15-16 — *"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."*

We should not be boisterous or obnoxious in sharing our faith, but we should always be ready to answer, gently and respectfully, when asked about our Christian perspective. We will not be ready if we do not *know* what we believe, much less *act* like what we believe. We may not be able to keep others from attacking us, but we can at least stop supplying them with ammunition. As long as we do what is right, their accusations will be empty and will only embarrass them. Keep your conduct above criticism!

Is your hope in Christ readily observable to others?

Are you prepared to tell others what Christ has done in your life?

We have a calling: we can point out the error of others with humility, and point them to Christ; we can help persuade them by our attitudes and actions; we can help convince them of the dangerous consequences of rejecting God; we can tell them about Jesus and how through Him they can have a personal relationship with God; we can tell them of God's love, acceptance and forgiveness.

15. If a chemically dependent person is breaking the law, should it be reported to the proper authorities? Driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, buying and selling and using controlled substances, child endangerment and abuse, robbery, assault and battery, etc. are wrong, unlawful behaviors.

Romans 13:1-5 — *"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.*

²Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

³*For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.*

⁴*For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*

⁵*Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience." (See I Peter 2:13-16)*

Family members often know that the dependent person has broken the law. However, out of their personal shame, and in a effort to "help him" or "not cause him any more trouble," they will not contact authorities to deal with the matter. When we choose to "cover up" for someone we know is breaking the law, we may be (perhaps without realizing it), helping to postpone the natural consequences of his behavior and/or the discipline of the Lord.

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and He will commend you. For He is God's servant to do you good.



“We Are to Use Biblical Resources and to Remain Obedient to Scripture in All Areas of Life When Dealing with an Alcoholic or Addict.”

- 16. We are not responsible to change a person, nor are we able to do so. Lasting change in anyone’s life is the work of the Holy Spirit. Lasting change is linked to our individual choice to obey the Word of God. Before we attempt to help someone else, we must test our own obedience.**

2 Peter 1:2-11 — *“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*

³*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.*

⁴*Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

⁵*For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;*

⁶*and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;*

⁷*and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.*

⁸*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.*

⁹*But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.*

¹⁰*Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,*

¹¹*and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

Many of us believers want more of God’s kindness (“grace”) and peace, but are we willing to put forth the effort to get to know Him better through Bible study and prayer? To enjoy the privileges and promises God offers us, we must combine getting to know Him better (“the knowledge of God”) with *complete trust*.

The power to grow doesn’t come naturally, but from God. Because we don’t have the resources, He has enabled us to “participate in the divine nature” to keep us from sin and help us live for Him. When we are born again, God by His Spirit empowers us with His own moral goodness.

Faith is more than belief in certain facts: It must result in action, growth in Christian character, and moral discipline, or it dies away because it does not demonstrate a truly transformed life. Faith in action includes: goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. These actions do not come automatically; they require hard work. They are not optional — all of them must be a continual part of our Christian life. We don’t finish one and start on the next — we work on them all together. God empowers and enable us, but He also assigns us the responsibility to learn and grow. We should not be surprised by, or resentful of, the process.

We are saved so we can grow to resemble Christ and so we can serve others. God wants to produce His character of active love in us. But to do this, He demands discipline and effort from us. As we obey Christ who guides us by His Spirit, we develop self-control, not only of food and drink, but also of our emotions.

Our faith must go beyond what we believe; it must become a dynamic part of all we do, resulting in good works and spiritual maturity. Salvation does not depend on good works, but it *results* in good works. **A person who claims to be saved yet remains unchanged does not understand faith or what God has done for him or her.**

17. **We must have an *eternal perspective* for our life here on earth, not look to people or things or circumstances to provide our peace and joy.**

II Corinthians 3:18 — *“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*

By beholding the nature of God with unveiled minds, we can be more like Him. In the Gospel, we see the truth about Christ and it transforms us morally as we understand and apply it. Through Christ’s life, we understand how wonderful God is and what He is really like. As our knowledge deepens, the Holy Spirit helps us to change. Becoming Christ-like is a progressive experience.

18. **Even though we are to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and are to please others for their edification, we are not to hide the failures or assume the responsibilities for those who are dominated by their addiction.**

Romans 15:1-2 — *“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.”*

Proverbs 26:5 — *“Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.”*

Romans 4:12 — *“So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.”*

Each of us is accountable first to Christ, not to others. Many times we base our moral judgments on opinion, personal dislikes and bias based on what others do, rather than on the Word of God. When we do this, we show our faith is weak — God is powerful enough to guide and protect His children. When we stand before God’s court of justice (“judgment seat”), we won’t be worried about what our beloved addict or alcoholic has done.

Sometimes, our well-meant but misguided efforts “cushion” a person from the effects of his behavior, or to avoid personal trials that may result. He is shielded from the natural, far-reaching consequences of his actions and does not personally experience the discipline of the Lord to an effective degree. As a result, he may continue to practice his destructive lifestyle because he has been denied the consequences the Lord wants to use to turn him around.

Proverbs 1:22 — *“How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge? If you had responded to My rebuke, I would have poured out My heart to you and made My thoughts known to you.”*

A fool is not someone with a mental deficiency, but someone with a character deficiency. The fool is not dumb or stupid, but is unable to tell right from wrong or good from bad. In Scripture, a fool is a godless person — an unbeliever or a *believer* who is not acting with godly principles.

Hebrews 12:5-6 — *“And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son.’”*

Who loves his child more — the father who allows the child to do what will harm him, or the one who corrects, trains, and even punishes the child to help him learn what is right. It’s never pleasant to be corrected and disciplined by God, but His discipline is a sign of His deep love for us. When God corrects us, we should see it as proof of His love and ask Him what He is teaching us.

Hebrews 12:11 — *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*

We may respond to discipline in several ways:

- (1) Accept it with resignation;
- (2) Accept it with self-pity, thinking we really don’t deserve it;
- (3) Angry and resent God for it; OR
- (4) Accept it gratefully as the appropriate response toward a loving Father.

- 19. Do not shun or avoid the person you have confronted with Biblical truths. The restoration and reconciliation process requires our consistent and faithful involvement in his life, in a spirit of gentleness.**

Proverbs 17:17 — *“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”*

What kind of friend are you?

What kind of a mate are you?

What kind of a parent are you?

What kind of a son or daughter are you?

There is a vast difference between knowing someone well and being a true friend. The greatest evidence of genuine friendship is loyalty (see I Corinthians 13:7) — being able to help in times of distress or personal struggles. Too many people are fair-weathered Christians. They stick around when the friendship benefits them, and leave when they’re not the center of attention. Think of your relationships and examine your level of loyalty to them.

Proverbs 27:17 — *“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”*

A meeting of minds can help people see their ideas with new clarity, refine them, and shape them into brilliant insights. This requires discussion partners who can challenge each other and stimulate thought — focusing on the idea without involving their egos in the discussion, knowing how to attack the thought and not the thinker.

Proverbs 27:5 — *“Better is open rebuke than hidden love.”*

Proverbs 28:26 — *“He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.”*

Luke 17:32-34 — *Jesus taught: “Remember Lot’s wife! Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left.”*

Matthew 18:15-17 — *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’”*

II Corinthians 5:17-21 — *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to him through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”*

Galations 6:1-2 — *“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.”*

- 20. No matter what adverse effects another’s behavior has or has had on us, we are to forgive him from our heart — even if it is necessary separate from him.**

Matthew 18:32-35 — *Jesus finishes His parable: “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. [Jesus said:] This is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.” (Read the entire parable beginning with verse 21.)*

Because God has forgiven all our sins, we should not withhold forgiveness from others. Realizing how completely Christ has forgiven us should produce a free and generous attitude of forgiveness toward others. When we don’t forgive others, we are setting ourselves *outside* and *above* Christ’s law of love.

We should be willing to forget others’ sins against us. Forgetting mistakes is necessary to any relationship. It is tempting, especially in an argument, to bring up all the mistakes the other person has ever made. Love, however, keeps its mouth shut — difficult as it may be. Try never

to bring anything into an argument that is unrelated to the topic being discussed. As we grow to be like Christ, we will acquire God's ability to forget the confessed sins of the past.

- 21. Do not gossip about anyone! Gossip is not a matter of information being true or false.** Information that is passed on for reasons other than (a) to edify the subject (not the speaker) or (b) to provide information necessary to help the subject to be restored, is gossip. The dictionary defines a gossip as "a person who habitually reveals personal or sensational facts."

Leviticus 19:16 — *"Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD."*

Leviticus 19:18 — *"Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt." "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD."*

Ephesians 4:29 — *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."*

Matthew 7:12 — *Jesus commanded: "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."*

Romans 1:28-29 — *"Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips . . ."*

(See also Proverbs 17:9; Proverbs 18:8; Romans 15:2; II Corinthians 12:20.)

- 22. Seek Pastoral counsel, as necessary, to determine how to respond to someone who continues in destructive behaviors. Such counsel should come only from those who are mature enough to help solve the problem.**

Proverbs 11:14 — *"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed."*

When dealing with an addicted loved one, it is helpful to have the advise and counsel of wiser Christians. Our perspective and understanding of the situation may be severely limited — we may not have all the facts, or we may be blinded by our personal emotions, bias, or wrong impressions. Seek the Biblical counsel of others and be open to their advice. Then, after considering all the facts and alternatives, and seeking the Lord's will, make your decision.

Remember, the Holy Spirit is your Counselor.

23. When dealing with believers who are addicted, encourage them to examine themselves after you have examined your own:

A. Thoughts

Matthew 15:19 — *“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”*

II Corinthians 10:5 — *“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

Philippians 4:8 — *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”*

B. Speech

Matthew 15:18 — *“But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’”*

Luke 6:45 — *“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”*

Ephesians 4:29 — *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”*

Colossians 4:6 — *“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”*

C. Actions

Mark 7:20-23 — *[Jesus] went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”* —

Feelings, good or bad, that are associated with overcoming a life-controlling sin are not to be the focus of attention. Instead, concentrate on pleasing the Lord and bringing glory to Him by being obedient to His Lord . . .

John 14:15 — *“If you love Me, you will obey what I command.”*

John 15:8 — *“This is to My Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.”*

II Corinthians 5:9 — *“So we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.”*

I John 5:3-4 — *“This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome, For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.”*

Matthew 5:16 — *“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

I Corinthians 10:31 — *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”*

Philippians 4:9 — *“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me [Paul, the Apostle], or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”*

Colossians 3:17 — *“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*

24. Remember that lasting peace and joy are promised to a believer who is obedient to Scripture. That applies to ALL of us.

Psalms 119:165-168 — *“Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble. I wait for Your salvation, O LORD, and I follow Your commands. I obey Your statutes, for I love them greatly. I obey Your precepts and Your statutes, for all my ways are known to you.”*

John 15:10-11 — *“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.”*

Romans 14:17 — *“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, . . .”*

Philippians 4:6 — *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*



May God richly bless you as you choose to walk in obedience to Jesus!

“The Most Excellent Way” is God’s Way!

PART VIII
“SCRIPTURE TOPICS FOR SUPPORT MEETINGS”

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NOTE: Each Topic can be related to one or more of the Ten Attitudes of Victorious Living. We recommend photocopying a Topic that relates to your Attitude Bible Study for the Meeting, and distributing the Topic to the Support Meeting attendees. They may use the back to take notes, and refresh their minds between meetings with the verses that ministered to them.

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SCRIPTURES ARE FROM THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION OF THE BIBLE, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

ADOPTION

In adoption, we receive the position of a son of God. We obtain the place of a child and the right to be called a son the moment we believe.

Ephesians 1:4-5 — For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—

Galatians 3:25-27 — Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Galatians 4:6-7 — Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

1 John 3:1 — How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

The full manifestation of our sonship awaits the resurrection, change, translation of saints, which is called “the redemption of the body.”

Romans 8:23 — 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.

Ephesians 1:13-14 — 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.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 — We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

1 John 3:2 — Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

ARMOR OF GOD

To fight spiritual battles we need God’s armor. In the Christian life we battle against “the spiritual forces of evil” (the evil forces of fallen angels headed by Satan who is a vicious fighter, see 1 Peter 5:8). To withstand their attacks, we must depend on God’s strength and use every piece of his armor. Paul is not only giving this counsel to the church as a whole, but to each individual within the church. The entire body of Christ needs to be armed. As you do battle against “the powers of this dark world,” fight in the strength of the church, whose power comes from the Holy Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4-5 NKJV— For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, ...

EPHESIANS 6:12-18 NKJV — *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*
¹³*Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*
¹⁴*Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*
¹⁵*and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*
¹⁶*above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*
¹⁷*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*
¹⁸*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints —*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**ASSURANCE**

Assurance is being certain in our minds with freedom from doubt. One of the enemy’s tricks is to cause us to doubt our salvation, God’s forgiveness, etc.

EPHESIANS 1:7-8 — *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*

1 PETER 1:3-5 — *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

ROMANS 8:38-39 — *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

JOHN 10:27-29 — *Jesus said: “My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”*

1 JOHN 5:13 — *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

PHILIPPIANS 1:6 — *Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

JOHN 11:25-26 — *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; And whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”*

JOHN 5:24 — *Jesus said: “I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**THE BIBLE — GOD’S WORD**

God’s Word is the Christian’s only authority for faith and conduct. The Bible can be relied upon for every situation of life. When we learn God’s way, we are able to distinguish between the folly of man’s wisdom and the truth and promises of God.

PSALMS 138:2 — I will bow down toward Your holy temple and will praise Your name for Your love and Your faithfulness, for You have exalted above all things Your name and Your word.

PSALMS 19:7-14 — The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

ISAIAH 55:8-9 — “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

PSALMS 119:105 — Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

JAMES 1:22 — Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

HEBREWS 5:14 — But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

PSALMS 119:130 — The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

PSALMS 119:165 — Great peace have they who love Your law, and nothing can make them stumble.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**BLOOD**

References to the “blood of Christ” always mean the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. Paul, Peter, John and the author of Hebrews reference the blood of Christ.

***Romans 3:25** — God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—*

***1 Peter 1:18-19** — For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

***Revelation 1:5-6** — To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father — to Him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

***Hebrews 9:14** — How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

***Ephesians 1:7-10** — In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace⁸ that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

CROSS

Today, the Cross, is the symbol of Jesus’ love, God’s power to save, and the thankful Believer’s unreserved commitment to Christian discipleship. To those who know the salvation which Christ gained for us through His death, it is a “wondrous cross” indeed.

The Cross symbolizes:

- the glory of the Christian gospel;
- the fact that through this offensive means of death, the debt of sin against us was “nailed to the cross;”
- and we, having “been crucified with Christ,” have been freed from sin and death and made alive to God.

1 Corinthians 1:17 — For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

1 Corinthians 1:23 — ... but we preach Christ crucified: ...

Galatians 5:11 — Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.

