



FAITH BIBLE COLLEGE

2 Timothy 2:15

*"Study to show thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needs not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth."*

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Volume VII1



FAITH BIBLE COLLEGE

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a workman that needs not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth."*

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Dear Student

Welcome to Faith Bible College

*Our Vision is to Empower, Edify & Equip the Body of Christ in
The Word of Truth, So that we can be Leaders of Today
& Teachers for Tomorrow.*

*"Leaders are those whose aroma lingers long after they have completed
the task and others who sniff it, wants to be like them"*

*"Leadership is not a title but a Function
& that Function pulls you to its Position
& the Position determines your Title"*

*Blessings & Graceful Studying
Professor Ronnie Moodley*

Theology of Ministry

Theology of Ministry -- Objectives



I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. **The Importance of this Course.**
- B. **The Contents of this Course.**

Objective: to establish the nature and format of the course.

II. FOUNDATION STONES FOR A THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY.

- A. **Introduction.**
- B. **How to Improve Your Ministry of Prayer.**
- C. **How to Improve Your Ministry of the Word.**
- D. **The Foundation Stones of Fellowship and Praise and Worship.**
- E. **Conclusion.**

Objective: to encourage a "back to basics" perspective of ministry that is designed to practically equip the minister to advance in the ministry of prayer and Word.

III. DIFFERENT MODELS OR IMAGES.

- A. **Image of a Christian.**
- B. **Image of the Church.**
- C. **Image of a Minister.**

Objective: to challenge students to consider the images they have of Christianity, the Church, and ministers in route to a more biblical model of each.

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IV. CONCLUSION: BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU SEAT YOURSELF.

- A. **Read Lk 14:7-11.**
- B. **The Way Not to Seat Yourself (v.8).**
- C. **The Dishonorable Result (v.9).**
- D. **The Way to Seat Yourself (v.10a).**
- E. **The Honorable Result (v.10b).**
- F. **Conclusion: The Basic Principle (v.11).**

Objective: to encourage and challenge students toward a God-centered theology of ministry as a way to summarize and conclude the course.

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THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY: SYLLABUS



Class Schedule -- 10 hour Course

CLASS #1: I. Introduction; II. Foundation Stones for a Theology of Ministry: A. How to Improve Your Ministry of Prayer.

CLASS #2: II. Foundation Stones for a Theology of Ministry: A. How to Improve Your Ministry of Prayer (cont.), B. How to Improve Your Ministry of the Word.

CLASS #3: II. Foundation Stones for a Theology of Ministry: B. How to Improve Your Ministry of the Word (cont.), C. The Foundation Stones of Fellowship and Praise and Worship.

CLASS #4: II. Foundation Stones for a Theology of Ministry: D. Conclusion; III. Different Models or Images: A. Image of a Christian, B. Image of the Church.

CLASS #5: III. Different Models or Images: C. Image of a Minister; IV. Conclusion: Be Careful Where You Seat Yourself.

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Assignments

This course requires a written reflection paper. A full 100% of your grade will come from the evaluation of the paper submitted:

Assignment #1

A full 100% of your grade will come from a 1500 word reflection paper (approximately 6 typed pages) that will have as its title "My own Personal Theology of Ministry." Besides an introduction and conclusion, the paper should have at least three other sections to include:

1. A brief explanation/description of your theology of ministry to include at least three areas or points of focus.
2. A biblical defense/development of each area.
3. Three ways in which you can improve in each area.

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THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY- Course Outline

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. **The Importance of this Course.**

1. All Christians are called into ministry. Those who have more of a "full-time" calling on their lives tend to be referred to as "ministers." How do we view ministry? What is our theology of ministry? Indeed, these questions must be answered by all Christians. They are of critical importance and interest to those who are referred to as ministers.
2. How one views ministry (and what the ministry is and what a minister does) will dictate what is focused upon within ministry. This course seeks to provide a student with a proper perspective of ministry so that a proper focus within ministry will be sustained.

B. **The Contents of this Course.**



1. Foundation stones for a theology of ministry.
 - a. How to improve your ministry of prayer.
 - b. How to improve your ministry of the Word.
 - c. The foundation stones of fellowship and praise and worship.
2. Different models or images.
3. Conclusion: Be careful where you seat yourself.

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II. FOUNDATION STONES FOR A THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY.

A. **Introduction.**

1. Read Acts 2:42 and 6:2,4.



- a. The foundation stones of Christian activity can be found in Acts 2:42:
 - 1) The apostles teaching (ministry of the Word).
 - 2) Fellowship.
 - 3) Breaking of bread (praise/worship).
 - 4) Prayer.
- b. A more specific application of these foundation stones for ministerial activity is found in Acts 6:2,4:
 - 1) Prayer.
 - 2) Ministry of the Word.
- c. Prayer and ministry of the Word cannot be separated. A problem in ministry is that the activity of prayer and Word has largely been switched to the activity of management and Word.
 - 1) Pastoral renewal comes when we get back to the basics. Our traditions have influenced ministers toward the "bigger" and more glamorous or high profile activities. Perhaps we are in danger of



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deserving the rebuke given to the Pharisees in Mk 7:6-9!

2) However, common perceptions of the ministry do not lend themselves to encourage ministers to "devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word" because it requires a perseverance in the commonplace and an appreciation for the obscure.

d. It would be quite an understatement to say that in today's high pressure church in which the Pastor is expected to wear a variety of hats (e.g., teacher, counselor, administrator, manager, etc...) there exists a need for a renewal of Acts 2:42 and 6:2,4



activity.

1) Within the modern culture of the church, so much emphasis has been placed on what the minister should get accomplished and how he should go about doing those things.

a) With such an emphasis on "what and how to do it", it is quite easy to forget that God is more concerned with "who we are."

b) For Jesus, even the "how" is an issue mainly because it relates to relationship with Him which produces "who we are" (it has been observed that Jesus never told his disciples how to get people to come to their church or how to make their church grow, but He did tell them how to pray).

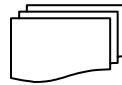
2) Ministers must grow in the "rest" that comes from focusing and relying on God. Indeed, "rest" comes from reserving

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more of yourself and your time for the "means of grace" mentioned in Acts 2:42 and 6:2,4.

- a) This, of course, necessitates a clear understanding of the sovereignty of God. To increase and improve their ministry of word and prayer, ministers must trust in God enough to recognize that success in ministry does not rely on them accomplishing something, but on Him accomplishing something through them.
- b) With this understanding, ministers will give themselves more to the means by which He works through them; that is, they will give themselves more to the word and prayer.

2. Contents of this section.



- a. Specific suggestions for how to improve your ministry of prayer.
- b. Specific suggestions for how to improve your ministry of the Word.
- c. General thoughts on the foundation stones of fellowship and praise and worship.

B. How to Improve Your Ministry of Prayer.

1. In church history there is a story about the great man of faith, George Muller. Muller, it seems, came to a point in his prayer life in which he was having trouble concentrating during prayer. He found himself (as we all do at times) falling asleep during early morning hours of prayer. The impact of the solution to this problem was by his own estimation revolutionary with respect to his walk with God and his success in ministry. Muller began to do what I would like to call "expository praying." That is, he allowed the word to dictate

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the content, flow, and direction of his prayers. He would read the Word and as it prompted him he would then pray with respect to what had been read.

- a. One of the secrets to a consistent prayer life is variety. Using various methods or formats to pray increases our ability to remain steadfast in prayer.
- b. This "Muller method" is not only an additional format that will add to the variety of one's prayer life, but it is one that incorporates the reading of the Word (a double winner).



2. Improvement in one's ministry of prayer necessitates an increase in holiness in one's life. It is true that sin pushes us away from Christ. It hinders relationship. Ministers must be committed to focus on avoiding sin. One of the added blessings of this commitment is that as holiness can facilitate more of an intimacy with God, so too intimacy with God can produce more of a holiness.
3. In a somewhat paradoxical way, God is sovereign and man has a free will. God's decrees can not be changed. At the same time, prayer can "change" things. We might employ what could be called a "vessel theology" in bridging the gap between the seeming contradiction. God's decrees can not change but our involvement in them can. As vessels (receptors) we can not cause (first cause) nor create anything in and of ourselves. Only God can do that (God's decrees do not change). However, we do have a free will. We can decide (with the help of the Holy Spirit) to be involved or not be involved in God's unchangeable decrees.
 - a. The practical response to such a "vessel theology" is to focus more on the "means of grace"; that is, to focus more on doing the things that facilitate God working in and through us. This increases our desire to see

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Him live/minister through us and directs our goals in life more toward "being" instead of "doing", surrendering instead of accomplishing, facilitating instead of creating. The result of all this should be more of a focus and contentment in prayer.

- b. The motivation to pray is not simply to be involved, but to be involved with what God is doing...indeed it is to desire to have God act and walk in this world...it is to desire to live out Galatians 2:20.



- 4. It can be argued that prayer is our response to what God has first said. It is interesting to consider that the first five "books" of Psalms (a common way to divide Psalms is into five sections) are a response to the five books of the Pentateuch in which God speaks His law to us. With these points in mind we might be driven to study the Psalms for training in prayer.

- a. Studying Psalms with respect to prayer can show us that it is not a question of what is the "proper" state of mind when we pray, rather it is to share with God whatever our state of mind. In the Psalms it is clear that both joy and frustration are realities, and thus, both are communicated to God (who more than anything else is reality...remember His personal name is "I AM"!). Since God looks at the heart, we need to offer heart felt prayers (warning: we must keep the right attitude when sharing negative expressions with God...that is, we must trust in God, avoid greed and selfishness, and be open to accepting His response).

- b. Building on the theme of offering heart-felt prayers, we should note that petition in the Bible is much more personal and involved than our generic forms of petition. As in Exodus 32 when Moses entreats the Lord in a sort of "case building" fashion, so too God would have us to not simply ask, but to ask within a real and dynamic relationship. This would include such conversation as "debate" (done

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with respect, not rebellion), bargaining (not to deceive selfishly, but to impact change selflessly), arbitrating (not to avoid, but to move toward God's will), and convincing (not to avoid God's best interests, but to realize them).

1) The result of the fact that the Scriptural models advocate a sense of persistence, persuasion and "case building" in prayer is that God's interest in our hearts is highlighted. These understandings create a way to communicate with God more thoroughly and more meaningfully for a longer period of time.



2) Returning to Exodus 32, we see what can become for us a model of "case building" in prayer. In verses 11-13 we see three platforms from which Moses appeals to God: God's people, the world, and the Word. Moses appeals to God on behalf of His people as he asks Him to bless them. He then appeals on the basis of showing Himself rightly to the world. Finally, he appeals on the basis of the promises of God's Word. In each case it is seen that the glory of God is the main issue and the sincere motivation.

5. An expanded prayer life may come from an expanded "comfort zone" of prayer both privately and publicly. For example, an expansion that goes beyond petition to lamenting...or beyond thanksgiving to praise and ecstasy.

6. The biblical names of God can be employed to focus in on an aspect of God's character in prayer. Indeed, in order to describe God the Bible itself relies heavily on the names of God. It also relies heavily on metaphors. Metaphors are used to describe the nature and functions of God. Thus, they can effectively be used in prayer to

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focus in on various aspects of God's character.

- a. Metaphors make us think, imagine, and have emotion. When we pray to God our "rock", for example, we must think about the dynamics of a rock that describe God. We begin to imagine or picture situations in which rocks exist, and functions that they serve (we might see, for example, waves crashing against the rocks and the rocks not moving).



- b. When we pray to God our "rock", we are led into feeling the emotions consistent with that object (the emotions of deep peace and relief as we sense the emotional responses to the reality of the stability of God in our lives).

7. With respect to prayer, sometimes we feel the tension between prayer as task (with the focus on effectual results/answers to prayer), and prayer as relationship (with the focus on simply spending time with God and being transformed through it). However, it should be understood that these two aspects of prayer are not mutually exclusive. One can not be done without the other.

- a. The tension between task and relationship in prayer is the "tension" between cause (relationship) and effect (task). That is, simply getting closer to God (cause) gets

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things done (effect: namely, it changes the one who prays and thus makes him more useful to God, and it also moves God's hand).

- b. Our sense of dependence needs to be understood in terms of dependence upon a Person, not a certain result. It is not so much the what of prayer but the who of prayer that matters. It is not so much coming to the solution of a problem (allowing a result to be the object of faith can lead to having faith in faith) as it is coming to the One who is the solution to the problem. We must be determined to not focus so much on the "answer" as on the "Answer-Man". To pray is to gaze upon God!



8. Fasting, combined with prayer, is a powerful "means of grace" that can be employed to intensify prayer and make it more effectual. It is an important Christian discipline that naturally is connected to improving one's prayer life.

C. **How to Improve Your Ministry of the Word.**

1. In order to improve in their ministry of the word, ministers must take more advantage of the information that is already at hand. Interaction with other believers, past and present, can improve our ministry of the word.

- a. Much understanding and explanation of the word can be gleaned from godly theologians, scholars, and practitioners. The reading of well-picked commentaries can provide much help for the student of the Bible.

- 1) Historical analysis in hermeneutics is the process that encourages the student

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of the Word to look at the Bible as though trying to look through a window.

Increased exposure to references that treat the culture and historical setting behind the content of the Scriptures can be of great value.

- 2) Basic "Bible book survey" types of reviews can serve to refresh one's awareness of author, audience, date, occasion for writing, etc.... All of this will be helpful in preparing to study the Word as though "looking through a window."
- b. As helpful as gleaning information from sources of literature can be, more impacting is gleaning information from others in a context of personal interaction.
- 1) Ministers should be a part of a prayer/accountability group that meet regularly. Such a group should spend time together studying the Word. Each member can glean insights and information from the others in the group that will add to his own ministry of the



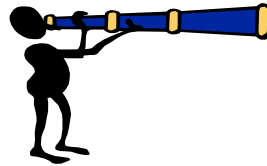
Word.

- 2) John Wesley's "holy club" is an inspiring model. For two hours every morning those in the club would read, study, and discuss the Word. This sort of thing can really fuel one's life in the Word and flavor the proclamation of it.
2. Even as historical analysis in hermeneutics allows the student of the word to view the Bible as a window, literary analysis allows him to view it as a picture. There is the tendency to get lost in

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the details of Bible study. A literary analysis perspective encourages the student of the Word to allow the more expanded context to inform his understanding of the details. That is to say, there is often a need to work harder at looking more for the forest than for the individual trees. Bible students need to practice looking for the "wider flow" of a book of the bible.

- a. One way to do this is to think of a passage in terms of "scene division". Study can be done from the perspective of looking at the text as a play. The scenes could then be separated, organized, and presented as such. In preaching and teaching one will then be more apt to use the "pace" of the text...more inclined to not neglect allusions to the senses offered by the text, and will be more equipped to utilize body language and other communication techniques to convey those allusions in the presentation of the Word.
- b. Beyond this, preachers need to be more sensitive to the text "zooming in" or "zooming out" on a character and then need to reflect that sensitivity in their preaching.



3. The study of the Scriptures should allow for both objectivism (meaning is derived from the object or that which is being studied) and subjectivism (meaning is derived from the subject or the one who is doing the studying). Certainly we should strive toward an inductive approach to the Scriptures (trying to be objective). At the same time, we should not negate the impact our own life experiences, mental tendencies, etc... bring to the text, which affect interpretation (able to be subjective).
 - a. Indeed, the balance between objectivism and subjectivism is consistent with the nature of

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God (which is Trinitarian...unity in diversity). Since God has this nature, so too does His body. That is, there is meant to be unity in diversity within the body of Christ. Thus, an evangelist might focus on a different angle of understanding of a truth than a teacher.

- b. One danger of a "hyper-objectivism" is that it repels a "body" mentality. It is more comfortable with saying that everyone should be exactly the same. The balanced hermeneutic understands that there is no "pure exegete" just as there is no pure (whole, completely God-like) vessel. But as a vessel is a piece or part of the fuller body, that vessel's understanding is a piece or angle of the fuller truth.
- c. A certain acceptance of subjectivism with objectivism, then, provides for a more realistic view of the body and a more consistent perspective with which to live and minister the Word within the body. As a warning, we should say here that this concept taken too far leads to the errors of relativism. The balanced perspective is that any given truth can be multifaceted in its purpose/use/application, but not in its content/spirit (note how the New Testament writers seemed to employ this principle in their interpretation of the Old Testament -- consider, for example, Matthew's use of Hos 11:1 in Mt 2:15).

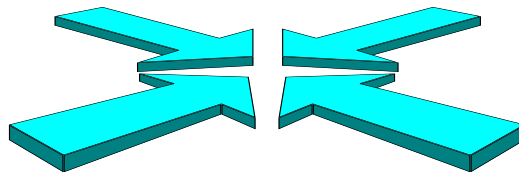


- 1) Thus, the "one meaning/one intention" hermeneutic must be taken with a grain of salt; that is, it must be held to, but understood properly. It is true to say that we should search for the single meaning intended by the author. However, we need to understand that the

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"single" meaning can include multifaceted/angled aspects of that single meaning.

- 2) Moreover, the author's single intention (once "mapped" over the various different dynamics of other cultures/situations) can be applied in various ways that remain consistent with that single intention. A "one meaning" hermeneutic does not deny a multi-dimensional meaning, use, or purpose of a passage.
4. In general, a major way to improve your ministry of the Word is to be more diverse hermeneutically. Because of your training, gifting, and personal preference, you may, for example, have a definite propensity toward thematic analysis (systematic theology). Improvement can come simply by balancing out your current exegetical focus/tendency with more of an historical analysis (biblical theology) and literary analysis focus.
 - a. With regard to biblical theology, more historical/background types of study can be done. You can be more conscious of not only looking at the Bible as a mirror and thus constantly categorizing the truth, but you can also look at the Bible as a window through which to view the "sitz em leiben" (life situation) of the text and get a fuller understanding of its meaning. Your ability to apply the word can improve via such processes. The fruit of such study can facilitate a "mapping" or "matching" the application for the original audience to the application for the contemporary audience.

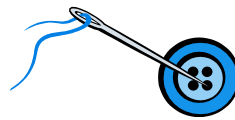


- b. This is also true with the third rung on the hermeneutical rack; that is, literary analysis. Attention to literary analysis (the form of the text and the author's

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motives in writing it) should result in more of a preaching style that mirrors the literary form of the text. This is helpful. Narrative passages are, perhaps, most effectively preached in narrative form. Also, literary analysis will result in more of an awareness and expectation that derived meaning must be based on the specific angle (motive/influence/"bent") of the original author.

5. Another way in which to improve your ministry of the Word is to focus more (perhaps even exclusively for a season) on expository preaching. With expository preaching there is a need to learn to be more content in developing and proclaiming the "one thing" the text says. In order to accomplish this you may need to work harder on developing a clear and concise proposition in the introductions of your messages. This, of course, is advantageous not only in keeping the message on track, but in hooking the listener early in the message and threading or tying things together late in the message.

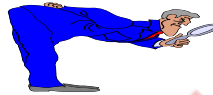


- a. Within the explanation portion of a message, a focus on expository preaching will facilitate more of an emphasis on "What concerns caused the text to be written?" This can result in a more valid explanation of the text.
- b. Within the illustration portion of a message, a focus on expository preaching will facilitate more of a "storytelling" mentality. This can result in a more interesting illustration of the text.
- c. Within the application portion of a message, a focus on expository preaching will facilitate more of an ability to utilize the "fallen condition focus" of the text (the

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issues in the text pertaining to the human problems that are a result of the Fall of man) as a guide. This can result in a more impacting application of the text.

6. Another way to improve your ministry of the Word is to consciously focus more on looking for and expecting to find Jesus in the text, and thus proclaiming Jesus from the text (especially with regard to the Old Testament).



- a. You can do a brief review of Old Testament quotes and allusions found in the New Testament as a way to prepare yourself to be better equipped to find Jesus in the Old Testament.
- b. Similarly, you might do a brief review of the Messianic prophecies found in the Old Testament. Here, you should be intent on linking the fallen condition focus with its Christological solution. Overall, study of and preaching from the Old Testament should be done with more of an insistence upon interpreting it in light of the New Testament.

7. Finally, with respect to improving your ministry of the Word, modern ministers should consider their prophetic role. Specifically, in Western culture, this will necessitate offering a prophetic voice in opposition to "postmodern" tendencies that utilizes a direct preaching style.

- a. In response to the relativism produced by such a pluralistic society that has lost all sense of belief in the existence of absolutes, our style of preaching must be authoritative without being condescending or combative.

- 1) In order to be a light to a non-absolutist society, prophetic preachers must speak dogmatically about biblical



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truth.

2) However, to speak dogmatically without patience, love, and sincere concern for those being spoken to will end up being counter-productive.

b. More specifically, the anti-foundational pillar of postmodernism described by Gene Veith in his book Postmodern Times¹ must be countered by firmly offering/standing on the most foundational of our Christian foundations; that is, the Deity of Christ and the uniqueness of salvation in Him.



1) As postmodernism takes more and more of a grip on our society, it will be critical to preach these foundational truths in an authoritative/caring style.

2) For example, one of the great truths that needs to be preached authoritatively is the fact that God will judge each individual according to their response to the gospel message. Postmodern thinking dismisses individual responsibility because it believes that society (not individuals) create truth and the proper response to it. Thus, society is responsible, not individuals. Indeed, a prophetic voice is needed.

D. The Foundation Stones of Fellowship and Praise and Worship.



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1. Certainly fellowship is a "means of grace" in that to fellowship with someone who has Christ living in him is, to some degree, to fellowship with Christ. The ministry of spiritual direction provides the minister with an opportunity to offer a means of grace to those he fellowships with. Ministers today need to rekindle the ministry of spiritual direction. They should view their time spent with people more in terms of being a spiritual director.
 - a. Plan to concentrate more on speaking the Word into the lives of people in your church. Within contexts of both formal and casual fellowship you can focus on helping people to figure God into the equations of their lives.
 - b. Especially in a culture where "God talk" is not so acceptable, ministers must heed Eugene Peterson's words:

"That is why the work of spiritual direction is essential, because we need to deal with the obvious...and we would rather deal with almost anything else."²

2. In a culture that prides itself in its diversity (pluralism) and its lack of absolutes (relativism), ministers must stress biblical commonalties among believers. If our fellowship with each other is going to flourish, then we must defend ourselves from the societal effects of pluralism and relativism by stressing such commonalties as the fact that we are all sinners, we all drink from the same cup (same problem and solution), we all have the same desperate need for salvation, we all have the same provision for salvation.
 - a. We must insist on developing our own clear and distinct identity. Without this, we are in danger of allowing pluralism and relativism to break us up from within...to produce division among ourselves...to facilitate conflict that comes from a lack of understanding of the reality of common ground.

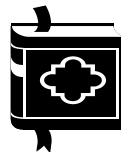
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- b. Ministers must focus on this in their fellowship with other believers...especially those who are significantly different from them.

3. The terminology "breaking of the bread" in Acts 2:42 is reflective of the Greek term "eucharisto" which means "to give thanks." Indeed, in Acts 2:42 the picture is one of sharing in the Lord's Supper. Of course, a major part of the idea of this Sacrament is that of thanksgiving and praise and worship.



- a. It can be seen that thanksgiving in the Psalms often took the form of stories. This model can help us avoid being shallow in our thanksgiving and praise to God. Following the model in Psalms, our thanksgiving to God would include a detailed account of what He has done. This helps us to remember all that God has done, and it also puts into immediate perspective the greatness and lovingkindness of God.
 - b. In his book, Desiring God, John Piper reminds us that the flow of life is ultimately determined by God's quest to be glorified (Jn 14:13) and our quest to be satisfied (Jn 16:24). Piper explains that the life of praise satisfies both quests (Is 48:11; Ps 147:11; Jer 32:40,41).³



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- 1) Pleasure is not evil it has simply been polluted by sin (flip flopped). Redemption does not do away with pleasure, rather it allows us to have it in its pure form...it does not destroy it, rather it establishes/fulfills it. Indeed, the pursuit of pleasure is mandatory in order to truly worship God (Ps 16:11).
- 2) Affections of the heart keep worship from being done in vain (consider Mt 15:8,9). Indeed, worship comes from more than the will. It comes from the heart. It comes from feelings (for example, it comes from fearing Him, enjoying Him, admiring Him, hoping in Him, honoring Him, being in awe of Him, delighting in Him, being grateful to Him, etc... -- consider Ps 27:4; 30:11,12; 32:11; 37:4; 42:1,2,5; 63:1,5; 73:25,26; 130:5).



- 3) Piper concludes that "the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever."⁴ One of the chief ways of enjoying God is to manifest an attitude of thanksgiving and praise. Worship is more of a privilege than it is an obligation.

E. Conclusion.

1. Get in small groups and do the following exercises individually and then share individual results with the group as a way to promote group discussion and interaction.

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- a. With respect to the suggestion concerning how to "argue" with God in prayer, make a list of five arguments you might use in prayer based on God's people, the world, and the Word (review the appropriate section of materials above and use the following example to explain to students what to do).

God's People

God's people need faithful shepherds
They need to eat meat instead of milk
They will be protected from heresy
They need a model to inspire them
They need a shepherd who loves them

The World

The world needs a prophetic voice
I need to remain separate from the world
Someone needs to stand in the gap for sinners
I need to offer biblical responses to current social issues
I need to be a missiological blessing to the nations

The Word

You promised to transform me (Rom 8:29)
You promised to complete what you began in me (Phil 1:6)
You promised to be at work in me to "will and to do" (Phil 2:13)
You promised that I would do "great exploits" (Dan 11:32)
You promised that we would know the things freely given (1Cor 2:12)

- b. With respect to your own ministry of the Word and prayer make a list of five strengths and five weaknesses you have in each.

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2. The lack of ministry in the Word and prayer is, to some degree, caused by the tendency of our technology/ability to fool us into thinking that we do not need God. Two major influences lead to such a tragedy:
- a. Deism (the theology that, to one degree or another, proposes that God is a Creator who is no longer involved in His Creation) - if the closing of the Canon is effectually translated into the closing of God's mouth (He no longer communicates with His people in a dynamic way), then we are in danger of incipient deism...deism, by nature, leads its followers away from God.
 - b. Ishmael syndrome - as was with Abraham and Hagar, this occurs when we feel we must/can take it upon ourselves to create/cause. It tends to occur because our focus is on doing instead of being, and on a worldly success (utilitarianism, pragmatism) instead of a holy success (obedience/relationship/faith). It comes into its fullness when we get too good at making things work (perhaps some aspects of the modern day church growth movement should be reminded of God's response to those at Babel of whom He described as ones to whom nothing would be impossible).
 - 1) A Christian from Africa, after visiting the United States and preparing to return to his own land, reflected on his observations of the American church and innocently stated,

"It is amazing what you people can accomplish without the Holy Spirit."
 - 2) We must avoid the "Ishmael Syndrome." We must return to being experts in being (knowing God) in order that the only true Expert can be an expert in doing (through us). We must return to defining the goal in terms of facilitating God's work instead of creating or manufacturing it. To do this we must return to a focus on the "means

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of grace" so that the very nature of our primary activities leads us to dependence on God.

- 3) Especially as you acquire more and more education, knowledge, experience, and skill in ministry it becomes more and more imperative to cling to the "basics." And so, in conclusion, be reminded of the natural link between Jn 15:5 and Prov 3:6...since there is "nothing I can do without Him," it behooves me to "acknowledge Him in all



my ways."

III. DIFFERENT MODELS OR IMAGES.

A. **Image of a Christian.**

1. What is radical Christianity? Sometimes the phrase "radical Christian" is misunderstood. It can result in people thinking that there is a choice between being a "normal" Christian and a "radical" Christian. The term "radical" intimidates some into not being all they are called to be in Christ (because they do not see themselves as extra-ordinary), and excuses others (because they argue that being "normal" is enough).

a. Ironically, the term "radical" by definition is the opposite of extra-ordinary. It refers to things that are basic and fundamental. Its focus is on that which arises from the root or source of a thing.

b. To be a "radical" Christian is to get back to basics; it is to do the fundamental things that the Bible sets forth. Perhaps, instead of saying "Let's get radical," we should encourage each other by saying, "Let's get normative."

c. Thus, to be a radical Christian is to be a

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biblical Christian.

2. Sometimes our traditional/cultural models or images of Christianity distort the biblical models or images. Use the following comparisons to discuss how this might occur.



- a. Praise and worship portion of a church service: Is it done for me to feel good (traditional/cultural) or is it done because God is worthy (biblical)? Do I worship God because of what I need/want or because of who God is/does?
- b. View of the Church: Is the Church an organization or is it an organism? Is it a corporation/business run by CEO's and businessmen or is it a body/family run by God through chosen and anointed spiritual leaders?
- c. Christian activity: Is it program oriented or relationship oriented? Are we involved in conducting events together or living out the life of Christ together?
- d. Method of growth: Do we focus on adding numbers or on multiplying (reproducing/discipling) lives? Do we insist on a superficial effect on many or can we be satisfied with a more profound impact on a few?
- e. Resources: Do we rely on our own abilities and expertise or do we focus on prayer and other means of grace?
- f. Success: Is it determined by results and the world's perception of what constitutes quantity and progress or is it determined simply by obedience to God.



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B. Image of the Church.

1. There are a variety of popular images and biblical images of the Church that could be discussed. In the course "Church and Sacraments" a major portion of time is spent on those descriptions. Here we will only discuss briefly a couple of images in order to promote class discussion regarding typical images of the Church.
2. Use the following chart to promote discussion.

IMAGE	THEOLOGY	APPLICATION	DISTORTION
Army	warfare, authority, training	strong leadership, submission	legalism, lack of compassion
Mystical Communion	unity, freedom, supernatural	communion, love, relationship, fellowship	inward, emotionalism
Mouthpiece of God	proclamation, evangelism, teaching	revival services, use of media	superficial response to needs
Healing Community	power of God, practical ministry	counseling, deliverance, healing ministry	ingrown, neglect of the ministry of the Word

C. Image of a Minister.

1. There are many different images of a minister. Eugene Peterson views the minister as one who prays, studies the Scripture, and gives spiritual direction to others. He summarizes his image of a minister by saying,

"The Pastor's responsibility is to keep the community attentive to God."⁵

- a. Peterson refers to the minister as a

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"Spiritual Director" as he reflects on what the common image of the minister used to include.

- b. Spiritual direction is a fading image of the minister, partly, because of the busyness of ministers and those they shepherd. Thus, there is both a lack of supply and demand for spiritual direction.

2. Use the following chart to promote discussion.

IMAGE	POSITIVE ASPECTS	NEGATIVE ASPECTS
Preacher	proclaimer, encourager, motivator	out of touch with people, need for action
Leader	vision, order, focus, protection, equipping	look to men instead of God, people become lazy
Teacher	authority, direction, protection, discipling	lack of self-learning, risk of false doctrine
Servant	supportive, approachable, activity	people do not learn to serve, overworked
Father	credible, security, nurturing, authority	distant, not flexible, feared
Brother	approachable, not feared, able to relate well	less credible, less authority
Counselor	personal concern, guidance, reconciliation	overwhelming, lack of seeking God's guidance
Healer	restoration, God seen as powerful/supernatural	look to men instead of God, idolize men

IV. CONCLUSION: BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU SEAT YOURSELF.

- A. **Read Lk 14:7-11.**

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1. There can be great embarrassment in presumption...in taking a place either through deception, misunderstanding, assumption, or presumption that is not actually there for the taking.

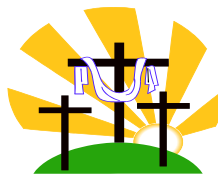
2. Through a brief study of this parable, we will conclude our course by submitting that the Church itself has not heeded its warning and has fallen to the inevitable circumstances. We will be invited individually and as a corporate body to consider the subtle ways in which we seat ourselves up front, and will be challenged to respond appropriately to God.

B. **The Way Not to Seat Yourself (v.8).**

1. What the parable says - "do not take the place of honor."

2. What has the Church done?
 - a. To some extent, the Church has developed/focused on a superficial, man-centered theology. Our theologies tend to assume that it is all about us when in fact it is all about God. We seat ourselves up front expecting God to tag along in the back.

 - b. To a large extent, this has occurred because we have spurned a theology that has the Cross as its focus.



- c. We have the shopper's mentality with respect to churches. We assess the desirability of a church from the me-centered perspective of what is available to meet my needs instead of

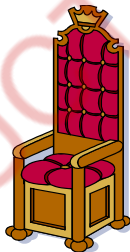
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the Him-centered perspective of what is available to meet God's needs. The "what can I get" mentality replacing the "what can I give" mentality has resulted in church hoppers/shoppers while God has been left in the dust...asked to sit in the back because after all, it is all about me, isn't it??

C. **The Dishonorable Result (v.9).**

1. What the parable says - "in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place."
2. What has happened to the Church?
 - a. Indeed, we have seen the Church that has insisted on seating itself in the front being asked to move to the back. There has been embarrassment (scandals exposed left and right).
 - b. There has been a reduction in credibility (100 years ago the minister was usually considered one of the most respected, well-known, and influential people in a town....today's surveys rarely have him appear even in the top 20).

D. **The Way to Seat Yourself (v.10a).**



1. What the parable says - "go and recline at the last place."
2. What should the Church do?
 - a. How do you seat yourself when you come to worship? Up front...that is, with an

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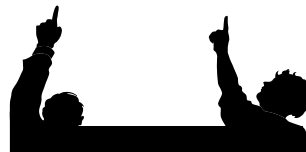
attitude and focus on your needs and rights...what you can and should get from it?

Or do you recognize that Jesus is to sit up front, and thus, seat yourself in the back; that is, with an attitude and focus on God's needs and rights...what He can and should get from it?

- b. Do you seat yourself as a "retailer" (Christ near us but separate from us) not believing Gal 2:20 to be true ("retailer" in the sense that there is then a "huge mark up" which results in you getting the direct glory while God is only glorified indirectly)? Or do you seat yourself as a wholesaler (Christ in us) believing Gal 2:20 to be true ("wholesaler" in the sense that there is no "mark up," which results in God getting all the glory directly)?

1) Is it God helps me or God is my help? Is it God helps me to be righteous or God is my righteousness? Is it God helps me to live or God lives in me?

2) As a church we seat God last when we think that He should get behind our plans instead of being our plans. It is not what the church is doing through God, but what God is doing through the church. We do not set the agenda, He does. It is not according to our



needs/goals, but His!

E. The Honorable Result (v.10b).

1. What the parable says - "then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with

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you."

2. What can happen to the Church?

- a. If you are in need of encouragement, uplifting, etc..., then the best thing you can do is sit in the back and lift up God. He will then bring you up front. As a Church we must better discern between our purpose and the results associated with that purpose. Our purpose is to glorify God (seat Him up front) while the result is that we are blessed (He brings us up front).
- b. Indeed the Scripture explains: "In His presence there is fullness of joy" (Ps 16:11); "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps 37:4); "Give and it will be given unto you" (Lk 6:38); "If I be lifted up I will draw all men to Myself" (Jn 12:32); "Seek ye first the rule of God and all the rest will be added to you" (Mt 6:33).



- c. Promote discussion by considering how the following passages impact the above concepts: Dt 8:3; 32:46-47; Ezra 7:9-10; Ps 1:1-2; 19:8; 119:16,45,50,52; 147:11; Jer 15:16; Jn 15:10-11; Rom 11:36; 15:4,13; Phil 4:4).



F. **Conclusion: The Basic Principle (v.11).**

1. Certainly, we are not saying that we should not receive from God. We must receive from God. It is not an either or issue (either I get from God or I give to God). It is an issue of proper order/progression.

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- a. In order to receive what we need from God we must first give ourselves to God.
 - b. We must seat ourselves in the back and allow God to bring us forward. We must humble ourselves and allow God to exalt us.
2. In the Church today, there is a need for individual and corporate repentance with respect to seating ourselves up front.