Colossians 2:13b-14 — ... He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Galatians 2:20 — I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Romans 6:6-10 — For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—⁷because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. ⁹For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him. ¹⁰The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

DEATH

Death is not the end of life for humans. The Bible teaches that man is more than a physical creature; he is also a spiritual being. For man, therefore, physical death does not mean the end of existence but the end of life as we know it and the transition to another dimension in which our conscious (soul/spirit) existence continues. In His resurrection, Jesus conquered death —physical, spiritual, and eternal.

In the Genesis account of the FALL, both physical and spiritual death come as a result of sin.

Romans 5:12-21 — Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—¹³for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

¹⁵*But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!*

¹⁶*Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.*

¹⁷*For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.*

¹⁸*Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.*

¹⁹*For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*

²⁰*The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,*

²¹*so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

2 Timothy 1:10-11 — ...but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

DEPRESSION — PART I

There are many times in our lives when we are tempted to indulge our feelings of depression. There is pain, suffering, tribulation and trials; God’s Word has declared it to be so. Therefore, these situations do not constitute the problem. The challenge we face is to live God’s way no matter what we may encounter and no matter how we may feel. Feelings of depression are not excuses to sin by failing to follow God’s Word. We all experience feelings of depression from time to time, and we must deal with the feelings from God’s perspective and not our own.

GENESIS 4:7 — If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.

JOHN 16:33 — [Jesus said:] “I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

II CORINTHIANS 4:7-10 — But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

II CORINTHIANS 4:16-18 — Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

ROMANS 8:35-39 — Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

COLOSSIANS 3:23-25 — Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**DEPRESSION — PART II**

While we may experience feelings of depression, as Christians we can fulfill our responsibilities and put-on Biblical love in our relationships.

PSALMS 19:7-11

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

PSALMS 119:92-93

If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life.

PSALM 119:143

Look upon my suffering and deliver me, for I have not forgotten your law.

JOHN 15:8-12

Jesus said: “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. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

JOHN 15:16-17

Jesus said: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:13

I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

COLOSSIANS 3:17

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

DEPRESSION — PART III

Even though our flesh (feelings) would rather give in to depression, our thoughts, words and actions can be focused on edifying others, and, more importantly, bringing honor to the Lord. If we choose not to respond to our feelings in God’s way, we may experience more difficulty.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

COLOSSIANS 3:2 — *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

COLOSSIANS 4:6 — *Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

PSALMS 38:1-7 — *O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. For your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down upon me. Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body.*

GALATIANS 6:7 — *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.*

COLOSSIANS 3:25 — *Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.*

HEBREWS 12:7-8 — *Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.*

HEBREWS 13:6 — *So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

EPHESIANS 4:29 — *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

HEBREWS 12:1-3 — *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**DISCIPLES**

Defined, a disciple is “a learner, a follower of Christ.”
The true disciple daily recognizes Jesus as Lord, and is willing to put Him ahead of every other pursuit in life.

LUKE 14:27 — *And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.*

LUKE 14:33 — *In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple.*

JOHN 15:8 — *Jesus said: “This is to My Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.”*

JOHN 13:35 — *Jesus said: “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”*

JOHN 8:31 — *To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, “If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples.”*

MATTHEW 10:24 — *Jesus said: “A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.”*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

DISCIPLINE

God knows that an uncontrolled life is an unhappy life, so He puts reins on our wayward souls so that we might be directed into the “paths of righteousness.”

***JOB 5:17** — Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.*

***PSALM 94:12** — Blessed is the man You discipline, O LORD, the man You teach from Your law; ...*

***PROVERBS 3:11-12** — My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline and do not resent His rebuke, Because the LORD disciplines those He loves, as a father the son he delights in.*

***HEBREWS 12:5-6** — And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son.”*

***I CORINTHIANS 11:31-32** — But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.*

***PSALM 119:67** — Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.*

***PSALM 119:75** — I know, O LORD, that your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

DRUGS & DRUNKENNESS

As the Bible clearly states, alcohol and drugs are a poor, and often vicious, substitutes for God in our lives.

PROVERBS 23:29-35 — *Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things. You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. “They hit me,” you will say, “but I’m not hurt! They beat me, but I don’t feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?”*

LUKE 21:34 — *Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.*

ROMANS 13:13 — *Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.*

GALATIANS 5:19-21 — *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.*

EPHESIANS 5:18 — *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*

I SAMUEL 1:14 — *How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine.*

JOEL 1:5 — *Wake up, you drunkards, and weep! Wail, all you drinkers of wine; wail because of the new wine, for it has been snatched from your lips.*

PROVERBS 20:1 — *Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.*

PROVERBS 23:20-21 — *Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.*

ISAIAH 5:22 — *Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks. . .*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**ETERNAL HOPE / LIFE**

We need an “eternal perspective” for our lives — being with God for all eternity is our ultimate hope. We will experience victorious living in this life to the measure we live toward becoming citizens of heaven. Children are on their “best behavior” while waiting for Santa Claus. We, God’s children, want to be on our “best behavior” — in mind and deed — as we wait in excited anticipation for Jesus to come for us.

***TITUS 2:12-14** — For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.*

***PHILIPPIANS 3:20** — But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.*

***COLOSSIANS 3:4-5** — When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

***I JOHN 2:28** — And now, dear children, continue in Him, so that when He appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming.*

***I JOHN 3:2-3** — Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

***JOHN 14:1-3** — Jesus said: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In My Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am.”*

***II CORINTHIANS 4:16-18** — Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

FAITH

Faith is trusting God that He is able to meet all our needs when we seek Him first (Matthew 6:33).

EPHESIANS 2:8 — For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

HEBREWS 11:1 — Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

HEBREWS 11:6 — And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

GALATIANS 3:11 — Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.”

ROMANS 10:17 — Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

ROMANS 12:2 — Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.

II CORINTHIANS 5:7 — We live by faith, not by sight.

HEBREWS 12:2 — Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

ROMANS 1:17 — For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Faith is considered righteousness, not as the work of man but as the gift and work of God:

ROMANS 4:5 — However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

JOHN 6:28-29 — Then they asked Him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent.”

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

FEAR, WORRY & ANXIETY

Fear, worry and anxiety are powerful emotions which can paralyze our minds and immobilize our bodies. These emotions were first experienced by man in the Garden of Eden as a result of his fall. The devil, not God, is behind these detriments to spiritual maturity. God has given us all that is necessary for victory when we are overcome with these emotions.

MATTHEW 6:25 — Jesus said: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?”

MATTHEW 6:31-34 — Jesus said: “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 — Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

II TIMOTHY 1:7 — For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

I JOHN 4:18 — There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

I JOHN 5:4-5 — For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

ROMANS 8:35-39 — Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

PROVERBS 16:9 — In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

II CORINTHIANS 4:16-18 — Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

FELLOWSHIP

The Bible encourages us to fellowship with other Believers for good reasons: to help turn us from our own self-seeking, self-righteous, judgmental, condemning old nature. We need the fellowship of Christians in order to grow. And we have responsibilities as a members of the body (Christ’s Church).

***EPHESIANS 4:22-25** — You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.*

***HEBREWS 10:25** — Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

***COLOSSIAN 3:16** — Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

***EPHESIANS 5:19** — Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, . . .*

***I CORINTHIANS 12:12** — The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.*

***I CORINTHIANS 12:25-27** — So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

FORGIVENESS — GOD’S

God has provided a way for us, through confession and repentance, to be forgiven and cleansed from all sin. It is God’s desire that every Believer live a victorious Christian life, and He knows the struggle we have as our flesh wars against the Spirit.

***1 JOHN 2:1** — My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

***HEBREWS 4:15-16** — For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

***PROVERBS 28:13** — He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

***1 JOHN 1:9** — If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

***PSALM 32:5** — Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*

***PSALM 103:12** — As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

***PSALM 130:1-7** — Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; O LORD, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.
If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.
I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
and in His word I put my hope.
My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.
O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with Him is full redemption.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

FORGIVING OTHERS

We must choose to forgive others if we want to be forgiven, and if we want peace with God. An attitude of unforgiveness will lead to ruin. The peace of God will replace the pain of being hurt when we forgive in obedience to His command.

MATTHEW 6:14-15 — *Jesus said: “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*

LUKE 23:34 — *Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”*

MATTHEW 18:21-22 — *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”*

LUKE 6:37 — *Jesus said: “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”*

MARK 11:25 — *And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*

EPHESIANS 4:32 — *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

COLOSSIANS 3:13 — *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9 — *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from Me, or seen in Me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

JAMES 4:17 — *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**GENEROSITY**

God loves a cheerful giver. We should have an attitude of generosity when and give freely of our love, time, and resources.

***I CHRONICLES 29:14** — But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your hand.*

***PROVERBS 3:9-10** — Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.*

***PROVERBS 11:24-25** — One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.*

***LUKE 6:38** — Jesus said: “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

***II CORINTHIANS 9:6-7** — Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

***ACTS 20:35** — In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus Himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**GOD’S CARE**

In spite of all the trials, testing and suffering, God sovereignly watches over us and meets our every need. We tend to confuse our physical *wants* and *desires* with our *spiritual needs*.

ISAIAH 43:2 — *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*

ISAIAH 41:10 — *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*

PSALM 34:19-20 — *A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.*

PSALM 55:22 — *Cast your cares on the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall.*

1 PETER 5:7 — *Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.*

MATTHEW 11:28-29 — *Jesus said: “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

GOD’S COMFORT

In any difficulty, God’s comfort and sustaining power are always available to us.

***II CORINTHIANS 1:3-5** — Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.*

***PSALM 42:11** — Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.*

***LAMENTATIONS 3:32** — Though He brings grief, He will show compassion, so great is His unfailing love.*

***HEBREWS 4:15-16** — For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

***LUKE 4:18-19** — [Jesus said of Himself:] “The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

***PSALM 145:14** — The LORD upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.*

***MATTHEW 11:28-30** — Jesus said: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

***PSALM 116:1-9** — I love the LORD, for He heard my voice; He heard my cry for mercy. Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live. The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the LORD: “O LORD, save me!” The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The LORD protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, He saved me. Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.*

***PSALM 119:50** — My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.*

***PSALM 46:1** — God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

***PSALM 55:22** — Cast your cares on the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall.*

***PSALM 34:8** — Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him.*

Personal Notes

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**GOD’S GUIDANCE**

By choosing to surrender to God’s guidance and direction daily, we save ourselves heartache, wasted time and dead-end pursuits.

PSALM 25:4-5 — Show me Your ways, O LORD, teach me Your paths; guide me in Your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in You all day long.

PSALM 25:9 — He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way.

PSALM 32:8 — I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

PSALM 143:8 — Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

PROVERBS 3:5-6 — Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

ISAIAH 58:11 — The LORD will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

THE GOSPEL

The joyous good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. The Greek word translated as gospel means “a reward for bringing good news” or simply “good news.” In Isaiah 40:9, the prophet proclaimed the “good tidings” that God would rescue His people from captivity. In His first sermon in Nazareth, Jesus used a passage from the Old Testament to characterize the spirit of His ministry: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor” (Luke 4:18).

The gospel is not a new plan of salvation; it is the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation which was begun in Israel, was completed in Jesus Christ, and is made known by the church. The gospel is the saving work of God in His Son Jesus Christ and a call to faith in Him.

Jesus is more than a messenger of the gospel; He is the gospel. The good news of God was present in His life, teaching, and atoning death. Therefore, the gospel is both a historical event and a personal relationship.

Faith is more than an intellectual agreement to a theoretical truth. Faith is trust placed in a living person, Jesus Christ. When the apostle Paul warned Christians of the dangers of following “another gospel” (2 Corinthians 11:4), he was reminding them that any gospel different than the one he preached was no gospel at all.

A gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) is more than a biography intended to provide information about a historical character. It is the presentation of the life of Jesus to show His saving significance for all people and to call them to faith in Him.

ROMANS 1:16 — *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes:*

ROMANS 10:8-13 — *“The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: ⁹That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹*

¹⁰*For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

¹¹*As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.”*

¹²*For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

GRACE

Under the law, God demands righteousness from man. Under grace, He gives righteousness to those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

**Justice is getting what you deserve.
Mercy is not getting what you deserve.
Grace is getting what you don't deserve.**

ROMANS 3:19-24 — Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

²¹But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²²This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by **His grace** through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

ROMANS 8:3-4 — For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

GALATIANS 2:16 — ... know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-9 — But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

JOHN 1:16-17 — From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

ROMANS 6:14 — For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace .

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10 — To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹But He said to me, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.**”

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

¹⁰That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

EPHESIANS 2:4-5 — But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — **it is by grace you have been saved.**

2 PETER 3:18 — But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

GROWING WITH GOD’S WORD

God gave us His Word so we might know and understand His nature. He gave us His Word in the person of Jesus Christ so we might know and understand *more* of His nature. The mature Christian walk is the pursuit of holiness as God has revealed Himself to be. To the extent that we choose to make His Word the focus of our lives, is the extent of our spiritual growth.

PSALM 138:2 — I will bow down toward Your holy temple and will praise Your name for Your love and Your faithfulness, for You have exalted above all things Your name and Your word.

I PETER 2:2-3 — Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

PSALM 119:11 — I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.

ROMANS 15:4 — For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

II TIMOTHY 2:15 — Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

II TIMOTHY 3:16-17 — All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

PSALM 119:105 — Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

PSALM 1:1-2 — Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night.

JEREMIAH 10:23 — I know, O LORD, that a man’s life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

THE HEART

What we are and what we do is determined in our heart. The words “heart,” “mind,” and “affections” are usually translated “heart” in the Bible.

JEREMIAH 17:9-10 — *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? “I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”*

MARK 7:20-22 — *He [Jesus] went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.”*

PROVERBS 4:23 — *Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.*

PSALM 44:20-21 — *If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, would not God have discovered it, since he knows the secrets of the heart?*

PSALM 139:23-24 — *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

PSALM 51:10 — *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

HEBREWS 4:12 — *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**HOLY SPIRIT — HIS INDWELLING**

We are not helpless and alone in the world. God indwells us by His Holy Spirit, who daily ministers to our needs.

EPHESIANS 5:18 — *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*

JOHN 3:6-8 — *Jesus said: “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at My saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”*

I CORINTHIANS 3:16 — *Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?*

ROMANS 8:16-17 — *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.*

ROMANS 8:14 — *Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

JOHN 14:26 — *Jesus said: “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

ROMANS 8:26 — *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**HOLY SPIRIT — HIS WORKS**

God dwells within the believer by His Holy Spirit. When we chose to walk in His Spirit, we have His power for victorious living. And it is His work to make us more like Jesus everyday.

EPHESIANS 5:18 — *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*

ACTS 4:31 — *After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.*

II TIMOTHY 1:7 — *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

GALATIANS 5:22-23 — *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.*

II CORINTHIANS 3:18 — *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

GALATIANS 5:25-26 — *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**HONESTY**

Strong personal relationships are based upon credibility. We trust God because He is trustworthy. We believe Him because He is credible. We need to develop credibility in our own character, especially in our witness of faith. Too many Christians are called hypocrites — for good reason.

***II CORINTHIANS 4:2** — Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.*

***COLOSSIANS 3:9-10** — 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.*

***ROMANS 12:17** — Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.*

***II CORINTHIANS 8:21** — For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.*

***PROVERBS 11:1** — The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight.*

***PROVERBS 11:3** — The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.*

***PROVERBS 12:13** — An evil man is trapped by his sinful talk, but a righteous man escapes trouble.*

***PROVERBS 12:17** — A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

HUMILITY

To say “I am a humble person” is the most prideful statement a human can make. By it’s very nature, humility does not consider itself at all.

ISAIAH 66:2 — “Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word.”

PROVERBS 16:18 — Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

PROVERBS 29:23 — A man’s pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor.

LUKE 14:11 — Jesus said: “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

JAMES 4:6 — But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

PROVERBS 22:4 — Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.

MATTHEW 23:12 — Jesus said: “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

PSALM 25:9 — He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

PROVERBS 11:2 — When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

PROVERBS 22:4 — Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3 — Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

COLOSSIANS 3:12 — Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

JAMES 3:13 — 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.

1 PETER 5:5 — Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

JESUS CHRIST IS LORD

When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, He becomes our Savior, Lord and Master. We are under new ownership. We can only enjoy our new life in Christ if we daily seek His will and follow in obedience because we love Him.

PHILIPPIANS 2:10 — That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, . . .

I CORINTHIANS 6:19-20 — Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

MATTHEW 22:37-38 — Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.”

LUKE 6:46 — Jesus asked: “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

PSALMS 37:4-6 — Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

JOHN 15:5 — Jesus said: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.”

ACTS 10:36 — You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

ACTS 16:31 — They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

JUSTIFICATION

Justification (“just-as-if-I-never-sinned”) is the process by which sinful human beings are made acceptable to a holy God. Justification is God’s declaration that the demands of His Law have been fulfilled in the righteousness of His Son. The basis for this justification is the death of Christ.

- Paul tells us that *“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them” (2 Corinthians 5:19).*

- **This reconciliation covers all sin:**

“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14).

- **Justification, then, is based on the work of Christ, accomplished through His blood and brought to His people through His resurrection.**

ROMANS 5:9 — *Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him!*

ROMANS 4:25 — *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

- **When God justifies, He charges the sin of man to Christ and credits the righteousness of Christ to the Believer:**

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 — *God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*

ROMANS 5:18 — *Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.*

- God is “just” because His holy standard of perfect righteousness has been fulfilled in Christ, and He is the “justifier,” because this righteousness is freely given to the believer:

ROMANS 3:25-26 — *God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—²⁶He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

ROMANS 5:16 — *Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

LOVE — GOD’S

When we love someone, we want them to be near to us, to know them better, and to “give” more of ourselves to them. God wants to give of Himself to us. He made this possible through His Son, Jesus Christ.

***JOHN 3:16** — For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

***ROMANS 5:8** — But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

***I JOHN 4:10** — This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

***GALATIANS 1:4** — Who gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ...*

***LUKE 19:10** — Jesus said: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

***I JOHN 4:7-11** — Jesus said: “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

LOVE — OUR CALL

Learning to love requires a daily dependence upon Jesus, while at the same time focusing on dying to self and living for Him. Living in this manner allows us to love others in spite of our adverse circumstances or unloving feelings. Love is a choice. Love is an attitude. Are you seeking to love or to be loved? Jesus is the answer to both.

I JOHN 4:19 — We love because He first loved us.

JOHN 13:34-35 — Jesus said: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”

ROMANS 12:9-10 — Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

EPHESIANS 4:2-3 — 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.

I JOHN 3:14 — We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

I JOHN 3:18 — Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

COLOSSIANS 3:14 — And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

I JOHN 4:7-11 — Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

MATTHEW 22:37-39 — Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

I CORINTHIANS 12:31-13:3 — But eagerly desire the greater gifts.

And now I will show you the most excellent way.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

I CORINTHIANS 13:4-8a —

Love is patient, love is kind.

It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails.

Personal Notes

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

MAN

We are created in the image of God. This means that we humans have the ability and the privilege of knowing, serving, and loving God, and that we are most fully human when fulfilling our spiritual potential. Every human life is precious to God, and this is exactly how we should treat the people with whom we share the world.

GENESIS 1:26-27 — Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18 — And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

God obviously did not create us exactly like Himself, because God has no physical body. Instead, we are reflections of God’s glory. Some believe that the image of God refers to our reason, creativity, speech, or self-determination. More likely, it is our entire self that reflects the image of God. We will never be totally like God, because He is our supreme Creator. But we do have the ability to reflect His character in our love, patience, forgiveness, kindness, and faithfulness.

THE FALL OF MAN (Read Genesis 3-4) — The divine intention was and is that man should have fellowship with God in obedience. Sin came, the essence of which is rebellion against the will of God. Man became separated from God (Genesis 3:8-10) and lost sovereignty over the earth (Genesis 3:17-19).

The goal of God is to restore sinning man to His likeness, fellowship and dominion.

ROMANS 8:29 — For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

REVELATION 21:3 — And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.”

REVELATION 20:6 — Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

OBEDIENCE

Our love for God is evidenced by our obedience to Him. Our peace and joy are the by-products (consequences) of our obedience to God’s Word.

ECCLESIASTICS 12:13 — *Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man.*

MATTHEW 7:21 — *Jesus said: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

ACTS 5:29 — *Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men!”*

LUKE 6:46 — *Jesus said: “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”*

JAMES 1:25 — *But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.*

DEUTERONOMY 6:5-6 — *Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.*

JOHN 14:21 — *Jesus said: “Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.”*

I JOHN 5:3 — *This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome . . .*

I JOHN 2:4 — *The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

JOHN 14:23 — *Jesus replied, “If anyone loves Me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”*

MATTHEW 7:24 — *Jesus said: “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”*

I JOHN 2:17 — *The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

I JOHN 3:22 — *And receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

POWERLESSNESS — MAN’S INABILITY

Whether we like it or not, we are dependent upon God. We can deny His power, even His existence, but we cannot escape His judgment. We are physically and spiritually helpless apart from God. In our denial, we prove our finite ways bring only temporary, temporal happiness. When we accept our powerlessness, our weakness becomes God’s opportunity to give us His supernatural strength and power.

EPHESIANS 3:16 — *“I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being . . .”*

MATTHEW 28:18 — *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.”*

JEREMIAH 10:23 — *I know, O LORD, that a man’s life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.*

JOHN 3:27 — *To this John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.”*

JOHN 15:5 — *Jesus said: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.”*

TITUS 3:5-8 — *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

II CORINTHIANS 3:5 — *Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.*

ROMANS 5:6 — *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*

ROMANS 7:18 — *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*

JOHN 6:44 — *Jesus said: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

EPHESIANS 2:8-9 — *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*

GALATIANS 2:16 — *Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

PSALM 127:1 — *Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.*

PROVERBS 14:12 — *There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*

ISAIAH 64:6 — *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

MATTHEW 5:36 — *Jesus said: “And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.”*

MATTHEW 6:27 — *Jesus said: “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”*

Personal Notes

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**PRAISE & THANKSGIVING**

God is pleased when we take time to praise and thank Him. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have someone spend their time telling you how much you are loved and appreciated? Make a list of the ways God blesses you, and notice how quickly your spirit soars!

PSALM 50:23 — He who sacrifices thank offerings honors Me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.

PSALMS 69:30-31 — I will praise God's name in song and glorify Him with thanksgiving. This will please the LORD more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hoofs.

PSALM 106:1 — Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever.

PSALM 107:8 — Let them give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for men, ...

PHILIPPIANS 4:6 — Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

I THESSALONIANS 5:16-18 — Be joyful always; Pray continually; Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

PRAYER

Christianity is “relationship” with God, not mere religion. God gives us the opportunity to improve our relationship with Him through prayer. As we grow closer to Him by talking and listening to Him, we begin to know and understand Him better. Our God is only a prayer away!

***1 JOHN 5:14-15** — This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him.*

***PHILIPPIANS 4:6** — Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

***JOHN 15:7** — Jesus said: “If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

***LUKE 11:9-10** — Jesus said: “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”*

***MATTHEW 6:5-7** — Jesus said: “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

***JOHN 16:24** — Jesus said: “Until now you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”*

***1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18** — Pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.*

***MATTHEW 6:5-7** — Jesus said: “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

***MATTHEW 7:7** — Jesus said: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”*

***JEREMIAH 33:3** — Jesus said: “Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”*

***EPHESIANS 3:20-21** — Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.*

***EPHESIANS 6:18** — And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

***PSALM 116:17** — I will sacrifice a thanks offering to you and call on the name of the LORD.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

PRAYER HINDRANCES

God does hear and answer our prayers. His answer is not always “yes,” and sometimes the answer is a long time coming. Certain hindrances can affect the outcome of our prayers.

PSALM 66:18 — If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; . . .

I JOHN 3:21-22 — Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God. And receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him.

JOHN 15:7 — If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

JAMES 1:6-8 — But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

JAMES 4:2-3 — You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

II CHRONICLES 7:14 — If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

PUT OFF / PUT ON

Our sinful behaviors have been perfected through practice, becoming what the world calls “addictions.” When we received Christ, we have His power to no longer sin — we must replace old, habitual sinful behaviors consistent with our new life in Christ. We are not victims — we become stronger victors as we put off the old and put on Christ!

MATTHEW 12:43-45 — Jesus said: “When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. ⁴⁴Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. ⁴⁵Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

EPHESIANS 4:22-24 — You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

EPHESIANS 5:1-2 — Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

ROMANS 13:14 — Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Personal Notes:

PUT OFF	PUT ON
JUDGING MATTHEW 7:1-2	LET GOD SEARCH HEART JOHN 8:9; 15:22
BITTERNESS HEBREWS 12:15	FORGIVENESS EPHESIANS 4:32; COLOSSIANS 3:13
SELFISHNESS PHILIPPIANS 2:21	SELF DENIAL JOHN 12:24
PRIDE PROVERBS 16:5	HUMILITY JAMES 4:6
STUBBORNNESS 1 SAMUEL 15:23	BROKENNESS ROMANS 6:13
IMPATIENCE JAME 1:2-4	PATIENCE HEBREWS 10:36
UNGRATEFULNESS ROMAN 1:2	GRATEFULNESS EPHESIANS 5:20
COVETOUSNESS LUKE 12:15	CONTENTMENT HEBREWS 13:5
LOSING TEMPER PROVERBS 25:28	SELF-CONTROL PROVERBS 16:32
ANGER PROVERBS 29:22	SELF-CONTROL GALATIANS 5:22-23
WRATH JAMES 1:19-20	SOFT ANSWERS PROVERBS 15:1
HATRED MATTHEW 5:21-22	LOVE 1 CORINTHIANS 3:3-8
MURDER EXODUS 20:13	LOVE ROMANS 13:10
GOSSIP 1 TIMOTHY 5:13	EDIFYING SPEECH EPHESIANS 4:9
LYING EPHESIANS 4:25	SPEAKING TRUTH ZECHERIAH 8:16
LAZINESS PROVERBS 20:4	DILIGENCE PROVERBS 6:6-11
STEALING PROVERBS 29:24	WORKING/GIVING EPHESIANS 4:28
GLUTTONY PROVERBS 23:21	DISCIPLINE 1 CORINTHIANS 9:27
FORNICATION 1 CORINTHIANS 6:18	ABSTINENCE 1THESSALONIANS 4:3
LUST 1 PETER 2:11	PURE THOUGHTS TITUS 2:12
HOMOSEXUALITY LEVITICUS 18:22	MORAL PURITY 1 THESSALONIANS 4:4-5
PORNOGRAPHY PSALMS 101:3	PURE THOUGHTS PHILIPPIANS 4:8
DRUNKENNESS PROVERBS 20:1	ABSTINENCE PROVERBS 23:30
GAMBLING PROVERBS 28:20, 22	GOOD STEWARDSHIP LUKE 16:11

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

RECONCILIATION with God:

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-21 NKJV — All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

¹⁹that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

²⁰We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us.

We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

²¹God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

EPHESIANS 2:14-16 NKJV— But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵by abolishing in His flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

COLOSSIANS 1:19-20 NKJV — For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him [Jesus], and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.

RECONCILIATION with Man:

MATTHEW 5:23-26 NKJV — Jesus said:

“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

²⁵Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

²⁶Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

MATTHEW 18:15 NKJV — Jesus said:

“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.”

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

REDEMPTION:

We are redeemed by the payment of a price. In the New Testament, redemption refers to salvation from sin, death, and the wrath of God by Christ’s sacrifice.

The tremendous cost of redemption:

1 PETER 1:18-19 — *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

EPHESIANS 1:7-8 — *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*

Believers are exhorted to remember the “price” of our redemption as a motivation to personal holiness:

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20 — *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

1 PETER 1:13-19 — *Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

¹⁴*As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.*

¹⁵*But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;*

¹⁶*for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

¹⁷*Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.*

¹⁸*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,*
¹⁹*but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

The Bible also emphasizes the result of redemption:

- Freed from the oppressive bondage of slavery to sin —

JOHN 8:34 — *Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”*

ROMANS 6:18 — *You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*

- Freed from the law —

GALATIANS 4:3-5; 5:1 — *So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. 4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. ...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.*

- Freed from fear of death (Heb 2:14-15)

HEBREWS 2:14-15 — *Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

“Therefore if the Son makes you free,
you shall be free indeed.”

John 8:36

REJOICE!

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

RENEWING THE MIND

ROMANS 12:2 — *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — His good, pleasing and perfect will.*

ROMANS 8:6 — *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

1 CORINTHIANS 2:16 — *“For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:5 — *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*

PSALMS 48:9 — *Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.*

PSALMS 119:59 — *I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes.*

PROVERBS 12:5 — *The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful.*

ROMANS 12:3 — *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:8 — *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent and praiseworthy — think about such things.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**REPENTANCE**

It is not enough to be sorry for our sins. Without an attitude of repentance — a sincere desire to *put off* the sin and *put on* godliness — we will not experience victory over that particular problem. To repent before the Lord is not just being sorry we offended Him and others; it is sincerely desiring to change the heart attitude and thoughts that caused the sinful behavior.

I JOHN 1:9 — *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

ISAIAH 55:7 — *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.*

PSALM 51:17 — *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

I JOHN 2:1 — *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

II CHRONICLES 7:14 — *If my people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

PROVERBS 28:18 — *He whose walk is blameless is kept safe, but he whose ways are perverse will suddenly fall.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

RESPONSIBILITY

In Romans Chapter 6 there are four key words which indicate the Believer’s personal responsibility in relation to God’s sanctifying work:

- (1) To **KNOW** the facts of our union and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (vs 3, 6, 9);
- (2) To **RECKON** or count these facts to be true concerning ourselves (v 11);
- (3) To **YIELD**, or present ourselves once for all as alive from the dead for God’s possession and use (vs 13, 16, 19);
- (4) To **OBEY** in realization that sanctification can proceed only as we are obedient to the will of God as revealed in His Word (vs 16-17).