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ENDNOTES

¹Gene Veith, Postmodern Times (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1994), p.158.

²Eugene Peterson, Working the Angles p.106.

³John Piper, Desiring God (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1986), p.41.

⁴Ibid., p.73.

⁵Peterson, p.2.

Christian Spirituality

Christian Spirituality -- Objectives



I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Spirituality on the Decline.
- B. A Definition of Spirituality.
- C. Purpose and Contents of this Course.

Objective: to establish the need, importance and format of the course.

II. SPIRITUALITY: KNOWING WHO GOD IS.

- A. Introduction.
- B. Jesus Means "God Saves".
- C. God Keeps Getting in the Way.
- D. God's Favorite Thing to Do.

Objective: to establish a basis for the life of spirituality by considering who God is, and to motivate us toward spirituality by understanding God's desire for us.

III. SPIRITUALITY: KNOWING WHAT WE NEED.

- A. Introduction.
- B. To Flee or Not to Flee: That is the CRITICAL Question.
- C. Repentance: The Act of Turning to God's Ability.
- D. Relating to God in Order to Properly Relate to Others.

Objective: to establish relationship with God as the primary need in our lives, and to motivate us toward a life of spirituality by making our relationship with God our first priority.

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IV. SPIRITUALITY: KNOWING HOW TO GET THERE.

- A. Introduction.
- B. Go For What Counts!
- C. Three Key Words: A Progression of Death to Self.
- D. The Life of the Cross and the Idea of Priorities.

Objective: to summarize the methodology of spirituality by focusing on the life of the cross, and to motivate us toward a life of spirituality by emphasizing the need to die to ourselves and equipping us to do it.

V. SPIRITUALITY: KNOWING HOW TO SUSTAIN IT.

- A. Introduction.
- B. God Has Led You in the Wilderness.
- C. The "Onyness" of God.

Objective: to establish the understanding that the life of spirituality is a process, and to motivate us toward and broaden our path to that life.

VI. CONCLUSION.

Objective: to summarize some of the most basic concepts of the course and to place the final focus upon Jesus Himself

Christian Spirituality

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY: SYLLABUS



Class Schedule -- 20 hour Course

CLASS #1: I. Introduction; II. Spirituality: Knowing Who God Is - A. Introduction, B. Jesus Means God Saves, C. God Keeps Getting in the Way.

CLASS #2: II. Spirituality: Knowing Who God Is (cont.); III. Spirituality: Knowing What We Need - A. Introduction, B. To Flee or Not to Flee.

CLASS #3: III. Spirituality: Knowing What We Need (cont.).

CLASS #4: IV. Spirituality: Knowing How to Get There.

CLASS #5: V. Spirituality: Knowing How to Sustain It.

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Assignments

This course requires a written reflection paper. A full 100% of your grade will come from the evaluation of the paper submitted:

Assignment #1

A full 100% of your grade will come from a 2500 word reflection paper (8-10 typed pages) concerning your life of spirituality. The paper can/should include concepts learned in the course as well as those gained from your own additional research, but should clearly be a collection of your own thinking and reflecting. The paper should have four sections to include:

1. What is spirituality to me?
2. How do I see the life of spirituality in others (biblical, historical, and peers)?
3. How have I lived the life of spirituality?
4. How can I increase/improve my life of

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CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY- Course Outline

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. **Spirituality on the Decline.**

1. The following expression can be applied to any society or individual to varying degrees. It is certainly descriptive of the progression of spirituality as it is seen in the Western Church.

To our forefathers, our faith was an experience.
To our fathers, our faith was an inheritance.
To us, our faith is a convenience.
To our children, our faith is a nuisance.

2. Fallen man has an interesting way of receiving life from God and, over time, converting it into death. Humanity has a tendency to engage in this type of progression on a societal level (consider the country of England as an example), religious movement level (consider the dynamics of revival in early Methodism as compared to modern day Methodism), and individual level (consider the history of certain dynamics of your own faith).



B. **A Definition of Spirituality.**

1. Spirituality can be defined as the proper attitudes and actions that are based on the recognition of who God is, and therefore, who man is not. In short, it is the proper human response to the reality of God.

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2. The opposite of true spirituality is superficiality. The very nature of the idea of true spirituality is based on the implications of such Scriptures as 1 Sam 16:7, ". . . God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."



- a. We are reminded of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Spirituality is not based on appearance. It is based on internal reality. It is not based on form, but substance.
- b. Christian spirituality are those attitudes and actions that spring forth from the changed heart of a redeemed believer that have as their central focus a desire for a dynamic, intimate, and profound relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

C. Purpose and Contents of this Course.

1. The purpose of this course is both didactic and prophetic. First, it is to teach and equip us toward a fuller understanding and practice of Christian spirituality. Second, it is to stir us toward reflection and renewal of spirituality.
2. The contents of this course can be summarized by the titles of the main sections of the course:

- a. Introduction.
- b. Spirituality - Knowing who God is.
- c. Spirituality - Knowing what we need.
- d. Spirituality - Knowing how to get there.
- e. Spirituality - Knowing how to sustain it.
- g. Conclusion.



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II. SPIRITUALITY - KNOWING WHO GOD IS.

A. **Introduction.**

1. True spirituality can only be as pure as the purity of one's understanding of who God is. Spirituality must begin with this knowledge because it is both sourced by it and directed to it.
2. In this section of the course we will consider the meaning of the name "Jesus", the intervention of God in our lives, and God's favorite thing to do as we seek to base our spirituality on knowing who God is.

B. **"Jesus" Means "God Saves."**

1. Introduction.

- a. God created man in His image (Gen 1:26), and thus created him as a spiritual being (since God is spirit (Jn 4:24; Gen 2:7)). When Adam and Eve fell (sinned) in the Garden of Eden, they died spiritually (Gen 3:3).



- 1) Man, as a spiritual being, needs to be redeemed. His spirit needs to be "born again." Only God can accomplish this redemption; only God can make man spiritual again.
 - 2) Indeed, man's spirituality began with God and it had to be redeemed by God. Fallen man's spirituality begins with the fact that "God saves."
- b. What does the name "Jesus" mean? The name "Judah" means "let Him (God) be praised." So what does "Jesus" mean?

- 1) It is a name that literally means "God

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is salvation" or "God saves."

2) "Jesus" (English) in Hebrew is "Yeshua" while in Lingala (a central African language) it is "Yesu."

c. Regardless of what language is used, "Jesus" means "God saves."

2. God **SAVES**.

a. God does not create the world and all that is in it only to leave it in order to watch from a distance and to require that it operate without Him. This type of thinking is described theologically as "deism." God **saves** the world, he does not leave it to its own doom. Jesus means "God saves" not "God leaves."

b. Neither does Jesus mean "God judges." It is not right to simply view God as one who gets mad at you and wants to punish you (consider the implications of Jn 3:16,17).



c. Indeed, God desires all men to come to salvation (1 Tim 2:4). He wants to draw all men to Himself (Jn 12:32), and does not want any to perish (2 Pt 3:9). He is the God who so loved the world that He sent Jesus; that is He sent "God saves."

3. **GOD** saves.

a. It is not the Church that saves you. It is certainly not drugs, alcohol, or money that saves you. It is not what family you were born into that saves you (consider the implications of Jn 3:3). It is not even how good you are that saves you (consider the implications of Rom 9:32 and Jn 6:29).



b. It is God, the Alpha and Omega, who saves you. He has paid the full price (see 1 Cor 6:20). He has done it all and thus becomes the stumbling block (review again Rom 9:32).

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Jesus means "God saves."

4. Reflections on the idea that Jesus means "God saves."
 - a. In each of the following Scriptures insert "God saves" in place of the name "Jesus" or reference to Him. Discuss how that adds depth to the meaning and implications of the text.



- 1) Mk 5:27 - after hearing about "God saves."
- 2) Acts 8:35 - he preached "God saves."
- 3) Mt 8:34 - the whole city came out to meet "God saves."



- 4) Jn 12:11 - believing in "God saves."
- 5) Rom 3:26 - having faith in "God saves."
- 6) Jn 1:37 - they followed "God saves."
- 7) Lk 8:35 - sitting down at the feet of "God saves."
- 8) Gal 2:4 - gaining freedom in "God saves."
- 9) 1 Cor 1:2 - sanctified in "God saves."
- 10) 1 Cor 3:11 - building a foundation on "God saves."
- 11) Heb 12:2 - fixing our eyes on "God saves."
- 12) Heb 1:3 - everything held together in "God saves."
- 13) Eph 1:10 - everything summed up in "God

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saves."

- 14) 1 Cor 16:22 - come back "God saves."
5. Conclusion.

a. Our spirituality depends on God. It depends on our willingness to admit that it depends on God! What must we do to be spiritual/to be saved?

- 1) We must confess Jesus; that is we must confess that it is God who saves and not we ourselves (consider Peter's "great confession" in Mk 8:29).



- 2) This confession includes repentance and belief (Mk 1:15). Use the following diagram to expand on this idea.



PETER'S GREAT CONFSSION - JESUS IS MESSIAH...HE IS GOD SAVES!



REPENT



Turn from trying to save yourself. Confess you're

SICK



Mt 9:12
Jn 9:41
1 Cor 11:31
Rom 10:13
Prov 3:5,6



BELIEVE



Jesus is God saves.

He is the
PHYSICIAN



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- b. An analogy: The swimmer who could not make it.
- 1) A swimmer begin to lose strength in the middle of the ocean, 500 miles from the nearest beach. Someone rode by in a boat and threw him a waterproof copy of a book on swimming. That did not solve his problem. Then someone jumped in next to him and began to show him how to swim. That was not the solution. Next, someone pulled him into a boat, fed him, and then threw him back into the water. That did not solve the problem either. Finally, someone pulled him into the boat and carried him 500 miles to land. That was his only hope.



- 2) So too with Jesus. He does not simply give us instructions on how to be saved. Nor does he simply show us the way or merely help us to help ourselves. He did it all. Indeed, Jesus means "God saves." Spirituality begins with this understanding.

C. God Keeps Getting in the Way.

1. Introduction

- a. Spirituality begins with our understanding that it is God who draws us to Himself. It is God who makes our relationship with Him a possibility.
 - 1) Included in this basic foundation of a life of spirituality is the fact that God is constantly intervening in our lives. The fact that God keeps getting in the way can serve as a profound definition or description of the idea that God is a God of mercy and grace.

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Indeed, our spirituality (relational response to God) is a possibility only because God is constantly involved in our lives.

- 2) If God was not directly involved with you this very second, you would instantly evaporate (Job 34:15). God is constantly involved with us for our own benefit. This is good news...Please God, get in my way!



b. The constancy of divine intervention in our lives is determined by:

- 1) the constancy of the sovereignty of the Father (CONSTANT CONTROL).
- 2) which is worked through the constancy of the grace of the Son (CONSTANT DIVINE FAVOR).
- 3) according to the constancy of the power of the Holy Spirit (CONSTANT ACTIVE PRESENCE).

2. The constant control of the Father.

- a. **EXPLAIN** - Read Ex 23:27-30 and Dt 7:20-22: God's omniscience results in a sovereign intervention in our lives. It is constant because His omniscience is constant. He always knows everything, and is therefore always in control. In the midst of His constant control He intervenes for our own benefit...even when we might think that the opposite is beneficial.



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- b. **ILLUSTRATE** - Some years ago, a tragic plane crash took the lives of the Zambian national soccer team. No one knew that would happen. Nevertheless, God knew and was in control. Two players on the team were Christians. One of them did not go on the trip because he was uncharacteristically left off the travel team. The other did not go because he was injured in practice the day before. Both players were distressed to see the plane leave without them. Later, however, they recognized the intervention of God on their behalf.



- c. **APPLY** - Perhaps you are looking for a new job. You are praying. There's a great opportunity that you desire, but it fails to materialize. You only see the apparent great opportunity, but God sees the whole picture. Rest in God in the things you cannot control, knowing that He is constantly intervening on your behalf and in control (consider Jer 29:11).



- d. And so we say, "Please God, get in my way!" The constancy of divine intervention in our lives is determined by the constancy of the sovereignty of the Father (CONSTANT CONTROL) which is worked through the constancy of the grace of the Son (CONSTANT DIVINE FAVOR) according to the constancy of the power of the Holy Spirit (CONSTANT ACTIVE PRESENCE).

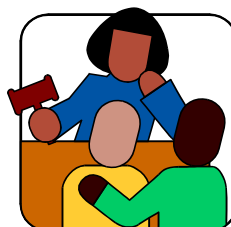
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3. The constant divine favor of the Son.

- a. **EXPLAIN** - Read Heb 7:25: According to Marvin Vincent, "the idea is not intercession, but intervention. It includes every form of Christ's identifying himself with human interests"¹ Thus, in Rom 8:26 it is not that the Spirit pleads on our behalf, but that he involves Himself in our situation; he takes part in it. So too in Heb 7:25. The idea is not that Jesus is constantly praying for us, but that he is constantly intervening in all our affairs for our benefit. "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses . . . Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:15,16). Through the Son, we enjoy a constant divine favor.



- b. **ILLUSTRATE** - Picture, if you will, a possible scene in heaven: you have just gotten yourself in a difficult situation because of your ignorance, negligence, or even because of your own sin. The case is brought before God. The question goes forth, "Is there anyone here who can put in a good word for this guy?" All eyes turn to Jesus. He nods his head in a sign of support. The command goes forward, "bless him, help him, show him favor" (IT'S NOT WHAT YOU KNOW BUT WHO YOU KNOW!).



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- c. **APPLY** - Sometimes we feel all alone, like no one is on our side. We may even feel that no one should be on our side. We may feel that we do not deserve favor and that no one should help us. The good news is that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father to intervene for us (Rom 8:34). He entered heaven to appear in the presence of God for us (Heb 9:24). He is for us. Indeed, we have an advocate (1Jn 2:1). We are always in a time of need. Jesus says we can do NOTHING without him (Jn 15:5), but we can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens us (Phil 4:13). What is this strength? It is the constancy of the grace of the Son. It is constant divine favor!



- d. And so we say, "Please God, get in my way!" The constancy of divine intervention in our lives is determined by the constancy of the sovereignty of the Father (CONSTANT CONTROL) which is worked through the constancy of the grace of the Son (CONSTANT DIVINE FAVOR) according to the constancy of the power of the Holy Spirit (CONSTANT ACTIVE PRESENCE).

4. The constant active presence of the Holy Spirit.

- a. **EXPLAIN** - Read Rom 8:26-28 (review the previous point and Vincent's remark). The idea of "intercede" is not praying in tongues (indeed, it is not associated with speech). It is the idea of the intervention of the Holy Spirit; that is, the idea of Him getting in the way on our behalf (indeed v.28 implies this sort of thing as it paints the picture of God's involvement in working things out in our lives). Yes, the constant active presence of the Holy Spirit results in the various pieces of the puzzle of our lives

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being fitted perfectly together.



- b. **ILLUSTRATE** - The Father constantly knows what is happening in our lives. He is in constant control. That constant control benefits us as it is worked through the grace vehicle of the constant divine favor of the Son; that is, the one who is constantly in control also happens to be constantly for us. Furthermore, the constant control of the Father that is worked through the constant divine favor of the Son is according to the constant active presence of the Holy Spirit. It is not just that He controls everything and is on our side, but it is also that he acts on our behalf. Indeed, the Spirit intervenes, actively working in our midst to put things together for us in the right way. It is God who is at work in us to will and to do his good pleasure (Phil 2:13).



- c. **APPLY** - How many times this year has God intervened for you? How many times this week has God intervened even to save your life in ways that you are not aware of? How many times has He intervened to put a right person in a right place at a right time which may not even be part of your "puzzle" until next week? How many times today has He intervened to remind you of something, or to put a certain desire in your heart, or a certain caution in your mind? Yes, perhaps the most foundational description of the mercy and grace of God is that HE INDEED GETS IN OUR WAY-read Ps139:7-12



5. Conclusion.

- a. So we say, "Please God, get in my way!" **The**

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constancy of divine intervention in our lives is determined by the constancy of the sovereignty of the Father (CONSTANT CONTROL) which is worked through the constancy of the grace of the Son (CONSTANT DIVINE FAVOR) according to the constancy of the power of the Holy Spirit (CONSTANT ACTIVE PRESENCE).

- b. There is no peace in deism. Praise God, that he truly is involved with his creation. He is involved in a constant way. He intervenes constantly.
 - 1) Thankfully, he intervenes, and in so doing becomes our peace, our rest, and our hope. What is your response to Him?



- 2) The word of God points to our proper response in Prov 3:5,6 - "TRUST in the Lord with all of your heart and DO NOT LEAN on your own understanding. In all your ways ACKNOWLEDGE Him, and He will make your paths straight."

D. God's Favorite Thing to Do.

1. Introduction.

- a. Our spirituality is based on God's desire to have relationship with us. We desire God because He first desired us (consider the similar progressions of Lev 19:2 and 1 Jn 4:19). We choose God because He first chose us (Jn 15:16). We seek God because He first sought after us (Lk 15:1-7).



- b. What is God's favorite thing to do? It is to spend time with us. It is to reveal Himself to us. God delights in us and in us knowing Him.

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- c. As a way to begin to think upon this type of idea, consider the following Scriptures: 2 Sam 22:20; 1 Kings 10:9; Ps 18:19; Prov 8:31; Prov 11:20; Prov 12:22; Prov 15:8; SS 4:9; Is 11:9; Hos 6:6; Mk 3:14.
2. Who God is - Some people think they are too important to spend time with God.
- a. Yet, God is the Creator (Gen 1:1). That single fact makes Him quite important.



- b. God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (Rev 1:8). That makes Him quite important.
- c. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim 6:15). He is the important One.



- d. Yet as important as God is, His greatest desire is to spend time with you (read Is 11:9; Hos 6:6). God Almighty wants to be your friend (read Jn 15:5).
3. What God does - Some people think they have too many important things to do to spend time with God.
- a. Yet, God holds the world together (Heb 1:3; Job 34:14,15). That single fact makes the things He does quite important.
- b. God takes your burdens and sustains you (Ps 55:22; 1Pt 5:7). That makes the things He does quite important.



- c. He makes nations to rise and to fall (Prov

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14:23; Mal 1:4). He does important things.

- d. Yet as many important things that God has to do, His most important is to spend time with you (read Is 11:9; Hos 6:6). The One who holds the world together wants to be alone with you in secret (read Mt 6:6).
4. Where God is - Some people think they have too many places to be at to spend time with God.
- a. Yet, God is everywhere (Ps 139:7-12). That single fact makes the number of places He has to be at quite impressive.



- b. God is in Russian prayer meetings at the same time He's protecting people in China. That makes the number of places He has to be at quite impressive. He must be at many places.
 - c. Yet as many places as God must be, His greatest desire is to be with you where you are (read Is 11:9; Hos 6:6). The omnipresent One wants to be with you (read Mt 28:20).
5. When is God - Some people think they do not have enough time to spend time with God.
- a. Yet, God is eternal. He is in the past, present, and future at the same time (Is 9:6). That single fact makes Him quite busy.



- b. To God 1000 years is like one day (2 Pt 3:8). That makes Him quite busy.
 - c. Yet as much time as God goes through, His greatest desire is to be with you now (read Is 11:9; Hos 6:6). The eternal God wants to spend time with you TODAY (read Ps 95:7).
6. Why and How does God do things - Some people think

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their lives are too important and complex to spend time with God.

- a. Yet, God works toward incredibly important purposes and works with incredibly complex strategies. His ways are beyond us (Is 55:9). That single fact makes His purposes and ways quite important and quite complex.
- b. Yet even though He is One who has such important and complex purposes and ways, His greatest purpose is to transform you into the image of Jesus (read Rom 8:29) by spending time with you (read 1 Jn 3:2). Indeed, the complex One wants to simply make Himself known to you through spending time with you (read Is 11:9; Hos 6:6).



7. Conclusion.

- a. What is your favorite thing to do? What is God's favorite thing to do? The incredible Creator who holds all things together, who is everywhere at one time and at all times, whose purposes and methods are critical and complex has as His greatest desire to spend time with us. Certainly we must be humbled by this reality. We must respond to God and spend time with Him.



- b. Is 11:9 -- **For the earth will be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.**
Hos 6:6 -- **For I DELIGHT in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.**

III. SPIRITUALITY - KNOWING WHAT WE NEED.

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A. Introduction.

1. Spirituality is fueled by a correct perception of what we need. To the degree that we understand our need for God is the degree to which we will seek Him. Those who are full of pride cannot be spiritual because they cannot see their need for God. Spirituality assumes humility.
2. In this section of the course we will consider the reasons we flee from God, our need for true repentance, and our need to relate to God in order to properly relate to others.

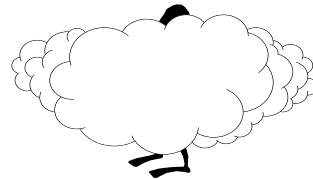
B. To Flee or Not to Flee: That is the CRITICAL Question.

1. Introduction.

- a. The irony of men fleeing from the only One who can help them began immediately after the original sin was committed in the garden of Eden (read Gen 3:8-13).



- 1) There is a contrast between God's desire to interact with Adam and Eve (note His question, "Where are you?", in v.9), and their desire to avoid God (note that "the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" in v.8).



- 2) The opposite of spirituality is portrayed by the attitudes and actions of men that represent an attempt to hide themselves from God in the midst of His creation. These attitudes and actions are prompted by sin which separates us from God.

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- b. It was probably very early in the morning on the day that Jesus was crucified that Judas the betrayer led a group of men through the darkness to arrest Jesus. Jesus' best friends were by his side, but then "they all left Him and fled" (read Mk 14:43-50).



- 1) The ones who walked, talked, laughed, cried, worked, slept, ate with Him for three years "left Him and fled." The ones who saw Him raise people from the dead, heal every kind of disease, cast out demons, multiply food, and walk on water actually "left Him and fled."
- 2) To be sure, they felt vulnerable. They sought refuge, security, and a covering. It is also seen that "a certain young man" felt vulnerable and sought refuge, security, and a covering as he fled from Jesus (see Mk 14:51-52). Instead, the result of fleeing from Jesus was that he was naked; that is without a covering. How ironic! (review Gen 3:7-21 and consider how that account includes similar symbolic dynamics and how the event in the **garden of EDEN** is similar to the event in the **garden of GETHSEMANE**).



- 3) Many times we flee from Jesus also. Yes, those of us who are His friends! We who have walked and talked with Him and have seen His power are similarly the ones, in the dark moments of our lives, who flee from Jesus in search of refuge, security, and a covering. Tragically, we share in the irony of the actions of that "certain young man" because to flee from Jesus is actually

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to be naked while to be with Him is to be covered (consider Ps 91:1-4 and 17:7).

c. Why do we leave Him and flee? In general, we flee from Jesus for the same reasons Adam and Eve, those in the garden of Gethsemene, and that "certain young man" fled from Jesus.

- 1) Lack of preparation.
- 2) Fear of men and temporal things.
- 3) Ashamed of self.
- 4) Ashamed of Jesus and the cross.

2. Why we flee from Jesus - lack of preparation.

a. Jesus told His disciples to do three things in preparation for avoiding the temptation to flee (read Mk 14:32-52).



- 1) Wait (vv.32,34) - waiting with Jesus and upon Jesus is necessary to avoid falling to temptation.
 - a) Indeed, as we spend time with Jesus and waiting upon His direction and guidance, we prepare ourselves to be strong in the hour of temptation.
 - b) However, like the disciples, we sometimes sleep instead!
- 2) Watch (vv.34,38) - watching includes the idea of being alert and sober (see 1 Thes 5:6), and is necessary to avoid falling to temptation.

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- a) Indeed, as we remain ready through discipline, self control, and discernment we prepare ourselves to be strong in the hour of temptation.
 - b) However, like the disciples, we sometimes sleep instead!
- 3) Pray (v.38) - praying includes the act of asking for God's help with the attitude of depending on God, and is necessary to avoid falling to temptation.
- a) Indeed, as we walk in the Spirit through engaging in conversation with God we prepare ourselves to be strong in the hour of temptation.
 - b) However, like the disciples, we sometimes sleep instead!
- b. Without preparation we will not be spiritual people because we will fall to the temptation to flee from Jesus, even as His disciples did.
- 1) Jesus certainly warned them (consider v.41).
 - 2) Jesus certainly warns us. Are you waiting? Watching? Praying? If not, when temptation comes, you too (Mk 14:50) will leave Him and flee (consider how Mk 4:5,6,16,17 may be applied to this concept).

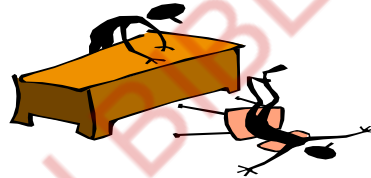


3. Why we flee from Jesus - fear of men and temporal

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things.

- a. What did the disciples fear? They feared the darkness, the soldiers, and the weapons. They feared the multitude that took hold of Jesus.
- b. What should they have feared? They should have feared the obvious superiority of Jesus (consider Mt 26:53 and Jn 18:6).
- c. What do you fear? We must understand the implications of Matthew 10:28. We must fear Him who has ultimate authority.



- 1) Are you concerned about what others think of you, or what God thinks of you? Do you fear the loss of material things, status or reputation, or do you fear the loss of your soul?
- 2) Do you have a temporal or eternal fear? If your fear is based on temporal things, you will leave Him and flee (Mk 14:50).

4. Why we flee from Jesus - ashamed of self.

- a. They felt a sense of failure and shame.
 - 1) Their sense of failure and shame was most immediately derived from the fact that they did not obey Jesus. They did not wait, watch, and pray, but instead, they slept. Their shame, perhaps, resulted in an unwillingness to look at Jesus in the face, even though His would have been a look of forgiveness and reassurance.
 - 2) Their sense of failure and shame as a



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group was magnified as they realized that it was one from among them who was Jesus' betrayer (v.43).

- b. We may also feel a sense of failure and shame.
 - 1) We might repeat the same type of sin many times and feel a growing sense of failure and shame. We may want to flee because we feel unworthy and embarrassed to look at or go to Jesus.
 - 2) Yes, we are unworthy. Yes, we do fail. Nevertheless, we must look to Jesus or we will flee from Him (consider Heb 4:14-16 with Heb 12:2).

5. Why we flee from Jesus - ashamed of Jesus and the cross.

- a. It is difficult to accept that the way of God is the way of the cross. In a paradoxical way, the cross is life through death; that is, that which appears to be a defeat is actually the victory. When the enemies of Christ took Him from the garden, the disciples were viewing it as their defeat. They were ashamed. Yet, it was their victory



and glory.

- b. Consider how Peter, on three different occasions and in three slightly different ways, seems to exemplify this idea of being ashamed of Jesus and the cross:
 - 1) Mt 16:21-23.
 - 2) Jn 13:5-8.

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3) Jn 18:10-11.



c. We may also be ashamed of the cross, and therefore not accept it easily. It is "scandalous" to our flesh to think that God had to do it all for us. Indeed, the Scriptural idea of the cross as a "stumbling block" comes from the Greek word "eskandalon" from which we get our English word "scandal." (consider Gal 5:11; Rom 9:33; 1 Cor 1:23).

1) In our flesh, we are ashamed of the cross (consider 1 Cor 1:18).

2) Thus, we flee from it and forsake it and try to do things our own way and in our own power and ability (like Peter, we want to do something WE can be proud of).

3) Promote discussion with respect to applying these tendencies to everyday Christian lives.



6. Conclusion.

a. At one time or another we all "leave and flee." Nevertheless, there is always hope. There is redemption. Read Jn 21:15-17.



1) Here we see a beautiful symbolization of complete redemption. Jesus restored Peter with three questions - one question and response of Peter for each of the three times he denied Christ. Each time Jesus asked "Do you love Me?" and Peter replied "Yes, I love You", we see the wiping away of the stains left

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by each "I do not know Him" (see Mt 26:70,72,74).

- 2) Yes, we all fail. However, what counts is the final result. One Saul of the Bible (King Saul in the Old Testament) began well, but did not end well. Another Saul (Paul of the New Testament) did not begin well, but did end well. Peter denied Christ three times. Pilate defended Christ three times (Lk 23:22-24). In the end, however, Peter repented and was redeemed. Pilate put Jesus to death and was condemned.
- b. At times, we may leave and flee from Jesus. Nevertheless, there is hope because there is redemption. Yes, we failed in the past, but what matters is what you will do today.



C. Repentance: The Act of Turning to God's Ability.

1. Introduction.

- a. The opposite of fleeing from Jesus is returning to Jesus. This is the act of repentance. Without repentance we will remain in our sin, and thus, remain unspiritual.
- b. Why can't we break some of the cycles of sin in our lives? Why do we find ourselves going back to the same sin over and over again?
 - 1) We sin. We are convicted. We confess. The answer to the previous question has something to do with that point of confession and which way we will then turn. Once we confess we either turn (repent) to our own abilities or we turn (repent) to God's abilities.
 - 2) Repentance is much more than saying "I will not do this thing again" or "I will

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turn from this way." The focus is not on a thing or a way. It is on a Person. The focus is not on ME. It is on Jesus Christ. Repentance is the point of coming to the end of yourself and turning to God's ability. It does not have so much to do with what you will or will not do (which are results of repentance, not so much the actions of it), but with what ONLY God is able to do.

- c. We sin. We are convicted. We confess. Then we must repent and believe. That is, to break the cycle of sin we must turn to God's abilities and put our trust in Him. Obviously, the key to breaking the sin cycle is to more fully understand what it means to truly REPENT. Consider and discuss the following passages with respect to this point.



- 1) Acts 9:35 - repentance is turning to God.
- 2) 1 Sam 7:3- repentance is to return to God/turn your heart to God.
- 3) Acts 20:21 - repentance is toward God.



- 4) Mal 3:7 - repentance is to "Return to Me"
 - 5) Hos 5:15-6:3 - repentance is to return to the Lord and know Him.
- d. What does it mean to truly REPENT? It means to turn to a Person - not turning to a way, but turning to the Way. Who is the Way?

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Jesus Christ. **TO REPENT IS TO TURN TO THE ABILITIES OF JESUS CHRIST.** IT IS NOT SO MUCH THE PROCESS OF DECLARING YOUR ACTIONS AS IT IS THE PROCESS OF ASKING TO BE ACTED UPON.

- e. Read Ps 51:1,2,10,14,17. We need to be acted upon by God in four ways: He must grace us, wash us, create in us, and deliver us.



2. Grace me (v.1).

- a. True repentance includes the understanding that God's grace is necessary. God's actions on my behalf are unmerited. I am unworthy.
- b. Counterfeit (substitute) repentance does not include the understanding of the desperate need for God's grace. It exhibits an attitude that tries to earn or deserve the right to come to God. It says, "I feel unworthy so I will wait until I do enough good things that I feel worthy enough to come to God."
- c. Read Heb 4:15,16. Since Jesus has "suffered with" us, we can boldly come to the throne. His compassion (v.1b) encourages us to accept His grace; that is, we do not have to feel deserving in order to come to God.



- d. Someone might say, "Before I repent, I want to get my life right." That is like saying, "Before I milk the cow, I want to drink the milk." First, you must milk the cow. Then you can drink the milk. So too, first you must repent. Then God can begin to "get your life right."



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- 1) Do you say that sometimes? Do you try to drink the milk without first milking the cow? Do you try to solve your sin problems without first going to the only one who is able to solve them?



- 2) Do you needlessly carry around the ball and chain of the unworthiness (guilt) of sin? Promote discussion.



- e. Repentance is the point of coming to the end of yourself and turning to God's ability. IT IS NOT SO MUCH THE PROCESS OF DECLARING YOUR ACTIONS (I will become worthy) AS IT IS THE PROCESS OF ASKING TO BE ACTED UPON (Shine your grace upon me, God).

3. Wash me (vv.2-9).

- a. True repentance includes the understanding that God's cleansing is necessary. It says, "I am unclean. I am dirty."
- b. Counterfeit (substitute) repentance does not include the understanding of the desperate need for God's cleansing. It exhibits an attitude that says, "I will wait until I do enough good things that I feel clean enough to approach God."



- c. Read Jn 13:6,8. Peter had this counterfeit attitude. He apparently felt that God should not have to wash his dirty feet, and that he should wash them himself. However, as Jesus

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later indicated, He is the only One who can make you "whiter than snow" (v.7b). We can not clean ourselves. We do not have to feel clean in order to come to God.

- d. Do you realize that if God does not wash you, you have no part with Him? Do you needlessly carry around the ball and chain of the dirtiness (guilt) of sin? Promote

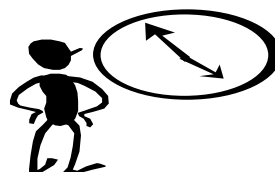


discussion.

- e. Repentance is the point of coming to the end of yourself and turning to God's ability. IT IS NOT SO MUCH THE PROCESS OF DECLARING YOUR ACTIONS (I will become clean) AS IT IS THE PROCESS OF ASKING TO BE ACTED UPON (Cleanse me, O God).

4. Create in me (vv.10-13).

- a. True repentance includes the understanding that God is still at work in you. It says, "I am unfinished. I am imperfect.
- b. Counterfeit (substitute) repentance does not include the understanding of the desperate need for God to continue to be at work in you. It exhibits the attitude that says, "I will wait until I have time to change myself so that I feel changed enough to approach God."
- c. Have you ever set a date for when you would start being different? Meanwhile, you gorge yourself with your current lifestyle (filling yourself up with as much as possible before the date) in anticipation of the date when you will change. You can set dates from here to eternity, but He is the only One who can create something new in you. You can not change yourself. You do not have to feel changed in order to come to God.



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- d. Do you "set dates" with respect to a sin area that keeps appearing in your life? Do you needlessly carry around the ball and chain of the imperfection (guilt) of sin?
 - e. Repentance is the point of coming to the end of yourself and turning to God's ability. IT IS NOT SO MUCH THE PROCESS OF DECLARING YOUR ACTIONS (I will change) AS IT IS THE PROCESS OF ASKING TO BE ACTED UPON (Change me, O God. Create anew in me).
5. Deliver me (vv.14-17).
- a. True repentance includes the understanding that God is the Deliverer. It says, "I am unable to deliver myself. I am useless by myself."
 - b. Counterfeit (substitute) repentance does not include the understanding of the desperate need for God's deliverance. It exhibits an attitude that says, "I will 'go through the motions' so that I feel like I am useful enough to approach God."
 - c. Read Mal 1:10. The ironic alternative to not admitting that you are useless is to do useless things (consider how the principle of Jn 9:41 relates to this idea). God does not want forms without the substance. He is not pleased with the "motions" (the burnt offering). He desires a broken and humble spirit. He is the only one who can deliver you (make you useful). You can not deliver yourself. You do not have to feel useful in order to come to God.



- d. Do you need to turn to God so He can make you useful again, but instead you go through the motions in order to feel useful? Do you needlessly carry around the ball and chain of the uselessness (guilt) of sin?



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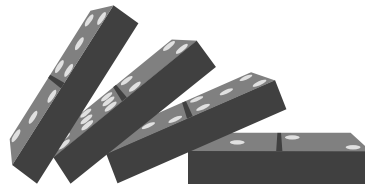
- e. Repentance is the point of coming to the end of yourself and turning to God's ability. IT IS NOT SO MUCH THE PROCESS OF DECLARING YOUR ACTIONS (I will be useful) AS IT IS THE PROCESS OF ASKING TO BE ACTED UPON (Deliver me, O God. Make me useful again).
6. Conclusion - Promote discussion and review by asking the following questions: What is true repentance? How does it affect spirituality?



D. Relating to God in order to Properly Relate to Others.

1. Introduction.

- a. In order to be a spiritual people we must know that we need God and His abilities. We need to properly relate to God. Beyond this, we must know that in order to properly relate to others, we must first properly relate to God. The quality of our spirituality with others depends on the quality of our spirituality with God.