ROMANS 6:3-19 — Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

⁴ We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

⁵ If we have been united with Him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

⁶ **For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—**

⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him.

⁹ **For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him.**

¹⁰ The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God.

¹¹ **In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

¹³ **Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness.**

¹⁴ For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

¹⁶ **Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?**

¹⁷ **But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.**

¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

¹⁹ **I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.**

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**RESTORATION —****Spiritual restoration for the penitent:**

PSALMS 51:12 — Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

ISAIAH 57:18 — I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him, ...

JEREMIAH 3:22 — “Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding.”

JEREMIAH 30:17 — “But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,” declares the LORD, ...

HOSEA 14:4 — “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.”

MICAH 7:19 — You will again have compassion on us; You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

RESURRECTION

The New Testament consistently teaches hope in the resurrection of the Believer based upon the resurrection of Christ as the “firstborn from the dead.”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-28 — *But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

¹³*If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.*

¹⁴*And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.*

¹⁵*More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that He raised Christ from the dead. But He did not raise Him if in fact the dead are not raised.*

¹⁶*For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.*

¹⁷*And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.*

¹⁸*Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.*

¹⁹*If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.*

²⁰*But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

²¹*For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.*

²²*For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*

²³*But each in His own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when He comes, those who belong to Him.*

²⁴*Then the end will come, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.*

²⁵*For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.* ²⁶*The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

²⁷*For He “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God Himself, who put everything under Christ.*

²⁸*When He has done this, then the Son Himself will be made subject to Him who put everything under Him, so that God may be all in all.*

COLOSSIANS 1:18-19 — *And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy.*

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18 — *We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.*

¹⁵*According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.*

¹⁶*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven,*

with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

¹⁷*After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*

¹⁸*Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

1 PETER 1:3-5 — *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

JOHN 14:1-3 — *Jesus said: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. ²In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am.”*

Resurrection includes:

- **A Transformed body** —

PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21 — *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.*

- **New dwelling** —

2 CORINTHIANS 5:2 — *Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, ...*

- **New clothing** —

2 CORINTHIANS 5:4 — *For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.*

REVELATION 6:11 — *Then each of them was given a white robe, ...*

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

THE ROMANS ROAD TO SALVATION is a way of explaining the good news of salvation using verses from the Book of Romans. It is a simple yet powerful method of explaining why we need salvation, how God provided salvation, how we can receive salvation, and what are the results of salvation.

1. We have all sinned. We have all done things that are displeasing to God. There is no one who is innocent.

ROMANS 3:23 — “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

Here’s what sin looks like in our lives:

ROMANS 3:10-18 — As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;
¹¹there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.
¹²All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”
¹³“Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips.”
¹⁴“Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”
¹⁵“Their feet are swift to shed blood;
¹⁶ruin and misery mark their ways,
¹⁷and the way of peace they do not know.”
¹⁸“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

The punishment that we have earned for our sins is death. Not just physical death, but eternal death!

2. The consequences of sin:

ROMANS 6:23a — “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord ...”

Jesus Christ died for us! Jesus’ death paid for the price of our sins. Jesus’ resurrection proves that God accepted Jesus’ death as the payment for our sins. All we need to do is believe in Him, trusting His death as the payment for our sins — and we will be saved!

3. *ROMANS 6:23b* — “...but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

ROMANS 5:8 — “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

4. *ROMANS 10:9* — “... that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

ROMANS 10:13 — “... for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins and rescue us from eternal death. Salvation, the forgiveness of sins, is available to anyone who will trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

5. The results of salvation.

ROMANS 5:1 — “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Through Jesus Christ we can have a relationship of peace with God.

ROMANS 8:1 — “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Because of Jesus’ death on our behalf, we will never be condemned for our sins. Finally, we have this precious promise of God:

ROMANS 8:38-39 — “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

SALVATION

Salvation means deliverance from sin and the consequences of sin.

***MATTHEW 1:21** — She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.*

***ROMANS 5:8** — But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

***EPHESIANS 2:8-9** — For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*

***ROMANS 10:9-13** — That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for, Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

***JOHN 1:12-13** — Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.*

***JOHN 3:16** — For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

SANCTIFICATION (NOT “RECOVERY”)

- **IN POSITION, believers are eternally set apart for God by redemption —**

HEBREWS 10:10 — *And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Positionally, therefore, Believers are “saints” and “holy” from the moment of believing —

PHILIPPIANS 1:1 — *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus ...*

HEBREWS 3:1 — *Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.*

- **IN EXPERIENCE, Believers are being sanctified by the work of the Holy Scriptures —**

JOHN 17:17 — *[Jesus prayed to the Father:] “Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is Truth.”*

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18 — *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-24 — *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.*

- **IN CONSUMMATION, the Believer’s complete sanctification awaits the appearing of the Lord —**

EPHESIANS 5:27 — *... and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

1 JOHN 3:2 — *Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

SANCTIFICATION: GOD’S WORK —

- **We are sanctified by God the Father —**

JUDE 1 — *To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ:*

- **God the Son —**

HEBREWS 2:10-11 — *In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.*

- **God the Holy Spirit —**

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13 — *But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.*

1 PETER 1:2 — *... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: ...*

- **Perfect holiness is God’s command and purpose —**

1 THESSALONIANS 4:7 — *For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.*

- **Sanctification is a process that continues during our lives as believers —**

HEBREWS 10:14 — *...because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*

- **Only after death are the saints referred to as “perfect” —**

HEBREWS 12:22-23 — *But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, ...*

THE BELIEVER’S WORK — Numerous commands in the Bible imply that Believers are also responsible in the process of sanctification.

- **We are commanded to “be holy” —**

LEVITICUS 11:44 — *I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.*

1 PETER 1:15-16 — *But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

- **To “be perfect” —**

MATTHEW 5:48 — *Jesus said: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

- **To “present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness” (Romans 6:19).**

1 THESSALONIANS 4:3-5 — *“This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God.”* More ...

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

- **God the Holy Spirit —**

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13 — But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

1 PETER 1:2 — ... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: ...

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- **Only after death are the saints referred to as “perfect” —**

HEBREWS 12:22-23 — But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**SATAN**

The day we receive Christ as our Savior, we also enter into the realm of spiritual warfare with the enemy. He will do everything in his (limited) power to turn us into doubting, defeated, joyless Christians.

LUKE 4:1-2a — Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days He was tempted by the devil.

(How did Jesus respond to the temptations of the devil? Read Luke 4:1-15.)

LUKE 22:31-32 — Jesus said: “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

MATTHEW 26:41 — Jesus said: “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

1 PETER 5:8 — Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

JAMES 4:7 — Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

EPHESIANS 6:11 — Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.

1 JOHN 5:19 — We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

SELF-CONTROL

Even the occasional use of drugs and alcohol weakens the body and mind, and our resistance to the enemy’s spiritual attacks. We must be alert in order to discern and do God’s will.

***1 PETER 1:13** — Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

***1 PETER 4:7** — The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.*

***1 PETER 5:8** — Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

***1 THESSALONIANS 5:6-8** — So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.*

***TITUS 2:1-6** — You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled.*

***TITUS 2:12** — It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, . . .*

***GALATIANS 5:22-24** — 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.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”**SELF-DENIAL**

As Christians, we have two natures — the old and the new. To grow in Christ, we must say NO to the flesh (the old nature) and YES to Christ who lives within, our new spiritual nature.

***GALATIANS 2:20** — I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

***1 PETER 2:11** — Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

***EPHESIANS 4:22-24** — You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

***ROMANS 13:14** — Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

***LUKE 9:23** — Then he [Jesus] said to them all: “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”*

***1 CORINTHIANS 9:27** — 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.*

(Read Chapter 9 and run the race with the Apostle Paul.)

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

SELF-EXAMINATION

We must examine ourselves — our heart attitudes, thoughts and motives — in the light of God’s Word, and not rely on our feelings and the standards of the world we live in.

***I CORINTHIANS 11:31-32** — But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.*

***PSALM 4:4** — In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.*

***PSALM 19:12** — Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.*

***PSALM 26:2** — Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; . . .*

***PSALM 119:59** — I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes.*

***PSALMS 139:23-24** — Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

***HAGGAI 1:7** — This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways.”*

***II CORINTHIANS 13:5** — Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?*

***GALATIANS 6:3** — If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

***JEREMIAH 17:9-10** — The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? “I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”*

***PSALMS 11:4-5** — The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD is on His heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; His eyes examine them. The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence His soul hates.*

***PSALM 17:3** — Though You probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.*

***PSALM 26:2** — Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; . . .*

***LAMENTATIONS 3:40** — Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.*

***I CORINTHIANS 11:28** — A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.*

***ACTS 17:11** — Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

***PROVERBS 5:21** — For a man’s ways are in full view of the LORD, and He examines all his paths.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

SIN — THE FACT

**SIN! Is it for real?
Or is it just a figment of God’s imagination?
The Bible is clear:**

ROMANS 3:10 — *As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one.”*

ROMANS 3:20 — *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

ROMANS 3:23 — *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, . . .*

ECCLESIASTES 7:20 — *There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.*

JEREMIAH 17:9 — *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*

ISAIAH 64:6 — *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

I JOHN 1:8 — *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

JAMES 4:17 — *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.*

ROMANS 6:23 — *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I CORINTHIANS 15:56 — *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.*

I JOHN 1:10 — *If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives.*

Personal Notes:

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SIN — GOD’S PENALTY

In God's divine plan, sin is eliminated through death. God, who is absolute holiness, cannot commune with sin.

The Old Testament describes the way man could atone for his sin in order to be acceptable to God — through the sacrifice of animals.

When God, because of His love (agape) for all sinners, sacrificed His Son for the sins of us all, He paid the ultimate price: death on the cross. When Christ rose from the grave, He gave us the way of eternal life.

What is our sacrifice? To be born-again in the Spirit, and to die to our sinful nature by faith in Christ.

***EZEKIEL 18:4** — For every living soul belongs to Me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to Me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.*

***EZEKIEL 18:20** — The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.*

***JAMES 1:15** — Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

***ROMANS 6:23** — For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

***ROMANS 14:12** — So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

***REVELATION 20:12** — And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.*

Personal Notes:

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SIN — GOD’S REMEDY

ISAIAH 53:2-12 —

Prophecy Concerning the Jesus, the Messiah

He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted.

But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth.

By oppression and judgment He was taken away. And who can speak of His descendants?

For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He was stricken.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, though He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.

Yet it was the LORD’S will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and though the LORD makes His life a guilt offering, He will see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

After the suffering of His soul, He will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by His knowledge My righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will give Him a portion among the great, and He will divide the spoils with the strong, because He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

JOHN 3:16 — *For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

JOHN 3:3 — *In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”*

ROMANS 5:1 — *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, . . .*

ROMANS 6:23 — *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

JOHN 14:6 — *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*

ACTS 4:12 — *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*

LUKE 19:10 — *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.*

I CORINTHIANS 15:3-5 — *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.*

ROMANS 10:9-10 — *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

See next page: *PUT-ON VICTORIOUS LIVING . . .*

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SIN — PUT ON VICTORIOUS LIVING

JOSHUA 24:15 KJV — *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*

ROMANS 12:2 — *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.*

ACTS 3:19 — *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, . . .*

ACTS 16:31 — *They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”*

ACTS 20:21 — *I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.*

JOHN 1:12 — *Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—*

ROMANS 10:9-10 — *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

ROMANS 10:13 — *For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

STUMBLING BLOCKS

Just be careful!

I CORINTHIANS 8:9 — *Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.*

I PETER 2:7-8 — *Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,” And, “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.*

I CORINTHIANS 10:7-12 — *Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.” We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!*

EPHESIANS 5:3-10 — *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them. 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.*

I CORINTHIANS 6:12 — *“Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything.*

I CORINTHIANS 10:23-24 — *“Everything is permissible”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible”—but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.*

I CORINTHIANS 8:9 — *Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

SUBMISSION TO GOD

Whatever we do willingly and as unto the Lord, even the unpleasant tasks, can become blessings.

COLOSSIANS 3:23-24 — *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

ISAIAH 1:18-19 — *“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; ...”*

I CHRONICLES 28:9 — *“And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve Him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.”*

PSALMS 51:10-12 — *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13 — *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.*

ROMANS 12:1-2 — *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.*

II CORINTHIANS 8:10-12 — *And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.*

JOSHUA 24:15 — *But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.*

Personal Notes:

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SUFFERING

The Bible says we can expect to suffer in this life. However, we need not view suffering as punishment. Rather, we can be thankful that we have been chosen to suffer for the glory of Christ.

JOHN 16:33b — *Jesus said: “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

PHILIPPIANS 1:29 — *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him, . . .*

PHILIPPIANS 3:10 — *I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, . . .*

I PETER 2:20-21 — *But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.*

I PETER 4:12-13 — *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed.*

ROMANS 8:18 — *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

I PETER 5:10 — *And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

I CORINTHIANS 10:13 — *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

Personal Notes:

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THE TONGUE

The tongue — though a very small member of the body — has enormous power for good or evil, and must be continually controlled.

***JAMES 3:7-8** — All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

***PROVERBS 12:18** — Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*

***PROVERBS 12:25** — An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.*

***PROVERBS 21:23** — He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.*

***1 PETER 3:10** — For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.”*

***PROVERBS 13:3** — He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.*

***COLOSSIANS 4:6** — Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

***PSALM 141:3** — Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.*

***EPHESIANS 4:31-32** — Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

***PSALM 19:4** — Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

TRIALS

Trials may be viewed as a refining process the Lord uses to strengthen us. At the same time, our faith is tested to see whether we turn to God as our source of strength and peace.

JAMES 1:2-4 — *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

ROMANS 5:3-4 — *Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

ROMANS 8:28 — *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.*

JOB 1:21b — *The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.*

JOB 23 10 — *But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold.*

II CORINTHIANS 4:8-9 — *We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.*

II CORINTHIANS 4:16-17 — *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

PROVERBS 3:5-6 — *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

THE HOLY TRINITY

The doctrine of the trinity means that within the being and activity of the one God there are three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Although the word trinity does not appear in the Bible, the three persons of the Godhead are mentioned together:

• **GREAT COMMISSION:**

MATTHEW 28:18-20 — Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

• **APOSTLES’ BENEDICTIONS:**

2 CORINTHIANS 13:14 — May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

1 PETER 1:1-2 — Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, strangers in the world, ... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

• **JESUS’ WORDS:**

JOHN 14:23-27 — Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. ²⁵All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

JOHN 15:26-27 — Jesus said: “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”

Personal Notes:

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TRUST IN GOD

God is 100% for us, not against us. If we seek Him, we can trust He will show us the paths to peace and joy.

ROMANS 8:31 — What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

PSALM 25:14 — The LORD confides in those who fear Him; He makes His covenant known to them.

PSALM 33:18 — But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His unfailing love, . . .

PSALM 34:7 — The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and He delivers them.

PSALM 34:9 — Fear the LORD, you His saints, for those who fear Him lack nothing.

PSALM 145:19 — He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him; He hears their cry and saves them.

PROVERBS 1:7 — The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

PROVERBS 3:5-6 — Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

PROVERBS 9:10 — The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

PROVERBS 22:4 — Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 — Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

**VENGEANCE —
ANGER, RESENTMENT, BITTERNESS**

We must not take it upon ourselves to “get even” with anyone. The Lord, who sees and knows all things, will be our vindicator (defender).

PROVERBS 20:22 — *Do not say, “I’ll pay you back for this wrong!” Wait for the LORD, and He will deliver you.*

PROVERBS 24:28-29 — *Do not testify against your neighbor without cause, or use your lips to deceive. Do not say, “I’ll do to him as he has done to me; I’ll pay that man back for what he did.”*

ROMANS 12:14-21 —
Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is Mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.

On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

1 PETER 3:8-12 —
Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.

He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

MATTHEW 5:38-40 — *Jesus said: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.”*

EPHESIANS 4:31-32 — *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

MATTHEW 5:43-48 —
Jesus said: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

MATTHEW 7:1, 5 — *Jesus said: “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.” “You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

Personal Notes:

“Scripture Topics for Fellowship/Support Meetings”

VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

Put off the flesh and put on faith! Temptation will always be a factor in our lives. But we have the power of Christ and His Holy Spirit within us. Let's BE who we are in Him!

EPHESIANS 5:18 — For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light . . .

I CORINTHIANS 10:13 — No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

I PETER 5:8-9 — Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

JAMES 1:12 — Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.

JOHN 16:33 — Jesus said: “I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:13 — I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.

I JOHN 4:4 — You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

I JOHN 5:3-4 — This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

GALATIANS 5:16 — So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Personal Notes:

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WITNESSING

The Holy Spirit empowers us so we can be ambassadors for Christ. If we are submitted to Jesus and His ways, we will be eager to fulfill our responsibility to share the Gospel.

MATTHEW 4:19 — *“Come, follow Me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”*

MATTHEW 5:16 — *Jesus said: “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

I PETER 3:15 — *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ...*

ACTS 1:8 — *Jesus said: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

ACTS 4:20 — *“For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”*

ACTS 16:31 — *They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”*

II CORINTHIANS 5:20 — *We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

Personal Notes:

“The Truth Shall Make You Free”

By Reverend Pyle (Substance Abusers Victorious, © 1991; Reprinted with Permission)

THE PROBLEM OF A.A. AND THE CHURCH

It is not our purpose to discredit the organization Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). But let the world keep it's AA – it has absolutely no place in the Church. In fact, as will be shown, the only way AA and the Church can work together is for the Church to reject the authority of the Scriptures, or for AA to abandon much of its philosophy concerning God, much of its Twelve Steps, and parts of its traditions.

For the Church to refer people to AA because “AA has the most effective program” is not much different than sending the evangelism committee to the Jehovah’s Witnesses because they have the most effective door-to-door evangelism program.

We preach, *“Do not be bound together with unbelievers, for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14)*. Then we send new or weak Christians to smoke-filled AA meetings where profanity is acceptable; where Christianity is put down as “judgmental,” “ineffective” or “no better than any other religion;” where members are told they may define God to suit themselves, but if they mention Jesus Christ they are either laughed at or expected to change their God. **This is an abomination!**

As a Christian, one cannot straddle the fence and keep a foot in both camps, i.e., proclaim submission to the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet endorse or give credibility to an organization that’s teachings are openly contrary to Scripture. **This is a reproach to the Gospel — it is “friendship with the world” (James 4:4).**

A SPIRITUAL PROGRAM?

AA claims to be a spiritual program. As Christians we understand “spiritual” to mean things that have their origin with God and which are in harmony with His character; the purposes of God revealed in the Gospel by the Holy Spirit; or men in Christ who walk so as to please God.

Observe what AA literature says about spirituality:

“We are told from the very beginning that AA is a spiritual program, but many of us are perplexed by the meaning of the word. There is no mystery in the spiritual side of AA. As a matter of fact, the good active member is practicing Christianity at all times whether or not he knows it.”¹

This sounds like another Gospel.

“Boiled down to its essence, Christianity, in fact spirituality, is simply LOVE. When you perform an act of pure love, something completely unselfish with no hope of gain or reward, you are participating in AA’s Spiritual program.”²

“Too often we hear an AA remark, ‘I think this is a wonderful program but I can’t understand the spiritual angle. To them the religion otherwise known as Alcoholics Anonymous is something complex, abstract and awesome.’³

“But, asks the alcoholic, where can I find a simple step-by-step religious guide? The Ten Commandments give us a set of Thou Shalts and Thou Shalt Nots; The Twelve Steps of AA give us a program of dynamic action; but what about a spiritual guide? Of course the answer is that by following the Ten Commandments and Twelve Steps to the letter we automatically lead a spiritual life, whether or not we recognize it.”⁴

The impression one gets from this is that AA is superior to Christianity. In any event, the Ten Commandments were not given as a “guide.” This thought reduces them to the Ten Optional Suggestions.

“The spiritual life is by no means a Christian monopoly.”⁵

“He has lost faith, if he ever had it, in the power of religion to help him. But each of the miracles accomplished by Alcoholics Anonymous is a spiritual awakening.”⁶

The problem is not a matter of “losing one’s faith.” Because of the rebelliousness and wickedness in one’s heart, a choice is made against following God, and instead, following after the bottle. This certainly is not God’s fault. Alcoholics Anonymous, as such, performs no miracles.

On the one hand, AA states that it is not a church or religion. In practice, however, many of its members consider it to be a church. In fact, there are groups that meet on Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings. Note some quotes from AA literature:

“Religion, later to be replaced by AA, is entirely out of the picture...”⁷

“Translating into terms of the alcoholic, we substitute ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS for RELIGION.”⁸

“In the early days, the kitchen was the Church of Alcoholics Anonymous.”⁹

“...To them the religion otherwise known as Alcoholics Anonymous...”¹⁰

WHO IS GOD?

As Christians we believe:

“There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; and withal most just and terrible in His judgments; hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.”

Westminster Catechism

We believe God’s decrees are absolute and unconditional; that He is subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent.

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever.” (Romans 11:33-36)

He does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. God is holy and hates all sin. He is under no obligation to any of His creatures — especially to those who are in rebellion against Him.

The God of AA (the higher power, or “god as I understand him”) is a figment of human imagination. In reality, those who hold to such notions are atheists because there is *no possible alternative* between an absolutely supreme God and no God at all!

Is your life based totally on God?

Do you seek His will in your life?

Do you desire to know Him better?

If not, you’re still in darkness!

If it means nothing to you that Jesus, God’s Son, came out of heaven to be born as a baby in a stable, to live the life of a man, to endure the Cross, dying as your substitute for the sins you committed, you’re in darkness. You’re dead spiritually, and *God’s wrath is upon you!*

Contrast the one, true God — the God of the Bible — with the God of AA:

“The alcoholic, objecting at first to the spiritual factor, is urged to keep an open mind, meanwhile treating his own AA group as a power greater than himself... He begins to form his own concept of God. This is what most AAs are trying to say when they talk about a spiritual experience. They mean a certain quality of personality change which, in their belief, could not have occurred without the help and presence of the creative Spirit of the universe.

“Almost every one of our members will tell you that while he may not go along with a clergyman’s concept of God, he has developed one of his own on which he can positively depend — one which works for him.”¹¹

“But I believe that conscience in almost anybody’s language is a synonym for God.”¹²

“There was only one man on this earth who was perfect and even HE did not think so. We can only try to grow each day in his ways.”¹³

“Every member of Alcoholics Anonymous may define God to suit himself. God to him may be the Christian God defined by the Thomism of the Roman Catholic Church. Or the stern Father of the Calvinist. Or the Great Manitou of the American Indian. Or the Implicit Good assumed in

the logical morality of Confucius. Or Allah, or Buddha, or the Jehovah of the Jews. Or Christ, the Scientist. Or no more than the Kindly Spirit implicitly assumed in the atheism of a Col. Robert Ingersoll... But as far as the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous is concerned, a pathological drunk can call God 'It' if he wants to, and is willing to accept 'Its' aid. If he'll do that, he can recover."¹⁴

"To cure your spiritual illness, you'll have to admit God. Name your own God, or define Him to suit yourself."¹⁵

"At this late stage, common sense, if I'll use it, will lead me to weigh each large or little issue on the scale of my conscience, which is the voice of my God."¹⁶

"When it was suggested to us as a step in this program, that we turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him, there were many of us who rebelled — determining that as between the extreme ruin from the bottle and the boredom of evangelism, we preferred the former."¹⁷

"(The) first step toward doing that job that God wants us to do is for us to live AA, for us to practice the principles of the recovery program in all our affairs, for us to give the basic principles of AA not only to our fellow alcoholics, but to the world at large."¹⁸

"Some religious organizations label the alcoholic a sinner and attempt to solve his drinking problem by saving his soul, but with little success."¹⁹

"...it is my sincere belief that God has saved us through AA because He has a job for us to do."²⁰

"AA members do not always get what they want in life. No member gets all he wishes or prays for... His fondest wishes and most intense prayers are gratified only when they are in harmony with his daily thoughts and his constructive AA actions."²¹

The second tradition of AA states: "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself' in our group conscience..."

The above teachings concerning God, were they taught by a church, would be branded as heresy. Much of it is blasphemous. This is the type of teaching that one can expect to receive in the AA recovery program. *As Jesus said in Mark 7:6-7, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men."*

Is it right to expose new or weak Christians to this kind of teaching?

CONVERSION

The founders of AA were involved in the Oxford Group which was a non-denominational, theologically conservative, evangelically styled group. It is often mentioned that co-founder Bill Wilson had a conversion experience. One AA member put it this way:

"When Bill felt lost and abandoned and prayed for help, he had an experience similar to that of St. Paul and Mohammed."²²

Note in his own words, Wilson's description of this experience:

"In his helplessness and desperation, Bill cried out, 'I'll do anything, anything at all!' He had reached a point of total, utter deflation — a state of complete, absolute surrender.

"AA members do not always get what they want in absolute surrender. With neither faith nor hope, he cried, 'If there be a God, let Him show Himself!' 'What happened next was electric. 'Suddenly, my room blazed with an indescribably white light. I was seized with an ecstasy beyond description. Every joy I had known was pale by comparison. The light, the ecstasy — I was conscious of nothing else for a time.

"Then, seen in the mind's eye, there was a mountain. I stood upon its summit, where a wind blew. A wind, not of air, but of spirit. In great, clean strength, it blew right through me. Then came the blazing thought, You are a free man. I know not at all how long I remained in this state, but finally the light and the ecstasy subsided. I again saw the wall of my room. As I became more quiet, a great peace stole over me, and this was accompanied by a sensation difficult to describe. I became acutely conscious of a Presence which seemed like a veritable sea of living spirit. I lay on the shores of a new world. This, I thought, must be the great reality. The God of the preachers.'

"Savoring my new world, I remained in this state for a long time. I seemed to be possessed by the absolute, and the curious conviction deepened that no matter how wrong things seemed to be, there could be no question of the ultimate rightness of God's universe. For the first time, I felt that I really belonged. I knew that I was

loved and could love in return. I thanked my God, who had given me a glimpse of His absolute self. Even though a pilgrim upon an uncertain highway, I need be concerned no more, for I had glimpsed the great beyond.’

“Bill Wilson had just had his 39th birthday, and he still had half his life ahead of him. He always said that after that experience, he never again doubted the existence of God. He never took another drink.”²³

Notice that in this “conversion” experience, there is no mention of Jesus Christ or repentance of sin. Wilson goes on to explain that he read a book *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Written by William James, the psychologist, it suggests that the conversion experience can have “objective reality. Conversion does alter motivation, and does semi-automatically enable a person to be and to do the formerly impossible...”²⁴

“If the spirit of that great psychologist, William James, could be consulted, he’d doubtless refer us to his famous book *Varieties of Religious Experience* where personality change through the ‘educational variety of spiritual experience or conversion’ is so ably explored. Whatever this mysterious process is, it certainly seems to work, and with us who are on the way to the asylum or the undertaker, anything that works looks very, very good indeed.”²⁵

“Of course we speak little of conversion nowadays because so many people dread being God-bitten. But conversion, as broadly described by (William) James, does seem to be our basic process.”²⁶

SIN OR SICKNESS?

There is much controversy on the issue of whether alcoholism is a sin or a sickness. Generally speaking, Christians who believe in the authority and infallibility of the Scriptures strongly hold to the belief that the problem is sin.

Peer pressure is just as real to adults as it is to adolescents. Some Christian counselors, pastors, psychologists or psychiatrists, are faced with the dilemma of accepting the authority of Scripture on the one hand, or being accepted by their peers in their respective fields on the other. They want, or feel a need, to be accepted as professional or “in,” and not considered to be naive or religious fanatics.

It is both amusing and sad to watch them. Some try to sound “professional” and “expert,” and they pompously declare to the world that alcoholism is definitely a disease.

Some resort to double talk and call it “dis-ease,” which means nothing. Some say it’s both sin and sickness. They say it starts out as sin, but once a person passes over the undefined line and becomes addicted — when he loses control — he has a disease and is no longer responsible. This is absolute nonsense.

“Bill [Wilson], a co-founder of this organization (AA), tells how his work with alcoholics and with himself and his own problem succeeded when the emphasis was changed from sin to sickness.”²⁷

AA is very emphatic in its “disease” stance on alcoholism. The message is that alcoholics are in no way responsible for being alcoholic.

“We need not be ashamed that we have a disease. It is no disgrace. No one knows exactly why some people become alcoholic while others don’t. It is not our fault. We did not want to become alcoholics. We did not try to get this illness.”²⁸

“We did not suffer alcoholism just because we enjoyed it, after all. We did not deliberately, maliciously set out to do the things we were later ashamed of. We did them against our better judgment and instinct because we were really sick, and didn’t even know it.”²⁹

The American Medical Association declared alcoholism to be a disease in the 1950s. However, the American Medical Association is not our authority. God’s Word is!

Using current definitions of “disease,” almost anything can be called a disease. But remember, alcoholism only happens to people who drink. One third of all adults never drink, and these people can never become alcoholics.

The process starts as a result of a personal choice to drink. The process then deteriorates through drunkenness, self-deception and a myriad of related sins, to finally an unquenchable appetite for alcohol as a total enslavement.

God holds each of us accountable for the choices we make and for the moral patterns of life we elect to pursue. There are always consequences to our choices. Some are pleasant and desirable as a result of wise choices, while others are devastating and painful as a result of unwise choices. We

don't determine the nature of the consequences for poor choices. Likewise we don't know ahead of time our degree of susceptibility, or when we are about to slide past a point of no return.