- b. For a domino at the end of the line to fall, the dominos in the front of the line must first fall. Without knocking down the first domino, no other dominos behind it will fall. So too, in our Christian lives. If we want to have strong relationships with others, we must first have strong relationships with

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God. If we want to be better family members of the body of Christ, we must first be better children of God.

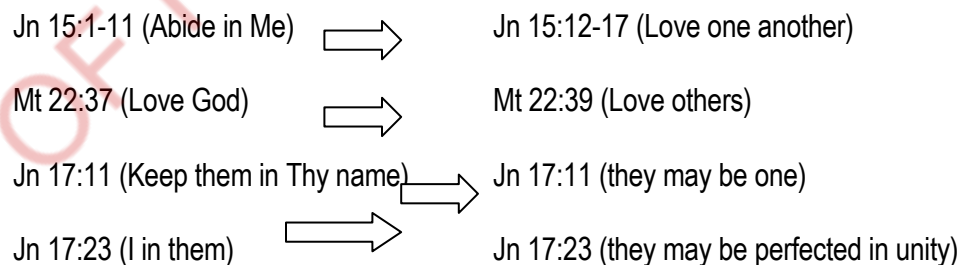
2. Explanation.

- a. Fellowship with others is based on fellowship with God. This is true because it must be God who loves others through us. To relate to God first creates the potential to relate to others because it makes the resource available.



- b. Read 1 Jn 1:3. Discuss how this verse could be used to explain the idea that fellowship with others is based on fellowship with God.

3. Illustrations - use the following passages to illustrate the theological progression from relationship with God to relationship with others.



4. Applications.

- a. To a certain degree, how you treat others is determined by the security and health of your relationship with God. When you struggle in your relationship with God you will also tend to struggle in your relationship with others. Promote discussion of specific applications.

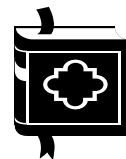
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- b. The quality of our fellowship with others depends upon the degree to which we understand that our relationships with God are shared relationships; that is, that we all have a common problem and a common solution (consider 1 Cor 10:16-17). Promote discussion with respect to how this idea can positively affect the avoidance of prejudice in the church (racial, family, denominational, etc).



- c. The commitment of our fellowship with others depends upon the degree to which we are committed to our relationships with God. The establishing and developing of a relationship is motivated by something (mutual interest, legislated pressure, formality, ritual, etc). Relationships between Christians must be based on, motivated by, and developed within a mutual loyalty to God. You must see your brother through your Father. Promote discussion of this type of application after considering how loyalty to a common mediator helped David and Jonathan avoid fleshly schism in 1 Sam 20:30-42 (focus on v.42).



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IV. SPIRITUALITY - KNOWING HOW TO GET THERE.

A. **Introduction**

1. The essence of spirituality is best described by the expression "being in Christ." It is manifested in an intimate and profound relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is arrived at through the cross; that is, death is the method.
2. In this section we will consider the attitude and motivation of the method. The concept of "going for what counts" stands as a motivator toward the life of the cross, and thus, toward a life of spirituality. We will then consider four key words that describe the progression of death to self. We will also consider spirituality as it relates to having the ability to establish and follow through on proper priorities.

B. **Go For What Counts!**

1. Introduction.
 - a. Blessed are the soccer goalies who stop penalty shots in the World Cup for their names will be in the newspapers for two weeks. Blessed are those who own the fastest cars for they will arrive at their destination one minute before the others. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.



- 1) Read 1 Cor 9:25.

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- 2) What are you striving for? What type of wreath will you be receiving?
- 3) A minister stood by the bed of a dying Christian man. The man was distraught. The minister tried to encourage the man in his salvation. The man responded, "I am not afraid to die. I know that I am saved in Christ. I am not afraid. I am ashamed. I have lived much of my Christian life in selfishness and must now meet my Savior empty handed.

b. Many people spend their whole lives involved in activities and pursuits that are insignificant in light of eternity; chasing dreams that have no eternal use, setting goals that have no eternal meaning, pursuing ambitions that have no eternal purpose.

- 1) Much time can be wasted on things that will mean nothing in the end. It is like a dog chasing a train. What is he going to do with it even if he were to catch it? Even if he is "successful", his success is useless; it is worthless.



- 2) The futility of life will never be so obvious as at the final judgment when many of the goals, activities, and events of our lives that seemed so precious to us are swallowed up in a moment of time as if they had never occurred. What a waste!

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- 3) Even Christians, it seems, will suffer regret (loss). Perhaps, some will say, "We should have gone for what counted. Give us another chance, Lord." Of course, your only chance is now! You can go for what counts now and avoid the tragedy of futility in the future. Rewards are waiting for you. Go for what counts!



- c. Read 1 Cor 3:8-17. In this section we will consider the idea of the biblical doctrine of rewards; that is, those things that "count" and give meaning to the word "success." The concept of "going for what counts" stands as a motivator toward the life of the cross, and thus, toward a life of spirituality.
2. Understanding the idea of "going for what counts" (Study 1 Cor 3:8-17).
 - a. There is a difference between the doctrine of salvation for the lost and the doctrine of rewards for the saved. True spirituality is only possible in the context of a Christian life. Indeed, rewards are determined according to the works of the believer (consider Mt 16:27).
 - 1) Christians are God's "fellow workers" (v.9) not with respect to salvation, but with respect to rewards.
 - 2) The idea of rewards (vv.8,14) is contrasted with the idea of "loss" (v.15).
 - a) This "loss" is not the loss of salvation (v.15), but the loss of an opportunity for reward. Fire (vv.13,15) does not consume precious metals (v.12), but does

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burn away impurities.



- b) Each man's work will be "tested" (v.13). The idea here is that of a metal being placed in the fire so as to approve its purity. Anything that is impure becomes waste or dross.
- c) Consider v.12. To build on Christ (to be in Him; that is, spirituality) is to build with eternal materials that will not burn (gold, silver, precious stones). To build on yourself (to be in self; that is, carnality) is to build with temporal materials that will burn (wood, hay, straw).



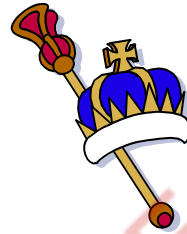
- 3) Christian spirituality (that which is built on the foundation, Jesus Christ; that which is "in Christ" - v.11) determines a believer's rewards. So go for what counts!



- b. There seem to be two basic areas of potential rewards.
 - 1) Ministry (vv.8-9) - Christian service, use of gifts, spreading the gospel, etc. As the building of God (v.9), the parts of that building that will remain through the fire are the parts that are developed in accord with the purposes of that building.

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- a) Consider how the "crown of exultation" (1 Thes 2:19) may be a reward associated with a believer's ministry.



- b) Consider how the "crown of righteousness" (2 Tim 4:8) may be a reward associated with a believer's ministry.

- c) Consider how the "crown of glory" (1 Pt 5:4) may be a reward associated with a believer's ministry.

- 2) Personal life (vv.16-17) - purity, prayer, dedication, etc. As the temple of God (v.16), the parts of that temple that will remain through the fire are the parts that are developed in accord with the purposes of that temple.

- a) Consider how the "crown of life" (Jms 1:12) may be a reward associated with a believer's personal life.



- b) Consider how the "imperishable wreath" (1 Cor 9:25) may be a reward associated with a believer's personal life.

3. Illustrating the idea of "going for what counts" (Study 1 Pt 2:4-9).

Christian Spirituality

- a. Spirituality is illustrated here in terms of a believer "being built up as a spiritual house." Remember, the parts of the house/temple that will remain through the fire (go for what counts) are the parts that are developed in accord with the purposes of the house/temple.



- 1) Notice in v.5 that one purpose is to "offer up spiritual sacrifices." These sacrifices may include sacrifices of:
 - a) Justice/righteousness (consider Ps 4:5).
 - b) Praise (consider Ps 27:6).
 - c) Thanksgiving (Ps 107:22).
 - d) A broken spirit (Ps 51:17).
- 2) Notice in v.8 that another purpose is obedience to the word.
- 3) Notice in v.9 that another purpose is to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you."

- b. These purposes of the house/temple (believers) point to activities that will count in the end. It makes sense to do things that count toward something. Study 1 Cor 9:24-27.



- 1) Paul uses the idea of a race to declare that he is not a Christian for nothing. He wants to avoid futility. He wants

Christian Spirituality

to go for what counts.

- a) Christianity is not a religion that is based on futility (as opposed to, for example, idol worship which is completely futile). Christians are not running simply for the sake of running. No! We run to win a



prize.

- b) When running in a race you only do those things that propel you toward the finish line. If something does not move you closer to the finish line (the reward), then you do not do it (consider Heb 11:24-26).

- 2) Paul, like a runner, is single minded. He has a goal (1 Cor 9:26) and everything is directed toward that goal (consider Heb 12:1,2). So, too, we must realize we are in a race and respond accordingly.

4. Applying the idea of "going for what counts."

- a. Do everything as unto God (as a service to God; see Col 3:23-24).



- 1) **To** whom you serve is **from** whom you can expect your reward (consider Mt 6:2-4). If you serve self, then self will reward you. If you serve man, then man will reward you. If you serve God, then

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God will reward you.

- 2) Think **eternally** (serve God), not **temporally** (serve man). Consider Col 3:2 and 2 Cor 4:18.
- b. Practice self-control (consider 1 Cor 9:25) and self-denial (consider 1 Cor 9:27).
- c. Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness (consider 1 Tim 4:7-8).
 - 1) With respect to what you do not do.
 - 2) With respect to what you do actually do.
- d. Build your relationship with God.
 - 1) Quantitative - seek Him (consider Heb 11:6) consistently through prayer, bible study, praise, fellowship with other believers, acknowledging Him in all your ways, etc.



- 2) Qualitative - practice intimacy and secrecy (Mt 6:1,4,6,18).

5. Conclusion.

- a. Are you going for what counts? Will what you did today last throughout eternity? Or was it just a waste of time?
- b. At the Milan Cathedral there are three huge doorways. Over the door on the right are the words, "All that pleases is but for a moment." Over the door on the left are the words, "All that troubles is but for a moment." Over the middle door are the words, "Nothing is important save that which is eternal."

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- c. To some degree, you determine your situation in eternity today. Are you like a dog running after a train? Does your life have purpose. Go for what counts! Promote a final discussion after reading Is 55:1-3.



C. Three Key Words - A Progression of Death to Self.

1. Introduction.

- a. The method of the gospel is the cross. The method of spirituality is the cross. Throughout the Scriptures, there is one clear methodology used to live in the Kingdom of God; that is, the methodology of death to self. The words "broken", "empty", and "yield" describe a certain progression that is necessary in living the life of the cross.
- b. Indeed, the way to go for what counts is the way of the cross.

2. Broken - in order to make room for God to work through you.

- a. Read Ps 51:16-17 - God desires and responds to our brokenness.
- b. Read 1 Cor 11:24 - Brokenness is necessary to bring forth life (consider also Jn 12:24 and 2 Cor 8:9).



- c. Read Mt 5:3 - God blesses brokenness. He can build that which is broken (consider how this is true symbolically in 2 Chr 32:5 and Neh 2:17, and how the opposite is true in Mal 1:4).

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3. Empty - in order to be filled with God's Spirit (God's resource - consider Zech 4:6).
 - a. Read Lev 14:33-42 - The "leprosy" in our lives must be emptied out or removed before it can be refilled or replaced.



- b. Read Jer 48:4-20 - If we are not emptied of self, then our "aroma" (v.11) will not change.
4. Yield - in order to enjoy God's desire to give to us we must receive through surrendering to Him.
 - a. Read 2 Chron 30:8 - We must not allow our hearts to become hard. Yielding to God is the opposite of "stiffening our necks" toward Him.
 - b. Read Rom 6:13 - To yield to God is to present yourself and your "members" to Him.
 - c. Read Acts 16:6-10 and Rom 15:22 - To yield to God is to avoid insisting upon your agenda.
 - d. Read Mk 4:20 - Yielding to God (accepting His word) bears fruit.



5. Conclusion.
 - a. As is the case in the popular hymn that reads "melt me, mold me, fill me, use me", the progression of the life of the cross that results in being used (use me) in the Kingdom of God begins with the idea of brokenness (melt me), continues with the idea of becoming empty of self (mold me), and ends with the idea of yielding or receiving (fill me).

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- b. Simplicity is essential in living this type of life. To focus on Christ instead of self you need to view life from an orientation of simplicity. You must realize your status relative to God. You must realize that God does not call you to complexity, but to simplicity. What are your priorities and concerns? Do you realize that worry is usually nothing more than being concerned over things that should not be your concern. How many people are worried about how much time they spend seeking first the kingdom of God? Consider and discuss the implications of Mt 6:33 as they relate to death to self and spirituality.



D. The Life of the Cross and the Idea of Priorities.

1. Introduction.

- a. A priority is that which comes first. It is a preference in an order of importance.
- b. To live the life of the cross you must understand priorities. More specifically, you must understand how to set and live out priorities.
- c. In order to describe this process we will consider the following terms: determination, discipline, dedication, and decision making.


2. Determination and discipline.

- a. Determination (setting a priority) - Determination helps us clearly set priorities. Determination is seen in a firmness in decisions and in a resolute persistence.

- 1) Read 2 Kings 2:1-6.



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- 2) Consider how the determination within the words "I will not leave you" is used to set a priority.
- b. Discipline (living a priority) - Discipline includes mental and moral training that results in obedience to rules. Determination is necessary to set a priority, but discipline is necessary to live out that priority.
 - 1) Read 1 Cor 9:25-27.
 - 2) Consider how discipline helped Paul to live out a priority. Consider how various disciplines help you live out priorities.
3. Dedication and decision making.
 - a. Dedication (setting a priority) - Dedication helps us clearly set priorities. Dedication is the attitude of devotion toward something that is set aside or marked for a specific purpose or use.
 - 1) Read Rom 12:1-2.
 - 2) Consider how dedication to God is described in Rom 12 as that which will set priorities in a life.
 - b. Decision making (living a priority) - Decision making includes the process by which we determine to follow a certain course of action. Dedication is necessary to set a priority, but decision making is necessary to live out that priority.
 - 1) Many people are afraid or reluctant to make decisions. Perhaps that is because many people fear determination, discipline, and dedication.

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2) Decision making requires faith (consider Heb 11:1-31).

4. Conclusion.

a. To live a life of spirituality, priorities must be set and lived out. Indeed, in order to die to self we must be determined and disciplined, even as Paul said, to "buffet" our bodies. We must be dedicated and able to make decisions that deny self and lift up Christ.



c. A priority is that which comes first. Christian spirituality recognizes that Christ comes first, and utilizes determination and discipline as well as dedication and decision making to set Christ as the priority and to live out that priority.

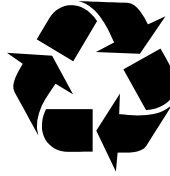
V. SPIRITUALITY - KNOWING HOW TO SUSTAIN IT.

A. **Introduction.**

1. Dying to self is how we move toward spirituality because the life of spirituality assumes the death of the flesh. In order to sustain spirituality we must continually go through the process of coming to the end of ourselves.

2. To one degree or another, we are all like the children of Israel as they are depicted in the book of Judges. We forget about God when we perceive that we do not need Him. Then, something happens which reveals our desperate need for God, and we seek Him again. God responds and we, again, begin to take him for granted. We forget about God again until the next thing happens that prompts us to recall our need for Him. And so the cycle goes! (consider how Mk 5:25-27 can be applied to these principles).

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3. In this section of the course we will investigate how God uses "wilderness experiences" to prompt us toward, and broaden our path to, a life of spirituality. We will also consider how an understanding of the "onlyness" of God can help us sustain spirituality.

B. God Has Led You in the Wilderness.

1. Introduction.

- a. When a consumer critic (like Ralph Nader) runs a public test on a car it is with the goal of exposing the negative aspects of the car. Oppositely, when the company that makes the car runs public tests it is to highlight the positive aspects of the car.

- 1) So it is with Satan and God.

- 2) Satan, the critic, tries to use times of testing in your life for negative purposes. God, the Creator, uses times of testing for positive purposes.

- b. Perhaps you are in a time or season of testing right now in your life. Where do you get relief? The burden seems too heavy to handle? What do you do? Perhaps, the most important thing to do is to have a biblical perspective concerning what we might call "wilderness experiences" (times of testing).



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- c. Read Deuteronomy 8:1-20. In the remainder of this section we will use this chapter of Deuteronomy to consider how:
- 1) the purpose of wilderness experiences is to bring us into a fuller realization that we must depend completely on God, and not on ourselves.
 - 2) the result of wilderness experiences is an expansion of our spiritual lives through death to self (as more of you leaves, more of God is able to come in).

2. Basic principles for spiritual growth (v.1).

- a. Note the term "careful". To sustain and grow our spiritual lives we must learn from our mistakes and allow them to be a guide toward positive change instead of a source of discouragement.
- b. Note the term "today" (as opposed to "yesterday").
- 1) Do not focus on the past in a way that results in you dwelling negatively on your failings and becoming discouraged (see Is 43:2,18).
 - 2) Yet, still remember (see v.2) and learn.
 - 3) That is, forget yourself and remember God.

3. The purpose of a wilderness experience (vv.2-6).

- a. God leads you into and in the wilderness to test and prepare you (v.2). In the wilderness He provides for you and is always with you (v.4; see also Ps 23:4). Consider the following examples.



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- 1) Jesus (Mt 4:1).
 - 2) Moses (40 years in the wilderness of Midian, Ex 2:15 and 3:1). The life of Moses reminds us of the title of a contemporary song, "The hidden valley turns shepherds into kings."
 - 3) Joseph (14 years spent in the wilderness of prison, Gen 37:2 and 41:46).
 - 4) David fled from Saul for many years before becoming king.
 - 5) Paul "went away to Arabia" (Gal 1:17).
- b. God uses the wilderness to test you in order that you might receive more from Him and be used more by Him (v.2b-6).
- 1) He humbles you; that is, He promotes less of you so there can be more of Him (v.2b).
 - 2) He humbles you; that is, He promotes a trust and dependence on Him which will enable Him to lead you since being led by God necessitates being dependent upon God and trusting in Him (v.3).
 - 3) He humbles you; that is, He promotes obedience through discipline (v.5; also see Heb 12:11).
4. The result of a wilderness experience (vv.7-10).
- a. To bring you to the promised land; that is, provision and satisfaction.
 - b. Promote discussion with respect to how wilderness experiences in our own lives can result in spiritual provision and satisfaction.

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5. Additional principles for spiritual growth (vv.11-20).
 - a. Note the repetition of "beware" (be careful), and "today" (v.11 - review notes on v.1).
 - b. We can easily become comfortable and lazy when everything is going well (vv.12-15). Consider how passages like Rom 5:3-5 and Jms 1:2-4 make more sense when we understand this



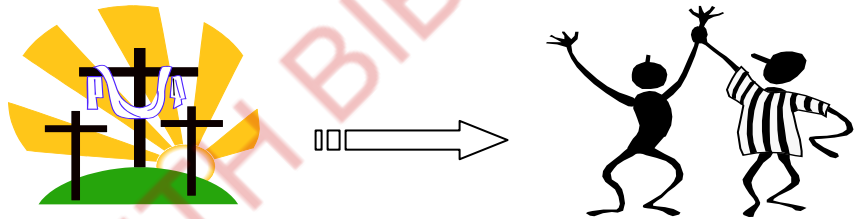
principle.

- c. The most important thing to focus on in a wilderness experience is the sovereignty of God. God will use it for your good (Rom 8:28). Even when you do not understand you must trust that God knows what and why things are happening. He always has a reason (e.g. consider the implications of Deut 7:22). So we must not question God. Our focus must be to trust and obey Him regardless of our outward circumstances.
 - d. The most important thing to learn from a wilderness experience is that success is from God and not self-created (v.17-18; also consider 1Cor 4:7; Jn 15:5).
 - e. The most dangerous response to a wilderness experience is idolatry (vv.19,20). Be careful to not allow a spirit of self pity (pride) to overwhelm you.

6. Conclusion.

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- a. Being a Christian and sustaining a life of spirituality is not easy because dying is not easy. Death is painful!
- b. Spirituality is sustained through experiencing the process in which death leads to life (consider the implications of Jn 12:24). The wilderness turns into a flowing river. The cross (the method) turns into the resurrection (the result). The method comes before the result (like Friday comes before Sunday) because the methods of the wilderness prepare for and lead to the results of the flowing river. Indeed, the suffering and pain of Calvary prepares for and leads to the triumph and glory of the empty tomb.



C. The "Onliness" of God.

1. Introduction.

- a. God is unique. He is one of a kind (see Dt 6:4). There is a certain "onliness" about Him that can describe His nature.
- b. An understanding of and meditation on this "onliness" can sustain and grow a spiritual life.

2. The only Son.

- a. Consider Jn 3:16 and Heb 11:17.
- b. Jesus is the only extension of God to man in visible form (see Jn 1:14,18).




- c. When we fully grasp that He is the only Son,


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we sustain our spirituality because we do not waste time seeking after another.

3. The only way.
 - a. Consider Jn 14:6.
 - b. Jesus is the only method of salvation (see Acts 4:12).
 - c. When we fully grasp that He is the only way, we sustain our spirituality because we do not waste time seeking after another.

4. The only thing necessary.
 - a. Consider Ps 62:1,2.
 - b. Jesus is all that is necessary. Jesus is enough (see Ps 27:4).
 - 
 - c. When we fully grasp that He is the only thing necessary, we sustain our spirituality because we do not waste time seeking after other things.

5. The only focus.
 - a. Consider Mt 6:33.
 - b. Jesus is the only One worthy of being our priority (consider Mt 6:24).
 - c. When we fully grasp that He is the only worthy focus, we sustain our spirituality because we do not waste time seeking after other things.

6. His "onlyness" leads to His "allness."
 - a. He is all in all (see Eph 1:23).
 - b. All things are summed up in Him (see Eph 1:10).
 - 

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- c. We are to acknowledge Him in all our ways (see Prov 3:5,6).
- d. He has all authority so we are to go to all nations, teaching all His commandments, and He is with us always (see Mt 28:18-20).

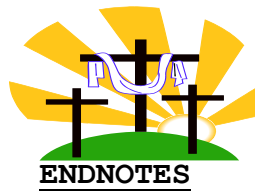
7. Conclusion.

- a. The life of spirituality is the result of the life of the cross because the life of the cross results in the life of Christ (consider how Gal 2:20 describes this principle).



- b. Christian spirituality is manifested to the degree that Christ lives in His people. Indeed, when the cross is present in our lives, He is the only One who lives (Gal 2:20).

VI. CONCLUSION - The life of Christian spirituality is the life of the cross. It is to be lived daily (Lk 9:23). As we die to ourselves, Christ begins to live in us. Spirituality becomes a possibility in our lives because it is possible for Christ to live in us (Gal 2:20). Indeed, He is our spirituality!



¹Marvin Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament: Vol IV (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), p.465.

Fasting As a Means of Grace

Fasting As a Means of Grace -- Objectives



I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. **The Need for a "Vessel Theology".**
- B. **The Importance and Contents of this Course.**

Objective: to establish the need, importance and format of the course.

II. DEFINITIONS: FASTING/MEANS OF GRACE/VESSEL THEOLOGY.

- A. **Fasting.**
- B. **Means of Grace.**
- C. **Vessel Theology.**

Objective: to establish a basis for the remainder of the course by agreeing on definitions of the three major concepts included in the course.

III. THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS: FASTING/MEANS OF GRACE/VESSEL THEOLOGY.

- A. **Preparing the Way.**
- B. **God as Source, Man as Receiver.**
- C. **Motive-Effect/Purpose-Result Distinction.**
- D. **Placing Yourself in a Right Position Before God.**
- E. **A Proper Expression of a Proper Attitude.**
- F. **Making Ourselves Available for God.**
- G. **Conclusion.**

Objective: to prepare a theological base upon which we can better understand the biblical practice of fasting, and to be able to apply other Christian disciplines to our lives in a similar way.

Fasting As a Means of Grace

IV. BIBLICAL APPLICATION: A SUMMARY OF THE BENEFITS OF FASTING

- A. Introduction.
- B. Repentance.
- C. Effective Prayer.
- D. Divine Guidance.
- E. Discipline and Resisting Temptation.
- F. Other Oriented.
- G. Preparation for Ministry.
- H. Physical Health.

Objective: to summarize the results of a biblical study of fasting with respect to its benefits while placing those results in a theological framework that is based on the ideas of means of grace and vessel theology in order to offer a biblical application of those theological ideas.

V. CONCLUSION.

- A. Study the Following Scriptures.
- B. What is Vessel Theology.

Objective: to challenge and motivate students toward applying the theological ideas discussed in the course to their own lives, and specifically to consider fasting as a way in which to do that.

VI. APPENDIX.

- A. Prayer and Fasting.
- B. Fasting and Health.
- C. Practical Guidelines to Fasting.
- D. Results of One Study.

Objective: to provide further information regarding various aspects of discussion within the body of the course.

Fasting As a Means of Grace

FASTING AS A MEANS OF GRACE : SYLLABUS

Class Schedule -- 20 hour Course

CLASS #1: I. Introduction; II. Definitions;
III. Theological Aspects - A-C.

CLASS #2: III. Theological Aspects (cont.); IV. Biblical
Application - Introduction.

CLASS #3: IV. Biblical Application - B-C.

CLASS #4: IV. Biblical Application - D-E.

CLASS #5: IV. Biblical Application (cont.);
V. Conclusion; VI. Appendix.

Fasting As a Means of Grace

Assignments

This course requires a written project. A full 100% of your grade will come from the evaluation of the paper submitted. The student will choose from one of the two options below (choose only one):

Assignment #1 (option #1)

A 1500-2000 word paper that is designed to document the results of three interviews of different people who fast regularly (at least 30 days per year). The student will formulate a list of interview questions (5-7 questions), organize and conduct the interviews, and write a paper that organizes and summarizes the content of the answers to the questions. The paper should include a short introduction that explains who was interviewed and what questions were asked. The emphasis of the paper (and, thus, the interviews) should be on perceived benefits of fasting and fasting as a means of grace.

Assignment #1 (option #2)

A journal of observations with respect to a four or five day fast. The student will fast for four or five consecutive days, and will keep a journal designed to record significant observations concerning principles, effects, benefits, etc... of fasting. The journal should be between 1200-1500 words and should include dates and times of journal entries.

Fasting As a Means of Grace

FASTING AS A MEANS OF GRACE- Course Outline

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. **The Need for a "Vessel Theology."**

1. Vessel theology represents the realization that God works through people. It is the study of God which has as a focus the implications of the Scriptural idea of "Christ in Us."
2. As gloves are to a surgeon's hands, so are Christians as they relate to God. God does His work through His vessels.



3. A man was walking down a road when he saw from a distance what looked like a small boy vigorously pumping a handle up and down. The man could also see that water was flowing out of a spicket. As he came closer, the man could not believe his eyes. The boy had been pumping for five minutes at an incredible rate of speed and showed no sign of slowing down, yet he appeared to be the size of a five year old. Suddenly, he realized that the "boy" was a wooden caricature that was being pumped by a motorized handle. So too, Christians are empowered by God to the degree that their works are not their own, but God's as He works His works through them; that is, they are vessels through which God acts.

Fasting As a Means of Grace

B. The Importance and Contents of this Course.

1. If we do not base our theology on what we might call a "vessel theology" we will be in danger of working in our own strength.
 - a. In 1979, a young man flew a pedal-powered plane 22 miles across the English Channel. Certainly, this was an incredible accomplishment with respect to man-powered flight. However, that type of flight is not practical. Man cannot maintain the necessary output of energy for extended flights. In the same way, Christians only deceive themselves when they think they can live the Christian life in their own power.



- b. Consider the implications of Gal 2:20, Jn 15:5, Phil 2:13, and 2 Tim 2:20,21. How do they portray the idea of vessel theology? How do they warn against not adhering to it?



2. The attitude of one with a vessel theology is built upon a belief in Jms 1:17; that is, that anything good must come from God. It is the attitude of God's people who yearn to see His activity in their lives, and thus, hunger for and rely upon His grace. The conclusion of such an attitude is to make oneself available to God for His use--to be a vessel for His activity. How can this be done? Through divinely ordained means of grace! Fasting is such a means.

Fasting As a Means of Grace

3. This course focuses on the Christian discipline of fasting as a means of grace (of course, there are other means of grace that God has instituted). It is the purpose of this course to offer a biblical study of fasting as it is used to describe and develop the idea of "means of grace" and "vessel theology." The course consists of three major sections. First, **definitions** of fasting, means of grace, and vessel theology are offered. Second, **theological aspects** with respect to those definitions are considered. Third, **biblical application** is offered through a study of the benefits of fasting. The course ends with a short conclusion which is followed by an appendix that offers additional information regarding prayer and fasting, fasting and health, practical guidelines for fasting, and results of one study done on fasting. The following represents a general outline of the contents of the course.

- a. Introduction.
- b. Definitions.
- c. Theological aspects.
- d. Biblical Application.
- e. Conclusion.
- f. Appendix.



II. DEFINITIONS: FASTING/MEANS OF GRACE/VESSEL THEOLOGY.

A. **Fasting.**

1. J. Harold Smith -- fasting is " . . . a turning of one's back on food as you confront the far greater need to satisfy the cravings of the inner man in giving yourself to God in worship and praise."¹
2. Richard Foster, in his book Celebration of Discipline, refers to fasting as an ancient spiritual discipline, and insists that biblical fasting always centers on spiritual purposes.²

Fasting As a Means of Grace

3. The essence of biblical fasting is the idea that there would be a willful denial of an otherwise normal function (eating food) for the sake of fervent spiritual activity. This definition is preferred since it recognizes the idea of self-denial as a necessary dynamic of fasting, and focuses on the existence of a spiritual purpose without which fasting loses its divinely intended meaning.



B. Means of Grace.

1. Reformed tradition.
 - a. To a large degree, the phrase "means of grace" became popularized under the necessary emphases of the Reformation. Indeed, book three of Calvin's *Institutes* is titled "The mode of obtaining the grace of Christ."
 - b. Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* follows Calvin and has as one of its chapter titles, "The doctrine of the Church and the means of grace."
 - c. The *Westminster Larger Catechism* (WLC 154; see also WSC 88) establishes the Word (preached and written), the Sacraments (baptism and Lord's Supper), and prayer as the "outward and ordinary means, whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation." It is from this point of reference (specifically, as it relates to prayer) that fasting can become viewed as a means of grace in the reformed tradition (see also WCF 23.5).

Fasting As a Means of Grace

2. Wesleyan tradition.
 - a. Borrowing a definition offered by John Wesley, means of grace are "outward signs, words, actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby He might convey to men, preventient, justifying or sanctifying grace³.
 - b. Wesley included fasting as a significant means of grace (along with public worship, the preached Word, the read Word, the Lord's Supper, and private and family devotions).



3. Summary definition -- It may be summarized that means of grace are those biblical actions that facilitate God's activity in a person's life. They are, thus, used by God as instruments of His



grace.

C. **Vessel Theology.**

1. Vessel theology is a phrase used to describe the theological idea of Christ in us. It is the idea that is implicit in such Scriptures as Gal 2:20 and 2 Tim 2:20,21.



2. It is a phrase descriptive of the reality of John 15:5 which understands that if nothing can be done without Christ then Christ must live in us (Gal 2:20) if we are to be useful to the Master (2 Tim

Fasting As a Means of Grace

2:21).

3. Vessel theology is the study of the principles and implications of Christ in us, the hope of glory!



III. THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS: FASTING/MEANS OF GRACE/VESSEL THEOLOGY.

A. **Preparing the Way.**

1. In God's Chosen Fast (one of the most well known books on the topic of fasting), Arthur Wallis inquires, "How can we expect the power to flow if we do not prepare the channels? Fasting is a God-appointed means for the flowing of His grace and power that we can afford to neglect no longer."⁴
2. Another author writes regarding the Acts 13:1-3 event:

We are given the impression that the experience of fasting provided such a vital fellowship with the Holy Spirit, that a better environment for guidance was created. This is not to say that fasting is a *guarantee* for guidance; the point is that those who fast are placing themselves in a situation through which the Holy Spirit has an easier access to them.⁵

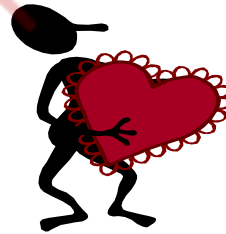
- a. Perhaps this is the best summary of the dynamics of the means of grace; that is, that "those who fast are placing themselves in a situation through which the Holy Spirit has an easier access to them."
- b. There is nothing good (consider Mt 19:17; Is 64:6; Jer 17:9) in fallen man by which he can make himself more godly. Only God can make a person more godly. Thus, there exist divinely appointed means of grace which serve

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to prepare the way for God.

B. God as Source, Man as Receiver.

1. The first thing that should be noted about the phrase "means of grace" is that the part played by the human involves the idea of "means." The human does not cause. He can only receive, for that is who he is; that is, he is a receiver--a creation. Only God can cause. Thus, the phrase is not "causes of grace."
 - a. The idea of "means" or "instruments" allows for man to be involved. The idea of "grace" insists that God must be involved.
 - b. The foundational theology is clear. Man cannot change his own heart (for God is the source), but he can engage himself in means of grace via which God changes hearts (man can receive).



2. In other words, God must act but so must men--God as the source and man as the receiver. Means of grace, then, simply become ways in which to receive from God.
 - a. Vessel theology is that which is concerned with facilitating God's unchangeable decrees. It understands that man must be involved in what God has ordained. Thus, reformed thinking is not fatalistic thinking. In a somewhat paradoxical sense (established by the fact that man tries to understand God's perspective on eternal things within a framework of space and time when God, Himself, is not bound to those parameters), man may "change" or impact that which God is doing since man, by his own decision, may or may not be involved in what God is doing.

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- b. Since man does have a clear part to play, a theology of God's grace can not include the idea that it is automatic. God's grace is appropriated, in large measure, according to man's actions. Indeed, God must be the first cause. Nevertheless, man can be seen to be the "second cause."
- c. Indeed, Christian growth is not accidental. It is not automatic. The pursuit of holiness is an intentional undertaking. The "means" are given by God (source) and directed toward Him. They are practiced by men.

C. Motive-Effect/Purpose-Result Distinction.

1. Fasting can be defined as the willful denial of an otherwise normal function (eating food) for the sake of fervent spiritual activity. The ultimate direction of any means of grace is that relationship with God would be strengthened.



2. Weeping and fasting were not uncommon in the life and experience of David (consider, for example, 2 Sam 12:16 and 21:22). It is interesting to consider the connection between fasting and hunger to draw closer to God as we consider David's frequency of fasting and the fact that he is described as a man after God's own heart.



3. Means of grace are means through which persons experience and respond to the loving presence of God. Thus, fasting is motivated by a response to the presence of God and has as its effect (benefit) the experience of the presence of God. The motive-effect progression is more commonly referred to as the purpose-result aspect of fasting.

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4. Fasting, as a means of grace, must include biblical motives on the part of the one who is fasting. In addition, it includes biblical effects as God takes what is directed to Him, uses it for His glory, and allows the effects to become blessings for the one who fasts.
 - a. The actual benefit of fasting is not found in a direct result, but in an indirect blessing.
 - b. One author describes this idea:

The enrichment of one's life through sacrifice comes as a consequence and not as a sought goal. It is more in keeping with the objectives of acts of self-sacrifice that the person be dedicated to the task of attaining a better world, providing a better life for others, and **attaining a fuller participation in the ongoing activity of God's Kingdom on earth.**⁶

The grand motive of fasting (or of any other means of grace) is to want to make your life more available for God's use; it is to want to make more of a way for Christ to continue to walk the earth.

- 1) To a certain degree, for Christians to insist that they will fast until they get what they want is dangerous. This sort of fasting is tantamount to a spiritual hunger strike. It does not understand the distinction between motive and effect; that is, that there are correct motives with which to engage in means of grace that are different from (yet consistent with) the effects of means of grace.

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- 2) When the Scripture exhorts "he who humbles himself shall be exalted" (Lk 18:14), it does not mean to advocate humbling self simply for the purpose of lifting self up! That would be a misunderstanding of "humble yourself." Rather, you humble yourself in response to your recognition of God and as a means to be more involved with Him (less of you, more of Him--receiving His grace).
- 3) So too, fasting should be a response to God and a means to be involved with His grace. The effect is that God lifts you up.

D. **Placing Yourself in a Right Position Before God.**

1. One specific way to understand fasting as a means of grace is to view it as an act that places a person in a right position before God. Martin Luther taught that genuine Christian fasting helps keep the flesh in check and is an outward training that prepares us to better receive God's grace.
 - a. Fasting, for example, that is prompted by genuine repentance is an outward expression of an inward attitude that positions us rightly before God.
 - b. Here it must be remembered that if something is outside the will of God, fasting will never put it inside the will of God. Fasting is a means not a cause. It is a facilitator--even a facilitator of right position before Him.
2. There are numerous Scriptures that indicate a connection between prayer and fasting with fasting being used as an aid to prayer. Yet, some may quote James 5:16, "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much," to indicate that fasting is not necessary. Herein, the point would be missed. It is not a question of whether or not it is necessary to fast, but a question of



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what a sincere practice of fasting can facilitate.

- a. Fasting can facilitate a proper attitude before God. It does not make one righteous (only the blood of Jesus can do that), but it can be a means to express the reality of righteousness (right standing before God) which would include an attitude of dependence, need, humility, desire for God, etc
- b. Remember, it is the *effective* prayer of a righteous man that accomplishes much. Various means can be employed to make one's prayers more effective. Fasting is one of those means.

E. A Proper Expression of a Proper Attitude.

1. In one of the greatest biblical passages concerning repentance, God proclaims His desire for a broken and contrite heart (Ps 51:17). It is a proper heart attitude that is acceptable to God. External forms (like fasting) that facilitate a sincere expression of those attitudes can be holy before God; that is, if they become a means of grace by becoming a means of expressing a correct attitude before God.



- a. Jesus expresses the validity of this idea in Mt 23:23 when he explains, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others." Jesus communicates a principle here. There is nothing wrong with a biblical form as long as it is sincerely associated with and expressive of a biblical substance. There is nothing wrong with the mold as long as it holds the filling. There is nothing wrong with something external as long as it truly facilitates an expression of something

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internal.

- b. For example, Ahab seems to have been truly broken before God (internal). His fasting (external), then, became acceptable to God as it facilitated an expression of his brokenness (see 1 Kgs 21:27). In this sense, fasting became a means of grace.



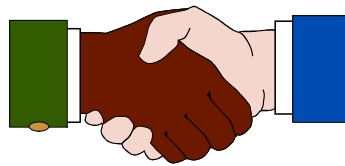
2. In Mt 12:7, in the context of a discussion of Sabbath regulations, Jesus explains that the fullness of the Law is not found in its sacrificial aspect, but in its heart aspect. Attitudes of the heart, more so than actions, are important because actions are sub-units of attitudes; that is, they proceed from attitudes (cf. Mk 7:20-23; Mt 12:34)). They find their purpose and meaning only in the context of appropriate attitudes (cf. Mt 23:23).
 - a. Fasting, as an action, must proceed from appropriate attitudes (e.g., repentance, hunger for God) if it is to be meaningful and beneficial.
 - b. In Mt 6:16-18, Jesus' teaching concerning fasting includes a sharp rebuke with respect to wrong methods and wrong motives. The manner had become externally focused and motivated by appearance before men. The methods were results of motives that were inconsistent with the very purpose and spirit of the practice.
 - c. It is the humbling of man's soul before God and not the act of fasting alone which pleases God. It must be realized that the act of fasting itself is of less importance than the attitude in man's heart. Only when the action of fasting is representative of the attitude of fasting is God's grace experienced. Only in this way can fasting be a means of grace.

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3. The Scriptural principle that the natural pictures the spiritual is used by James Beall in explaining the significance of fasting:

I propose that fasting speaks of far more than abstaining from food and the obvious physical results. Rather, the outward actions speak of an inner focus upon God, an intensity of turning from all else,⁷ and a complete readjusting of priorities.⁷

- a. To argue, as some might, that the obvious biblical connection between fasting and repentance is but another attempt by man to earn salvation is to miss the point of this connection in the Scripture. Indeed, Jesus rebukes any such idea (see Lk 18:9-14). This rebuke, however, does not invalidate the penitential fast, it only invalidates a fast that seeks to earn or merit forgiveness. This is not a change from the Old Testament perception of fasting, only a true explanation of it.



- b. Biblical fasting is related to repentance as a handshake is related to friendship. It is an outward response to an inward reality. It is an expression of that reality which, if sincere, is an appropriate means of placing self rightly before God. It expresses the exact opposite attitude that accompanies the desire to earn forgiveness (a self-righteous attitude of one who does not see himself as needy). Rather, it expresses an attitude that accompanies a desperate need for forgiveness, and thus, is an appropriate means of grace.

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- c. Thus, to assert that fasting is invalidated as a penitential discipline because forgiveness comes by trust in Christ (and is not earned) is to miss the point of fasting altogether. If that type of assertion is agreed with then the prayer of repentance (which does not earn forgiveness) must be invalidated also. Is it not the purpose of fasting to express one's desperate need for God? Did penitential fasting in the Old Testament earn forgiveness? Of course not! It only expressed the need for it. Penitential fasting on the day of Atonement did not earn forgiveness, yet was valid. Penitential fasting under the New Covenant is no different.

F. Making Ourselves Available for God.

1. Charles Stanley writes,

There should be a desire to make ourselves available to God. Fasting is not done for the purpose of doing something for God; it is done for the purpose of doing something for ourselves. The end result is that we are more available to God. He can work through us.⁸

2. The real benefits of fasting are spiritual (they occur within us). Fasting, as a sincere activity, should prepare and strengthen us for further service.
- a. This preparation is the fundamental idea of means of grace. There is a preparation for the King of Kings to live in and work through His people. For example, through repentance (a proper attitude of fasting) we "make His



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paths straight, we make ready the way of the Lord" (cf. Mk 1:3).

b. Indeed, to be filled with something good (Christ), we must be emptied of anything bad (self). In fasting, we deny ourselves (empty ourselves) and make room for Christ to enter, to change us, and to work through us. To this end, we speak of fasting as a means of grace. In as much as the Kingdom of God is for those who are poor in spirit (empty of self), and in as much as fasting can serve to empty self and make room for Christ, it can be understood that fasting, to a certain degree, results in doing the works of Christ.

3. Means of grace do not create God's presence, activity, and intervention but appropriate that which is already available. Involving oneself in a means of grace is to agree with what God wants to do and confess that God must do it.

a. One author refers to John Wesley and writes:

He never questions God's availability to us in the Christian life, but is concerned instead with our availability to God. To experience God, one must be open to God's presence, and this is encouraged by those means of grace which nurture an expectant, hopeful faith.⁹

b. To rely on God to make His grace available does not mean that His grace is automatic.

4. The end product of any means of grace is the actuality of Gal 2:20; that is, Christ on earth operating in and through His people. Means of grace are simply ways that facilitate grace. What is this grace? It is Christ Himself! He is the end. The means are not the end.



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- a. Christ, Himself, is the grace that the means are meant to facilitate. The means are not simply meant to facilitate us being like Christ, but are meant to facilitate Christ in us (Gal 2:20). The means do not simply result in Christ *helping* us to be like Him, rather they make us available for Christ to *live and work through* us.
- b. The ultimate and most foundational use of spiritual disciplines (including fasting) is to make way (facilitate) for Christ to live through us. Means of grace provide an avenue for Christ to live and minister on this earth through us (vessel theology).



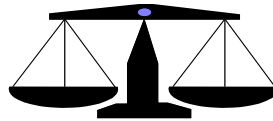
G. Conclusion.

1. The idea of fasting as a means of grace is very significant in the life of the Christian.
 - a. Derek Prince takes that significance to a higher level than most when he says of restoration or revival, "The divinely appointed means to accomplish it is prayer and fasting."¹⁰
 - b. More recently, Bill Bright (founder of Campus Crusade for Christ) has expressed a similar sense of significance and writes, "I believe the power of fasting as it relates to prayer is the spiritual atomic bomb that our Lord has given us to destroy the strongholds of evil and usher in a great revival and spiritual harvest around the world."¹¹
2. Because of its importance, it is critical that the Christian understand its dynamics. There cannot be a reliance on the act of fasting. When this happens there is a danger of the means becoming the end, and God can be forgotten in the mechanics of abstaining from food. This is not faith; it is

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idolatry, for it puts confidence in the relative instead of in God, the absolute.

- a. At a time when attention to such a potentially misunderstood and abused religious practice such as fasting seems, to some degree, to be rekindled, balance is critical.



- b. Here we might consider the words of the great Reformer, John Calvin, who recognized the true fast as a valid expression of the Christian faith while at the same time exposed the errors and misuse of the fast (as did Jesus). Calvin wrote, ". . . many, for want of knowing its usefulness, undervalue its necessity, and some reject it as altogether superfluous; while, on the other hand, where the use of it is not well understood, it easily degenerates into superstition."¹²

IV. BIBLICAL APPLICATION: A SUMMARY OF THE BENEFITS OF FASTING.

A. **Introduction.**

1. Does the Bible indicate that there are benefits to fasting? That there are benefits to fasting should not be downplayed. If fasting is done sincerely and with correct motives, it can be done with a certain expectation as to results since Jesus made that a point of His own teaching on fasting (cf. Mt 6:18).



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2. There is a diversity of biblical purposes and benefits of fasting. Certainly, it is clear that most of the biblical passages concerning fasting do revolve around "distress situations." These distress situations, however, vary in nature. Many, to be sure, include penitence (e.g., Lev 16:29-31; 1 Kings 21:27; Jonah 3:5-10; Acts 9:9) or sorrow (e.g., 1 Sam 31:13). Others include the context of the need to make a critical decision (e.g., Gen 24:33; Acts 14:23), the need for God's protection or deliverance (e.g., Judges 20:26; 1 Sam 7:6; 2 Chron 20:3; Ezra 8:21-23), and the need for God's intervention and direction (Deut 9:9-21; 2 Sam 12:15-23).



3. It is true that various New Testament passages concerning fasting are more instructive (e.g., Mt 6:16-18; 9:14-15; Lk 18:9-14) than distress situation oriented. Nevertheless, many New Testament passages do include a distress type of situation (e.g., Mt 4:2; 11:18; 17:21; Acts 9:9; Acts 14:23). Even after the death and resurrection of Jesus there are passages concerning fasting that are set in the context of distress situations. Some may argue that Jesus instructed His followers to no longer fast because His coming effectively eliminated distress situations or any other context in which fasting would be appropriate. This position should be rejected for various reasons.

- a. First, Jesus Himself gave no indication that he denounced fasting. He did clearly denounce fasting with impure motives (see Mt 6:16-18). However, it is clear that the teaching on fasting in the Sermon on the Mount reveals that it is not a question of whether or not the disciples of Christ will fast (it does not say "If you fast . . ."), but a question of how they will fast.

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- 1) When Jesus says, "When you fast," He is saying nothing less than "you will fast."
- 2) That fasting can be effective (and thus appropriate) is clearly supported in this passage. Jesus describes the Father's response to sincere fasting with the encouragement that He "will repay you" (v.18). Later, He exhorted His followers to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (v.20).



- 3) In as much as "heaven" is already and not yet, as is consistent with the nature of the Kingdom of God, these "rewards" can be realized in this life and in the life to come (cf. Mk 10:30).
- b. Second, the fact that there are biblical accounts of fasting after the ascension of Jesus serves as strong evidence that His coming did not abolish its practice. Of course, the key passage to consider is Matthew 9:14-15.



- 1) It is again clear that Jesus did not denounce fasting. As was the case in his discussion on fasting in the Sermon on the Mount ("when you fast"), Jesus actually indicated that His disciples would fast: "the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast" (Mt 9:15). The "bridegroom" is Jesus and the

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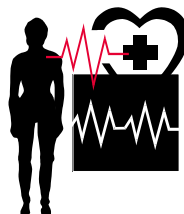
"attendants of the bridegroom" ("them") are His disciples. Will the disciples of Jesus fast? Yes. When? When Jesus is taken from them; that is, after His death on the cross.

- a) There is no reason to believe that Jesus' point is that fasting will only be appropriate from the time of His death on the Cross to the time of His resurrection. This is supported by the fact that, indeed, the post-ascension disciples of Christ did fast.
 - b) In as much as it is true that the Kingdom comes in phases (i.e., there is an initial coming of the King and a second coming of the King), it is also true that fasting is suspended within the parameters of the first coming, reinstated between the first and second comings, and dissolved forevermore after the second coming.
- 2) Fasting could be seen as a practice that mourns the removal of the bridegroom and facilitates a closer relationship with Him who is gone (2 Cor 5:6).
- a) Of course, operatively it is the Holy Spirit who brings God's people into relationship with the removed Christ. Nevertheless, fasting can facilitate these operations of the Holy Spirit in as much as it facilitates an expression of need for those operations, and in as much as it enhances the attitude of emptying self for the purpose of being filled with the Spirit.



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- b) Since there is a dual nature to the coming of the Kingdom (the Kingdom is "already and not yet"), there would be no fasting during the actuality of the first coming, but there would be fasting in preparation for the next coming. To the degree to which fasting can express or manifest, and even prompt or establish, inner attitudes of the heart like repentance, humility, and reliance upon God is the degree to which fasting is appropriate in the New Testament and the church age. To disagree with this assessment is to disagree with the fact that Christians still need to repent, be humble, and rely on God.
4. Various authors on the topic of fasting have similarly observed certain benefits from fasting:
- a. A more effective prayer life.
 - b. Discipline and strength to overcome temptations.
 - c. An expression and prompting of sincere repentance.
 - d. A clearer mind and increase in spiritual discernment and guidance.
 - e. An increase in the level of peace and spiritual confidence.
 - f. An increase in bodily health and energy.



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3. True fasting, by its very nature, must align itself with humility, and thus, repentance. Fasting's attitude is that of repentance. Fasting also enhances that attitude. Numerous Scriptures show a connection between fasting and repentance.
- a. In Lev 16:29,31 it can be seen that a national day of fasting was observed on the day of atonement. Fasting was consistent with the attitude of repentance that should be the focus of such a day. The fact that God needed to cleanse His people of sin necessarily pointed to the devastation and tragedy of it. It was a thing to mourn--to be solemn toward. Fasting, on the Day of Atonement, was a means to express a proper



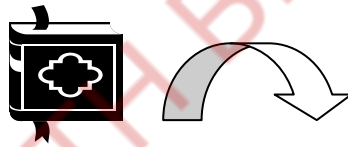
inward attitude.

- b. In 1 Sam 7:6 God called the people of Israel to return to Him with all their heart. That is, He called them to repent. In an attitude of prayer and fasting, the people of God responded to His call. Fasting was employed to express sincere repentance.
- c. In 1 Kings 21:27 Ahab fasted before God in repentance and expressed his attitude of humility before Him. Fasting and repentance go together because repentance and humbling oneself go together. Again, it is not so much an issue of the efficacy of the mere form of fasting as it is an issue of what that form facilitates. In the case of Ahab it facilitated an expression of a proper position before God; that is, the position of humbling yourself before Him. Fasting may also be a means of grace in the sense that it facilitates a reception of God's conviction. As we fast to show our repentance, we may indeed be prompted toward an even deeper sense of repentance.
- d. In Neh 9:1 the fasting of the assembled ones was associated with confession of sins and repentance. Again, fasting became a

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facilitator for the expression of an inward attitude.

- e. In Isa 58:1-12 it is shown that the selfless attitude that is required in fasting is consistent with the sincerity of humbling oneself and denying oneself. It is also consistent with the area in which Isaiah's audience needed repentance; that is, the area of justice to the needy. Fasting, without an attitude of repentance, is like feasting without an attitude of joy and thanksgiving. Fasting both expresses repentance and facilitates a greater sense of it.



- f. In the context of severe devastation, Joel (1:14; 2:12,15) entreated the people of God to pray and fast. The primary issue was that of repentance; that is, the act of "returning to the Lord your God" (v.13). As an expression of repentance, the fast would represent a sincere attitude. Fasting, in this case, would facilitate an expression of repentance "with all your heart" (v.12).

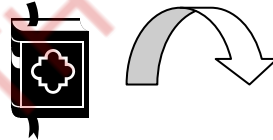
- 1) It is the inward attitude that is of importance, not simply the outward action ("And rend your heart and not your garments", v.13).
- 2) Only this type of fasting can be a means of grace because God's grace, most fully, is only poured out on the sincerely repentant.

- g. In Jonah 3:5-9, the city of Nineveh repented with fasting. Even newly converted pagans somehow knew the association of fasting with repentance: "Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast . . .

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let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence that is in his hands."

- h. The New Testament continues the connection between fasting and repentance. In the parable of Lk 18:9-14, the Pharisee who fasted twice a week was rebuked by Jesus. Why? The answer is found in the introduction: "And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous" (v.9). Fasting is associated in the Scriptures with repentance from a lack of righteousness, not with earning righteousness. Fasting is an expression of reliance upon God, not a task to gain trust in self.



- i. In Acts 9:9 is found the absolute fast of Paul at his conversion, which is somewhat unique. Certainly, repentance should be seen to be the core issue here. Paul's fast was his humble response to God's rebuke as he repented before Him.

C. **Effective prayer** (also see Appendix A).

- 1. Even those who downplay the effectiveness of fasting agree that it can be beneficial in regard to making prayer more effective.
- 2. Consistent with the idea of fasting as a means of grace, is the understanding that fasting is an outward expression of a correct inward position. It is a means of expressing and intensifying that position.
 - a. The Scriptural principle that God responds to and rewards that which costs something of the inquirer (e.g., seen in the case of the poor

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widow in Lk 21:1-4) can be summarized as the principle that God responds to sincerity.



- b. Indeed, the effectiveness of seeking God sincerely is associated with fasting (Jer 29:13,14; Joel 2:12).
3. How much more effective can prayer be when combined with sincere fasting? In Jonah 3:5,10 (also consider 2 Sam 12:16,22 and Joel 2:12-14), fasting (actually the sincerity that fasting expresses) actually seems to be so effective that God changes His mind concerning what He will do to the Ninevites.
 - a. Yes, prayer and fasting are effective. However, it is important, at this point, to not allow this reality to move the out of bounds markers that designate the field of theological play. In explaining this potential theological dilemma, it must be remembered that God's actions are completely consistent with what He had already declared. It is not God who really changes (cf. Mal 3:6; Heb 13:8) but man.



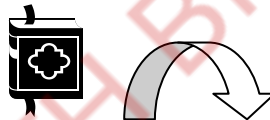
- b. Arthur Wallis explains when he writes:

Man's change of heart makes it morally possible for God to behave differently towards him, yet acting consistently with His holy character and principles. Why, then, does Scripture say that God repented, or changed His mind? This is an example of a common figure of speech in the Hebrew Scriptures by which God's Person or action is viewed from the human standpoint. We may think of this as the Holy Spirit's use of

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language which is an accommodation to our finite understanding. So far as His declared intentions are concerned we may say that God repented, for these were conditional; but as far as His character and principles are concerned, "God is not man . . . that He should repent (Num 23:19)."¹⁴

4. The Scriptures are full of contexts in which prayer and fasting are connected.
 - a. In Deut 9:9,18, Moses fasted a second time for forty days and forty nights as part of the process of going before God on behalf of others. Fasting can be understood here as a means of intensifying intercession.



- b. In 1 Sam 7:6, the prayers of the people of God were enhanced by the act of fasting. Indeed, fasting provided a more intense and definitive way to express the proper heartfelt attitude that God required in coming to Him. The result was that the prayers of God's people were effective as a means of God's grace, being used to deliver them from the hands of the Philistines.
 - c. In 2 Sam 12:15-23, it is clear that David was not so much fasting in repentance from adultery as he was fasting because the child was sick. The act of fasting was placed clearly in the context of that which would accompany and intensify intercession ("David therefore inquired of God for the child", v.16).
 - 1) In fact, the actions were so pragmatic in this case that the fast was broken only after the child had died (to the confusion of those who would normally be accustomed to fasting at the death of a child).

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- 2) The explanation for this was equally pragmatic: "And he said, 'While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, "Who knows, the Lord may be gracious to me, that the child may live."' 'But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again?'" (vv.22,23). The key phrase here is "the Lord may be gracious to me."
- 3) Clearly, David perceived fasting as a means of grace. He fasted in hopes that his actions would make his prayers more effective and facilitate God's grace in the matter.

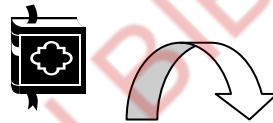


- d. In 2 Chron 20:3 is another example of fasting as it is associated with effective prayer. Is the mere form of fasting the thing that makes prayer more effective? No. It is the degree to which the people of God genuinely express their need to God (consider verse 12). God responds to need, not to forms (consider Ps 51:17). In as much as fasting is a form that facilitates a sincere expression of need, it is effective as an aid to prayer. Apparently, this was the case in 2 Chron 20:3 as Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast, all the people of Judah assembled together, they fasted and prayed, and expressed their desperate need for God.
- e. In Ezra 8:21-23, the act of fasting is connected to prayer before God (v.21 and v.23). However, it is more directly connected to position before God ("I proclaimed a fast . . . that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him . . .", v.21). Prayer necessitates a right position or attitude before God (humility). Humility can be expressed by fasting. Fasting results in the prayers of God's people being effective only because God responds to a humble and needy people. Fasting is simply an expression of that humility and need. In this sense, fasting is a means of grace and

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can aid in the effectiveness of prayer.

- f. In Neh 1:4, Nehemiah spent a prolonged period of time in prayer and fasting as he interceded for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. His emphasis on beseeching God to be attentive to his prayer (1:6,11) seems to link fasting with the idea that it is an aid to effective prayer.
- g. In Esther 4:16, it may be that the fast was meant to be used with prayer to the end that the intercession and petition would move God to cause the king to look upon Esther with favor (indeed, this is what happened as seen in 5:2).

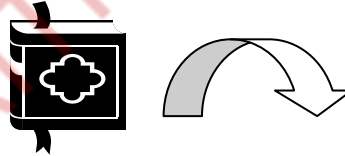


- h. In Ps 35:13, David described fasting and prayer as being associated with bringing something good to his enemies. The efficacy of fasting with respect to offering effective prayers is implied by the very logic and flow of David's discussion; that is, that his actions (fasting and prayer) are designed to be different than the actions of his enemies (actions of evil against him). For David, fasting was meant to result in blessing.
- i. In Isa 58:1-12, fasting is associated with the idea of effective prayer. In verse 3, those who fast align it with God seeing and noticing them and their prayers. In verse 4, fasting is associated with making "your voice heard on high." Does a fast that is sincere in what it expresses affect God "seeing," "noticing," and "hearing" prayers? As a means of grace, fasting can result in these things when it facilitates a sincere expression of the type of heart that God responds to. And so, the discourse continues in verse 9, "Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am'."
- j. Using Dan 9:3,20-23, it might be argued that

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the most foundational way in which to evaluate the effectiveness of prayer is in terms of whether or not God has "heard" and has responded. In the context of a season of prayer and fasting in Daniel's life, it is clear that God has heard and is responding: "At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued . . . " (9:23).

- k. Then in Dan 10:2-14, Daniel is told that from the first day of his seeking God his words were heard. Indeed, the one speaking to Daniel says, "I have come in response to your words" (v.12). His words were effective. God heard him and responded, answering his prayer for insight. In as much as the act of fasting expressed a sincere attitude of "humbling yourself before your God" (v.12), it can be seen to have aided in the realization of effective prayer.

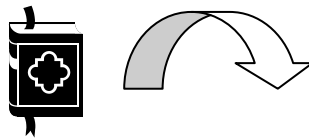


- l. In Joel 1:14 and 2:12,15, fasting is associated with effective prayer in that "then the Lord will be zealous for His land, and will have pity on His people. And the Lord will answer . . . " (2:18,19). Fasting can express sincere repentance and need (a means). God does respond to sincere repentance and need (grace).
- m. Fasting can be a means of grace. In Jonah 3:5-9, in response to the prophetic message, the people of Nineveh "believed in God" (v.5) and engaged in a city-wide fast. In the mind of the king who declared the fast, fasting was obviously understood to be associated with aiding the potential effectiveness of prayer. The fast was proclaimed and the directive was given, "let men call on God earnestly" (v.8). Similar to the reasonings of David (II Sam 12:22) and Joel (Joel 2:14), the king of Nineveh declares "Who knows, God

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may . . . (v.9). Of course, the result is that God does relent "concerning the calamity which He had declared" (v.10). The fasting and prayer of even a freshly converted people have results.

- n. In Zech 7:3-5 it is clear that the Scriptures associate fasting with effective prayer. In the context of pursuing to "seek the favor of the Lord" (v.2), fasting is considered. The fact that God rebuked the type of fast that these ones had been practicing (v.5) is not necessarily a rebuke of the idea of fasting being used as an aid to prayer. God rebuked them because they were not fasting for Him but for themselves. Simply because fasting can be seen to be an aid to prayer does not necessitate that the prayers must be selfish. Fasting that is done as unto God would be done to aid prayer that is motivated by and seeks God's glory. As the Reformed theologian, John Piper, would say, our benefit is the effect not the target. Fasting unto God that expresses reliance upon Him and desire for Him is seen in the Scriptures to be a means of grace in as much as God uses the hearts (and appropriate outward expressions, thereof) of his people to glorify Himself.



- o. The New Testament has its own contexts in which prayer and fasting are linked. In Acts 13:1-3 it is "when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them" that they proceeded to commission Paul and Barnabas as missionaries and send them away. This occasion of fasting may have been associated with a desire to intensify prayer due to such an important event.

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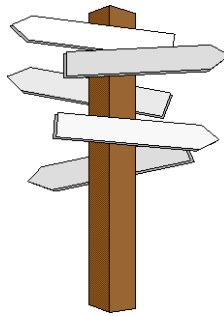
- p. In Acts 14:23, the decisions made in the appointment of elders were of a critical nature, and they were not entered into without "having prayed with fasting." In commissioning those chosen, fasting intensified prayer.

D. Divine Guidance.

1. Receiving direction from God (divine guidance) as a benefit of fasting is to a large degree a subset of the fasting benefit of making prayer more effective; that is, guidance from God is sought in prayer. Some are reluctant to consider the possible benefits of fasting that are associated with receiving divine guidance. Certainly, there are dangers to avoid. This should not be surprising since most holy things have their counterfeits. One author, who recognizes fasting for divine guidance to be Scriptural writes:

Most Christians believe in guidance, and although some have gone astray, piling their lives upon the rocks, through unscriptural methods, God does still guide and lead His people. What do you do if the way ahead is not clear? . . . we can see that the Apostles were used to the idea of fasting when in need of divine aid. . . . We are given the impression that the experience of fasting provided such a vital fellowship with the Holy Spirit, that a better environment for guidance was created. This is not to say that fasting is a *guarantee* for guidance; the point is that those who fast are placing themselves in a situation through which the Holy Spirit has an easier access to them.¹⁵

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2. How does God guide us and how does that compare with the idea of revelation?
 - a. First, there are the dynamics of general revelation. That God is revealed in creation is clearly established in the Scriptures and through experience. However, it is also true Scripturally and experientially that general revelation can not result in salvation for fallen man. To a large degree, man's wicked heart results in him being blind to general revelation.
 - b. Special revelation is necessary. God's special revelation of Himself is found in the Scriptures. Through the Scriptures, God guides His people into His moral will.
 - c. Subordinate revelation is that which is consistent and answerable to the Scripture. It is not different revelation, nor is it new or additional revelation. The canon is closed and what God has revealed of Himself in the Scripture is sufficient and complete. However, it is not exhaustive implicationally and applicationally.
 - 1) To a certain degree, the sufficiency of Scripture results in the idea that God's communication with His people is static; that is, that He has revealed Himself sufficiently in the Scriptures and that He does not change.
 - 2) At the same time it must be understood

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that God's implicational and applicational communication with His people is not static due to the very nature of the Scripture itself; that is, that "the word of God is living and active . . ." (Heb 4:12). And so God continues to guide His people (any form of Deism is rejected) through illuminating Scriptural principles to them that He may use to give them understanding as well as implicational and applicational guidance. Both moral and non-moral decisions can be made by the people of God as the Spirit of truth guides them "into all the truth" (Jn 16:13).

3) Thus, when divine guidance is spoken of, it is not to speak of anything that is new revelation or that would be inconsistent with Scripture. Rather, it would be the guidance that God accomplishes in His people that is morally, implicationally, and applicationally consistent with the Word of God.

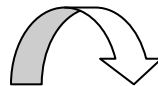
3. Charles Stanley, the great modern day Baptist preacher who has seen experientially and Scripturally that fasting is associated with "hearing God's voice," writes,

. . . we must know what God has to say to us individually. This calls for intense prayer. Fasting intensifies prayer, allowing us to reach into the innermost part of our spirit till we can understand spiritual things that we otherwise could not grasp. . . . Fasting prunes and peels. . . till we get to the hard core of what God is trying to say to us. . . . Fasting helps us find God's will. . . . As you fast and pray He will clear your eyes . . . and you will hear from God as never before. His leading will become clear.¹⁶

a. Fasting can be a means to more fully receive direction from God because fasting has the

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6. The Scriptural cases are numerous in which a connection is made between fasting and receiving divine guidance.
- a. In Ex 34:28, Moses fasted 40 days and 40 nights in the midst of receiving the Word of God (the Law) and being in the presence of God in an intense way. It is at that time that God communicated to Moses "the words of the covenant."
 - b. In Jdg 20:26, the Israelites, after falling into, perhaps, a sense of self-confidence, came before God with fasting in an expression of reliance upon Him. This expression of reliance upon God, of insisting upon His guidance and intervention, was rewarded with His guidance and intervention. Fasting can communicate a heartfelt need for God and can result in the grace of God's response.

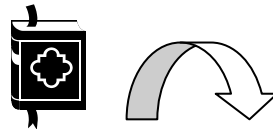


- c. Then in 1 Kings 19:8, Elijah fasted for forty days on his way to Mount Horeb. The fast would certainly have facilitated for Elijah the attitude of dependance upon God. It is this attitude that prepared Elijah to receive a mighty revelation of God (vv. 9-13) and His divine guidance (vv.15-18). Fasting became, in this sense, a means of grace--a facilitator of being prepared to receive divine guidance.
- d. In Esther 4:16 there is another fasting event. In this case, it may be that the fast was meant to aid in Esther's quest to receive guidance and direction from God concerning what to say to the king and how to present herself before him. Indeed, before she declared the fast there was no indication of

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any specific plan to be used. However, the remainder of the story makes it clear that she did have and implement a wise and strategic plan. The phrase "thus I will go in to the king . . ." could imply the idea that via the fasting, Esther's expectation was that God would supply sufficient direction as to how to proceed.

- e. Fasting, in Isaiah 58:1-12, can be associated with receiving guidance from God. Indeed, these are a people who "delight to know my ways" and "delight in the nearness of God" (v.2). The direction and guidance that comes from knowing the ways of God and being near to Him is given to the one who engages in God's chosen fast. In v.8 it is "light" that is promised, and in v.11 it is the Lord who "will continually guide you."
- f. In Dan 1:8-16 divine guidance is associated with fasting. Immediately after establishing the scenario of the partial fast, the Scripture reads, "And as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams" (v.17).
 - 1) Of course, this is not to say that it is simply a matter of one's diet that dictates the degree to which one will be guided by God.
 - 2) However, it does seem valid to establish a connection between the sincere, God-directed obedience and self-denial that can be involved in fasting and the reception of guidance from God; not that it is a reward but that it is a result of that which such attitudes facilitate.

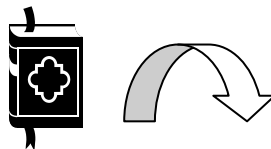


- g. In Dan 9:3,20-27, in the midst of prayer and fasting on behalf of his people and Jerusalem, Daniel was given revelation through a vision.
- h. Then in Dan 10:2-14, he was told that from

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the first day of his seeking God his words were heard. Indeed, the one speaking to Daniel said, "I have come in response to your words" (v.12). His words were effective. God heard him and responded, answering his prayer for insight. In as much as the act of fasting expressed a sincere attitude of "humbling yourself before your God" (v.12), it can be seen to have aided in the result of receiving guidance from God ("Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people", v.14).

- i. In the New Testament this connection continues. In Lk 2:36-38, the Scripture presents Anna as one of the many used by God to joyfully proclaim the coming of the Savior (v.38). How did she know it was Him? Even as Peter, later, would not know via flesh and blood revealing it to him, but by divine revelation (Mt 16:17), so too Anna knew via divine revelation. It is clear that fasting is not necessary for this to occur. Nevertheless, Anna's fasting was clearly associated with reception of divine revelation. Fasting, for Anna, was a means of worshipping God, and worshipping God had as its effect the reception of revelation.

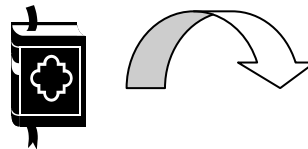


- j. In Acts 9:9-12, it could be argued that fasting was associated with receiving divine guidance. As a means of grace when conducted in a sincere and proper attitude toward God, fasting is used by God to facilitate reception of divine guidance; that is, guidance is an effect of true fasting. The Lord instructs Ananias to "inquire . . . for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man

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named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight" (Acts 9:11,12). Paul, in humility and penitence, prayed and fasted and received divine guidance.

- k. In Acts 10:30, there is an obvious connection between fasting and reception of divine guidance if one accepts the King James reading. Of course, as has been seen, this type of connection is not without the support of other Scriptures. If one accepts this reading, it is interesting how it links all three Christian disciplines mentioned by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (almsgiving, prayer, and fasting) with the reception of divine guidance (Acts 10:2-4; 30-31).
- l. In Acts 13:1-3, it is "while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting" (v.2) that guidance came to them by the Holy Spirit. Clearly, we see another association between fasting and the reception of divine guidance.



- m. In Acts 14:23, similar to the account found in Acts 13:1-3, fasting can be seen to be associated with receiving divine guidance. The decisions made in the appointment of elders were of a critical nature, and they were not entered into without "having prayed with fasting."