But these things are certain: When God forbids drunkenness, and when He clearly warns us that drunkenness is sin, and when He tells us that we will reap what we sow, we can be 100 percent sure that if a person "sows" the seed of habitual drunkenness, sooner or later, there will be an abundant harvest of painful consequences. God, out of His infinite love and grace, will forgive our sins when we confess them. But, God, out of justice, cannot tolerate the sins of willful disobedience, regardless of who or what we try to blame. Therefore He may permit us to suffer severe consequences and pain as a result of our sins related to alcoholism.

It is good for us to be reminded that the sins committed which are related to alcoholism are no worse in God's sight than any other transgressions. Lies, gossip, unkindness, etc., are all sins which God hates. All offenses (sins) need to be confessed.

Sin against God is the basic issue that always has to be addressed first.

Satan continually seeks to divert our attention away from the issue of sin and personal accountability. If he can persuade us that alcoholism is a *disease* rather than *sin* — if he can convince us that the alcoholic is a helpless victim of a disease or genetic circumstance— instead of accepting personal responsibility; if he can encourage alcoholics to call upon some generic higher power that can be defined any way they want, instead of calling upon the one true God through Jesus Christ; or if he can get the alcoholic to rely on a secular support group like AA instead of the Church where they can be spiritually fed, nurtured, loved, upheld in prayer, and guided through a study of the Word of God — then he can successfully keep the alcoholic enslaved in the bondage of drunkenness and its related sins.

THE DISEASE EXCUSE

Alcoholism is said to be a disease because:

1. It is primary. It is not a symptom of something else.

(This is not true. It is actual a symptom of being a sinner. We sin — regardless of the particular sin — because we are sinners.)

2. Alcoholism is progressive. You use more and more and it gets worse. (So does sin!)
3. Alcoholism is chronic. You can never go back to it. (So is sin. Yield to it and you become controlled by it again.)
4. Alcoholism is fatal. Ultimately, it will kill you if you continue. (Sin is fatal — "the wages of sin is death...")
5. Alcoholism is treatable. (No it's not! Sin is not treatable. It must be punished. But Christ took the punishment. Keep in mind, God loves you very, very much. He offers His forgiveness regardless of what your sin may be — lying, stealing, gossiping, adultery, drunkenness, murder — no sin is beyond His ability to forgive and cleanse.)

The complaint is sometimes made: "Countless chemically dependant people within churches are not reaching out for help because they sense a judgmental attitude from their fellow Christians."

No Christian has a right to be judgmental. On the other hand, practicing sin is not to be tolerated within the Church (I Corinthians 5: 11-13). It is not judgmental (or unloving) to call sin, "sin" — especially when God's Word identifies it as such. Often, because of guilt, an individual thinks he senses a judgmental attitude in others, when in fact these so-called "judgmental Christians" may not even know he's chemically dependent.

It has also been said, "There are numerous references to drunkenness in the Bible, but nothing is ever mentioned about 'addiction' or 'alcoholism'." Of course the Bible never mentions addiction or alcoholism. These are relatively modern terms. The Greek word *methe* means habitual drunkenness, and Christ paid the penalty for alcoholism/drunkenness/*methe*.

It is said that the alcoholic drinks involuntarily. *This is nonsense!* Our hearts beat involuntarily and many of our other bodily functions are involuntary. But to say someone drinks involuntarily is less than truthful.

Alcoholism (drunkenness) is listed as a work of the flesh. **Galations 5:21 states:** “*that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” People don’t practice diseases. They do practice sin, however, and ultimately they run the strong risk of becoming enslaved. Drunkenness is always listed as sin (I Corinthians 5:11; 6:9-10; etc.) The Bible never excuses it, never suggests the slightest possibility that after one gets “hooked” that he will not be held responsible.

Advocates of the disease model admit their inability to cure patients. The reason is obvious. There can be no cure for a disease that doesn’t exist. Human beings cannot forgive sin. Treatment facilities can clean up a drunkard, but only the blood of Jesus can cleanse a drunkard.

GUILTY IS AS GUILTY DOES

An attempt is being made to create a guiltless society in which people are not responsible or accountable for their behaviors. The fact of sin is ignored and the behavior is described as a medical, or emotional, or social problem. Those who promote the disease concept state that by calling alcoholism a disease rather than a moral (sin) problem, it relieves the alcoholic of guilt, and he is more likely to get help.

But guilt is not necessarily a bad thing. Normal people feel guilty when they have done wrong. We must question it when men call evil “good,” or darkness “light,” or bitter “sweet,” or sin “sickness,” guilt “innocence.” Theoretically, they do so, so they won’t feel guilty — even though before a holy God, according to His Word, they are guilty.

Guilt is an uncomfortable feeling and can be a great motivator for changing behavior. God uses guilt to bring about conviction of sin. Conviction brings us to repentance, which brings us to Jesus for salvation.

In Jesus Christ, not only do we have forgiveness for sins, but we also have found a solution to the guilt problem. In Him we are justified — declared by God to be 100 percent righteous, our sins blotted out, washed away, the slate wiped clean. The old life is gone; we have received a new life, a new heart. We are new creations; the past is behind us. The guilt is gone.

BRAINWASHING?

Herbert Fingarette, in his book *Heavy Drinking (The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease)*, points out that no leading research authorities accept the classic disease concept. He quotes a leading research authority, “There is no adequate empirical substantiation for the basic tenets of the classic disease concept of alcoholism.”³⁰ It is interesting to note that proponents of the disease concept level their attacks toward Fingarette, but they do not have an answer for the research authorities.

The director of a treatment center takes issue with Fingarette by asking, “Why do thousands of experienced alcohol workers and recovering alcoholics accept that alcoholism is a disease?”

The answer is quite simple. The recovering alcoholics were brainwashed by alcohol workers, who either were brainwashed themselves, or knew they would be discredited and fired on the spot if they as much as even questioned the disease concept.

ALCOHOLISM IS BIG BUSINESS

Fingarette points out that “political and economic pressures as well as various constituencies within the health-services field have played a powerful role in actively promoting the scientifically discredited classic disease concept.”³² The treatment of alcoholism has become a very big business.

Most treatment programs are based on the disease concept of alcoholism. Consequently, their lobbying, public relations, and advertising propagate the myth of alcoholism as a disease. In 1990, more than \$14 billion was spent on alcohol treatment. Naturally, the very greedy health-care industry is going to do all it can do to keep the disease concept alive.

In addition to the health-care industry, the liquor industry has a real interest in promoting the disease concept, and finds the idea suits its interests. With the health-care industry declaring that alcohol is not the cause of alcoholism, the liquor industry is completely off the hook. It is free to say that the vast majority of people who drink are not at risk — that there are just a few who, for some unknown reason, catch the disease.

There are many who are involved in the rehabilitation of alcoholics who know that alcoholism is not a disease. They prefer to continue treating a non-existent disease and so they refer to the disease concept as a “useful lie.” They believe that the lie serves as a means of getting people with alcohol problems to go for help — that the end justifies the means.

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32). A “useful lie” has never set a person free.

Secular treatment centers loudly proclaim that an alcoholic is a person who drinks because he has to — he can’t not drink. He has lost his will. He has lost the ability to abstain.

At the same time, they insist that if this person who has lost control enters treatment, he must voluntarily abstain from drinking. If he is able to voluntarily abstain, then their whole notion that he has lost control is out the window.

If alcoholism were a disease, one would expect medical doctors to be heavily involved in the treatment process. Upon close examination, one will find that medical doctors are not involved and, in fact, medical doctors have limited knowledge in the treatment of alcoholism.

A study from London, based on 100 married male alcoholics, showed that those attending sophisticated treatment in a secular center fared no better than those who were told, “Stop drinking. Go back to work, and improve your marriage.” Both methods produced the same result at the end of a year: about one third of each group had improved.

The disease concept is out of time with the facts. It is interesting that alcoholism seems to be the only problem that is addressed over and over as the “disease of alcoholism.” You don’t hear cancer or measles referred to, over and over, as the “disease of cancer,” or the “disease of measles.” The advocates of the disease concept seem to be trying either to convince themselves or to brainwash the public.

The Church must get involved in the debate about the nature of alcoholism, its cause, to what extent it is a sin that requires repentance, and to what extent it is also a harmful behavior with which some people struggle more than

others. The care and “treatment” of alcoholics must not be left to those who disregard Biblical truths.

THE TWELVE STEPS

AA states: “AA’s Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole.”³²

The basic concept came from what Wilson and others had learned from the Oxford Group. The original steps openly mentioned God: “Came to believe GOD could restore us to sanity,” and, “Made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of GOD.” When Wilson presented the steps as he originally wrote them to his group, there were objections from atheists and agnostics who wanted the word “God” deleted. Consequently, the creed was changed to “Came to believe that a POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES could restore...” and “...turn our wills and our lives over to the care of GOD, AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM.”

From a Biblical perspective, there are problems with some of AA’s twelve steps. We understand that AA is trying to make its program available to anyone who has an alcohol problem, whether he is Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, [Atheism], etc. They call their program a spiritual program, but they define spiritual as something totally foreign to Biblical Christianity’s understanding of the term. To make the steps acceptable to all religions of necessity offends Christians, especially those who believe in the inerrancy of Scripture.

Step 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.

Alcohol isn’t the problem. God says the problem is sin. We may say we’re powerless, but God still holds us responsible for all sins we commit. Each of us will stand before God some day. [Those of us who are Christians will be judged for our Christian good works and will be rewarded accordingly.] How will unbelievers explain to Him that they were “powerless,” and that which He calls sin isn’t really sin, but is really a disease.

Step 2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

The problem is not insanity. The problem is sin. To say our problem is insanity relieves us of personal responsibility for our behavior. The only power that can help us is not a “higher power,” but the Highest Power, Jesus Christ. **“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly”** (Romans 5:6).

Step 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God, as we understood him.

This is a generic god. Man has never been given the prerogative to define God to suit himself. Only the God of the Bible can forgive sins, break the power of sin and offer the free gift of eternal life. To even suggest a possibility that another “god” or “higher power” has equal position or power or status with the God of the Bible is heretical and blasphemous.

It is New Age thinking. It is idolatry. Jesus said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me”* (John 14:6). *“...and there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). *“I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another...”* (Isaiah 42:8).

Step 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

God does the searching. *“Search me, O God, and know my heart... see if there be any hurtful way in me...”* (Psalm 135:23-24). *“I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give each man according to his ways, according to the result of his deeds”* (Jeremiah 17:10).

[In The Most Excellent Way, we encourage people to: *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified”* (2 Corinthians 13:5). It is important that we involve ourselves in the daily cleansing of our old nature.]

Step 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

The Bible says, **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** (1 John 1:9).

There is a subtle difference between “admit” and “confess.” To confess means we agree with God that what we did was wrong and we don’t want to do it again. “Admit” means simply, “Yes, I did it.” What is the “exact nature of our wrongs?” It is sin! If we “admit” this sin to Buddha, or the Kindly Spirit, or some generic higher power, have we accomplished anything? Can these gods forgive sin or cleanse us from our sin?

Step 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

You can’t blame your sin on a character defect. When a person becomes a Christian, he is a new creature. We are to live like new creatures. If we don’t, it is because we choose not to, and not because we have a character defect. God, through the Holy Spirit, enables and gives us the power to live the Christian life. To call it a “defect of character” waters down the seriousness of sin.

Step 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

God will forgive our sins. He will not prevent us from sinning if we’re determined to sin. Through the consequences of our behavior, through His chastisement, He can make us wish we hadn’t sinned. Basically His command to us is, “Stop sinning!” There is a tendency for people to get bitter toward God when they discover that He doesn’t physically prevent them from sinning.

Steps 8, 9, 10. There are no serious problems with these steps.

[For a Scriptural perspective on these steps, read *Rapha’s 12 Steps in the Wrong Direction: A Critique of Rapha’s 12-Step Program for Overcoming Chemical Dependency*, Robert McGee, et al, at www.christiandiscernment.com.]

Step 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.

Prayer and meditation may improve the conscious contact of a believer with God. But not for an unbeliever. The only message the Bible has for the unbeliever is *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved...”* (Acts 16:31). A generic god such as “higher power” can do

nothing, even for an unbeliever: *“They have mouths, but they do not speak; they have eyes, but they do not see, they have ears, but they do not hear; Nor is there any breath at all in their mouth” (Psalm. 135:16-17).*

God has already revealed His will for us in His written Word and He has *given* us the Holy Spirit who empowers us to carry it out.

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2) .

Step 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and practice these principles in all our affairs.

We don’t have “spiritual awakening” as a result of following formulas or steps; and formulas and steps will not lead a non-believer to “spiritual awakening,” no matter how long he follows them. These steps will not bring him into a relationship with Jesus Christ, since Jesus Christ is our only hope for a spiritual awakening.

There are problems in trying to align certain Scripture passages in an attempt to add credibility to the steps. In order to make them fit, the meaning of the Scripture is often “bent” or misapplied. An example of a misapplied Scripture is the use of Romans 13:1. *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers,”* is used as a proof text to justify the reference to “a power greater than ourselves” that “could restore us to sanity,” as per Step 2. The Romans 13 passage refers to government, while Step 2 is referring to a self-defined god.

The Twelve Steps of AA came from the Oxford Group — not from the Bible as some would have you believe.

“The twelve steps of AA were in essence an evolution of man’s experience for many ages. They are truly the Christian code restated so that they can be more practically applied.”³³

“It is not easy for an alcoholic to practice the principles of the Twelve Steps as our founders suggested they should be practiced. But, in doing so, we will, to the best of our ability, be conforming with God’s will each day of our lives on earth.”³⁴

Some would have you believe they either came from God or are

equal with God’s Word.

“God said if I didn’t think He had a large hand in that outfit (AA), I was still in the fog. As my new boss, He said the twelve steps were my tool to be used in building a smooth road from here on in.”³⁵

“By following the Ten Commandments and Twelve Steps to the letter we automatically lead a spiritual life, whether or not we recognize it.”³⁶

“But Christ didn’t shut Himself away from the world. He went out into the highways and byways, the length and breadth of Palestine to cure the sick, to give sight to the blind, cheer the down-trodden, to give the world the principles, many of which our founders have summed up in the Twelve Steps.”³⁷

Various ministries and organizations recognize a doctrinal or theological problem with AA’s Twelve Steps. Some change a few of the words so as to “Christianize” them. Others have developed their own twelve steps, completely different from those of AA.

Certainly there is nothing inherently wrong with “twelve steps” or “ten steps” or “ninety-nine steps” if that’s what an organization wants. But why should the Church borrow anything from the world?

The world, which is in enmity with God, has absolutely nothing we, as Christians, want. Stick with God’s Word. Everything the alcoholic needs to know in order to have victory is found in God’s Word. He will also discover that God is interested in giving him victory over *ALL* sin — not just drunkenness.

SPIRITUALISM & PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

The founders of AA were involved in spiritualism and psychic phenomena.

This seems inconsistent with other aspects of their lives. For example, Bill Wilson urged his friends and “recovered” alcoholics to either join or rejoin a church.