E. Discipline and Resisting Temptation.

1. In declaring that all people have appetites or drives that need to be kept in balance, Charles Stanley proposes:

Fasting brings our physical appetites under the Holy Spirit's control. . . . Our drives were given in order that they may serve us. But when they get out of

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balance, we become their slaves. By fasting we can restore the balance God originally intended. . . . The sex drive has to be brought under the authority of the Holy Spirit. Fasting is a divine aid in bringing about this change.¹⁸

2. Indeed, food and the lust for it is associated in Scripture with a lack of discipline and falling into sin. In one way or another because of food, Eve was tempted (Gen 3:6), Noah fell into a trap (Gen 9:20,21), Esau sold his birthright (Heb 12:16,17), Jacob picked Esau as his favorite (Gen 25:28), the people of God murmured (Ex 16:3; Num 11:4,5; 21:5), and the priests were rebuked (1 Sam 2:29).
 - a. Indeed, Scripture calls its followers to make the body the servant of the spirit. Discipline in eating is fundamental and fasting develops fundamentals of discipline.
 - b. Wallis observes this sort of connection as he refers to the biblical implications of the fact that the sin of Sodom was linked to a lack of discipline with food (cf. Ezek 16:49):



Where there is a failure to deal with this lust for food, the life is opened to attack along other lines. The connection between overeating and the stimulating of sex desire is common knowledge. . . . The value of fasting as an aid to subduing the body and mastering the appetite has always been recognized. The Church of England Homily (1562) suggests that the first end of fasting is to "chastise the flesh, that it be not too wanton, but tamed and brought in subjection to the Spirit."¹⁹

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- c. In other words, fasting is used to increase discipline!
3. More specifically, fasting has been associated with an increased ability to resist temptation. One author writes:

To maintain power over the desires of the flesh, and to be in constant victory over the egoistic self, we need much of the grace of God. To receive that grace in times of violent temptation, and to enjoy God's power when needed, there is no doubt that we shall find fasting necessary, sometimes. . . . It cannot be said that every Christian will be saved from all carnality if he takes up fasting. It can be said, however, that fasting is a most powerful aid to those who face this problem.²⁰

4. Some authors have expanded on the connection between fasting and resisting temptation, and have included a connection between fasting and spiritual warfare, in general. Derek Prince takes an entire chapter and uses the accounts found in 2 Chron 20:1-30, Ezra 8:21-23, Esther 4, and Jonah 3:5-9 to associate fasting with spiritual warfare. Arthur Wallis feels that the spiritual application of Is 58:6 concerns itself with the use of fasting to tear down spiritual strongholds. He refers to a Pastor Hsi of China, whom Dr. D.M. Lloyd Jones referred to in his writings, as one who used prayer and fasting in the ministry of deliverance. He goes on to account for many others in the past and currently who have discovered this use of fasting.



5. A significant number of Scriptures seem to point to a connection between fasting and discipline or resisting temptation.
 - a. In Num 6:3,4 the Nazarite vow (vow of separation)

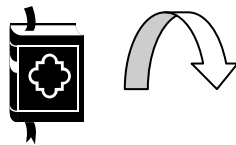


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is manifested, in part, via a partial fast. In this sense, we see fasting associated with separation from sin. Fasting is a means to express that separation.

b. In 1 Sam 7:6, God promises His people deliverance from the hands of the Philistines. God's people pray and fast. Deliverance is the result of such actions. Does fasting create a deliverance? No. Fasting simply facilitates a required attitude for deliverance and in so doing becomes a means of God's grace.

c. In 1 Kings 19:8, Elijah fasted for forty days on his way to Mount Horeb. The fast certainly facilitated for Elijah the attitude of dependence upon God. In the midst of his great temptation to abandon his ministry, it took this type of attitude to receive from God the necessary equipping to overcome the temptation. Part of that equipping came as God revealed Himself to him. Fasting became, in this sense, a means of grace--a facilitator of being prepared to receive divine guidance and encouragement to overcome temptation.



d. In the historical account found in Mt 4:2 and Lk 4:2, fasting is associated with an ability to resist temptation. Once Jesus denied self, He was better prepared to resist temptation because temptation appeals to lifting up self. The physical discipline of fasting, then, becomes a means of expressing and establishing the type of attitude that will lead to victory.

e. In Mt 11:18 and Lk 7:33, John the Baptist came "eating no bread and drinking no wine" (Lk 7:33). This type of partial fast is reminiscent of the Nazarite vow (vow of separation) seen in Num 6:3,4. In this sense, we see fasting associated

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with separation from sin. Fasting is a means to express that separation. Indeed, this was the call of John the Baptist unto others, "Repent."

F. Other Oriented

1. Even as Jesus could be seen to be relating fasting to almsgiving in the Sermon on the Mount, it could be understood that fasting should result in being more aware and sensitive to the needs of others.



2. In reference to Zech 7:4-10, James Beall concludes:

Fasting which is a response to God's initiative will result in practical outreach. It will make us sensitive on the inside to the needs of others because the shift of focus will free us from self-preoccupation. We will respond to the need we see not only to God in prayer but in caring for others . . . Fasting, if done with the heart focused on God will change our hearts. We will not only be moved toward God, but toward our brother.²¹

3. One Church historian reports that early in the Church age "Christians were fasting to make resources available to meet the needs of those less fortunate. . . . Tertullian confirms that it was not unusual for the leaders of Christian communities to proclaim fasts for the express purpose of collecting alms or supporting other worthy aims."²²



4. It should be remembered that the Isaiah 58 passage links fasting with social justice. Indeed, that is the whole point of the "chosen fast." It is that there would be a focus on the needs of

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others--the hungry, the homeless poor, the naked, the afflicted. This selfless attitude is consistent with the sincerity of humbling oneself and denying oneself. It is also consistent with the area in which Isaiah's audience needed repentance; that is, the area of justice to the needy.

G. Preparation for Ministry

1. The idea of the use of fasting in ministry preparation can be seen in how Jesus' ministry was launched with power after fasting 40 days in the wilderness (Lk 4:2,14), how Paul and Barnabas' missionary ministry was inaugurated with fasting (Acts 13:3), and how local church ministry was initiated with fasting (Acts 14:23). Some may even see a connection with respect to Paul's practice of fasting that may be being alluded to in 2 Cor 6:3-10 and 11:23-27.
 - a. In a certain sense, fasting could become a part of preparation for ministry because it is discipline in the area of self-denial. Indeed, one who serves another must be able to deny himself to put the needs of others first. More importantly, fasting facilitates an expression of reliance upon God. Reliance upon God is a foundation stone for ministry.
 - b. David Smith quotes various historical references as he illustrates the connection between fasting and preparation for ministry using well-known churchmen.²³ Of Girolamo Savonarola, who was a priest in the Dominican Order when he was appointed to the office of Prior of Florence in 1491, Smith writes:

His preaching had always been highly regarded, but now he became a man aflame with truth. He fasted and prayed; at last he found his message. The sentences rushed out, never halting, never losing intensity or volume, but growing until his voice became as the voice of God Himself. Tears gushed from the eyes of the hearers, they beat their breasts, they cried unto God for mercy, the church echoed with their sobs. These sermons caused such terror, alarm, such tears, that everyone passed through the streets without speaking, more dead than alive. Often, Savonarola was so weak with fasting, before such preaching, that he needed help to remain in the pulpit.

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Of Charles Finney, Smith reports that he:

. . . appears to have been empowered immediately after his conversion and always spoke with unction and conviction. "Sometimes," he wrote, "I would find myself, in a great measure, empty of this power. I would then set apart a day for private fasting and prayer, fearing that this power had departed from me. After humbling myself, and crying out for help, the power would return upon me with all its freshness."

2. In review, it is true that the Matthew 4 and Luke 4 wilderness experience (which included fasting) immediately preceded the launching of the ministry of Jesus ("And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district", Lk 4:14). It also seems to be true, logically and experientially, that Satan attacks a ministry directly when it is first beginning; that is, at its most vulnerable time. In the midst of this early attack, fasting can be a means of preparation in as much as it is an expression and means of focusing upon the need to rely on God.
 - a. As Jesus' fasting physically focused Him on His reliance upon the Father, it prepared Him to express His spiritual reliance (note the emphasis given to reliance upon God in each of His three responses to "the tempter").
 - b. Fasting can be a part of preparation for ministry because it is discipline in the area of self-denial, and ministry necessitates self denial.



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3. In Acts 13:1-3, it is "when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them" that they proceeded to commission Paul and Barnabas as missionaries and send them away. This occasion of fasting may be seen to be associated with preparation for ministry. The dynamics of sending and being sent are full of the issues of preparation.
4. Finally, in Acts 14:23, the decisions made in the appointment of elders were of a critical nature, and they were not entered into without "having prayed with fasting." In commissioning those chosen, fasting became part of their preparation for ministry.

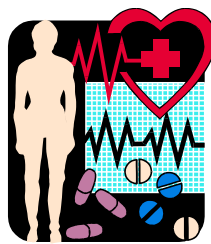
H. **Physical Health** (also see Appendix B).

1. It is left to another section of this study to expand on the relationship between fasting and physical health. In no way could it be proposed that Scripture clearly claims that fasting results in better health. Here, it should simply be mentioned that several Scriptures seem to make indirect allusions to this connection.
2. In Isaiah 58 the physical benefits of fasting may be seen. Indeed, those actions that positively impact our spiritual lives often have an equally impacting effect in our physical lives. As part of the discourse concerning the results of a chosen fast, there are the statements that "your recovery will speedily spring forth" (v.8), and "the Lord will . . . give strength to your bones"



(v.11).

3. Furthermore, in Dan 1:8-16 it is interesting to note that one of the results of the partial fast of the Hebrew young men was physical health. After the ten day test, "their appearance seemed



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better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food" (v.15). In an almost paradoxical way, the ones who abstained were healthier than the ones who indulged. The same paradoxical dynamic is clearly explained in modern health books. Fasting can result in better health (also see Appendix C).

V. CONCLUSION.

A. **Study the following Scriptures** which refer to the idea of "vessel theology."

1. Formed by God - Ps 139:14-16; Eph 2:10; 2 Cor 5:17.
2. Potter and the clay - Is 64:8; Jer 18:1-6.



3. General concepts - 1 Sam 16:7; 2 Cor 4:7-9; 1 Cor 4:7; 2 Cor 5:20; 2 Tim 2:20,21; Phil 2:13; Gal 2:20; Jn 15:5.

B. **What is vessel theology?** What is the idea of means of grace? How does vessel theology imply the necessity for means of grace? How is fasting a means of grace?



VI. APPENDIX.

A. Prayer and Fasting.

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1. Why is fasting so often associated with prayer? In general, it may be because the biblical passages regarding fasting so often include the activity of prayer. Specifically, it may be because Jesus seemed to link them together (along with almsgiving) in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt 6:1-18).



- a. Although it is thought by some that these particular disciplines were mentioned by Jesus to establish them as sort of a holy triad, it should be remembered that the context of the passage is that of rebuking the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. It is more likely that these three disciplines were grouped together simply because they were clear examples of Pharisaical hypocrisy.
 - b. Nevertheless, some things can be learned about fasting when it is studied in light of other disciplines (especially prayer).
2. Certainly, for some, fasting has no meaning apart from prayer. At the same time, it might be pointed out that no mention of prayer was made when Esther fasted (Esther 4:16) nor when the leaders at Antioch were fasting (Acts 13:2). Indeed, Jesus chose to address prayer and fasting separately in the Sermon on the Mount. Perhaps, it could be said that in as much as prayer is reliance upon God and fasting is a sincere expression of that reliance, fasting can be referred to as an "unspoken" form of prayer.



3. Even as Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, lists prayer and fasting together as Christian disciplines, He also relates similar instructions

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regarding each. These are not to be empty, ritualistic disciplines.

- a. Disciplines must be seen as means and not ends, lest they yield religiosity. A Christian life should be a disciplined life. This discipline should be motivated by a love for Christ. The disciplines of a Christian are motivated by the desire to get closer to God. They are means that are directed toward substance.
 - b. The disciplines of a ritualist are motivated by the desire to accomplish the discipline. They are ends that are satisfied with appearance.
 - c. Christian disciplines, more than anything else, are ways to channel and organize the overflowing energy, commitment, and desire that one has for Christ. Both prayer and fasting should be understood in this way.
4. Of course, the most common understanding of the relationship between fasting and prayer is that fasting is an aid to prayer. Certainly, fasting can be a means to express and prompt a greater level of reliance upon God. Prayer that is based on a greater reliance upon God is prayer that is, indeed, more effective.
5. One final thought provoking and practical connection made between prayer and fasting might be added here. It could be argued that since we pray both as a regular discipline (daily) and as a more "crisis oriented" discipline, we should also fast both as a regular discipline (perhaps one day a week) and as a more "crisis oriented" discipline.

B. Fasting and Health.



1. While some believe that fasting is dangerous to one's health, most writers on the subject, both religious and secular, commend it as a potentially

Fasting As a Means of Grace

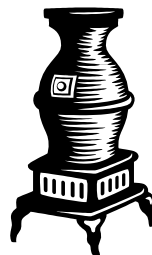
healthy practice. Some go as far as claiming that fasting can help in eliminating everything from common colds to heart disease and cancer.

a. Indeed, it should be remembered that good health is associated with sincere fasting in Is 58:8. This, of course, is not the reason why Christians should fast, lest fasting become a mere superficial practice. However, it is a benefit that is not inconsistent with Scripture.

b. Certainly, Christians should be concerned about their health. It is their bodies that are referred to as the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6:19). The fact that fasting has various health benefits is not the direct Christian motivator for the practice, but it is a purpose that is consistent with Christian teaching.

2. The most concise way to describe the reasons why fasting helps the body remain healthy is to describe the process of de-toxification.

a. Fasting helps the body purge itself of toxic substances. Some would even claim that during long fasts the whole body, including the brain, undergo a cleansing as toxic poisons are released from the body. Fasting gives the digestion system a break and allows time for the body to renew itself as it burns away its "rubbish."



b. During a prolonged fast the body lives on surplus fat. It burns up the waste and

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decaying tissues of the body. Only when this refining process is complete does it begin to consume its healthy cells. That is when starvation begins (typically between 21 and 40 days).

3. Various writers report that fasting can be associated with people experiencing greater amounts of energy. An overall increase in energy, better sleep, and waking up more refreshed are some of the related testimonies of those who fast.

C. Practical Guidelines to Fasting.

1. Perhaps the two most essential practical issues pertaining to Christian fasting are the motive for fasting and the "when" of fasting. Indeed, the two are closely related since the motive will dictate the timing of a fast, and the timing of a fast should be reflective of the motive.

- a. When the focus of fasting becomes technique-oriented and not motive-oriented, then we necessarily move away from the biblical purpose of it, and thus, the efficacy of it. Thus, one practical guideline is to clearly establish the motive of a fast before it is begun. Make sure that it, somehow, involves self decreasing that Christ might increase (Jn 3:30).



- b. It is true that the New Testament at no time commands fasting. Thus, Christian fasting should not be compulsory. Fasting should not become an empty ritual. It should not simply be a discipline with no direction. It is true that fasting is, in one way or another, to be prompted by a situational need. That need, however, is not simply experienced in "crisis situations" defined by external

Fasting As a Means of Grace

circumstances.

- 1) The biblical purposes of fasting go beyond such a definition. It must be remembered that fasting does have specific biblical purposes and benefits. The proper time to fast is when one or more of those purposes is clearly at hand.
- 2) The main point here, in summary, is that fasting be done with clear purpose and direction that is based on pure motives. It may be helpful to ask three questions of yourself when considering a time to fast:
 - a) Do I feel led by the Spirit? (indeed, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness and fasted).
 - b) Are my motives right? (indeed, this was the real issue of Jesus' teaching on fasting in the Sermon on the Mount).
 - c) What are my spiritual objectives? (biblical purposes consistent with biblical benefits).

2. One author submits the following practical principles as ones to be especially aware of when fasting:²⁴

- a. Have a clear aim so as not to get distracted or disinterested.
- b. Do not fast for show.
- c. Overcome the temptation to boast of your fastings and to feel deserving with respect to God. Focus on glorifying God and not on establishing self-righteousness.
- d. Plan and organize a fast with a first phase of self-examination and repentance, a second phase of petition, and a third phase of

Fasting As a Means of Grace

giving praise and thanks to God.

- e. Look for change in yourself.
3. Fasting makes possible a process of physical therapy in which it provides an opportunity for the body to operate its own natural system of cleansing and healing.



- a. Because of this process, various side effects should be expected such as: An unpleasant taste in the mouth, a coated tongue, bad breath, headache (especially for caffeine drinkers), sleeplessness, nausea, weakness, and dizziness.
 - b. It should be remembered, however, that this same process of cleansing eventually results in significant physical benefits such as: a brightness of the eye, pure breath, clear skin, increased senses, mind alertness, and general physical well-being.
4. Generally, fasting has been observed to have various stages.
- a. The first one or two days a craving for food is present.
 - b. During the next two or three days the craving for food subsides, but there can be a feeling of weakness or faintness. The end of this second stage comes as poisons and toxins are finally eliminated from the body (generally understood to be complete after the third or fourth day).
 - c. The next stage is one in which the person who is fasting enjoys a sense of growing strength with little concern for food (many writers seem to point to somewhere between day seven and ten to represent where people "turn a corner" in fasting--perhaps this could be compared to the "second wind" phenomenon in long-distance running). Termination of this phase comes when a painful sense of hunger

Fasting As a Means of Grace

(starvation) begins (between 21-40 days).

- 1) Here it should be noted that there is a clear difference between the desire, craving, or appetite for food (habitual) that one will experience in the first several days of a fast, and the physical hunger associated with starvation (physiological need) that one will experience at the end of a lengthy fast.
 - 2) In fact, the body has an automatic device for suppressing appetite which is usually realized in a significant way after the second or third day of a fast. That process, which occurs due to an increased production of ketones, continues until the starvation phase begins.²⁵
5. There are two practical points of information that are linked to what could be called the three day rule.



- a. First, never engage in an absolute fast (no food or drink) for more than three days. The body cannot function without water for more than three days.
 - b. Second, normal fasts of more than three days should be broken slowly. This is the most difficult time in fasting, and also the most critical. In a longer fast the stomach shrinks and the digestive organs that normally assimilate food do not operate at full force. They must be given sufficient time to become efficient. A full meal should not be eaten immediately but should be worked up to over a period of time. The longer the fast, the more critical is this process.
- 1) Some writers propose that, as a rule, the fast should take as long to be broken as it does to be completed.

Fasting As a Means of Grace

- 2) Initially, after a four or five day fast, a light meal should be taken mainly consisting of fruits and vegetables. With fasts that last longer than five days, the first several meals taken should consist of juices and soups. With a fast that lasts longer than 21 days it may be necessary to take up to a week before full, regular meals can be taken.
6. Fasting is not for everyone. It should not be done by diabetics, pregnant women, heart patients, extremely thin people, or young children. Others who want to begin a discipline of fasting should work their way into it. The first time someone fasts should not be for a prolonged time. Start with one meal. Then, try a one day fast. Eventually, a prolonged fast can be attempted.
 - a. Some say fasting is only fasting if only water is consumed. Others advocate drinking juices when fasting.
 - b. Do not allow yourself to be bound by such arguments of methodology. Remember, the issue is not methodology. It is motive.
7. Finally, those who fast should be aware of Satanic attacks--especially discouragement. Make it a point to focus on praise during a fast. This is the greatest weapon against the enemy and his attempts to discourage you.

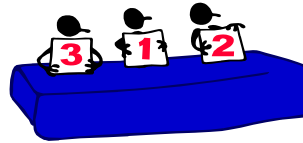
D. Results of One Study.

1. In November, 1995, research on the benefits of fasting was conducted at Bible Teachers Institute in Virginia Beach, VA. Forty-eight students (approximately half of the population which was used for the study) were randomly chosen to anonymously complete a questionnaire which was designed to test for correlations between the degree to which one practiced fasting and certain hypothesized benefits of fasting.
2. It was hypothesized that the students who

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practiced fasting would have a greater perception of:

1) being guided by God; 2) having an effective prayer life; 3) being able to resist temptation; 4) focusing on the needs of others; and 5) being healthy and energetic.



3. In general, various treatments of the data collected showed strong support for hypotheses one, two, and three. Hypothesis four was not supported as strongly, and hypothesis five was not supported at all.
 - a. Specifically, 25.00% more of the students who practiced fasting had a perception of being guided by God than was true of those who did not practice fasting.
 - b. Also, 37.47% more of the students who practiced fasting had a perception of experiencing effective prayer lives than was true of those who did not practice fasting.
 - c. Also, 25.00% more of the students who practiced fasting had a perception of being able to resist temptation than was true of those who did not practice fasting.
 - d. Also, 16.63% more of the students who practiced fasting had a perception of focusing on the needs of others than was true of those who did not practice fasting.
 - e. Also, 8.33% less of the students who practiced fasting had a perception of being healthy and energetic than was true of those who did not practice fasting.

Fasting As a Means of Grace

ENDNOTES

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¹⁴Wallis, p.57.

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¹⁶Charles Stanley, Handle With Prayer (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1984), p.35.

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¹⁷Ibid, p.34.

¹⁸Ibid, p.32.

¹⁹Wallis, pp.83,86.

²⁰David Smith, pp.53-54.

²¹Beall, pp.32-33.

²²Joan Rufe, Early Christian Fasting: A Study of Creative Adaptation (University of Virginia, 1994), p.246.

²³David Smith, p.50.

²⁴J. Choi, Korean Miracles (La Canada, CA: Mountain Press, 1978).

²⁵Alan Cott, Fasting as a Way to Life (New York: Bantam Books, 1977), p.105.

Christian Ethics

Christian Ethics -- Objectives

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. **In the Beginning...**
- B. **A Definition of Ethics.**
- C. **A Need for Christian Ethics.**
- D. **The Contents of this Course.**

Objective: to establish the nature and format of the course.

II. CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY AS THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

- A. **The Question of Ethics/Social Concern.**
- B. **A Biblical Hierarchy of Concern.**
- C. **Motive and Method of Concern.**

Objective: to establish the basis for Christian ethics and to establish some general principles that can serve as parameters for our further study.

III. HISTORY OF EVANGELICAL ATTENTION TO ETHICS AND SOCIAL CONCERN.

- A. **Early Examples.**
- B. **An Unfortunate Reversal.**
- C. **A Counter Reversal.**
- D. **A Balance to Social Concern and Ethics.**

Objective: to establish and understand the history of Christian ethics and to offer a balanced view toward ethics based on that history.

Christian Ethics

IV. ETHICS AND THE LAW.

- A. **Introduction.**
- B. **The Meaning of the Term "fulfill" in Mt 5:17 and Christ's Relationship to the Law.**
- C. **Grace and the Law.**
- D. **The Imitation of Christ and Christian Ethics.**
- E. **A Synthesis of Our Study Using Two Key Excerpts from the Sermon on the Mount.**
- F. **Conclusion.**

Objective: to understand the relationship between the Law and ethics and to build a perspective of ethics that is based on the Law while not being at odds with grace.

V. A STUDY OF VARIOUS ETHICAL ISSUES.

- A. **Medical Ethics.**
- B. **Sexual Ethics.**
- C. **Domestic Ethics.**
- D. **Punitive Ethics.**
- E. **Other Issues.**
- F. **Conclusion.**

Objective: to obtain information about a variety of issues and through class discussion practice how to communicate the various positions and defend those which are rooted in a biblical perspective.

Christian Ethics

CHRISTIAN ETHICS : SYLLABUS

Class Schedule -- 20 hour Course

CLASS #1: I. Introduction; II. Christian Responsibility as the Basis of Christian Ethics; III. History of Evangelical Attention to Ethics and Social Concern.

CLASS #2: IV. Ethics and the Law: A. Introduction, B. The Meaning of the Term "fulfill" in Mt 5:17 and Christ's Relationship to the Law.

CLASS #3: IV. Ethics and the Law (cont.)

CLASS #4: V. A Study of Various Ethical Issues:
A. Medical Ethics, B. Sexual Ethics.

CLASS #5: V. A Study of Various Ethical Issues (cont.).

Christian Ethics

Assignments

This course requires a written project. A full 100% of your grade will come from the evaluation of the paper submitted.

Assignment #1

A full 100% of your grade will come from a 2000 word research paper (7-9 typed pages) concerning one of the topics discussed under the "Study of various ethical issues" section of this course (e.g., abortion, genetic engineering, war, gun control, etc...). Besides an introduction and conclusion, the paper should have at least three other sections to include:

1. A survey of the issue and the various positions.
2. A defense of your own position.
3. Practical suggestions for how Christians can have an impact regarding the issue.

Christian Ethics

CHRISTIAN ETHICS - Course Outline

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. **In the Beginning....**

1. Since a moral God made man in His image, man is a moral being.
2. Since man rebelled against his Creator and took on a fallen image, man acquired the potential to be immoral...."Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil...." (Gen 3:22).



- a. The ability to do good (acquired at creation) was corrupted by the Fall of man.
- b. The ability to do evil was acquired due to the Fall of man.



B. **A Definition of Ethics.**

1. Definition -- that which concerns itself with the nature of moral obligation and, thus, determines the rule of right conduct that is used to distinguish between that which is right and wrong; that which determines the moral relation man has to himself and to others.
2. Ethics is about what is right and what is wrong (Prov 1:3,7; 2:9; 12:10; Micah 6:8; Mt 5-7).

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3. Our word "ethics" is from the Greek word "ethos" (1 Cor 15:33) from which we get our word "morals." The Greek word "anastrophe" is used to express the idea of a way of life, conduct, or behavior. Biblical ethics is the manner of life that the Bible requires and provides.

C. The Need for Christian Ethics.

1. Christians are called to:
- Live holy and moral lives (Lev 19:2; 1 Cor 6:18).



- Be an example of holiness and morality (Mt 5:13-16).
 - Be an advocate/defender of holiness and morality (Jer 22:16).
2. Christian ethics vs. secular ethics - use the following diagram to discuss the difference between Christian ethics and secular ethics.¹



	CHRISTIAN	SECULAR
STANDARD What do I do?	God's Law (Bible)	Self law or public policy/popular opinion
EQUIPMENT How am I able?	Internal empowerment (Holy Spirit)	External influence (heroes, peer pressure, environment, genetics)
MOTIVE Why should I do it?	Gratitude, love, desire for communion with God, duty	Philanthropic, self-interest, religious, rewards from men
DIRECTION Where is it heading?	Christlikeness, glory of God	Progress of humanity, self-improvement

Christian Ethics

D. The Contents of this Course.



1. Christian responsibility as the basis of Christian ethics.
2. History of evangelical attention to ethics and social concern.
3. Ethics and the Law.
4. A study of various ethical issues.

II. CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY AS THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

A. The Question of Ethics/Social Concern.


1. Social concern/ethics must exist in Christianity because part of Christianity is a responsibility to others.
2. The need for ethics/social concern came into question early on in biblical history when Cain responded to God with the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9).



B. A Biblical Hierarchy of Concern.

1. Responsibility to one's own.
 - a. Responsibility to self (Eph 5:29; 1 Thes 4:11,12; 2 Thes 3:7,8).
 - b. Responsibility to family (1 Tim 5:8,16).
 - c. Responsibility to fellow believers (Gal 6:10; Rom 15:24-27; 1 Jn 3:17; Jms 2:15,16).

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2. Responsibility to all men (1 Tim 6:18; Heb 13:16; Rom 12:20; Tit 3:1,2; Gal 6:10; 1 Thes 3:12, 5:15).
 - a. Responsibility to the poor (Lev 19:9,10; Lk 14:13).
 - b. Responsibility to widows and orphans (Ex 22:22,23; Mk 12:40).

 - c. Responsibility to the oppressed (Ez 18:5-9).
 - d. Responsibility to rulers and governors (1 Tim 2:2).
 - 1) Obey them (Rom 13:7).
 - 2) Honor them (Tit 3:1).
 - 3) Pay taxes to them (Mt 22:17-21).
 - e. Responsibility to promote peace and morality (Mt 5:13-16; Rom 12:18).

C. Motive and Method of Concern.

1. Motives for social concern/ethics.
 - a. As unto Christ (Col 3:23; Mt 25:40).
 - b. As witness/testimony of Christ (Rom 13:5; 1 Pt 2:13,14; 1 Cor 9:22).
2. Methods of social concern/ethics.
 - a. Helping those who cannot help themselves.
 - b. Helping others to help themselves.
 - c. Helping others not to hurt themselves.
 - d. Helping one's own to help their own.
 - e. Helping society to help itself.

Christian Ethics

III. HISTORY OF EVANGELICAL ATTENTION TO ETHICS AND SOCIAL CONCERN.

A. **Early Examples.**

1. Some historians attribute the avoidance of a bloody civil war in England in the 1700's to the work of John Wesley and the Methodist movement. With a focus on both Word and deed, the Methodists were successful at applying the biblical mandate to be salt and light, and their influence resulted in the correction of extreme social injustices.
2. The converts of Charles Finney in the early to mid 1800's gave their whole lives to the work of the anti-slavery movement.

B. **An Unfortunate Reversal.**

1. As the turn of the century approached, fundamentalist evangelicals began to withdraw from a focus on social issues, in part, due to an overreaction to the increase of theological liberalism (that was often associated with those who focused on social issues).
 - a. This response of fundamentalist evangelicals was further fueled by an increase of post-millennial type thinking; that is, that man could establish the Kingdom of God through his actions.
 - b. It was also fueled by a warped theology of the nature of the Kingdom of God; that is, that it is the reconstruction of society achieved by man's efforts.
2. The following are some of the other reasons for the general withdrawal of fundamentalist Christians from involvement in social issues:
 - a. A widespread pessimism after World War I due to the perception that society seemed unchanged (thus, a "what's the use"

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mentality).

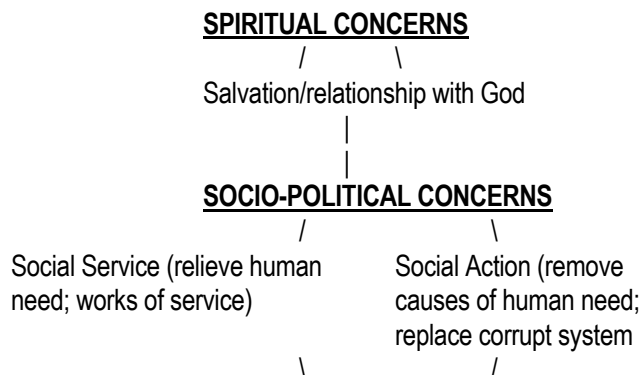
- b. The rise of dispensationalism (popularity of the Scofield Bible) that proposed that the world would steadily deteriorate until Christ's return (again, a "what's the use" mentality).
- c. The spread of Christianity to middle and upper classes who diluted the radical nature of the Gospel by trying to retain the status quo.

C. **A Counter Reversal.**

- 1. In the 1960's fundamentalist evangelicals began to be involved in social issues once again.
- 2. However, error continued to be an issue as liberal theology became increasingly fed by humanism, and liberation theology began to surface as part of liberal theology.

D. **A Balance to Social Concern and Ethics.**

- 1. Christianity is more than doing good works. It is a relationship with God Himself. Thus, Christian ethics must be rooted out of that relationship and result in service and action. Ultimately, it is salvation that will transform society, not simply service, action, and involvement.
- 2. The following diagram conveys a model of Christian responsibility.



Christian Ethics

INCREASE IN SPIRITUAL CONCERNS

IV. ETHICS AND THE LAW.

A. **Introduction.**

1. Some feel more comfortable to describe the ethics of the New Testament in terms of "love" and "grace."
 - a. This is true in as much as it includes the understanding that "love" represents for Jesus the summing up of the Law and the Prophets.
 - b. Thus, it is actually redundant to speak of a "New Testament ethic" and an "Old Testament ethic."
 - c. Nevertheless, some theological positions promote the perception of a mutually exclusive relationship between law and grace, and therefore do not recognize the Law as being the hub of "Christian ethics."
 - d. One author, in recognizing this misunderstanding that some have in their view of the relationship between the two testaments, writes: "Because relationships--loving relationships--need some form and structure there is an important place for rules within a love ethic...Jesus, in outlining His love ethic, said, 'If you love Me, you will keep my commandments (Jn 14:15)'"².
 - 1) This relationship between love and Law is established in both the New and Old Testaments (consider 1 Jn 5:3 and Ex 20:6).



- 2) Also consider Jn 14:21; 15:10; 1 Jn 2:3-

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5; 1 Jn 3:18; Dt 5:10; Dt 6:5,6.

2. Law and Grace.

- a. In order to gain an understanding of the relationship between Law and Gospel, it is necessary to give attention to the meaning and function of "grace."
- b. John Murray refers to certain erroneous perceptions of the law's relationship to grace, and concludes:

"An erroneous conception of the function of law can be of such a character that it completely vitiates our view of the gospel; and an erroneous conception of the antithesis between law and grace can be of such a character that it demolishes both the substructure and the superstructure of grace."³

- c. Murray warns against both extremes. We cannot separate Law and grace. The Law with no grace easily becomes legalism. Grace without the Law easily becomes a license for sin (Antinomianism).

3. Contents and theses of this study.

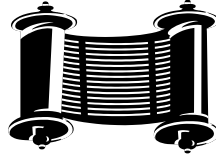
a. Contents.

- 1) We will define the term "fulfill" in Mt 5:17 (the way in which the term "fulfill" is interpreted will have much to do with our understanding of Christian ethics), and discuss Christ's relationship to the Law.
- 2) We will describe grace as an enabler with respect to its relationship to the Law.
- 3) We will discuss how the "imitation of Christ" relates to Christian ethics.

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4) We will examine two key excerpts from the Sermon on the Mount as we attempt to synthesize the study.

b. Theses.



1) The Law and the gospel are not in opposition to each other.

2) The term "fulfill" as used in Mt 5:17 points to Christ as validator and confirmer of the Law. Also, a logical and biblical extension of this sees Christ as accomplisher of the Law.

3) The Law (God's commands to His people representing His moral will, not necessarily the issues of ceremonial or judicial/civil laws) is seen as the basis for Christian ethics (morality).

4) Grace is seen as enabler rather than exempter with respect to the Law.

5) Sinful man is ethically deficient. Only God is good. Thus, our ethical ability is found in Christ alone.

6) Humility/poverty of spirit/selflessness is the foundation stone of ethical ability (a prerequisite to ethics).

7) In as much as we humble ourselves (die to ourselves) and allow Christ to work in us, we can be perfect. It is Christ alone who is perfect; that is, His perfecting us is nothing less than His living His perfection in us.

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B. The Meaning of the Term "fulfill" in Mt 5:17 and Christ's Relationship to the Law.

1. Other views.

a. Some views understand the instructions in the Sermon on the Mount as those that are only representative and applicable of life in another age. Other views propose that man is progressively moving closer to a natural attainment of salvation by works, and that the instructions of the Sermon on the Mount are dependent upon how far man has evolved spiritually in and of himself. Both of the above views distort Jesus' relationship to the Law and how that relationship affects man.

1) One such distortion arises out of an attempt to define the term "fulfill" in Mt 5:17 as "adding to." However, such Scriptures as Ps 19:7 and 119:128 will not allow for this type of interpretation.



2) Furthermore, such an interpretation fails to note the context of the passage and therefore misinterprets v.20.

b. If Jesus is simply adding to the Law an interior aspect that did not previously exist, then He is condemning the Pharisees wrongly, for they, more than anyone else, kept the external law perfectly.

1) The question arises: What were they missing that was already part of the Law? They were missing the true heart motive within the Law that connected commandment to a relationship with God.

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- 2) Furthermore, the mistake of the Pharisees was that they felt the Law could justify them.
2. Law and gospel as being consistent with each other.
 - a. Certainly the Sermon on the Mount stresses inward heart attitude. We also see this emphasis in the Old Testament (e.g., Is 1:10-20; Ps 40:8; Ps 51:16-17; Dt 6:6; Dt 11:18; Dt 30:14).



- 1) And so we should understand Jesus to be correcting the Pharisaical externalism in Mt 5:17-20, but not to be creating a new Law.
- 2) Jesus does not add to or delete from the Law, but explains the fullness of the Law and its use that has always existed. Jesus is the establisher of the true Law (see Rom 3:31).

b. One writer explains it in the following way, "Far from being different from the first covenant, the ethical stipulations of that new covenant would be the same as the original law; God says He will write the law on people's hearts, not change the law."⁴

- 1) The change does not need to come in the Law as it is stated in the divine, Old Testament Scripture, but in the law as it is practiced by hypocritical humans according to their superficial traditions. Jesus establishes the fullness of the real Old Testament Law while repudiating the emptiness of the pseudo scribal law.
- 2) The original Law itself is perpetual, as it is the expression of God's will

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(consider Ps 93:5; Ps 111:7; Ps 119:152,160).

3) Since Jesus is both the fulfillment of the Law and the heart of the gospel, the two cannot be opposed to each other. With this understanding, we can view the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus' description of God's moral or ethical will.

3. The meaning of the term "fulfill" in Mt 5:17.

a. In Mt 5:17, the conjunction "but" establishes a direct contrast between the two infinitives "to abolish" and "to fulfill." Thus, we should define "fulfill" according to a definition of "abolish."



1) The term "abolish" (*katalusai*) conveys the sense of dissolving or dismantling. It includes the idea of the destruction of something by the separating its pieces. Thus, we can define this term as the action of annulling, making invalid, or repealing.

2) With this understanding, we can define "fulfill" (*plarosai*) as to confirm, hold up, or validate.

b. Jesus fulfills the Law in the sense of confirming it, re-establishing it as valid, and restoring it to its originally intended full measure. Indeed, the revelation in the Old Testament finds its validation and actual embodiment in Him (see Jn 1:17).

1) Some proponents of this interpretation

Christian Ethics

of "fulfill" are Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, H. Ridderbos, W.C. Allen, John Murray.

- 2) The great Methodist evangelist, John Wesley, also understood that Jesus upheld the previously existing moral Law. Wesley would see Jesus saying of the Law, "I have come to establish it in its fullness, in spite of all the changes of men. I have come to declare the truth and full importance of every part of it. I will show its length and breadth, and entire extent."⁵
- c. A logical and biblical implication of this interpretation is that Christ accomplished the demands of the Law (with respect to its penalties satisfied in the sacrificial death of Christ for us, and with respect to its requirements satisfied in Christ's perfection). A next step would be to understand "fulfill" in terms of enabling the disciples to now better keep the Law. In this way, we understand our ethical potential as being rooted in the fact that the Law is fulfilled by Christ.
4. Christ's/the Christian's relationship to the Law.
 - a. Jesus renounced the reduced and cheapened form of the Law known as the scribal law which was created by the hypocritical, and therefore non-ethical, attitudes/behavior of the scribes and Pharisees. On the other hand, Jesus' relationship to the true Law, and therefore His relationship to ethics, was to reestablish it rightly and to stand up for its validity.
 - b. Jesus goes as far as to clearly state His loyalty to the minutest detail of the God



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given Law (see Mt 5:18). Thus, it is not simply broad and general principles that Jesus is advocating as being characteristic of His ethic, but specific details ("jots and tittles").

- 1) Attention to detail is not necessarily indicative of legalism. Legalism is not simply a bent toward detail, rather it is a bent toward emptiness, externalism, humanistic traditionalism, and hypocrisy.
 - 2) The mistake of the Pharisee (as is often taught) is not simply an overconcern for detail. Indeed, Jesus' own fulfilling of the Law is a validation of detail. However, it is a validation of the details of the true and full Law. Thus, we are not advocating legalistic ethics, but Christ ethics.
- c. Jesus could not invalidate the Law since it remains binding until the end of the world (note the emphatic nature of Mt 5:18). Indeed, the "therefore" that begins v.19 seems to logically read, "therefore...since the Law can never lose its binding force...."
- 1) John Murray concludes, "The law of God...must be regarded as the criterion of righteousness no less than it is the criterion of sin. If sin is the transgression of the law, righteousness must be conformity to the law (ethics)."⁶
 - 2) Note the direct relationship between the Law and what is holy and good in Rom (7:12-21).



- d. For the believer, the Law changes from bondage to delight. Both the Old and New Testaments describe the Law of God (ethics)

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as being the delight or joy of the believer (see Ps 40:8; Ps 119:97; Neh 8:10; Jn 15:10-11). Thus, we cannot speak of a Christian ethic as if ethics have changed due to Christ's coming. Ethics and the moral Law of God are one and the same.

C. Grace and the Law.

1. An understanding of "grace."

a. Some theologians argue that the Christian life and obedience to the Law are mutually exclusive issues. Often, this erroneous way of thinking is rooted in a misunderstanding of grace.

1) Grace is not to be understood as that which excuses us from doing the Law, but as that which enables us to do the Law.

2) Far from making the Law non-applicable to Christian lives, grace makes the Law quite applicable (note Rom 7:16,22,25 and 1 Cor 9:21).



b. At this point, we must be sure to note the gospel's clarity in stating that it is not the Law that justifies us. Indeed, the Law does not have the power to save.

1) Law and grace differ in that Law does not provide for salvation to fallen man, but fallen man can only be saved by the grace of God.

2) Yet, we must realize, as Paul did (see Rom 3:31), that there is much more to consider than this major difference between Law and grace when we are analyzing how they relate to each other.



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c. Grace has two major aspects. First, it frees us from the burden of sin. Second, it frees us to seek and follow God and live by His Law.

1) Grace delivers people from the dominion of sin and therefore delivers people from that which consists in transgression of the Law (see Rom 6:18-22). Within this process, grace promotes and establishes the opposite of sin in people's lives, and thus, becomes deliverance to holiness and righteousness.

2) Grace does not exempt someone from the demands of the Law, rather it establishes the character and status of a person that enables him to respond positively to those demands (consider how Paul points to the Law when addressing ethical issues in the



Corinthian letters).

a) In terms of ethics and Christian living we must not focus on grace as "excuser" but as "enabler."

b) Perhaps, then, we can understand Jesus' words to Paul in 2 Cor 12:9 (also see Eph 3:7).

d. One cannot understand the relationship between works (ethics) and faith, unless one first understands the relationship between works (ethics) and grace. Grace stands as the enabler of works, not the exempter.

1) Thus, grace and faith are seen working together in Eph 2:8. This dynamic is quickly followed (Eph 2:10) by the explanation that good works (ethics) are

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found in Christ. When we include the reality of Gal 2:20 "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me," we can begin to understand the full message of Rom 8:4: "in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

- 2) Grace is active not passive. It is alive not dead. It is enabler not exempter. It is Christ in us! Perhaps, it would be better to speak of a Christ ethic rather than a Christian ethic (the Christian ethic is the Christ ethic since the ethics worked through a Christian are actually Christ's ethics [works]).

2. Grace as enabler.

a. Looking to the Old Testament we see that Ez 36:27 does not promise an annulment of the demand of the Law. It promises an Enabler, the power needed to obey. Indeed, the Spirit gives life and ethical ability.

- 1) In terms of Mt 5:17, to fulfill the Law is not to make it better but to equip others to better keep it.
- 2) The enabling grace is manifested in the sending of the Holy Spirit. To doubt this is to be rebuked by the question found in Gal 3:3).

b. Puritan ethics understood that there was a supernatural grace that enabled believers to fulfill the Law. This occurred in the following four ways:

- 1) The new life (a prerequisite to enabling grace).
- 2) Forgiveness of sins (sanctification arises from justification).

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- 3) The indwelling of Christ (the power for keeping the Law is found in our union with Christ).
- 4) The work of the Holy Spirit who conforms us (sanctifies us).



c. The most basic Puritan question/answer was: "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God." Hence, Puritan thinking disallowed a marriage between ethics and hedonism, self-realization, or humanism and its tolerance and situational ethics.

- 1) Sometimes the Puritan ethic that was based on an adherence to authoritative commands is today replaced with a set of ethics based on inner compulsions.
- 2) However, the leading of the Spirit must always be consistent with the Spirit of God's Word. The absolute nature of God's Laws must not be ignored. It is true that we may sometimes not "feel led" to love our neighbor, but that does not mean for that instance that it is not God's Law. The Spirit does not oppose God's (His own) Law.

3. Ethics worked through believers by Christ.

a. Can sinful man be ethical/good in terms of the biblical understanding of the term "good"? The answer is an emphatic, NO! Sinful man can in no way be good by his own doing--only regenerated man can do good (see Lk 18:19; Rom 3:12; Rom 7:18).



b. A new nature given by Jesus Christ is a prerequisite to Christian ethics. Why is this true?

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- 1) Because it is actually the new nature in a man that does good, not the old man.
- 2) More specifically, it is Christ in us doing good, not us in us doing good. Christ's fulfillment of the Law had extenuating circumstances for man. Man could now ask Christ into his heart, and by faith, experience Christ accomplishing the Law through him.
 - a) The context of Mt 5:17-20 supports this implication of "fulfill." Note v.16: "Let your light shine...that they may see your good works (ethics), and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Who is the light? Jesus is the light (Jn 8:12). Who glorifies the Father? The Son glorifies the Father (Jn 17:1). Where are our good works to be found? In Christ (Eph 2:10).



- b) Yes, it is in this context of Christ working through the believer that we read vv.17-20 (consider Gal 2:20 with Rom 8:3-10; 15:18; Phil 4:13).
 - c. Certainly we should understand Christ's obedience to the Law in terms of His accomplishing atonement for us, but we should also understand it in terms of our own sanctification/holiness/ethical ability.
 - 1) It can be said that the Holy Spirit causes the believer to grow in likeness and obedience to Christ (consider 1 Cor 6:15-20; Eph 4:13,15; Gal 4:19; 1 Pt 2:21; 1 Jn 2:5).



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- 2) When we speak of the Spirit "causing likeness", we speak of a critical concept in our quest to understand biblical ethics; that is, the concept of the imitation of Christ (Note: the biblical concept of imitation goes beyond the notion that Christ is simply set forth as a model or example of how to live).

D. The Imitation of Christ and Christian Ethics.

1. What is the nature of the content of this imitation? Who is the active force behind the imitation?

- a. The whole concept of imitation goes back to Lev 19:2: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." We should note here that the Scripture does not say "You shall be holy because of your ability to imitate Me who is holy." Rather, the logical connective "for", which introduces reason or justification, points directly back to God Himself. The very reason why they can be holy is because they are a chosen people, a people set apart, as can be seen in the preceding verses (Lev 18:29,30). Thus, imitation is rooted in the very existence and abilities of God, not in the existence and abilities of man.



- b. This aspect of imitation is also established in the New Testament. It is possible to translate *egenathata* ("became") in 1 Thes 1:6 in the passive sense ("were made"), and thus establishing God as the logical subject. In this way, "became" is not simply a matter of chance or solely a matter of active seeking, but is directly under God's control.

2. In New Testament, the focus in the imitation-example relationship is on Christ as the One who gives and not on man as the one who attains.

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Thus, we may note the essential realization that man by his own right, power, or works cannot be as God. The imitation, thus, becomes a by-product of surrender and fellowship, as opposed to the more active process that would include those acts which produce a likeness.

- a. Christ is the active force who enables us to imitate His ethical example (that is, He lives His ethics through us).
- b. What then is man's part in all this? The key word is "surrender." The very nature of the imitation of Christ focuses on nothing less than the very nature of Christ Himself; that is, the nature of selflessness.
 - 1) To imitate Christ is to imitate the way of the Cross. Indeed, in all references to the imitation of Christ in the New Testament the context reveals an emphasis on dying to self (e.g., 1 Cor 4:16; 1 Cor 11:1; Eph 5:1; 1 Thes 1:6; 1 Thes 2:14; 2 Thes 3:7,9).
 - 2) We might conclude this section by proposing an alternative understanding of ethics: The Christian ethic can be argued to be, in essence, a Cross ethic or ethic of selflessness.



E. A Synthesis of Our Study Using Two Key Excerpts from the Sermon on the Mount.

1. Read Mt 5:3.
 - a. Poverty of spirit stands as the foundational stone of ethics. It is the starting line for ethical ability, just as the beatitude that emphasizes it marks the beginning of the Sermon on ethics.

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- 1) James Boice rightly asserts, "we must recognize as a first principle for understanding the Sermon on the Mount that we cannot fulfill the standards of the Sermon by ourselves. Paradoxically, Jesus teaches that the Sermon is only for those who know that they cannot live by it."⁷

- 2) The same paradox existed for those living under the Old Testament. The Law was something that sinful man was unable to keep. Thus, the scribes interpreted and reinterpreted the Law so as to make it conform to their sinful tendencies, all the time polluting it more and more to the point where one could keep the scribal regulations yet be far from keeping the commandment of God. Yes, the Law in both testaments reveals man as a sinner (Rom 3:20).



b. God uses our inability to keep the Law to direct us toward having the attitude that will result in the opportunity to be equipped to do the Law. How do we define this attitude?

- 1) It is the attitude of one who is hopelessly deficient. For fallen man to have hope he must first recognize and admit his utter hopelessness.
 - a) Those who work with alcoholics say the critical (and first) step in helping an alcoholic is getting him to admit that he is an alcoholic.



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- b) So too, the first and critical step in helping morally depleted man is to get him to admit he is morally depleted (consider the implications of Mk 2:17 and Jn 9:41).



- 2) F.B. Meyer offers an eloquent explanation:⁸

To confess that thou art nothing, but that Christ is all; to know that thou canst do nothing effective to bless men, but that Christ can, and will, do it by thee. That is the secret of this poverty of spirit which unlocks the treasures of the Kingdom of heaven...The way to become poor in spirit is to realize that thou hast no power of thine own by which to bless and help others, and to open thy whole being to the incoming and thorough flowing of the wealth of the ever-blessed God.

- 3) One must see his own deficiency to be able to receive His sufficiency. Being poor in spirit becomes a prerequisite for seeing the Kingdom, just as being an empty vessel stands as a prerequisite for being filled with the ability of Christ. Boice concludes, "if we are ever to understand the ethical teachings of Jesus, we must recognize as a first principle that we just cannot abide by them. And we must come in faith to the only One who did fulfill them and who alone can fulfill them in those who give their lives to Him."⁹

- c. Ultimately, ethics is summarized by the words surrendering, submitting, and dying to self.



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These, ultimately, are the ethical actions of men (consider Jn 6:28-29). Thus, we might talk about an "empty vessel ethic" instead of Christian ethics.

2. Read Mt 5:48.

a. Only in the light of our understanding of Mt 5:3 can we begin to understand a call to ethical purity/blamelessness.

1) We are ethically perfect in as much as we allow Christ to work through us (Ps 18:30-32).



2) We begin to approach the impossibility of being consistent in this perfection when we remember that it is the Law that leads us to repentance (see Phil 3:12-14 for a healthy view toward this impossibility). The Law is a tutor, pointing us toward the greatest ethic of all in God's economy; that is, repentance.

b. The combination of Law and gospel is the combination of commandment and enablement, or obligation and promise. Christ's fulfilling of the Law implies His accomplishment of it. Thus, by the work of the Cross, Christ is our justification (replacement/representative), and by the result of the Cross (Christ in us via relationship or access to Him) He is our righteousness (our holiness/sanctification).

F. Conclusion.

1. The Christian has ethical responsibility (mandate) because he has ethical privilege (enablement). This combination of privilege and responsibility

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can be seen in the letter to the Ephesians. Indeed, chapters 1-3 represent Christian privilege while chapters 4-6 represent Christian moral and spiritual responsibility (consider how this dynamic is summed up in Eph 2:10).

2. Much of ethics has to do with knowing God. The perfect union between human beings is expressed in Gen 4:1. In Eph 5:23, Paul speaks of this "one flesh" idea in terms of Christ's relationship with the Church. Christ is the groom and His bride is the Church. To be "in Christ" is nothing less than to be in intimate "spiritual intercourse" with Him; that is, to be "one flesh" with Him (Gal 2:20). And thus, the ethical/Law abiding Christ works/lives in an unethical/Law breaking man, and man indeed becomes "ethical."

V. A STUDY OF VARIOUS ETHICAL ISSUES.



A. **Medical Ethics.**

1. Abortion.
 - a. Although the Hippocratic oath states that there will be nothing given to induce abortion, abortion in the United States is practiced regularly and legally.
 - 1) In many ways, abortion can be said to be the "watershed" issue with respect to Christian ethics.
 - 2) Discuss ways in which other issues of ethics are impacted by the abortion issue.



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- b. In the U.S., one third of potential births end in abortion, totaling 1.6 million per year.¹⁰ Of the 1.6 million abortions less than 600 are connected to rape or incest.¹¹ The demographics of those receiving abortions indicate that abortion is not a cultural or socioeconomic issue, but an issue of convenience/expedience.¹²
- c. Read the following Scriptures and promote discussion as to the ethical nature of abortion.
- 1) Is the fetus a human? Consider Ex 20:13; 21:22-23; Lev 17:11,14; 18:20-30; Job 10:8-13; Ps 139:14-16; Is 9:6; 49:1,5; Jer 1:4,5; Lk 1:14,15,39-41.
 - 2) Does a mother have exclusive rights over her own body? Consider Job 31:15; 33:3,4; Ps 127:3-5.
 - 3) Does God expect us to defend the oppressed and needy (e.g. an unborn fetus)? Consider Prov 31:8,9; 21:13; 24:11,12; Mt 25:40-45; Rom 15:1.



- d. Finally, consider and discuss the following major inconsistencies in our society with respect to the abortion issue. What other inconsistencies are there? What actions can Christians take regarding the abortion issue.
- 1) In some States, it is actually against the law to commit suicide, but legal to have an abortion.
 - 2) Children in schools must have a note

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from a parent in order to get an aspirin from a nurse, yet with abortion parents are not required to know.

3) It is not debated whether the government has the right to legislate your option as to whether you will wear a seat belt in a car; nevertheless, it is strongly debated whether the option to abort a child should be legislated.

a) Remember, the argument based on the question "Is it right to impose your morality on others?" is self-contradictory since all laws impose some sort of morality on others even as the above statement implying that morality should not be imposed upon others is actually imposing a certain morality on others.

b) The question is not "Should morality be imposed?", but "Whose morality will be imposed?" The answer must be found in the realization that the Creator has the right to impose law on the creation.

2. Infanticide.

a. At the core of the abortion issue is a decreasing awareness and respect for the value of life. Thus, abortion (as was the case in Nazi Germany) leads to infanticide (actions that lead to the death of unwanted infants) and euthanasia (actions that lead to the death of the elderly and sick). The question is what (who) is next? In the historical case of Nazi Germany the answer was the holocaust!



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- b. Infanticide is the killing of an infant by direct or indirect means (for example, infants born with Down's syndrome are put in a room with a sign that reads "Do not feed this baby." Usually it takes place in hospitals with infants suffering from Down's syndrome or spina bifida.
- c. The underlying question is that of the value of life. What constitutes whether a life is valuable?
- 1) How perfect does a person need to be before they are considered valuable enough to have a right to life (consider Mt 7:1,2; Ex 20:13; Rom 12:3)?



- 2) Who has the power to make such decisions (consider Lev 24:17; Ps 146:7-10; Ex 4:11,12; Ps 94:9).
- 3) What is the definition of a "successful life"?
- 4) Who is the parent loving when they commit infanticide out of "love"? Is it really a question of the rights of the parents not to have to allow medical intervention? Or is it simply a question of how we view the value of life?
- 5) Why can the law get away with taking a suspected child abuse victim away from the parents, but it cannot bring itself to protect a handicapped infant?
3. Euthanasia.
- a. Euthanasia is the deliberate killing (additional activities that cause death) of an individual who is in extreme suffering for the supposed merciful purpose of relieving

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that suffering.

b. The underlying ethical question is "When does "helping" someone become "playing God?"

1) People should be afforded the possibility of dying naturally (even when it includes suffering as suffering is part of the ramifications of the Fall of man). We must not actively/directly help people die.

2) At the same time, all that is possible should be done to allow someone to live without imposing extra-ordinary devises/methods upon them that would not allow them to die naturally.

4. Genetic Engineering.

a. This is a fascinating area of medical ethics. More than any other area of ethics it reveals the problem with advancing technology; that is, that the heart of man is wicked and desperately sick (Jer 17:9).

1) Indeed, genetic engineering can result in positive contributions to society (for example, genetic farming, production of medically useful substances such as insulin, improvement of plant species, possibilities for the alleviation of certain sicknesses, etc....).

2) Nevertheless, the technology of genetic engineering has vast potential for negative contributions to society (for example, introduction of new diseases through human error, introduction of destructive life forms, selfish use of reproduction capabilities, etc...).

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- b. The underlying question is "Does the creation have the right to act as the Creator?" Where must we draw the line? Consider this excerpt from the *USA Today* newspaper (Tuesday, February 25, 1997, page 6D):



The world was taken by surprise by the announcement that scientists have accomplished what most believed impossible -- using the DNA of an adult sheep to create a genetically identical lamb.

While ethicists debate the issues of someday cloning humans, and politicians clamor for future regulations, scientists are awestruck by the benefits that the immediate cloning of animals hold for society....That means society must now grapple with the religious, ethical and psychological implications.

- 1) What are the implications of the potential for human cloning? Theologically? Practically?
- 2) How might we compare this technological breakthrough to the breakthrough of being able to produce the atomic bomb?

B. Sexual Ethics.

1. Homosexuality.

- a. Consider the following Scriptures in discussing the morality of homosexuality: Gen 19:1-11; Lev 18:22; 20:13; 1 Kgs 14:24; Rom 1:24,26,27; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:10; Jude 6,7).



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b. Is homosexuality a sin or an alternative lifestyle? Are people born homosexuals? What is the Christian community's response to homosexuality?

2. Pornography.

a. In an article in the *Dallas Morning News* (March 5, 1984), Henry Boatwright, Chairman of the U.S. Advisory Board for Social concerns, stated that 70% of the adult pornographic magazines sold end up in the hands of minors.

b. Consider and discuss the following negative effects of pornography:

1) The effects of viewing people as objects.

2) The effects of living in fantasy worlds.

3) Aggression against women and children.

a) Rape.

b) Child pornography.

4) The strong relationship between organized crime and pornography.



c. One of the main issues with respect to pornography is the question of the freedom of speech.

1) Consider this question in light of Gal 5:13 and 1 Pt 2:16.

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- 2) Consider how "free speech" is limited by the government in other situations (for example, cigarettes and liquor can not be advertised on television) yet pornographic material can be sold on the streets. What is the difference? Is this an inconsistency?

C. Domestic Ethics.

1. Divorce and remarriage (an excellent book on this topic is Divorce and Remarriage by Jay Adams).

- a. In the United States 50% of all marriages end in divorce. Commitment is not the high value it once was because situational ethics has strongly influenced value structures. If a marriage "does not work" then the morality of situational ethics actually results in a high value being placed upon dissolving the marriage.



- b. Yet God hates divorce. Consider the implications of Gen 2:23-24, Hos 2:1-22, Mal 2:16, and Mk 10:2-9.
- c. Does God permit divorce? Consider Dt 24:1-4, Mt 19:3-9 (allowed in the case of adultery), and 1 Cor 7:10-16 (allowed in the case of abandonment). It should be remembered that although divorce is allowed in certain cases it is still God's desire that there be reconciliation (see 1 Cor 7:11).
- d. Does God permit remarriage? Consider Deut 24:4, Rom 7:2-3, Mt 5:32, Lk 16:18, and 1 Cor 7:15.

2. Spouse and child abuse.

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- a. Both spouse and child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional) are serious problems in society. In the United States, statistics have shown that as many as 40% of all girls will have been sexually abused in some way by age 13. Many of those who were abused as children become those who abuse children in the future.
- b. The effects of child abuse are devastating. Negative dynamics of fear, disrespect, guilt, and a distorted perception of God are but a few of the tragic consequences of abuse. Child abuse is against the law. To some degree, society must protect its children. Where does the protection of the State cross over the boundaries set by the natural authority of the parents?
- c. Some statistics show that as many as 10% of American women are abused by their husbands. Women who are abused are often in great danger. It may be necessary to leave the home. Some women stay when the situation is extreme because of guilt, co-dependency, fear, shame, and denial. What can be done about spouse abuse? When should a woman leave the home?



D. Punitive Ethics.

1. Crime and prison.
 - a. As much as 25% of all households in the United States experience a crime. Perhaps, the original purpose for prisons was to produce penitence (penitentiaries). Although only 10% of crimes committed in the U.S. are prosecuted (thus, deterrence is low), the American purpose for prison is to punish

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offenders. The following four reasons can justify a "prison for punishment" mentality (a punitive system).

- 1) Incapacitation -- prisoners are not on the streets with a chance to commit more crimes.
 - 2) Deterrence -- examples to others who can then be discouraged toward committing a crime.
 - 3) Rehabilitation -- to restore and reform.
 - 4) Punishment -- to accomplish a sense of justice.
- b. For the most part, the biblical way of punishment is restitution. A system of restitution seeks to hold the offender responsible for his conduct. It is also motivated by a desire to restore/repay the victim. What system do you think is more effective, punitive or restitution?

2. Capital punishment.

a. The Mosaic Law prescribes the death penalty for the following crimes:

- 1) Murder (Ex 21:12,14,23; Lev 24:17,21; Num 35:16-21, 30-34; Dt 19:11-13).



- 2) Blasphemy (Lev 24:11-16).
- 3) Witchcraft (Lev 20:27; Dt 18:9-13).
- 4) Neglect of duty in battle (Ez 33:6).
- 5) Harlotry (Lev 21:9).
- 6) Adultery (Lev 20:10).
- 7) False witness (Dt 19:15-20).

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- 8) Homosexuality (Lev 20:13).
 - 9) Bestiality (Lev 20:15-16).
 - 10) Other issues: Incest (Lev 20:11-12); marriage to a woman and her daughter (Lev 20:14); cursing mother or father (Lev 20:9); rebellious children (Dt 21:18-21); offering children to idols (Lev 20:1-5); profaning holy things (Lev 10:1-9); false prophecy (Dt 18:20); rape (Dt 22:25).
- b. It could be argued that such New Testament passages as Acts 25:10-11 and Jn 19:7-11 affirm capital punishment. Certainly, individuals are called to forgive (Mt 5:38-39), nevertheless, those in authority are called to execute justice (consequences in the midst of forgiveness).
 - c. The other side of the argument is that capital punishment goes against the New Testament focus on forgiveness. More importantly, it deprives someone of the opportunity to get saved. The rebuttal would be that the death penalty may actually drive someone to salvation. This position would view Cain as the exception rather than the rule (Gen 4:9-15). Is capital punishment biblical? Should it be instituted today in our penal systems? Consider Gen 9:5-6 and Ex 21:12-17.

E. Other Issues.

1. War.



- a. Pacifism -- This position would say that Christians should have nothing to do with war and would point to Christ as the model of

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pacifism (Mt 26:52). It would argue that Christians who participate in a war are compromising their mission (Mt 28:18-20).

- b. Nonresistance -- This position would argue that Christians may only participate in war as non-combatants since the Bible teaches separation from the world and establishes Christians as soldiers of another type of war (2 Cor 10:3,4; Eph 6:12).
- c. Just war -- This position would argue that Christians may fight in a defensive war. It would recognize that physical conflict against evil is not always avoidable and would have the perspective that for a just cause (self defense), a just intention (to secure peace), using just means (appropriate force comparable to only what is necessary to secure peace with a strong commitment to protect the innocent/uninvolved), enacted by a formal declaration (under the authority of the government), and done as a last resort.
- d. Preventive war -- This position would argue that Christians may fight in a war to stop attack or to correct extreme injustice. The basis of rationale would be the idea of our responsibility to protect justice and correct injustice. To some degree, history has shown that a more aggressive attitude can prevent wars.
- e. Biblically, what support does each position have? Which is the strongest position biblically? Logically? Practically?



2. Politics.

- a. Should Christians be involved in politics? Consider Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pt 2:13-17; Mt 17:24-27; Mt 22:15; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Tim 2:1-2; Rom

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16:23 (also consider the callings of such important biblical figures as Daniel, Joseph, David, Esther, and Nehemiah.

- b. Two extremes.
 - 1) Political activity is evil. This promotes a mentality of isolationism in which Christians remove themselves completely from the issues of the world. This can lead to cynicism and apathy with respect to being salt and light to a corrupt world.
 - 2) Political activity is the answer. This overreaction fails to recognize that evil is a moral problem that ultimately must incorporate moral solutions. This can lead to compromise when Christians no longer just happen to be politicians, but instead politicians just happen to be Christians.

F. Conclusion.

- 1. As time allows, the instructor may lead the class in considering a variety of other common ethical issues. The following list represents some additional topics that may be



considered/discussed:

- a. Civil disobedience.
- b. Aids.
- c. Drugs.
- d. Censorship.
- e. Media issues.
- f. Education.

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- g. Gun control.
 - h. Foreign policy.
 - i. Use of high tech weapons.
 - j. Welfare and policies toward the poor.
2. Discuss some of the distinctions between a Christian basis of ethics and a secular basis of ethics. Why is there a difference? How should a Christian respond to the differences?

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ENDNOTES

¹Based on course notes from a D.Min course (Applied Theology, DMC 802) taught by Dr. Ligon Duncan at Reformed Theological Seminary, Summer -- 1995.

²Greg Forster, Christian Ethics in the Old Testament (Bramcote Notts: Grove Books, 1980), p.4.

³John Murray, Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), p.181.

⁴Greg Bahnsen, Theonomy in Christian Ethics (Nutley, N.J.: The Craig Press, 1979), p.46.

⁵Clare Weakley Jr., ed., Happiness Unlimited (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1979), p.125.

⁶Murray, p.190.

⁷James Montgomery Boice, The Sermon on the Mount (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p.25.

⁸F.B. Meyer, The Directory of the Devout Life (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1904), pp.24-25.

⁹Boice, p.25.

¹⁰M. Cunningham, "The Abortion Wars," *National Review*, 2 November 1992, p.42.

¹¹Byron C. Calhoun, "Am I a Murderer?" *Journal of Biblical Ethics in Medicine*, Summer, 1989, p.46.

¹²Cunningham, pp.43-46.

1st Timothy: Part One

1st Timothy: Part One -- Objectives



I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. **The Pastoral Epistles.**
- B. **Historical and Contextual Background of 1 Timothy.**
- C. **Repeated Phrases/Ideas/Themes.**
- D. **General Outline.**
- E. **Format of this Course.**

Objective: to prepare for an intense study of the first chapter of 1 Timothy by surveying various aspects of the book as a whole, and to establish the format of the course.

II. SECTION #1: Greeting (1:1,2).

- A. **Introduction.**
- B. **Word Studies.**
- C. **Outline.**
- D. **Specific Observations.**
- E. **Interpretation and Application.**

Objective: to do an inductive study of 1 Tim 1:1,2 in order to understand its contents and to practice doing inductive bible study.

III. SECTION #2: Charge to Timothy to protect the faith (1:3-20).

- A. **Introduction.**
- B. **Word Studies.**
- C. **Outline.**
- D. **Specific Observations.**
- E. **Interpretation and Application.**

Objective: to do an inductive study of I Tim 1:3-20 in order to understand its contents and to practice doing inductive bible study.

IV. CONCLUSION.

Objective: to practice doing inductive bible study as the instructor leads the class in a "lab session."

1st Timothy: Part One

1ST TIMOTHY: PART ONE: SYLLABUS

Class Schedule -- 20 hour Course

CLASS #1: I. Introduction; II. Section #1 (begin).

CLASS #2: II. Section #1 (cont.); III. Section #2 -
A. Introduction, B. Word Studies, C. Outline.

CLASS #3: III. Section #2 - D. Specific Observations,
E. Interpretation and Application (begin).

CLASS #4: III. Section #2 - E. Interpretation and
Application (cont.).

CLASS #5: IV. Conclusion.

1st Timothy: Part One

Assignments

This course requires a written project. A full 100% of your grade will come from the evaluation of the paper submitted.

Assignment #1

The student will do an inductive study of the first chapter of Titus. The inductive study should be presented in the same format as is consistent with this course; that is, it should include an introduction, word studies (four words), an outline (three levels deep), specific observations (10), and interpretations and applications (7). The study should be approximately 6-8 pages in length. The assignment will also include a 2-3 page study of the background of the book of Titus to include: historical and contextual background; repeated phrases, ideas, and themes; a general outline (one level).

In general, the student should follow the exact pattern and format as seen in the course materials in order to complete all parts of this assignment (refer to materials for further understanding). Please **BE CAREFUL** to pattern each section in accordance with the actual course materials.

The assignment will be graded according to the following point system: Introduction = 5 points; Word Studies = 10 points; Outline = 10 points; Observations = 25 points; Interp./Applications = 25 points; Background study = 25 points.

1st Timothy: Part One

1ST TIMOTHY: PART ONE - Course Outline (1st Timothy 1:1-20)

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. **The Pastoral Epistles.**

1. The Bible books I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus are often referred to as the "Pastoral Epistles".
2. Paul understood the principle of multiplication. He understood that the Kingdom would grow like a tree (consider Mk 4:30-32). Leaders would have to be reproduced even as the branches of a tree produce more branches.




3. Thus, Paul taught and practiced the principle of II Tim 2:2. He multiplied himself in two younger men, Timothy and Titus. His detailed instructions to them in the Pastoral epistles are designed to further train them in leadership, and to direct them with respect to training others in leadership.
4. Although the title "Pastoral Epistles" is commonly used for these Bible books, Timothy and Titus were not Pastors of individual congregations. They were apostolic representatives sent by Paul to Ephesus and Crete to help organize the churches under the leadership of "local church" leaders.

B. **Historical and Contextual Background of I Timothy.**

1. Author - Paul (see 1:1). Timothy had accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 14:6,7; 16:1-3). Paul had a direct hand in discipling Timothy (Acts 14:6,7; I Cor 4:17; II Tim 2:1).

1st Timothy: Part One

2. Date - thought to be written around 61 or 63 A.D. between Paul's two imprisonments. His second imprisonment resulted in his martyrdom that is known to have occurred sometime between 65-68. Paul wrote I Timothy and Titus after his release from his first Roman imprisonment (2 year house arrest) about 62 A.D. and during his 4 years of travel to visit Crete, Ephesus, Miletus, Troas, etc... (commonly referred to as his fourth missionary journey, and before his second and final Roman imprisonment around 66 A.D. (when he wrote II Timothy; see II Timothy 1:16,17).
3. Destination - Ephesus (see 1:3). This area was originally reached via the ministry of Apollos (Acts 18:24), however, the people there were not fully taught (Acts 19:4-6). Paul was intimate with the Ephesians since he spent more than two years there during his third missionary journey (Acts 19:8-10). He left after riots occurred and went to Macedonia (Acts 19:23-20:1), and soon after met with the Ephesian elders to warn them of impending infiltration of false doctrine (Acts 20:17,29-30).
4. Occasion - the existence of false teachers as well as potential divisions developing within the church seem to motivate the writing of this letter.
5. Purpose - to encourage Timothy to keep and defend the faith against false doctrine, and to instruct him concerning the organization of the local church. The letter is directed both to Timothy as an individual and to the church at large.
6. Themes - the following are some of the major themes of the book:

 - a. The importance of sound doctrine - Several times (1:3-11; 4:1-10; 6:3-5) Paul refers to the dangers of false doctrines. He is very careful to emphasize how critical it is to protect the purity of the faith.

1st Timothy: Part One

- b. Instructions for life in the church: public worship and relationships - Paul offers instructions for how one "ought to conduct himself in the household of God" (2:1-15; 3:15). He also gives instructions concerning how the people of the church should live together and treat each other (5:1-20; 6:1-2,17-19).
- c. Leadership qualifications and disciplines - A whole section (3:1-13) is devoted to qualifications for church leaders. Other sections focus on various disciplines (spiritual - 4:11,12; ministerial - 4:13-16; relational - 6:11-16,20-21; financial - 6:6-10).

C. Repeated Phrases/Ideas/Themes.



1. "It is a trustworthy statement" (1:15; 3:1; 4:9; also II Tim 2:11 and Tit 3:8).
2. God the Savior (1:1; 2:3).
3. The faith/truth/sound teaching (keeping it, following it, etc) (1:2,3,4,5,10,14,19; 2:4,7,15; 3:9,13,15; 4:1,3,6,11,12; 5:8; 6:3,10,11,12,21).
4. Salvation/ministry for all (1:15,16; 2:1,4,6; 4:10,16; 6:13).
5. Prescribe/teach these things/I charge you; urge you/Guard (1:3,18; 2:1; 4:6,13,15,16; 5:7,21; 6:2,13,20).
6. Follow/given over to Satan; believers/unbelievers; good/bad; good deeds/bad deeds; wander from the faith (1:6,9,19,20; 2:14; 3:6,7; 4:1; 5:8,14,15,24,25).
7. Honor/respect/dignity (1:17; 2:2,9; 3:2,4,7,8,11; 5:3,17; 6:1,16).