Dr. Bob had morning devotions consisting of prayer, Bible study and meditation. He apparently was known for his prayer life — numerous people requested him to pray for them.

“I was always glad to think that I was included in those prayers,’ said Bill. ‘And I sort of depended on him to get me into heaven. Bob was far ahead of me in that sort of activity.’”³⁸

But Bill had a persistent fascination and involvement with psychic phenomena.

“As early as 1941 Bill and his wife were holding regular Saturday spiritualist sessions, psychic experiments and sessions with an Ouija board.”³⁹

“A man named Tom and his wife were regular members of spiritist activities. He states, ‘Bill and Dr. Bob believed vigorously and aggressively. They were working away at the spiritualism, it was not just a hobby. And it related to AA.’ According to Tom, Bill never did anything that was not in some way connected with AA and with his own spiritual growth.”⁴⁰

In letters Bill wrote in 1935 from Akron to his wife, he mentions séances and other psychic events. He was staying in Akron with Dr. Bob.

Wilson’s psychic experiences are described in the AA World Service Book *PASS IT ON (The Story of Bill Wilson and How the AA Message Reached the World)*.⁴¹

What are we to make of all this? On the one hand, there is prayer, Bible study and church affiliation. On the other hand, there is the serious dabbling in psychic phenomena — the Ouija board, séances and other “contacts” with the dead — which most Christians consider to be Satanic. These activities seemed to have taken place at about the same time as the founding of AA (1935), and continued through the formative years (into the 1940s).

To those who believe that AA is God-inspired we say, it is extremely doubtful that a holy God would inspire a “new truth” about victorious living to men whose occultist practices are contrary to the Word of God — and then transmit so-called “truth” to His people through them. ♥

**“The Truth Shall Make You Free”
Jesus is Truth!**

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**“Him [Jesus] we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom,
that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.
To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.
Colossians 1:28-29 NKJV**

ADDICTION: Sin or Disease?

WE HAVE A NEW-YEAR RESOLUTION FOR 2009 (and thereafter) for the ministry of “The Most Excellent Way”: we are no longer going to be timid about the Word of God. Have we been timid? Yes.

Recognizing that we are in the midst of a spiritual battle for souls, we must honor God and His Word above all things, and speak the Truth in love.

We recognize that most of the people who come into “The Most Excellent Way” are familiar with, or have been indoctrinated with, the “scientific conclusion” that they have a disease. The disease conclusion is embraced by the legal system, medical community, government agencies, healthcare community, recovery industry, Alcoholics Anonymous programs, residential programs, prison programs and psychological therapies.

We have not entered into the controversy about whether addiction is sin or disease. Whatever way we may define addiction, **Jesus is the solution! He heals disease! AND He provides freedom from the bondage of sin!**

Since 1986, by God’s grace, thousands — perhaps tens of thousands — of addicts have been set free from their slavery to drugs and alcohol by attending this ministry. We offer them hope for a new and changed life by faith *in* and obedience *to* Jesus Christ. We offer an eternal perspective on life, not just a means to get clean and sober in this life. We know what it is to be restored by God, our Creator. Jesus is the Rock of “The Most Excellent Way”!

Many church leaders who are sensitive to the spiritual needs of their congregants and people in their community have stepped up and addressed addiction with Biblical truth, seasoned with love and compassion. They have allowed individuals who God has restored and made new in Christ to reach out with this ministry to those still in bondage.

Other church leaders believe the only way to help addicts is to integrate man’s philosophies with Biblical truth.

Here’s a bold statement. **Jesus said: “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather**

with Me scatters” (Luke 11:23 NJKV).

It is impossible to be neutral in this spiritual war — neutrality means standing against Him. There are two spiritual forces at work in the world, and we must choose between them. Satan is scattering and destroying, but Jesus Christ is gathering and building. We must make a choice, and if we choose to make no choice, we are really choosing against Him.

We live in a world obsessed with “tolerance.” Jesus never preached or exemplified tolerance for that which was contrary to the Scriptures of old or His Gospel message.

LUKE 6:46-49 — “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? ⁴⁷Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: ⁴⁸He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. ⁴⁹But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”

There will come a day when we all must stand before our Lord and Savior and give account of our works during our Christian life. Those of us who minister with the Word of God must be careful to present the pure Word.

“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1 NKJV).

It is our fervent prayer that those who minister in “The Most Excellent Way” are devoted to the pure Word of God that brings life, and that more abundantly!

Rev. Pyle’s essay — **“AA & the Church: The Truth Shall Make You Free”** — may help dispel any faith in, or devotion to, A.A. programs and the 12-step philosophy you may have. —TMEW

“Love, Acceptance & Forgiveness”**by Pastor Jerry Cook**

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In 1986, when “The Most Excellent Way” was experiencing its beginnings as a ministry to the chemically dependent, we providentially read “LOVE, ACCEPTANCE & FORGIVENESS” by Pastor Jerry Cook. Implementing the principles of love, acceptance and forgiveness produced much fruit in our personal lives, and in the ministry.

“The Most Excellent Way” is not just another Christianized secular recovery program. Our calling is to live, demonstrate and teach Biblical principles with eternal consequences. We pray that these excerpts from Pastor Cook’s book will encourage those of you who labor in ministering to the drug addicted individuals and their families.

~ Glenn Wright, Director



“When love, acceptance and forgiveness prevail, the Church of Jesus Christ becomes what Jesus was in the world: a center of love designed for the healing of broken people and a force for God.”

~ Pastor Jerry Cook

**“LOVE ONE ANOTHER”**

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers.

Anyone who does not love remains in death.”

1 John 3:14 NIV

According to this Scripture, the evidence that we’re children of God is love for other believers. If love is lacking we *remain in death* — we are not the sons and daughters of God, no matter what experience we claim in the past. Now that is both frightening and liberating. I know that I have passed from death unto life. How do I know it? I know I’m a child of God because I love.

That’s not some theological or philosophical statement. I actually do love the brethren, and that is evidence of God’s Spirit living in me. You see, in the natural [man] I don’t love anybody. My personal history is one of exploitation and manipulation of other people. But now I love them. Therefore, I know I am a child of God; my daily experience verifies it.

Today the church of Jesus Christ needs to make a bold commitment to love people and then dedicate itself to fulfilling that commitment. Our whole life-style should tell people, “If you come around here, we’re going to love you. No matter who you are or what you’ve done or how you look, smell or behave, we’re going to love you.”

We must remember that the word for love here is AGAPE. AGAPE love first exists, then it affects the emotions. For God so loved the world that He sat in heaven and had warm feelings? No, that’s nonsense. God so loved the world that He *gave*. That’s it!

AGAPE is a volitional [free will] commitment to another that motivates us to act on his [or her] behalf. Every time you find a corresponding action to the concept of AGAPE, it is a giving action.

Furthermore, AGAPE involves the kind of giving that cannot be compensated. That concept of love is quite foreign to our culture. The mentality of this world leads us to love and give only when there is reason to assume that our love will be reciprocated. This reciprocity is tested carefully during a “getting acquainted” time. If things look promising, if our approach meets with acceptance and response, we risk a bit further and a friendship is established.

***“If you come around here, we’re going to love you.
No matter who you are or what you’ve done or how you look,
smell or behave, we’re going to love you.”***

In the Kingdom of God we first love, then we move into acquaintance. In this world we first get acquainted, then we move into love sometimes. As a result, most people have many acquaintances and a few friends but they are dying from lack of love.

Love is commitment and operates independently of what we feel or do not feel. We need to extend this love to everyone who comes into our church [and The Most Excellent Way meeting]:

“Brother, I want you to know that I’m committed to you. You’ll never knowingly suffer at my hands. I’ll never say or do anything, knowingly, to hurt you. I’ll always in every circumstance seek to help you and support you. If you’re down and I can lift you up, I’ll do that. Anything I have that you need, I’ll share with you; and if need be I’ll give it to you. No matter what I find out about you and no matter what happens in the future, either good or bad, my commitment to you will never change. And there’s nothing you can do about it. You don’t have to respond. I love you, and that’s what it means.”

A church [and ministry] that can make that commitment to every person is a church that’s learning to love and a church that will be a force for God.

One of these people came to me and reminded me of the commitment I had made to him. In fact, he repeated it to me almost word for word. “I’ve been up all night in anticipation of talking to you.” he continued. “I have to tell you that I’ve blown it.” He then proceeded to describe the chaos in his life, his marriage and his ministry. As his shocking story unfolded, I found myself becoming angry and disgusted with him for blighting the name of Jesus and forfeiting his ministry so foolishly.

“Dear God,” I thought, “what have I gotten myself into? Can I really keep my commitment to this man? When he’s all done pouring himself out to me, can I totally accept him and not think any less of him?” I was not at all sure I could. But while he was speaking, a strange thing happened.

God gave me compassion for the man. When he was through, I said, “What you have told me is probably the most disgusting, despicable thing I can think of. I don’t know of anything more you could have done to make me reject you. You’ve left no stone unturned. But you need to know that the Holy Spirit is giving me the capacity to love [AGAPEO] you. And because I love you, and that love has been placed in my heart by the Holy Spirit, God loves you and offers you complete forgiveness.”

It was just like turning on a faucet the way the man began to weep. Then he prayed. On the basis of my love he asked God to forgive him. The outworking of all that over a period of time brought about the restoration of his home and his ministry, and now he is serving Christ.

He had to tell someone. And because I had made that commitment to him, he felt he could come to me. You see, he was at a point emotionally where he could not risk rejection but neither could he keep silent. Like many other hurting people, he desperately needed someone to love him and had almost nowhere to turn. No wonder a church [man or woman] that knows how to love becomes a force for God.



“ACCEPTANCE: LOVE IN ACTION”

A woman came to me one day and said she’d have to stop having Bible studies in her home. “That’s too bad,” I said. “Why?” “People are coming and smoking in our house,” she replied. “So?” I asked, puzzled. “It’s stinking up our new drapes,” she said. I was beginning to get the picture. “Do you want sterile drapes,” I asked, “or do you want to expose hurting people to the love of Jesus?”

*“Isn’t that fantastic?
Jesus spent His time with dirty,
filthy, stinking, bent sinners.”*

Love means accepting people the way they are for Jesus’ sake. Jesus hung around with sinners and if we’re too holy to allow people to blow smoke in our faces, then we’re holier than Jesus was. He didn’t isolate Himself in the synagogue. In fact, He mixed with sinners so much that the self-righteous got upset about it. “He’s friendly with some very questionable people,” they said.

And Jesus replied, *“Yes, because I didn’t come to minister to you religious leaders. I came to call sinners to repentance.”*

Isn’t that fantastic? Jesus spent His time with dirty, filthy, stinking, bent sinners. And when those kind of people find someone who will love and accept them, you won’t be able to keep them away.

Why do people go to the bar? They're looking for someone who will listen to them. So they get drunk and blow all their problems out on the bartender. He cries along with them and laughs along with them.

What are they looking for? They're looking for love and acceptance. But they can't come to the church because the church doesn't like drunks.

A young man phoned me early one morning and said, “I'm going to commit suicide.” I said, “Why are you talking to me?” He said, “Because I don't want to do it, but I don't know what else to do. I'm a heroin addict, and last night I nearly killed a man.” He told me the circumstances, how he'd been stopped from killing this man. He said, “I'm afraid to go home. I'm afraid to do anything. I'm totally out of control and the only thing I know to do is end my life.”

I asked him if we could get together. “No way,” he said. “I called a pastor a few months ago and he told me to come by his office. When I got there, he had the sheriff waiting to pick me up. I spent the next six months in jail. I made up my mind then I wasn't about to go to another creep preacher.”

***“Unreserved acceptance of people
should be a habit with us.”***

My heart broke. What could I do? I said, “Look, I'll go to my office right now. Give me 15 minutes. Then you drive by the church until you're satisfied that no one else is around. I'll stay there for three hours. If at any time during those three hours you want to risk coming in, I'll be the only one there.”

I waited at the church two and a half hours. Finally I heard the front door open, then a knock on my office door. I let him in. He gave his life to Christ right there. It was a powerful, beautiful kind of thing. The heart-breaking question is, why hadn't he found love and acceptance before in the one place on earth that's supposed to know how to love?

I know churches that have split because “long hairs” have come in. Pastors and elders who are afraid of long hair and bare feet are in the wrong business.

Does it really matter? The church should state, “We're going to love and accept people, and if you don't want to love people, you're in the wrong place. Because this church is going to love people.”

***“We're going to love and accept people,
and if you don't want to love people,
you're in the wrong place.”***

Unreserved acceptance of people should be a habit with us. There's no other way to get close enough to people to help them at the level of their deepest needs. When we cultivate the habit of accepting people, they open up to us, they like us, they trust us instinctively.

I was at the county courthouse ... one day when I spotted a young couple I recognized from our church — they were getting a marriage license. “Well, Pastor,” the young man said, “we've been shacking up

for about four years now, and we figured we might as well do it right. Say, . . . would you mind being a witness for us?”

I felt that every eye in the place was on me, a pastor who had just been identified as knowing young couples who were shacking up together. What was I to do? Say to the fellow, “Shh-shh, don’t let anybody hear them?” If people can’t be healed in our congregation, where should we send them? Someone has to be the end of the line for messed-up humanity. We are not in a popularity contest.

I accepted that brother. The point is, though, I had accepted him long before this encounter and my acceptance was so solid that he wasn’t ready to tell me the truth.

Because we are accepted IN the Beloved, we must be accepting OF the beloved. I can’t give up on you till God does, and He won’t! We’re safe with God, and we’ve got to be safe with one another. I’ve got to be safe with my brothers and sisters. I’ve got to be able to know that I can blow it and still be loved.

I’m only human, and you have no idea how human I am. You little realize the weakness and the frailty of the man who lives in this frame. But I know; I contend with it every day. I’m just mud, as you are. I’ve got to be able to fail and still be loved and accepted—by my wife, by my children, by my parishioners, by my parents. I simply cannot live with rejection. And that’s not because I’m on an ego trip but because I’m a person.



“ACCEPTANCE IS NOT LICENSE”

Earlier, I told about a fallen pastor who was restored to fellowship because he found love, acceptance and forgiveness at [our church]. A barrage of phone calls began coming to us at that time from irate pastors and people. They were terribly upset that our accepting him would be interpreted as license for what he had done. I suppose that is possible.

“Someone has to be the end of the line for messed-up humanity.”

Perhaps some people would be so blind. But they would be wrong to make that assumption. We were neither countenancing his sin nor trying to be noble and heroic in bucking the tide of sentiment against him. We were simply and plainly loving him.

A leading church official called . . . [and] asked, “Do you know what you’ve done?” I assured him that I most likely did not. “Well,” he said, “you’ve opened your doors to every broken-down pastor with ethical problems.” My answer to that is, “Praise the Lord.”