1st Timothy: Part One

8. Godliness/purity (1:5,15; 2:2,10,16; 4:5,7,8; 5:2,4; 6:3,5,6,11).
9. controversial issues/arguments/futile discussions (1:4,6; 2:8; 3:3; 4:7; 5:13; 6:4,20).
10. fight the fight (1:18; 6:12).
11. that which counts in the end (4:8; 6:19).
12. Jesus/God as source (1:1,2,12,14,15,16; 4:4; 6:17).
13. sin (1:9; 2:14; 5:12,20,22,24).
14. laying on of hands (1:18; 4:14; 5:22).
15. reputation/glory of God/Church (1:17; 6:1,14,16).
16. money issues (3:3,8; 6:5-10,17,18).
17. commandment of God; acceptable in the sight of God (1:1,18; 2:3; 5:4; 6:14).
18. good works (2:10; 5:10; 6:18).
19. household (3:4,5,12,15; 5:8,14).

D. General Outline.



1. Greeting (1:1,2)
2. Charge to Timothy to protect the faith (1:3-20)
3. Instruction/guidelines for "how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God" (2:1-3:15)
4. Extended charge to Timothy to protect the faith (3:16-4:16)
5. Extended instructions/guidelines for "how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God" with a specific focus on leadership (5:1-6:19)

1st Timothy: Part One

6. Conclusion (6:20,21)

E. Format of this Course.

1. In this course we will study I Timothy 1:1-20. We will divide our study into two sections according to the general outline (see "General Outline").

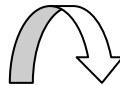
2. Each of the two sections will include five areas of study:



- a. A short introduction.
- b. Word studies.
- c. Outline.
- d. Specific observations.
- e. Interpretation and application.

3. Note: we will use the NASB version in our study.

II. SECTION #1: 1:1,2 - GREETING



A. **Introduction** - In typical Pauline and formal fashion of the day, the sender and recipient of the letter are immediately identified. The greeting is given as from the greeter whom the sender of the letter represents. Indeed the letter comes from an ambassador, one who represents another.

B. **Word Studies** (after reviewing the word studies below, the instructor may want to lead the class in other selected word studies if the proper reference books are available).



1st Timothy: Part One

1. "apostle" (v.1) - one who is sent; "a sent one".
2. "true" (v.2) - legitimate, real, genuine, one who is born in wedlock...Timothy, who according to Jewish teaching was an illegitimate child since he was born to a Jewess by a Gentile father, is legitimately born to Paul in the faith¹

C. Outline.

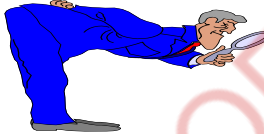


1. This section can be divided into three parts:
 - a. Identification of the sender (Paul, an apostle; i.e., sent one) - v.1.
 - b. Identification of the recipient (to Timothy) - v.2a.
 - c. Identification of the greeter and His greeting (from God) - v.2b.
2. The following is a more expanded outline:
 - a. Identification of the sender (v.1).
 - 1) Name identification (Paul).
 - 2) Title identification (apostle).
 - a) Source of title (Christ).
 - b) Means of attaining title.
 - (1) Commandment of God...our Savior
 - (2) Commandment of Jesus...our hope
 - b. Identification of the recipient (v.2a).
 - 1) Name identification (Timothy).
 - 2) Title identification (true child).

1st Timothy: Part One

- a) Source of title ("my"...i.e., Paul).
- b) Locus of title (in the faith).
- c. Identification of the greeter and His greeting (v.2b).
 - 1) Contents of the greeting.
 - a) Grace.
 - b) Mercy.
 - c) Peace.
 - 2) Name and Title identification of the greeter.
 - a) God (name) - Father (title).
 - b) Christ Jesus (name) - Lord (title).

D. **Specific Observations** (the instructor may want to lead the class in making their own observations from another passage as a way to practice what is modeled here).

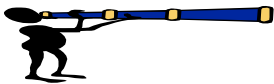


1. The word "of" points to POSSESSION and is REPEATED three times in v.1 establishing Paul as Christ's apostle, and the commandment as God's and Christ's commandment.
2. The phrase "according to" introduces the SOURCE or JUSTIFICATION of Paul's apostleship (v.1).
3. "Christ Jesus" is REPEATED three times and "God" is REPEATED twice in vv.1,2...God is DESCRIBED or DEFINED as "our Savior" (v.1) and "the Father" (v.2), while Christ is defined as "our hope" (v.1) and "our Lord" (v.2).
4. The word "to" introduces the DIRECTION or recipient of the letter (v.2).

1st Timothy: Part One

5. The word "from" introduces the SOURCE of the greeting; i.e., the greeter Himself (v.2).

E. **Interpretation and Application** (after the application questions the teacher should promote discussion and ask the class to develop more specific ways to communicate the application of the points to everyday life).



1. Verse 1.

- a. Paul is the one who sends the letter, even as he is a sent one (an apo-stello). He is an ambassador representing, most directly, Christ ("apostle of Christ Jesus; i.e., Jesus' sent one). Of course, Jesus is God's "sent one" (Jn 13:20; 17:18), even as Paul is sent by Christ but by the command of God, initially. Thus, this representation is the result of a command of, most initially, God = Savior and, most directly, Jesus = hope.
- b. Thus, the greeting in v.2 is seen to come from the greeter who is none less than, most initially, God = Father, and most directly Jesus = Lord.
- c. Yes, God the Father is "first" (most initial) and Christ Jesus is "last" (most direct or most immediate). Indeed, the "first" (most initial) becomes "last" (least direct or immediate), and the "last" (least initial) becomes "first" (most direct or immediate). In this sense, the idea of the "first becoming the last" has to do with the idea of reproduction and multiplication of ministry; i.e., the sending out of others and the giving over of ministry. Indeed, when you "let go of ministry" through the process of reproduction you necessarily let go of being the "first" (most immediate or revealed); i.e. your ministry is now done indirectly through another who is now revealed ("first") in order to prepare (Eph 4:12) another to be revealed (2 Tim 2:2). This necessitates dying to oneself in order to point to or put

1st Timothy: Part One

the focus on another (Phil 2:4; Rom 12:10; also see how this is done in the Trinity, Jn 13:3, 17:7,10, Jn 16:14,15). Unity and growth are the results of these processes (Eph 4:13,16).

- d. Do you see yourself as an ambassador? As one whose authority is from another? As a sent one and, therefore, a representative responsible to adequately represent that other?
- e. Do you seek to let go of ministry? Do you consciously look for ways to put another out front in ministry? Or do you seek to control others so as not to let go of that first position?

2. Verse 2a.

- a. The recipient is Timothy. Although, as we see in v.3, it is indirectly addressed to the church at Ephesus. Indeed, the letter includes more than private information for Timothy. There is a sense of general instructions for the church at large. Beyond this, the formal format of the greeting (Paul uses the formal formula of his day, putting his name first and identifying himself...remember, Timothy knows who he is) points to the author's intention of a wider audience.
- b. It should be noted that Paul's understanding of Timothy's "legitimacy" (see word study) is not founded in his physical birth but in his spiritual birth. Indeed, our legitimacy is found "in the faith", not in some family tie or history.
- c. Do you view your worth according to what family you have come from? Do you find your identity within physical circumstances of this world? Or is your value and legitimacy based on your spiritual heritage?

3. Verse 2b.

- a. Very much seen in this short greeting is the

1st Timothy: Part One

whole process of multiplication:

- 1) God the sender sends Jesus the sent one (Jn 3:16) --> Jesus the Sender sends Paul the sent one (1:1) --> Paul the sender sends Timothy the sent one (1:3; Phil 2:19) --> Timothy the sender sends leaders (overseers) the sent ones to/within the church (3:1; II Tim 2:2).....consider the whole progression of Jn 17:18-20.
- 2) Another way to see this is to understand the whole process of "birthing" and "reproducing or extending": God begets Jesus (Jn 3:16) --> Jesus begets the apostles, including Paul (Jn 20:22; Acts 1:8; Acts 9:15) --> Paul begets Timothy (1:2, "my true child") --> Timothy begets others (II Tim 2:2)....
- 3) God is manifested/extended via Jesus (Heb 1:3) --> Jesus is manifested/extended via the church by the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:22,23).

b. Thus, the greeting comes from:

- 1) Paul the sent one <-- Jesus the Lord/hope <-- God the Father/Savior.
- 2) Consider how the deity of Christ is alluded to here as we see the phrase "God the Savior", yet we know that Jesus is called the Savior (II Tim 1:10; Phil 3:20; Eph 5:23). This is because the Savior sent the Savior (I Jn 4:14), or the Savior appears as the Savior (Tit 3:4), or the Savior is manifested as the Savior (Tit 1:3). That is, Jesus the Savior and our hope, is God (Tit 2:13; II Pt 1:1). Indeed, "Jesus" means "God Saves". Of course, Paul further insists on the Deity of Christ as he refers to

1st Timothy: Part One

Jesus as "Lord" (1:2).

- c. The contents of the greeting are standard: grace and peace. However, it is only in his letters to Timothy that we see the addition of "mercy" in the greeting (see II Jn 3; Gal 6:16; Jude 2). The uniqueness of this greeting may emphasize the difficult nature of the task upon Timothy.
- d. Do you see yourself as an Ambassador? Are you an extension of the ministry of Christ or do you simply extend your own program? Do you work toward the multiplication of ministry through reproducing yourself?

III. SECTION #2: 1:3-20 - CHARGE TO TIMOTHY TO PROTECT THE FAITH.

- A. **Introduction** - For Paul, the purity of the gospel message and its teachings was of critical value. He could see beyond the immediate minimal effects of false doctrine to the eventual devastating effects. The truth must remain pure and protected. Timothy is commissioned to see to it that impurities are squelched.
- B. **Word Studies** (after reviewing the word studies below, the instructor may want to lead the class in other selected word studies if the proper reference books are available).



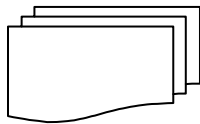
1. "instruct" (v.3) - command, charge; a military term meaning to "give strict orders"; the instruction was to be given in an authoritative way²
2. "administration" (v.4) - stewardship, literally,

1st Timothy: Part One

law of the house, God's economy; the same word, for example is used in Lk 16:2, Eph 3:2, and Col 1:25; thus, it is a stewardship issue...they are not being good stewards when they engage in such speculations; they are not concerning themselves with the administration of God's interests, but of those of men (consider, then, how 1:20 might be understood with respect to the idea of Mt 16:23).

3. "ignorantly" (v.13) - unaware, not knowing; however, as is the case in Rom 2:4 (translated as "not knowing"), this does not imply that there is a valid and acceptable excuse, or a lack of guilt that would somehow negate any possible judgment (see Rom 2:1-3); it is not the justification of Paul that is the issue here, but the mercy (compassion) of God upon a sinner in allowing such a one to serve Him.
4. "I am foremost" (v.15) - note that Paul's understanding of his status with respect to sin is stated in the present tense...he was a sinner and is now a forgiven sinner...this realization helps him to be grateful (see Lk 7:47).
5. "rejected" (v.19) - to repudiate, to push away from oneself, to push aside; the word implies a violent (see Acts 7:27) and deliberate (see Acts 7:39) rejection³
6. "taught" (v.20) - to be chastened, disciplined, sternly punished with a view toward being trained; the same word is used in Heb 12:6 and translated "He (God) disciplines"; the subjective form of the word suggests purpose while the aorist tense emphasizes an ending point...i.e., the discipline is not punitive but reformative (it has a purpose), and it is not given with a view toward its unnecessary continuance.

C. Outline.



1. This section can be divided into 3 parts:
 - a. The contrast between "our" position of truth

1st Timothy: Part One

- by faith and "their" position of error (vv.3-11).
- b. A brief auto-biography (vv.12-17).
 - c. Specific charge to Timothy (vv.18-20).
2. A more concise version of the outline:
- a. Us vs. Them (vv.3-11).
 - b. Me - Paul (vv.12-17).
 - c. You - Timothy (vv.18-20).
3. The following is an expanded outline using the more concise titles:
- a. Us vs. Them (vv.3-11).
 - 1) Difference in the teaching of the two groups (vv.3-5).
 - a) Instruction to Timothy to remain at Ephesus (v.3a).
 - b) Purpose for Timothy to remain (vv.3b-4).
 - (1) to protect against false doctrine teachings (v.3b).
 - (2) to protect against mythology and genealogy teachings (v.4).
 - (a) effect of those teachings: speculation.
 - (b) contrasted with furthering the administration of God: faith.
 - c) Contrast of "our" goal and their goal (v.5).
 - 2) Difference in the way the two groups use the law (v.6-11).

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a) Explanation of the effects of the previous contrast (vv.6,7).

(1) Method of the effect: straying from the true goal (v.6a).

(2) The effect: fruitless discussions (v.6b).

(3) Motive of the effect: wanting to be a teacher of the law (v.7a).

(4) Irony of the motive: they do not understand the law (v.7b).

b) Contrast of "our" use of the law to their use (vv.8-11).

(1) Introduction: law must be used lawfully (v.8).

(2) General requirement: "realizing..." (v.9a).

(3) Specification of the requirement (vv.9b-10a).

(4) Generalization of the specification (v.10b).

(5) Definition of the generalization (v.11).

b. Me - Paul (vv.12-17).

1) Paul the sent one...Christ the sender (vv.12-14).

a) Jesus the sender (v.12).

(1) Definition of what Jesus has done: strengthened Paul.

(2) Reason for doing it.

(3) Extended definition of what Jesus has done: put Paul into service.

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- b) Paul the sent one (v.13).
 - (1) Description of Paul.
 - (2) God's response to Paul: mercy.
 - (3) Reason for God's mercy.
- c) Result of the sent one in the sender (v.14).
 - (1) Result: more than abundant.
 - (2) Method of the result: the sent one finding resources in the sender.
- 2) Paul the saved one...Christ the savior (vv.15-17).
 - a) Jesus the savior (v.15a).
 - b) Paul the saved one (v.15b).
 - c) Result of the savior in the saved one (vv.16,17).
 - (1) The savior demonstrates his patience in the saved one.
 - (2) The savior uses this for a demonstration for others.
 - (3) The savior receives glory and honor from the saved one.
- c. You - Timothy (vv.18-20).
 - 1) Timothy must keep the faith (vv.18-19a).
 - a) Command given (v.18a).
 - b) Means to keep it (v18b).
 - c) Action required (v.19a).
 - 2) Others have shipwrecked their faith (vv.19b-20).

1st Timothy: Part One

- a) Method: rejecting a good conscience (v.19b).
- b) Result: shipwrecked faith (v.19c).
- c) Biographical specification (v.20).
 - (1) List of names.
 - (2) Paul's response to them.
 - (3) Purpose of that response.

D. **Specific Observations** (the instructor may want to lead the class in making their own observations from another passage as a way to practice what is modeled here).



1. In vv.3-11 there is a biographical CONTINUITY that seems to establish two groups: Group #1 - "you" and "my" (v.3), "our" (v.5), "we" (v.8), "I" (v.11); Group #2 - "certain men" (v.3), "some men" (v.6), "they" (repeated three times in v.7).
2. In vv.12-17 there is a biographical CONTINUITY that moves the focus to Paul: "I" (v.12), "me" (repeated three times in v.12), "I" (repeated three times in v.13), "I" (v.15), "I" (v.16), "me" (v.16).
3. In v.18 the pronoun you is REPEATED three times.
4. The phrase "in order that" introduces the PURPOSE for Timothy to remain at Ephesus (v.3).
5. The word "which" is REPEATED in v.4. In the first case the word introduces what is ASSOCIATED with "myths and genealogies" (i.e., speculation). In the second case the word introduces what is associated with "the administration of God" (i.e., faith). The word "rather" establishes a CONTRAST between "speculation" and God's administration or

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stewardship by faith.

6. In v.5, the word "but" establishes a CONTRAST between the goal of "our teaching" and the teaching of the others.

7. In v.6, the word "for" introduces an EXPLANATION of the effect of the previous contrast (the effect of the contrasting goals is that the other group has fruitless discussions). The word "straying" introduces the METHOD of how the effect is established, while the construction "wanting...even though" (v.7) introduces the superficial MOTIVE that promotes the effect.

8. The word "but" establishes a CONTRAST between what "we know" about the law and what the others know about the law (v.8).

9. The word "realizing" introduces the REQUIREMENT or METHOD of using the law lawfully (v.9).

10. The word "but" establishes a CONTRAST between "a righteous man" and "those who are lawless and rebellious" (v.9).

11. The phrase "whatever else" (v.10) introduces a generalization of the previous list (which in itself was a specification of the initial general statement in v.9a). The phrase "according to" in v.11 establishes a DEFINITION or MEASUREMENT of "whatever"...

GENERAL CONTRAST

||
\\

"a righteous man"
vs.
"lawless/rebellious"-->

SPECIFIC CONTRAST

||
\\

"a righteous man"
vs.
"ungodly, sinners,
unholy, profane,
murderers, etc... ==> **GENERAL CONTRAST**

||
\\

1st Timothy: Part One

"a righteous man"

vs.

MEASURED by the "gospel" <===== "whatever else..."

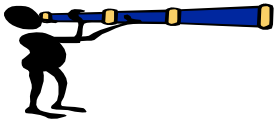
12. In vv.12-17, "Christ" is REPEATED four times. It is also observed that it is Christ who is active and Paul who is passive (Christ the source, Paul the receiver):

Christ strengthens/considers/puts (v.12)...Paul is shown mercy
Christ saves (v.15)...Paul, thus, finds mercy (v.16)
Christ demonstrates (v.16) in Paul

13. The word "because" introduces the REASON why Christ strengthens Paul (v.12).
14. The phrase "even though" is REPEATED in v.7 and v.13.
15. In v.13, the word "because" introduces the REASON why Paul was shown mercy.
16. The word "with" establishes the METHOD of the abundance (v.14).
17. In v.16, the phrase "in order that" introduces the PURPOSE or RESULT of the "foremost" finding mercy.
18. The word "by" establishes the MEANS to "fight the good fight" (v.18).
19. The word "keeping" establishes the METHOD for fighting the good fight (v.19). Thus, the opposite of "keeping" (i.e., "rejecting") is the method for the opposite of "fighting the fight" (i.e., "shipwreck").
20. In v.20, the phrase "so that" introduces the PURPOSE of delivering others over to Satan.

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- E. **Interpretation and Application** (after the application questions the teacher should promote discussion and ask the class to develop more specific ways to communicate the application of the points to everyday life).



1. Verse 3.

- a. Paul the apostle, in the midst of an apostolic situation, instructs one of his co-workers to remain involved in an apostolic work.

What type of involvement is Timothy to have within the Ephesian church?

- b. Timothy's ministry was to be an extension of the apostolic ministry of Paul. This ministry, as is always the case with Paul, does not usurp the authority of the local church. Paul's goal is to establish the local church. Thus, he installs elders (interchangeable are the terms "pastor" and "bishop"), who are local leaders, to lead the local church. Timothy does not remain on at Ephesus to replace or negate the plurality of elders (pastors) that have already been established within the local church (Acts 20:17). That is, he does not remain as a pastor, but as an apostle.

- c. The phrase "in order to" introduces the purposes (note: "nor" in v.4 establishes a second purpose) of his stay:

1) He is to instruct certain ones not to

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teach strange doctrines and ...

- 2) He is to instruct them to avoid speculative discussions.
 - d. Two things should be observed here about apostolic authority:
 - 1) It does exist in a firm and direct way (see word study concerning "instruct").
 - 2) It does focus on the protection of the faith that was planted, not on the actual leading of the local congregation (which is done by local leaders/elders/pastors/bishops, and thus, the church remains the "local church").
 - e. Are you sensitive to the parameters of your authority? Do you believe in the local church to the degree that you would promote a missiology that insists upon local leadership?
3. Verse 4.
- a. Here, Paul begins to elaborate on the second purpose for Timothy to stay...He is to instruct them to avoid myths and genealogies.
Why are these things to be avoided?
 - b. Myths and genealogies are contrasted with the advancement of the "administration of God". That which is to be avoided is associated with "mere" (showing how inferior speculation is to faith) speculation, and that which is desired is associated with faith. The result or effect of myths and genealogies is the exact opposite of the method for advancing the cause of God. Thus, they are useless and should be avoided. To engage in such discussion is to be a poor steward (see word study concerning "administration") of time and thought.
 - c. Do you participate in useless discussions that result in mere speculation? Do you

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avoid all types of conversations that do not advance God's cause? Have you considered what you speak about in terms of stewardship? What about gossip? What about judging others? What about intellectualizing the scriptures? Who wrote the book of Hebrews? Will you spend more time studying that question than actually studying the book of Hebrews?

3. Verse 5.

- a. Paul does not simply contrast the effects and methods regarding the two groups, but also the goal and source of their teachings. The term "but" establishes this contrast as does "straying from these things" in v.6 (in other words, one group has one set of goals and sources while the other group strays from that set of goals and sources).

How do the goals and sources of the two groups contrast with each other?

- b. Paul says the goal of "our instruction" is love. The implication is that the goal of the instruction of others is not love, but selfishness and pride. Indeed, a focus on speculative issues does not focus on God, but on self. Its goal can so easily be to lift up self by winning an argument or by exhibiting a superior intellect. Furthermore, the source ("from") of "our instruction" is: 1) a pure heart; 2) a good conscience; 3) a sincere faith. The implication is that the source of the teachings of others is: 1) an impure heart; 2) a bad conscience; 3) an insincere faith.

- c. When engaging in speculative discussion, what is your goal? What is the goal of gossip and judging others? What is the source of that type of conversation? What may be the goal

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of proving who wrote the book of Hebrews?
What may be the source of that type of study?

4. Verse 6.

- a. Paul returns to the effects of the teachings of others. Again, we see that the effects are "fruitless discussions" (futility, uselessness).

Why is it necessarily true that their discussions are futile/useless?

- b. Paul has made it clear that these types of teachings are not based on faith. We know that "whatever is not of faith is sin" (Rom 14:23). The root of all sin is rebellion. Rebellion always leads to futility (see Rom 1:21; Eph 4:17; Acts 4:25; Rom 8:20). Of course the tragic result of futility is a lack of fulfillment and frustration.

- c. Do you realize that gossip and judging others can be the cause of your sense of a lack of fulfillment and frustration?

5. Verse 7.

- a. The term "wanting" introduces the motive for turning aside to fruitless discussions.

Why do these teachers engage in these types of conversations?

- b. They want to be teachers of the law. The problem is that their focus is not on the law itself, but on them being teachers of it. They do not have a sincere love for the law, but a love for themselves. Their focus is not on conveying truth, but on establishing a position of status for themselves. It is the old problem of putting structure or form ahead of content. The irony is that they know nothing about the true law of God.

- c. Do you let your gift make room for you or do you try to create room for your gift? In

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ministry, do you focus on the content and let the form follow naturally or do you try to establish the form and then force the content in? What do you desire more...to be a minister (to have the status) or to do the ministry (to have the reality).

6. Verses 8-11.

- a. The term "but" establishes yet another contrast between "us" and "them". This time the contrast concerns the use of the law.

What is the requirement for using the law lawfully?

- b. Interestingly, the requirement is to have a certain understanding. It is to realize (v.9) that the law is not for righteous men but for the unrighteous. In other words, it is to realize that the law does not save, but only corrects, keeps order, or reveals sin (as Paul repeatedly says in Romans and Galatians with such descriptive similes as the "law is like a schoolmaster or tutor"...see Gal 3:24-26). Without this understanding, the tendency will be to say that the law establishes grace instead of saying that grace (the gospel, see v.11) establishes the law. This will lead to legalism because we will be set under the law. Yet, we know that we are not under the law, but over it, thus establishing the law (see Rom 3:31). Thus, we are not on the one hand legalists (under the law), nor on the other hand antinomianists (without law). Rather, the righteous man is a doer of the law, and the unrighteous man a slave of it.

- c. Do you use the law to establish your righteousness, thus promoting legalism? Or do you understand that the law only points to and "fences in" your unrighteousness? Is the law freedom for you through righteousness or slavery through unrighteousness?

7. Verses 12-17.

- a. Paul makes a transition here as he begins to point back to himself via pointing to Jesus.

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He thanks Christ for what He has done. The following diagram can be used to study these verses:

What Jesus Has Done

strengthened
put into service

(And yet) showed mercy

||
V

(And yet showed) mercy

Why Jesus Has Done It

BECAUSE he considered (Paul) faithful

BECAUSE Paul acted ignorantly in unbelief

IN ORDER THAT Jesus might demonstrate His perfect
patience

What has Jesus done for Paul?

- b. As we note the continuity of the structure between v.12 and v.13 ([something was done] BECAUSE of [something else]), we can more fully answer this question. Most immediately we see that Jesus **strengthened** Paul; that is, according to v.13, he **showed mercy** to Paul.

Are these two divine actions necessarily linked?

- c. Yes, indeed, power (strength) is perfected (through "perfect patience" - v.16) in Paul's weakness. This principle is described in II Cor 12:9 as being an act of grace that is sufficient (note the similarity to v.14).

Is the divine action of "putting one into service" necessarily linked to "strengthening" and "showing mercy"?

- d. Yes, indeed, Jesus says elsewhere (see Jn 15:5) that there is NOTHING we can do (service) without Him (His mercy and strength). Furthermore, Paul answers this question with a resounding "YES" in v.14 when he says that his abilities (more than abundant) come from Christ's grace and are associated with that (faith and love) which is found in Christ Jesus (not in Paul). Thus, it is not about Paul the sent one, just as it is not simply about Jesus the sender.

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It is about Jesus the sender in and through Paul the sent one.

- e. When do you feel strong? Is it when you feel like YOU can accomplish something? Or is it when you know you cannot accomplish something? Do you walk in this paradox? Do you allow yourself to feel real strength by knowing that you have to trust in Jesus? Or are you satisfied with false strength that comes from trusting in yourself?

Why has Jesus strengthened Paul and put him into service?

- f. It is because he considered Paul faithful. After God reveals Himself to Paul, the apostle responds correctly to God (Acts 9:18-22). He acts on the revelation he is given and so God entrusts more to him (Mk 4:23-25). Initially, however, it is purely because of God's grace and mercy which is shown to Paul BECAUSE of one reason...Paul acted ignorantly in unbelief, and IN ORDER THAT certain purposes or results be accomplished...Jesus might reveal (demonstrate) Himself to others, and be glorified.
- g. The reason Paul receives mercy ("even though he...v.13) is because of "ignorance", while the previous group of false teachers does not receive mercy ("even though they...v.7) as they "do not understand". Both are worthy of judgment (see word study on "ignorance").
- h. However, the difference is not found in the guilt of the individual, but in God's response to that individual. The false teachers "do not understand" because of their pride. They are pointing to themselves and not to God. They do not need God. Paul "acted ignorantly in unbelief" as he ignorantly points away from God thinking the whole time that he is defending Him. He does need God (Acts 22:3). God responds to needs.
- i. The purpose or result for Paul receiving mercy is other oriented. Although it is

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clear that Paul receives mercy so that he himself can be saved (Christ came to save sinners, of which he is certainly one), the focus of the purpose of Paul's salvation is on Jesus and others. It is so Jesus will be revealed. It is so Jesus' perfection will become known. It is so Jesus will be glorified (note the logical conclusion of such events as it is presented in v.17). It is also so others will come to know Jesus. Yes, the purpose of God's mercy upon Paul is so that Paul could know God, but equally important (and actually more focused on here) is that through Paul, Jesus would become known by others.

- j. Are you a conscientious responder to God? Are you sure to be faithful with what God has given you? Do you "lock out" God because of your pride? Do you miss God's mercy because you do not perceive your desperate need for God? Do you realize and act on the principle that God reveals Himself to you so that He can be glorified by revealing Himself to others through you?

8. Verses 18-19.

- a. Now Paul turns his attention back to Timothy. The term "entrust" clearly establishes this progression (taken from one and given to another...consider II Tim 2:2). The command has been to protect the faith. Here it is communicated as "keeping the faith and a good conscience" which is used to describe how one would "fight the good fight".

What resources does Timothy have to "fight the good fight"?

- b. The fight is to be fought "by them". "Them" refers back to the prophecies previously made concerning him (consider I Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 2:6). In other words, the resource of the Christian soldier is the word of God. It is the direction and calling of God as it is received from Him.

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- c. "Keeping" is to "rejected" what "fighting the good fight" is to "shipwrecked". Timothy is to win via remaining steadfast (consider Mt 24:13). Some others are losing because they are actively choosing not to remain steadfast (see word study on "rejected").

What exactly has been rejected?

- d. Faith and a "good conscience" has been rejected. These two things were matched together in v.5 also. It is seen in that context that the alternative to a "good conscience" was "mere speculation" (v.4) and "fruitless discussion" (v.6). These discussions were not done by faith, but by pride of the intellect. Paul is not talking about backsliding here, but deliberate heresy. Whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom 14:23). The conscience is seared when resources (means) other than the word of God are used with respect to "faith" (consider I Tim 4:1,2).

- e. Have you received your marching orders? If not, by what means do you plan to fight the GOOD fight? By what means do you plan to keep a GOOD conscience? How will you keep the faith if not by the word of God? Do you avoid the temptation produced by pride to engage in speculation? Or are you humble enough to receive the simplicity of the word of God?

9. Verse 20.

- a. Paul now lists "some" of those who reject the faith. He says that he delivers them over to Satan.

What does it mean to be delivered over to

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Satan?

- b. In 1Cor 5:5 we see the same action. Here it is more clear. It is stated in the context of the act of "excommunication" (see 1Cor 5:9-11). To be out of fellowship with the body of Christ is to be a sitting duck for the enemy of our souls.

Why would Paul want to do such a thing?

- c. It should be noted that even in 1Cor 5:5 it is done for the benefit of the recipient. Here, it is "so that they may be taught not to blaspheme". It is for discipline (see word study on "taught") and, thus, has as its goal the restoration of the guilty ones. Thus, God's mercy is available for these others as it is available for Paul. They are all guilty sinners. The difference lies in the form the mercy takes. For Paul it is revelation. For these it takes an extra step. Before they can receive the mercy that is found in God revealing Himself, they must receive the mercy that is found in God bringing them to the end of themselves (the destruction of their flesh, 1Cor 5:5). These steps are necessary due to one principle: We must confess our need for God to recognize it (Jn 9:41; Mk 2:17).
- d. Do you impose upon yourself an unconditional surrender to the enemy by avoiding fellowship with other Christians? Do you impose upon yourself the discipline of God because you refuse to repent and refuse to confess your desperate need for Him?

IV. CONCLUSION.

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- A. The teacher may ask the students to review the word study and observation sub-sections from the previous section in order to consider more points of interpretation and application.



- B. As time permits, the course could end with the teacher leading the students in a "lab session" in which they would develop materials (using a similar format as is seen in this course) from their own inductive study of 1 Tim 3:16-4:16 (note: 1 Tim 6:20-21 could also be studied at this time or used as a mini-lab earlier on).

ENDNOTES

¹Fritz Rienecker, A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p.614.

²Ibid., p.614.

³Ibid., p.618.

1st Timothy: Part Two

1st Timothy: Part Two -- Objectives



I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. **The Pastoral Epistles.**
- B. **Historical and Contextual Background of 1 Timothy.**
- C. **Repeated Phrases/Ideas/Themes.**
- D. **General Outline.**
- E. **Format of this Course.**

Objective: to prepare for an intense study of the second and third chapters of 1 Timothy by surveying various aspects of the book as a whole, and to establish the format of the course.

II. SECTION #3: Instruction/Guidelines for "how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God" (2:1-3:15).

- A. **Introduction.**
- B. **Word Studies.**
- C. **Outline.**
- D. **Specific Observations.**
- E. **Interpretation and Application.**

Objective: to do an inductive study of 1 Tim 2:1-3:15 in order to understand its contents and to practice doing inductive bible study.

III. CONCLUSION.

Objective: to practice doing inductive bible study as the instructor leads the class in a "lab session."

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1ST TIMOTHY: PART TWO: SYLLABUS

Class Schedule -- 20 hour Course

CLASS #1: I. Introduction; II. Section #3 -
A. Introduction, B. Word Studies, C. Outline.

CLASS #2: II. Section #3 - D. Specific Observations.

CLASS #3: II. Section #3 - E. Interpretation and
Application (chapter two).

CLASS #4: II. Section #3 - E. Interpretation and
Application (chapter three).

CLASS #5: III. Conclusion.

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Assignments

This course requires a written project. A full 100% of your grade will come from the evaluation of the paper submitted.

Assignment #1

The student will do an inductive study of chapter two and three of Titus. The inductive study should be presented in the same format as is consistent with this course; that is, it should include an introduction, word studies (six words), an outline (three levels deep), specific observations (15), and interpretations and applications (10). The study should be approximately 10-12 pages in length.

In general, the student should follow the exact pattern and format as seen in the course materials in order to complete all parts of this assignment (refer to materials for further understanding). Please **BE CAREFUL** to pattern each section in accordance with the actual course materials.

The assignment will be graded according to the following point system: Introduction = 5 points; Word Studies = 15 points; Outline = 15 points; Observations = 30 points; Interpretations/Applications = 35 points.

1st Timothy: Part Two

1ST TIMOTHY: PART TWO - Course Outline (1st Timothy 2:1-3:15)

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. **The Pastoral Epistles.**

1. The Bible books I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus are often referred to as the "Pastoral Epistles".
2. Paul understood the principle of multiplication. He understood that the Kingdom would grow like a tree (consider Mk 4:30-32). Leaders would have to be reproduced even as the branches of a tree produce more branches.




3. Thus, Paul taught and practiced the principle of II Tim 2:2. He multiplied himself in two younger men, Timothy and Titus. His detailed instructions to them in the Pastoral epistles are designed to further train them in leadership, and to direct them with respect to training others in leadership.
4. Although the title "Pastoral Epistles" is commonly used for these Bible books, Timothy and Titus were not Pastors of individual congregations. They were apostolic representatives sent by Paul to Ephesus and Crete to help organize the churches under the leadership of "local church" leaders.

B. **Historical and Contextual Background of I Timothy.**

1. Author - Paul (see 1:1). Timothy had accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 14:6,7; 16:1-3). Paul had a direct hand in discipling Timothy (Acts 14:6,7; I Cor 4:17; II Tim 2:1).

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2. Date - thought to be written around 61 or 63 A.D. between Paul's two imprisonments. His second imprisonment resulted in his martyrdom that is known to have occurred sometime between 65-68. Paul wrote I Timothy and Titus after his release from his first Roman imprisonment (2 year house arrest) about 62 A.D. and during his 4 years of travel to visit Crete, Ephesus, Miletus, Troas, etc... (commonly referred to as his fourth missionary journey), and before his second and final Roman imprisonment around 66 A.D. (when he wrote II Timothy; see II Timothy 1:16,17).
3. Destination - Ephesus (see 1:3). This area was originally reached via the ministry of Apollos (Acts 18:24), however, the people there were not fully taught (Acts 19:4-6). Paul was intimate with the Ephesians since he spent more than two years there during his third missionary journey (Acts 19:8-10). He left after riots occurred and went to Macedonia (Acts 19:23-20:1), and soon after met with the Ephesian elders to warn them of impending infiltration of false doctrine (Acts 20:17,29-30).
4. Occasion - the existence of false teachers as well as potential divisions developing within the church seem to motivate the writing of this letter.
5. Purpose - to encourage Timothy to keep and defend the faith against false doctrine, and to instruct him concerning the organization of the local church. The letter is directed both to Timothy as an individual and to the church at large.
6. Themes - the following are some of the major themes of the book:

 - a. The importance of sound doctrine - Several times (1:3-11; 4:1-10; 6:3-5) Paul refers to the dangers of false doctrines. He is very careful to emphasize how critical it is to protect the purity of the faith.