If they can’t come here, where can they go? Where do we refer them? If people can’t be healed in our congregation, where should we send them? Someone has to be the end of the line for messed-up humanity. We are not in a popularity contest. Jesus was crucified at the end of His ministry, and it was the equivalent of the local ministerial association that put Him on the cross. The religious community

may put you on the cross too. If so, pray that God will forgive them, for they know not what they do.

The very brothers who would crucify you may also fall some day, and when they do, they should be able to come to you and find love, acceptance and forgiveness. They should find a welcome and hear a voice saying, “Brother, I know you are hurting. In Jesus' name, come in.”

Never labor under the misconception that such acceptance breeds license. To the contrary, your very acceptance of a brother will make him strong. It will never confuse him in questions of right and wrong if your teaching and personal life-style establish clear standards.

Example: A person who uses profanity is not going to imagine you approve of such language — just that you accept him personally. As he hears your reverent speech and learns God's Word and, most important, comes to love God, he will understand clearly that profanity is wrong. But if you communicate personal rejection to such a person, he will never be around long enough to be touched by God through you.

The same principle applies in all our relationships with other people. Jesus accepts us though we have much in our lives that offends His holiness. His acceptance of us does not imply approval of our unworthy behavior. If, then, we are acceptable to Jesus, who do we think we are to reject others?



“FORGIVENESS: TO STOP PLAYING GOD”

*“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,
just as in Christ God forgave you.”
Ephesians 4:32 NIV*

I like Catherine Marshall's concept of forgiveness as she develops it in her book SOMETHING MORE. She suggests that forgiveness is releasing another from your own personal judgment. Taking your personal judgment off a person doesn't mean you agree with what he has said or done. It simply means you will not act as his judge. You will not pronounce a guilty verdict on him.

“But he was wrong,” you say.

“OK, but he's not standing under my judgment. I release him. To keep another under your personal judgment is to play God with him. The Word says **“It is mine to avenge, I will repay,” says the Lord**” **Romans 12:19 NIV**. And because He's going to repay, I don't have to.

“But he was wrong!” you say.

“Of course,” [the Lord may say].

“Well, are *You* going to do anything about it?” you ask.

“What do you think?”

“Are *You* going to strike him dead?” you ask.

“Do you want to play God? If so, remember this: The moment you step in to bring judgment onto that man [or woman], you will come under *My* judgment.”

“. . . forgiveness is releasing another from your own personal judgment.”

Forgive, and you’ll be forgiven. **Jesus said:** *“Do not judge, and you will not be judged.” Luke 6:37 NIV.*

Release people from your personal judgment! For unless I can be assured of your forgiveness, I cannot really open myself to you. You see, I know that sooner or later I will disappoint you and fail. Not by design or desire, but I am imperfect; I’m still under construction. I must know that you will not condemn me when my weaknesses and flaws and sins begin to show. I need the assurance of your forgiveness — a forgiveness with no bitter aftertaste.

Remember, you are not the Lord. None of us is to function as Lord in anybody’s life, ever, under any circumstances. There’s only one Lord, and that’s Jesus Christ. A pastor [and ministry leader] must never relate to his people as a “lord.” [We] are not obligated to get people to heaven. That’s the work of Jesus. [Our] obligation to people is first to love and accept and forgive them, and second, to bring them to ministry readiness by teaching them to do the same.

This reduces things to such simplicity. Pastors [and ministry leaders] are free to love their people. They don’t have to be guardians. They are not wardens of the flock but shepherds of the flock. There’s a big difference, and it’s the difference between loving and judging.

“None of us is to function as Lord in anybody’s life, ever, under any circumstances.”

When love, acceptance and forgiveness characterize our lives and our churches [and our ministry], the Lord will send us people who need to be made whole.

A pastor friend called me one day very upset at our church — He was irritated because some of his people had started coming to our church “You’re nothing but a bunch of garbage collectors.” As I thought about it, I realized he was telling the truth. That’s exactly what we are, garbage collectors. What were we before Jesus found us? Weren’t we all just garbage? Jesus finds us and recycles us.

I’ve seen human garbage become beautiful ... I’ve seen the stench of sin turned into the fragrance of heaven. That’s our business. We can’t worry about what critics think or say. Where is God going to send the “garbage” for recycling if He can’t put it on our doorstep? He’ll find a place. If we’re not open for business, someone else will be. But we want to be used of God.

When *love, acceptance and forgiveness* prevail, the church of Jesus Christ becomes what Jesus was in the world: a center of love designed for the healing of broken people, and a force for God.



“And because I love you, and that love has been placed in my heart by the Holy Spirit, God loves you and offers you complete forgiveness.” — Pastor Jerry Cook

The Most Excellent Way

MINISTRY TEAM APPLICATION/QUESTIONNAIRE

To be completed by Meeting Leader and Ministry Team Members

The Ministry Team of “The Most Excellent Way” is a dedicated group of men, women and family members across America and abroad, who have been delivered from alcohol and drug dependency. Involvement in this ministry is our opportunity to bring God’s love, acceptance and forgiveness to those in bondage: *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (II Corinthians 1:3-4).* If the Lord has called you to serve Him in “The Most Excellent Way”, we would like to know more about you. Your responses will be kept confidential! (Please make copies of this questionnaire for others on your ministry team to complete and forward to us.)

Today’s Date _____

• **Full Name** _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone — Home _____

Wk _____ Cell _____

Email _____

Marital Status _____

Mate’s Name _____

• How long have you been clean and sober? _____

Have you been involved with a drug treatment program or facility? _____ How long? _____

Program/facility name: _____

When did you become “born again”? _____

• **Name of Your Church** _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Pastor’s Name _____

Telephone _____

How long have you attended? _____

Do you participate in Bible studies? _____

• What ministries are you involved in (other than “The Most Excellent Way”), and for how long?

• Are you currently attending “The Most Excellent Way” support meetings? _____ How long? _____

• Are you currently on the Ministry Team? _____ If so, how long? _____

• What are your current responsibilities to the ministry?

• What is your personal evaluation of “The Most Excellent Way” ministry and resources? Please explain:

• If you are new to “The Most Excellent Way”, why do you want to join the Ministry Team?

• In what specific ways do you believe you would be/you are an effective member of the Ministry Team?

- Are you committed to the Word of God as the most effective “restoration” resource for drug addiction?

Why or why not? _____

- Do you agree that the Word of God is sufficient for creating a new, victorious life for *everyone* who believes in and surrenders to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior?

Please explain: _____

- **YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY:** Please write a brief, personal testimony focusing on the details of your conversion and restoration. (Please attach additional paper if you need more space to tell you story.)

- (1) How old were you when you accepted Jesus?
- (2) Who told you about Jesus?
- (3) What were you like before you became a Believer?
- (4) Why did you ask Jesus to forgive you?
- (5) How has being a Christian changed your life? Your attitude? Your behavior? Your goals? Relationships?
- (6) What is the most important thing Jesus has done for you?
- (7) How does your relationship with Jesus affect your daily life?

- “The Most Excellent Way” has permission to print my testimony in the ministry newsletter and/or on the website?

Yes ___ | No___ Anonymously:_____ With my name:_____ Signed: _____

*Thank you for helping us know you better!
May the Lord richly bless you in “the most excellent way”!*

“Spiritual Leadership”

by Glenn Wright

“Jesus Teaches Leadership by Example”

A. The World

1. Worldly leadership is a pyramid with authority perched precariously on the top. Authority flows downward. Submission flows upward from the bottom.
2. Corporate and political flow charts show this stream of authority.
3. This authority’s goal is control.
4. The world system values individuals who can be used to benefit the authority in control.

B. In God’s kingdom, authority is at the top, but the top is loving and submissive towards the needs of those at the bottom.

1. The two greatest commandments!
2. God sees the unique value of each individual.

C. We can find eight traits (attitudes) of this true spiritual kingdom leadership in Scripture.

1. Jesus, the Servant

- a. **Matthew 20:25-28** — *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*
- b. A servant’s job is to do all he can to make life better for others. He thinks not of himself first, but of others.
- c. He sees the distinct value of each person to God.
- d. Servanthood is a loving choice not enslavement, nor manipulation. (To love God and one another.)
- e. It does not mean to be a doormat or to be manipulated.
 - 1) Manipulation deprives us of our integrity. We must be able to have a choice. Yes or No.
 - 2) Jesus did not allow Himself to be manipulated, nor did He manipulate.
 - 3) We need to be truthful, loving and do what is right for that person.
- f. How do we handle manipulation?
 - 1) When we recognize the pressure or manipulation, we quietly withdraw until we can make the correct loving choice. There are those who want to lead, but are not ready.
 - 2) **Mark 8:11-13** — *“The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test Him, they asked Him for a sign from heaven. He sighed deeply and said, ‘Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it.’ Then He left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.”*

2. Jesus did not “lord it over”

- a. The Christian Leader must recognize the uniqueness and direct relationship of each person to Christ.
- b. Pharisees did not love the sheep, but themselves. They lorded their position over the people. Jesus loved the sheep and had compassion for them.

He put no pressure on the sheep to submit to the leaders, but on the leaders to submit to the people.

- c. Unlike the world system goal to exercise control, the kingdom leader is chosen to equip people to grow spiritually, for ministry, and to love one another.

Ephesians 4:11-16 — *“It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up,*

¹³*until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

¹⁴*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*

¹⁵*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

- d. Four things a *spiritual* leader must do:

- 1) Teach the Word
- 2) Promote Biblical knowledge and unity in the faith
- 3) Help people mature for their own stability
- 4) Train

2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV — *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for **doctrine**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **instruction** in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

- e. Worldly leaders are trained to maintain a distance from their people.

- 1) This isolates them from reality.
- 2) This places them above others.

- f. Worldly leaders must not let any-thing sway them from their goals.

- g. A leader once said that to teach the submitted person to be a servant, he had him mow his lawn.

A Jesus-type leader would mow the submitted person’s lawn.

- h. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

- i. We must be lovers of people, and any motivation we generate in another, must come out of their voluntary response to love.

3. Jesus, the Example — love, acceptance and forgiveness — He was:

- a. Approachable
- b. Available
- c. Vulnerable
- d. Selfless
- e. Obedient to God’s word
- f. Humble approach
- g. Spoke with authority
- h. An ordinary man
- i. Servant

- j. Knowledgeable
- k. Compassionate
- l. Loving**

- 1) By serving people and loving them, as they begin to recognize your ability and example, they choose to follow voluntarily.
- 2) Jesus never asked His disciples to do anything that He did not do first, and showed them how to do.

4. Humble Jesus

“Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Luke 12:1-3 NKJV — ...*“He began to say to His disciples first of all, ‘Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.’”*

- a. Humility is not a hang-dog approach to life. Humility is simply seeing ourselves as we really are — not higher or lower.

It means being totally honest with our-selves — being upfront about it.

It means knowing who we are and taking responsibility for our emotions, mistakes, sins, and accepting our blessings.

- b. Humility is like “walking in the light.”

Humility chooses to be real, to hide nothing, to be open.

Humility is the loving way to be with people, which in turn produces love in them.

1 John 1:7 NKJV — *“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*

- c. We fear being vulnerable by “taking off our mask” and letting people see who we really are. However, this allows others to discard their own masks, and brings us into a right relationship of friendship and intimacy, with loving respect for one another.
- d. Innocent — humble as a child.

5. Jesus — the Last and the Least

- a. Our human nature (natural man) drives us to be first and best.

Mark 9:35 NIV — *“Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, ‘If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.’”*

Luke 9:48 NKJV — *[Jesus said:] “Who -ever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great.”*

- b. From birth we begin to do all we can to be first and best. For example:

- 1) For example: sibling rivalry, parental approval and favoritism, sports, school competition, games (video and board games), business friendship, peer acceptance, etc.
- 2) We all want to be winners.
In Christ we are all eternal winners. There is no competition in heaven.
- 3) Pride causes us to glorify self.
- 4) The others-oriented servant, like Jesus, will rejoice at seeing others, who they have served and encouraged, achieve and enjoy the position of first or best.

- 5) We will not care that we are the last or least.

2 Corinthians 10:17-18 NKJV —

*“But he who glories, let him glory in the LORD.’ For **NOT** he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.”*

- 6) The only legitimate prize for us to seek is *“the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14 KJV).*

This high calling is the call to servant-hood, which brings peace, joy and happiness (blessedness).

- 7) We find Jesus as an average look-ing man, in humble places — in a manger, in a small town, among the poor, the sinners, being an example, being as the last and the least.

Wherever He is — His servant will also be! AND Wherever His servant is — there will *He* be also!

6. **Jesus has Purpose, not Ambition**

Philippians 2:5-8 NIV — *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

- a. Jesus was equal with God, but He did not come to take the Kingdom by force.
- b. He did nothing that would destroy or inhibit our ability to choose to follow Him or walk away.

- c. Jesus was a humble and gentle man as we see in this scripture:

Matthew 12:18-21 NIV — *“Here is My servant whom I have chosen, the One I love, in whom I delight; I will put My Spirit on Him, and He will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out, till He leads justice to victory. In His Name the nations will put their hope.”*

- d. Jesus was motivated (driven) by love and obedience, not blind ambition. This is true evangelism.

James 3:14-16 NIV — *“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.*

7. **Jesus knew Himself**

Philippians 2:7 KJV — *“But [Jesus] made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

- a. Politicians and businesses spend millions advertising their image or reputation whether their product is good or bad.

In America image and reputation are most important to most people, including many “Christian” ministry leaders and clergy.

- b. Promoting our image or reputation is simply a means to gain control over others, or manipulate them to our best advantage — to glorify self.
- c. Jesus did not care whom He was seen with. He kept company with sinners, including a prostitute, and He dined with tax collectors and sinners. He was with the poor, the afflicted and the oppressed.
- d. He had no place He could call home. He had no material wealth.

- e. He was not with the rich and powerful. He did not socialize with the Pharisees or rulers unless invited to do so, in which case He would usually convict them of their hypocrisy.
- f. Jesus did what ever was best to serve the people no matter the cost.
- g. Do we know who we are in Christ?

8. **Jesus was Obedient — even unto death**

- a. Obedience was no doubt a joy to Jesus because it would be true to His nature. Jesus was and is the new Adam and His desire was obedience, He made the right choice compared to Adam and Eve.

- 1) Jesus' job description was to reveal the Father to us, which He did to the utmost obedience even in Gethsemane.

John 5:19-20 NIV — *“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does.”*

- 2) These characteristics of God and the Son totally speak of LOVE — the guiding principles for Jesus' early life, and ours:

Servant — Example — Humble — Last and the least — Using no force — Obedience

Matthew 16:24-26 NIV — *[Jesus said:] “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it.”*

- 3) **Death to self unlocks the power of God in your life:**

John 10:11-18 NKJV — *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*

¹²*But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.*

¹³*The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.*

¹⁴*I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*

¹⁵*As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.*

¹⁶*And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.*

¹⁷*Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.*

¹⁸*No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”*

Luke 4:18-19 NKJV — *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to pro-claim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”*



May the Lord richly bless you and you lead others as Jesus leads.