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- b. Instructions for life in the church: public worship and relationships - Paul offers instructions for how one "ought to conduct himself in the household of God" (2:1-15; 3:15). He also gives instructions concerning how the people of the church should live together and treat each other (5:1-20; 6:1-2,17-19).
- c. Leadership qualifications and disciplines - A whole section (3:1-13) is devoted to qualifications for church leaders. Other sections focus on various disciplines (spiritual - 4:11,12; ministerial - 4:13-16; relational - 6:11-16,20-21; financial - 6:6-10).

C. Repeated Phrases/Ideas/Themes.



1. "It is a trustworthy statement" (1:15; 3:1; 4:9; also II Tim 2:11 and Tit 3:8).
2. God the Savior (1:1; 2:3).
3. The faith/truth/sound teaching (keeping it, following it, etc) (1:2,3,4,5,10,14,19; 2:4,7,15; 3:9,13,15; 4:1,3,6,11,12; 5:8; 6:3,10,11,12,21).
4. Salvation/ministry for all (1:15,16; 2:1,4,6; 4:10,16; 6:13).
5. Prescribe/teach these things/I charge you; urge you/Guard (1:3,18; 2:1; 4:6,13,15,16; 5:7,21; 6:2,13,20).
6. Follow/given over to Satan; believers/unbelievers; good/bad; good deeds/bad deeds; wander from the faith (1:6,9,19,20; 2:14; 3:6,7; 4:1; 5:8,14,15,24,25).
7. Honor/respect/dignity (1:17; 2:2,9; 3:2,4,7,8,11; 5:3,17; 6:1,16).

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8. Godliness/purity (1:5,15; 2:2,10,16; 4:5,7,8; 5:2,4; 6:3,5,6,11).
9. controversial issues/arguments/futile discussions (1:4,6; 2:8; 3:3; 4:7; 5:13; 6:4,20).
10. fight the fight (1:18; 6:12).
11. that which counts in the end (4:8; 6:19).
12. Jesus/God as source (1:1,2,12,14,15,16; 4:4; 6:17).
13. sin (1:9; 2:14; 5:12,20,22,24).
14. laying on of hands (1:18; 4:14; 5:22).
15. reputation/glory of God/Church (1:17; 6:1,14,16).
16. money issues (3:3,8; 6:5-10,17,18).
17. commandment of God; acceptable in the sight of God (1:1,18; 2:3; 5:4; 6:14).
18. good works (2:10; 5:10; 6:18).
19. household (3:4,5,12,15; 5:8,14).


D. **General Outline.**



1. Greeting (1:1,2)
2. Charge to Timothy to protect the faith (1:3-20)
3. Instruction/guidelines for "how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God" (2:1-3:15)
4. Extended charge to Timothy to protect the faith (3:16-4:16)
5. Extended instructions/guidelines for "how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God" with a specific focus on leadership (5:1-6:19)
6. Conclusion (6:20,21)

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E. **Format of this Course.**

1. In this course we will study I Timothy 2:1-3:15. According to the general outline (see "General Outline"), we will treat this as one section (Section #3).
2. This section will include five areas of study:
 - a. A short introduction. 
 - b. Word studies.
 - c. Outline.
 - d. Specific observations.
 - e. Interpretation and application.
3. Note: we will use the NASB version in our study.

II. SECTION #3: 2:1-3:15 - INSTRUCTION/GUIDELINES FOR "HOW ONE OUGHT TO CONDUCT HIMSELF IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD".



- A. **Introduction** - The challenge to Timothy to protect the faith is followed by various instructions concerning conduct within the church. Paul offers general guidelines for men and women, and then proposes specific criteria for selecting elders and deacons.
- B. **Word Studies** (after reviewing the word studies below, the instructor may want to lead the class in other selected word studies if the proper reference books are available).



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1. "first of all" (2:1) - first in the sense of primacy of importance.
2. "entreaties, prayers, petitions, thanksgivings" (2:1) - here we see four of the seven different words for prayer used in the New Testament..."entreaties" includes the idea of deep desire or need; "prayers" is the most generic of the words used and could include the more formal idea of public prayers; "petitions" involves more of the personal aspect of prayer in which one boldly comes into God's presence and engages in informal conversation; "thanksgivings" incorporates the idea of expressions of gratefulness.
3. "tranquil and quiet life" (2:2) - the idea of remaining withdrawn from outward disturbances.
4. "ransom" (2:6) - the price paid for the release of a slave.
5. "modestly and discreetly" (2:9) - both words indicate a sober and reserved attitude with regard to sexual interest, appetite, and arousal; a picture of a woman who is in control of her passions and desires, and who is repulsed by a shameful or dishonorable appearance.
6. "braided hair" (2:9) - hair that is woven or plaited; elaborately plaited hair could be associated with the appearance of a prostitute of that day.
7. "exercise authority" (2:12) - to act on one's own authority; to dominate as an autocrat.
8. "the bearing of children" (2:15) - the use of the definite article may specifically refer to the birth of the Savior.
9. "above reproach" (3:2) - deserving of a good report; this first criteria serves as a heading for the whole list: personal life is above reproach (vv.2,3), family life is above reproach (vv.4,5), church life is above reproach (v.6),

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community life is above reproach (v.7).

10. "the husband of one wife" (3:2) - literally "a one woman man"; polygamy was still practiced by both Romans and Jews in New Testament times, thus, this odd construction seems to most likely refer to a prohibition of polygamy; if Paul meant that an overseer could only be married one time (not divorced or widowed), he would have used the term "gameo" (marry) in conjunction with the idea of "once"; as it is, however, it is "one woman" that is emphasized not "one marriage"; the construction may also imply the attitude of faithfulness.
11. "temperate" (3:2) - sober, clearheaded.
12. "prudent" (3:2) - self-controlled; thoughtful.
13. "respectable" (3:2) - orderly...both in demeanor and the fulfillment of responsibilities; the inner discipline necessary to keep one's own life ordered and organized.
14. "hospitable" (3:2) - his position includes the responsibility to open his home to travelling ministers and the needy of the local congregation¹
15. "pugnacious" (3:3) - violent.
16. "gentle" (3:3) - kind, patient, longsuffering (able to patiently endure accusation and injustice).
17. "uncontentious" (3:3) - not a fighter.
18. "dignity" (3:4) - indicates that the "control" (submission) of the children is motivated by a natural respect for the father (which he gains through service...consider how the principle of this dynamic is established in v.13 as well as other passages such as Lk 22:26), as opposed to being motivated by sternness (fear).
19. "incurred by the devil" (3:6) - either the

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condemnation that the devil will receive, the condemnation that the devil will use against another, or the condemnation that the devil will lead one into (this option seems more consistent with "the snare of the devil" in v.7).

20. "double-tongued" (3:8) - gossipers; more likely, lacking integrity in what one says...saying one thing to one person and another thing to someone else.
21. "high standing" (3:13) - literally step, base, or foundation; historically used as degree, grade, or rank.

C. **Outline.**



1. This section can be divided into 4 parts:
 - a. Specific instructions for men concerning their conduct within the household of God (2:1-8).
 - b. Specific instructions for women concerning their conduct within the household of God (2:9-15).
 - c. Qualifications of church officers (3:1-13).
 - d. Conclusion: declaration of the purpose for offering instructions (3:14,15).
2. The following is a more expanded outline:
 - a. Specific instructions for men concerning their conduct within the household of God (2:1-8).
 - 1) Introduction: general instruction (vv.1,2).
 - a) List of actions: types of prayers (v.1a).

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- b) Recipients of actions (vv.1b,2a).
- c) Goal of the actions (v.2b).
- 2) Result of following the instruction (vv.3-7).
 - a) Statement of the result: pleasing to God (vv.3,4).
 - b) Justification of the result: one God for all men (vv.5,6).
 - c) Ramification of the justification: Paul sent to the Gentiles (v.7).
- 3) Conclusion: summary of the instruction (v.8).
- b. Specific instructions for women concerning their conduct within the household of God (2:9-15).
 - 1) Instructions on how to "adorn themselves" (vv.9,10).
 - a) General methods contrasted (v.9).
 - b) Specific alternative method (v.10).
 - 2) Instructions concerning actions and attitudes (vv.11-15).
 - a) Action and attitude to have (v.11).
 - b) Action and attitude not to have (v.12a).
 - c) Restatement of action to have (v.12b).
 - d) Justification of the prior instructions (v.13).
 - e) Continuation of the justification (v.14,15).
 - (1) Contrast between Adam and the woman (v.14a).

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- (2) Result for the woman (v.14b).
- (3) Contrast of the result (v.15a).
 - (a) Method (v.15b).
 - (b) Condition (v.15c).
- c. Qualifications of church officers (3:1-13).
 - 1) Qualifications of overseers (vv.1-7).
 - a) Introduction: general qualification (vv.1,2a).
 - (1) General condition: the desire to do a fine work (v.1).
 - (2) General qualification: the reality of a fine character ...above reproach (v.2a).
 - b) List of specific qualifications (vv.2b-7).
 - (1) Personal life is above reproach (vv.2b,3).
 - (2) Family life is above reproach (vv.4,5).
 - (3) Church life is above reproach (v.6).
 - (4) Community life is above reproach (v.7).
 - 2) Qualifications of deacons (vv.8-13).
 - a) Qualifications for men (vv.8-10).
 - (1) List of qualifications (vv.8,9).
 - (2) Process for selection (v.10).
 - b) Qualifications for women (v.11).

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- c) Continuation of qualifications for men (v.12,13).
 - (1) Qualifications for overseers given also to deacons (v.12).
 - (2) Explanation of why the same qualification is given (v.13).
 - d. Declaration of purpose for offering instructions (3:14,15).
 - 1) Primary purpose/motive to write (v.14).
 - 2) Alternative purpose/motive to write (v.15).
 - a) Initial definition/description of the household of God (v.15b).
 - b) Additional definition/description of the household of God (v.15c).
- D. **Specific Observations** (the instructor may want to lead the class in making their own observations from another passage as a way to practice what is modeled here).



1. There is CONTINUITY between "I urge...prayers" (v.1) and "I want...pray" (v.8).
2. The term "all" is REPEATED six times (vv.1,2,4,6). This term is also CONSISTENT with "Gentiles" in v.7 (all others besides the Jews) and "every place" in v.8.
3. There is CONTRAST between the term "all" (vv.1,2,4,6) and the term "one" (v.5).
4. The phrase "in order that" introduces the PURPOSE or GOAL of the prayers (v.2).
5. There is CONTINUITY between the phrase "holy hands" (v.8) and "all godliness" (v.2).

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6. There is CONTRAST between "wrath and dissension" and "tranquil and quiet" (v.2).
7. The term "who" introduces a DESCRIPTION of God (v.3) and then introduces a DESCRIPTION of Jesus (v.6).
8. There is CONTINUITY between the terms "savior" (v.3), "saved" (v.4), and "ransom" (v.6).
9. The term "truth" is REPEATED in v.4 and v.7.
10. The term "for" introduces the JUSTIFICATION of why it is "good and acceptable" to pray for all men (v.5).
11. The phrase "and for this" introduces the RAMIFICATION of the previous justification (v.7).
12. There is CONTRAST between "truth" and "lying" (v.7).
13. The term "Therefore" introduces Paul's CONCLUSION of his previous discussion (v.8).
14. The term "Likewise" establishes a COMPARISON between v.8 and v.9.
15. There is a CONTINUITY between the terms "women" (vv.9,10,15), "woman" (vv.11,12,14), and "Eve" (v.13).
16. The term "godliness" is REPEATED (v.2,10).
17. The term "with" introduces two METHODS or WAYS in which women could "adorn themselves". Furthermore, the term "not" establishes CONTRAST between these two METHODS (v.9).
18. The phrase "but rather by" introduces the ALTERNATIVE METHOD of "adorning themselves" (v.10).
19. The phrase "as befits" establishes a COMPARISON or CONSISTENCY between a woman who uses the method of good works to adorn herself and a woman who makes

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a claim to godliness (v.10).

20. The term "with" establishes the METHOD in which a woman is to "receive instruction" (v.11).
21. The term "but" establishes a CONTRAST between "let a woman" and "not allow a woman" (v.12); that is, "receive instruction" is in CONTRAST to "teach or exercise authority over a man".
22. The term "but" establishes a CONTRAST between "teach" and "remain quiet" (v.12).
23. There is CONTINUITY between "quietly receive" (v.11) and "remain quiet" (v.12).
24. There is CONTRAST between the term "submissiveness" (v.11) and "over a man" (v.12).
25. The term "for" introduces a JUSTIFICATION for not "allowing a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man" (v.13).
26. The term "and" points to a CONTINUATION of the JUSTIFICATION (v.14).
27. The term "but" establishes a CONTRAST between "Adam (not) deceived" and "woman quite deceived" (v.14).
28. The participle "being" introduces the MEANS by which the woman "fell into transgression" (v.14).
29. The term "but" establishes a CONTRAST between "fell" and "preserved" (v.15).
30. The term "through" introduces the METHOD or MEANS by which a woman will be "preserved" (v.15).
31. The term "if" establishes the CONDITION for being "preserved" (v.15).
32. There seems to be a general sense of CONTINUITY between "godliness and dignity" (v.2), "godliness/discreetly (v.10/v.9), and "sanctity with self restraint" (v.15).
33. The "if...then" construction establishes being

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"above reproach" as the REQUIREMENT for "aspire to the office of overseer" (vv.1,2).

34. There is CONTINUITY between the idea of a "fine work" (v.1) and "above reproach" (v.2).
35. There is CONTINUITY between "fine work" (v.1) and "good reputation" (v.7).
36. The term "reproach" is REPEATED three times (vv.2,7,10).
37. There is CONTINUITY between the idea of "not addicted" and "free from" (v.3).
38. The term "but" establishes CONTRAST between "pugnacious" and "gentle" (v.3).
39. The participle "keeping" introduces the MEANS by which someone is to "manage his own household well" (v.4).
40. There is STRUCTURAL CONTINUITY between "manage...household...his own" and "take care of...church...God's" (v.5).
41. The term "not" is REPEATED often (vv.3,5,6,7,8,11).
42. The term "lest" introduces the POSSIBLE RESULT of selecting a "new convert" (v.6).
43. Reference to "the devil" is REPEATED (vv.6,7).
44. There is CONTINUITY between "must be above reproach" (v.2) and "must have a good reputation...fall into reproach" (v.7).
45. There is CONTINUITY between "fell into transgression" (v.2:14), "fall into the condemnation" (v.6), and "fall into reproach" (v.7).
46. The phrase "so that" introduces the PURPOSE of having "a good reputation with those outside the church" (v.7).
47. The term "likewise" establishes a CONTINUATION or SIMILARITY between instructions concerning elders

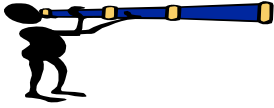
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and instructions concerning deacons (v.8).

48. The term "with" introduces the METHOD of "holding to the mystery of the faith" (v.9).
49. The "then...if..." construction establishes "beyond reproach" as the CONDITION for "let them serve as deacons" (v.10).
50. There is CONTINUITY between the phrases "Deacons likewise men of dignity" (v.8) and "Women likewise dignified" (v.11).
51. There is CONTINUITY between the phrases "Deacons be men" (v.8) and "deacons be husbands" (v.12). Thus, there is a biographical interruption in v.11 (concerning women).
52. There is CONTINUITY between the qualifications for elders ("husband of one wife - v.2; "one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control" - v.4) and the qualifications for deacons ("husbands of one wife" and "good managers of their children and their own households - v.12).
53. The term "for" introduces the REASON for the qualifications in v.12 (v.13).
54. The term "but" establishes a CONTRAST between "hoping to come to you before long" and "in case I am delayed" (v.15).
55. The phrase "so that" introduces Paul's PURPOSE in writing them (v.15).
56. There is CONTINUITY in the structure of the phrases "the household of God", "the church of the living God", and "the pillar and support of the truth".
57. The phrase "which is" introduces a DEFINITION or DESCRIPTION of "the household of God" (v.15).

- E. **Interpretation and Application** (after the application questions the teacher should promote discussion and ask the class to develop more specific ways to communicate the application of the points to everyday life).

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1. Verses 1,2,8.

- a. Paul now begins to offer instructions ("I urge that...prayers"). His initial instructions are for the men of the church. He makes this clear in v.8 as he concludes ("therefore") the section with a repetition of the instruction ("I want the men...to pray").

Why does Paul instruct the men to pray?

- b. Paul's answer is "in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity". Here, we should remember that the main theme of the passage concerns God's heart for "all men". The fact that "all men" have the same Savior (only "one" God) necessitates that the people of God have a heart for all people. Paul seems to be speaking against divisive attitudes. That is, it may be that when Paul said "in order that...", he was not so much referring to how praying for others would result in a certain way those others would treat the people of God, but that he was referring to the attitude in which the people of God should look at and treat others. When believers pray for others (even "kings and all who are in authority" who very well may be the ones responsible for persecution against them) they promote amongst themselves "a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" with respect to their attitude toward others.

- c. We might also defend this interpretation by referring to the continuity found between the phrases "holy hands" (v.8) and "all godliness" (v.2), and "without wrath and dissension" (v.8) and "tranquil and quiet" (v.2). A "tranquil and quiet life" would be a life without wrath and dissension against others...a life that would be determined to pray for everyone else instead of complain

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about them or be enemies with them.

- d. This interpretation would also be consistent with a more general biblical theology concerning the relationship between the people of God and "others". Believers are told that they are to be peacemakers (Mt 5:9), that Christ has come to bring peace between men (Eph 2:14), and that they are to pursue peace with all men (Heb 12:14). At the same time, however, Jesus told his followers that He did not come to bring peace, but a sword (Mt 10:34). The sword He is talking about is the sword that comes against the believer (note that later He makes it clear that the believer is not the one to bear the sword - Mt 26:52). Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (II Tim 3:12). Although others might persecute them, believers are to pursue peace. In conclusion, in I Tim 2:1-8 Paul is not so much concerned with how others will treat believers as he is concerned with how believers will treat and act toward others.
- e. Do we complain about the authorities and unbelievers more than we pray for them? If we are not careful about our attitudes toward unbelievers we can alienate ourselves from the very ones we are called to reach out to.
- f. Are we motivated to pray for "all men" simply because we are men after God's own heart, and the selfless attitude associated with prayer

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on behalf of others is the attitude we are called to have concerning others? Or are we trapped in a selfish theology that assumes everything that is done is to benefit self (could this be why we often interpret this passage in terms of what benefits believers can get from praying for others)?

2. Verses 3-7.

- a. In v.3 Paul makes it clear that this is not simply his desire, but that God Himself is pleased when prayers are "made on behalf of all men".

Why is this pleasing to God?

- b. Paul "urges" (v.1) and "wants" (v.8) men to pray. God "desires" all men to be saved (v.4). The logical conclusion is that God is pleased when His people pray for the salvation of all men. Moreover, God is pleased when His people display a correct attitude toward unbelievers...an attitude that is consistent with God's own heart for the lost. It is pleasing to God when His people pray for "all men" because it shows that His people understand that "one God" is the Savior of all.

- c. Indeed, the term "for" (v.5) introduces the justification for God's pleasure. It is the fact that there is only one God and one mediator between God and men. To some degree, the passage includes an implied, mild rebuke. The men seem to have fallen into an attitude of wrath and dissension toward unbelievers and ruling authorities. Paul encourages them to pray for these people instead. This pleases God because He knows that His "ransom" is the only hope these "others" have. His salvation is the only way. Believers need to know that to be against these "others" is to take lightly the actions of one "who gave Himself as a ransom" for them. Indeed, it was because of those actions that Paul himself was appointed to his ministry. This fact only serves to make any implied rebuke even stronger.

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- d. Is your attitude toward unbelievers consistent with God's heart for them? Do you pray for the salvation of those who are lost? Do you realize that we must pray for "all" men since there is only "one" Savior?

3. Verses 9,10.

- a. The term "likewise" establishes a clear connection between vv.1-8 and vv.9-15. Paul is continuing his instructions. The difference is that now the instructions are for the women (note the continuity between the terms "women" (vv.9,10,15), "woman" (vv.11,12,14), and "Eve" (v.13)). The goal of the instructions, however, seems to be similar. There exists a general sense of continuity between "godliness and dignity" (v.2), "godliness/discreetly" (v.10/v.9), and "sanctity with self restraint" (v.15). Paul is motivated to offer these instructions to both groups (men and women) because he wants them to show forth godliness. He wants them to be dignified before others. He wants them to have a good reputation.

Why is Paul so concerned with their reputations?

- b. In order to answer this question we must first observe how vv.1-8 and vv.9-15 relate to 3:1-13. In 3:1-13 we see the qualifications for elders and deacons. A main theme of these qualifications is that the applicants must be of good reputation. Indeed, the men who desire to be elders "must be above reproach" (3:2). Deacons must be men of dignity (3:8). Deaconesses "must

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likewise be dignified" (3:11). Then in 3:14-15, the conclusion to the whole section (2:1-3:15), Paul states that he writes the instructions so that they may know how to conduct themselves in the household of God. He goes on to describe the household of God as the **"pillar and support of the TRUTH"**. Indeed, the term "truth" is one that is repeated throughout the letter. It is the people of God who are expected to hold up, maintain, and express the "truth". This truth, to some degree, must be conveyed through the very conduct of believers.

- c. Although the instructions are for believers, they are given with evangelistic motives. Certainly, we saw how this was true in 2:1-8. Paul makes this sort of connection throughout his writings (e.g., Phil 2:14-16). Peter, as well as other writers of Scripture, makes this connection (e.g., II Pt 3:9-12). Indeed, believers are called to conduct themselves with godliness and dignity as a form of outreach.
- d. How do you conduct yourself in the household of God? Are you godly and dignified? Does your conduct come from within or is it merely an outward show? Are you motivated to conduct yourself in certain ways because of the realization that you are part of the support, maintenance, and expression of the truth both to those inside and outside the church? Or does your conduct become a stumbling block to others?
- e. Paul's initial instruction to women concerns their physical appearance. He wants them to "adorn themselves" in certain ways.

How should women dress?
- f. The term "with" introduces the method or way in which women should "adorn themselves". They are to use "proper clothing".

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What is "proper clothing"?

- g. It is clothing that is consistent with that which is "modest and discreet". It does not promote sexual arousal. The term "not with" establishes a contrasting method of clothing oneself (v.9). Thus, "braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments" are considered improper clothing. Paul then offers the alternative means by which to clothe oneself.

What is the alternative?

- h. The phrase "but rather by means of" introduces the alternative method of "adorning themselves" (v.10); that is, good works. Paul is saying that with regard to their appearance they should let their actions "clothe them". Their value should not depend on the value of their clothes but on the value of their actions. Godliness is a profound concept. It is not superficial. A woman cannot claim it based on her outward appearance. Who someone is finds its proof in what someone does (consider the principle developed in Mk 7:21).
- i. For Paul, the issue has to do with what is in the heart. The question of motive is the central issue. Paul does not create a framework for legalism. He, instead, challenges the motives of women concerning what they wear, and asks them to base their decision on their desire to glorify God (consider Mt 5:16).
- j. What do you count on to establish your appearance before others? Do you base your value on the value of your clothes? Your car? Your house? Your salary? What are your motives when you decide what you will wear? Do you try to dress to arouse? To impress?

- 4. Verses 11-15.

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- a. Paul continues his instructions to women by focusing on their actions and attitudes within the church. Their actions have to do with receiving instruction.

What attitude should they have in receiving instruction?

- b. The attitude is described, in part, by the continuity of the phrases "quietly" and "remain quiet". They are to listen. More specifically, they are to do it "with entire submissiveness".

What does "entire submissiveness" mean?

- c. In as much as v.12 represents the contrast of v.11 (note the contrast between the structure "Let a woman..." and "do not allow a woman"), the opposite of "entire submissiveness" is "teaching over" or "exercising authority over". The issue is not whether or not a woman can speak or teach in church (all ministries are open to women in the church as they are done with respect to this overarching principle that women should not carry the "final authority" attitude and role of the overseers (men) of a local church).

- d. The issue at hand concerns the role of the woman relative to the role of the man. Later, we see that only men can be overseers (3:1), yet both men and women can be deacons (3:8,11). The role of the overseer includes that of "ruling over" (3:4; 5:17). Thus, a woman could not assume this position since the attitude of her role in the church includes a mandate not to assume a final authoritative or ruling attitude toward a man (it should be noted here that it is understood that this is a very volatile issue in the church today, that there are various opinions on this issue, and that it is not a matter that is easily understood and applied).

Why is the role of a woman different from

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that of a man?

- e. The modern day movement that desires to explain away this passage simply by saying that Paul's opinion was a cultural reaction has two major weaknesses: first, if we can be relieved of this instruction simply because Paul's culture is at fault, then who is to say what other Scriptural instructions can be ignored (i.e., this "modern" position weakens the doctrine of the authority of the Scriptures); second, Paul does not substantiate his point with a cultural argument but with an anthropological argument (i.e., he does not refer back to his culture, but to creation).

- f. The term "for" introduces the justification for not "allowing a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man" (v.13). Men and women are equal in identity (Gal 3:28) because they were created and redeemed by the same Creator and Redeemer. They are different in role because of the order of their creation..."Adam was first created and then Eve". Thus, "in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman (they must all be involved), yet "man is the head of a woman" (I Cor 11:3,11). The man is the initiator...he is the covering. In the local church, men (i.e. a plurality of men elders, overseers, or pastors) must act as the "final authority" under God.

- g. Paul continues this justification by pointing out that it was Eve who was "quite deceived" (not Adam) with the result that she "fell into transgression" (v.14). The good news is that the term "but" establishes a contrast between "fell" and "preserved" (v.15).

How will women be preserved?

- h. The term "through" introduces the method or means by which a woman will be "preserved" (v.15). The likely interpretation of this

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verse involves the observation of the definite article that precedes "bearing of children". That is, salvation is available via THE birth of Christ. We might also note the relation this would have to Gen 3:15, and how the context of this passage certainly makes reference to the activities of Genesis 3.

How do you interpret this passage? Do you agree that men and women have different roles?

5. Verses 3:1-7.

- a. Paul continues with his instructions by offering a list of qualifications that should be considered when choosing an "overseer".

What is an overseer?

- b. The Greek word is episkopo. In the New Testament it is translated as overseer or bishop, and is used interchangeably with the words for "elder" (presbuteros) and "pastor" (poiman). The position or "office" of overseer is the position of leadership in the local church. Furthermore, according to the New Testament there is not a single overseer in a local church, but a plurality of overseers or elders (for further detail on this issue see the course called "Church Government" in the MOTMOT series of courses; also consider Acts 20:17,18,28; I Pt 5:1,2; Acts 14:23; Tit 1:5-7; I Tim 5:17).

How might the list of qualifications be organized?

- c. The "if...then" construction in vv.1,2 establishes "be above reproach" as the REQUIREMENT for "aspire to the office of overseer". The condition, in general, is that a man "aspire to" or "desire" to do the work. It is described as a "fine work". The requirement, in general, is that the man's character should be consistent with the work. He should be "then" (therefore) "above

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reproach" or of "good reputation" (see v.7).

If you want to do a fine work then you must have a good reputation (be above reproach). That this is the general requirement or qualification can further be established by observing the emphasis in this passage that is given to the term "reproach" (repeated three times in vv.2,7,10).

- d. If we understand "be above reproach" as the general qualification then the following categories of specific qualifications might be appropriate:

- 1) Personal life is above reproach (vv.2b,3) - see appropriate word studies.

"the husband of one wife", "temperate", "prudent", "respectable", "hospitable", "able to teach" (different than the other qualifications in that it is more of an ability...notice that the other qualifications are not so much natural talents or abilities as they are attitudes or character traits), "not addicted to wine" (the qualifications include what the person should be and what the person should not be), "not pugnacious" (the term "but" establishes "gentle" as the contrast of "pugnacious" and thus further defines "pugnacious"), "gentle", "uncontentious", "free from the love of money" (the continuity between the phrases "not addicted to" and "free from" put an emphasis on the fruit of the Spirit of self-control; it is critical that a leader not be under the control of something other than God).

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- 2) Family life is above reproach (vv.4,5).

The principle of Lk 16:10 is used here.

A man must be able to manage his own household well before he can (through experience) or should (through proving) manage the larger household of God. Again the issue of "control" is part of the qualifications. The participle "keeping" introduces the means by which a man is to "manage his own household well". He does it by "keeping his children under control". How does he do that? The term "with" introduces his method. It is done "with all dignity" (see word study). It is done by gaining respect and authority through service. Serving others is "how to manage his own household" and "how he will take care of the church of God".

- 3) Church life is above reproach (v.6).

The term "lest" introduces the possible result of selecting a "new convert". A new convert may become proud of his position, not having the maturity or experience to handle the authority. This will result in "the condemnation of the devil" (see word study).

- 4) Community life is above reproach (v.7)

The phrase "so that" introduces the purpose of having "a good reputation with those outside the church". Again, it is an issue of "falling into" something related to "the devil". At this point we might notice a continuity between "fell into transgression"/associated with the devil (2:14), "fall into the condemnation"/associated with the devil (3:6), and "fall into reproach"/associated with the devil (3:7). An overseer must be one who does

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not "fall" easily to the schemes of the devil. According to the apparent flow of Paul's earlier argument concerning why women can not have final authority in the church (authority over a man), one might conclude that an elder (one who has final authority in a local church) can not be a woman, in part, due to how the history of the fall of mankind directly associates the woman with the "falling/devil" dynamic.

- e. How is your personal life? Family life? Church life? Community life? Can you say that they are "above reproach"? Do you evaluate yourself and others according to natural talents and abilities, or according to attitudes and character traits?

6. Verses 8-13.

- a. In v.8, the term "likewise" establishes a continuation or similarity between instructions concerning elders and instructions concerning deacons. In addition, Paul includes that deacons should be ones who are "holding to the mystery of the faith".

How will they be able to hold to the mystery of the faith?

- b. The term "with" introduces the method of "holding to the mystery of the faith" (v.9). It is accomplished by having a clear conscience. Correct motives and actions are necessary. If he is "double tongued" (see word study), then his conscience will be seared since he will forfeit his integrity. If he is involved in self-serving, deceptive practices ("sordid gain"), then his conscience will be seared since he will forfeit his integrity. Wrong motives

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diminish our ability to remain steadfast in the Lord. They affect our desire to hold to the things of God. Indeed, Paul already made clear the connection between "reproach" and "the snare of the devil" (v.7).

How will they know if a potential deacon will hold to the mystery of the faith?

c. In v.10, the "then...if..." construction establishes "beyond reproach" as the condition for "let them serve as deacons" (v.10). They must first be tested. The means by which they will hold to the mystery of the faith must be established. That is, a "clear conscience" and the actions and motives that produce it must be evident. The ultimate proof is in the result itself. They are ones that show an ability to "hold to the mystery of the faith". In this sense, proofs like steadfastness, consistency, dedication, stability, and perseverance in the faith are most useful.

d. In v.11, Paul begins to address "women".

Who are these women?

e. These "women" seem to refer to deaconesses (for example, consider Phoebe in Rom 16:1) as opposed to wives of the deacons.

1) First, there is no pronoun present ("their") that would clearly identify them as the wives of the deacons. Furthermore, if they are the wives of the deacons then the lower office of deacon would necessitate stricter qualifications than the higher office of "overseer" since there is no mention of such qualifications for wives of the overseers. This is not likely.

2) Second, there is continuity between the phrases "Deacons likewise men of dignity" (v.8) and "Women likewise

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dignified" (v.11). Paul uses "likewise" three times in this passage (2:9; 3:8; 3:11). The first two times he uses it to introduce instructions for a distinct group of people. It would follow that this third time would be no exception. He is introducing his instructions for deaconesses as opposed to deacons.

- 3) Third, there is continuity between the phrases "Deacons be men" (v.8) and "deacons be husbands" (v.12). Thus, there is a biographical interruption in v.11 (concerning women). Some argue that for this reason, Paul must be referring to deacon's wives when he says "women". However, the observation of an interruption can be used to defend the "deaconesses" interpretation.

- a) Earlier we observed the connection between 2:12 and 3:4 (the issue of "final authority") as a way to explain Paul's position that elders must be men. In v.12, Paul returns to that issue. There is continuity between the qualifications for elders ("husband of one wife - v.2; "one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control" - v.4) and the qualifications for deacons ("husbands of one wife" and "good managers of their children and their own households - v.12).

- b) In v.13, the term "for" introduces the reason for the qualifications in v.12. Deacons must have the qualifications of v.12 because "those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a

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high standing" (see word study). That is, they can be moved up to the position of "overseer". As shown earlier, overseers can only be men.

- c) Thus, Paul gives the qualifications for deacons in vv.8-10, the qualifications for deaconesses in v.11, and then adds the qualification for deacons in v.12 that is specifically necessary for the office of "overseer". The "final authority" issue is introduced again and is reserved only for men because, as Paul argued in 2:12-14, men must hold the "final authority" position in the local church. The "overseer" position is the "final authority" position, and can not be held by a woman. Women can be deaconesses, but can not advance to the office of "overseer".

- f. Are you consistent in holding to the mystery of the faith? Do you walk with a clear conscience? Do you often risk losing the ability to remain steadfast because you allow yourself to have wrong motives? Do the deacons in your church show a consistency and stability in holding to the mystery of the faith? What is your position concerning women deacons? Women overseers?

7. Verses 14,15.

- a. Paul concludes this section by explaining his purpose for writing "these things".

What "things" is he referring to?

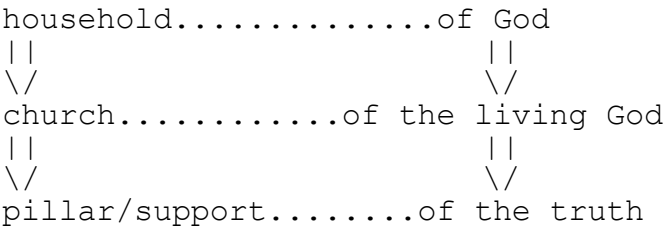
- b. The phrase "so that" introduces Paul's purpose for writing. It is that "you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God". The "things" are the

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instructions he gives which begin in 2:1 and continue through 3:13 and pertain to "conduct" and "the household of God". It is obviously important to Paul that these instructions be understood. He hopes to come to them soon but writes the instructions in case he is delayed.

Why is it so important that these instructions be understood?

c. There is continuity in the structure of the phrases "the household of God", "the church of the living God", and "the pillar and support of the truth". Furthermore, the phrase "which is" introduces a DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION of "the household of God" (v.15). It is the church of the living God. It is the pillar and support of the truth:



God is the truth (Jn 14:6). The church is its pillar and support. It is what holds up

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the truth. Indeed, it is the church that holds up God to be seen by the world. God's reputation is affected by the reputation of the church. The church of God must represent God with proper conduct. How else will "truth" stand out and be seen?

- d. Are you conscious of your conduct in the household of God? Do you represent God well? Is truth supported by your conduct?

III. CONCLUSION.

- A. The teacher may ask the students to review the word study and observation sub-sections from the previous section in order to consider more points of interpretation and application.



- B. As time permits, the course could end with the teacher leading the students in a "lab session" in which they would develop materials (using the same format seen in this course) from their own inductive study of 1 Tim 5:1-6:19.

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ENDNOTES

¹Fritz Rienecker, A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p.622.