

## WHAT DO I OFFER?

It is counter intuitive to many American Christians to think in terms of sacrifice. In fact, we are more prone to see sacrifice as something that was eliminated with the New Covenant. There is, of course, a sense in which this is true. However, discipleship will inevitably have an element of sacrifice.

As we begin this study, read Romans 12:1-2 and reflect on the sacrifice mentioned here:

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Read through Psalm 51:16, 17 and note the facts that are clearly stated:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

The first fact is this, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.'

The second fact, which demonstrates the first is this, 'Because a broken and a contrite heart God will not despise.'

We suddenly realize that a spirit rightly broken, and a heart truly contrite, is an excellent thing to God

The Bible mentions a number of things that are very acceptable to God.

- 1. The sacrifice of Christ for our sins**
- 2. Our undying love for God which He sees as better than sacrifices**

Read through Mark 12:33 and journal your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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- 3. Walking humbly and obediently, which God sees as better than sacrifices**

Read through the following verses, recording your thoughts here:

Micah 6:6-8 \_\_\_\_\_

#### **4. A broken and contrite heart**

The world may not see our heart in the same way that God sees it.

Servants of God do what He directs. They obey Him. The servant does not have the option of deciding whether or not he wants to obey. Choosing not to obey is rebellion, and such disobedience will bring serious consequences.

Many people are so self-centered they want to do their own "thing." They do not stop to consider what obedience may mean in their lives. Jesus told a parable about obedience:

**Matthew 21:28-31 (NASB) "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he regretted it and went. The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, 'I *will*, sir'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?"**

Which son did the will of his father? Was it the one who said no but later repented, or the one who said yes but never went? The first son is the one who obeyed the father. Obedience means doing what is commanded.

Some people want God to give them an assignment immediately. They say that they will do whatever He asks. But when God observes their lives, He notices they have not obeyed in the things He already has told them to do.

God gave the Ten Commandments. Are you obeying? Jesus has told you to love your enemies. Are you able to do that? Jesus ordered the church to make disciples of all nations. Are you doing all you know to obey Him? God tells you through Scripture to live in unity with your Christian brothers and sisters. Do love and harmony characterize your fellowship?

God's commands are not given so you can pick and choose the ones you want to obey and forget the rest. He expects you to obey *all* His commands out of your love relationship with Him. When He sees you are faithful and obedient in a little, He will be able to trust you with more.

God has always been at work in our world. He is at work where you are. When God is ready for you to be involved with Him in an assignment, He will always come to you and reveal what He is doing, or what He is about to do. When He does, this will be His invitation for you to join Him.

Joining Him will require major adjustments of your life to Him so He can accomplish His will through you. When you know what God has said, know what He is about to do, and have adjusted your life to Him, there is one remaining necessary response to God.

**To experience Him at work in and through you, you must obey Him. When you obey Him, He will accomplish His work through you; and you will come to know Him by experience.**

You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you. After God has taken the initiative to involve you in His work, you believe Him and adjust your life to Him. This entire process may happen very quickly or it may be extended over a lengthy period of time. The adjustments, however, must be made. Only then do you get to the place of obedience. You must obey Him first. Then He will accomplish His work through you. When God does a God-sized work through your life, you come to know Him intimately by experience. In reality, your obedience shows things what you believe about God:

- 1. Reveals what you believe about Him**
- 2. Determines whether you will experience His work in you and through you**
- 3. Determines whether you will come to know Him more intimately**

You must choose whether to obey God. You cannot obey Him unless you believe and trust Him. You cannot believe and trust Him unless you love Him. You cannot love Him unless you know Him.

Finish your thinking for today by reading through 1 John 2:3-6, asking yourself how you measure up:

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## HOW TROUBLE BEGINS

The Word tells us that whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Romans 15:4). Today we are going to begin our study with a look into the Old Testament. We can be confident that these words were written for our instruction.

Carefully read through the first five chapters of Jeremiah. Note the historical condition of Judah, the southern kingdom. Then read the following verses and summarize what you learn of Judah during the time of Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 2:1-8 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Jeremiah 2:13-19 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Jeremiah 2:20-25 \_\_\_\_\_  
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How do you think conditions in your time parallel those of Jeremiah's time? The third chapter of Jeremiah tells how Israel has "played the harlot." Read the following verses and record Israel's behavior:

Jeremiah 3:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 3:6, 13 \_\_\_\_\_

Now read Jeremiah 4:19-22 and note how the people regard God's approaching judgment. \_\_\_\_\_  
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Jeremiah 5:7 sees God asking a question of Judah, "Why should I pardon you?" There are many reasons why He should not that are given in chapter 5. But we see that, time and time again, God calls the people back. "Return faithless Israel." "I will not look upon you in anger. For I am gracious." "I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God and have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed my voice." (Jeremiah 3:12-13)

Read through Jeremiah 5 and note the reasons given for God's judgment: \_\_\_\_\_

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In what ways did Israel refuse to submit to the refining process of God? What did God require? \_\_\_\_\_

Now list any parallels you see between the nation of Jeremiah 5 and our nation.

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Also list any parallels between Jeremiah 5 and your own life: \_\_\_\_\_

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Now think carefully about what constitutes disobedience to God. Read the following verses and record what you learn about sin:

James 4:17 \_\_\_\_\_

1 John 3:4 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 53:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Read Jeremiah 7:1-7. Was Judah given the opportunity to submit to the refining process? \_\_\_\_\_

Read Jeremiah's lament in 8:21-22. He knew there was a cure, but the people were not listening. They didn't have to live a defeated lifestyle, but they made no changes. They could have grown in maturity, but they did not repent.

Read James 1:2-4 and record what you learn. \_\_\_\_\_

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Adversity itself is not grounds for joy! But the expectation of the result, the development of our character, causes us to rejoice in trials. We can rejoice because we believe God is in control of circumstances and is at work through them for our ultimate good.

Read the following passages and record what you learn:

Romans 5:3-4 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 12:2 \_\_\_\_\_

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We can rejoice because God is at work in us, regardless of our understanding. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Philippians 1:6 \_\_\_\_\_

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Hebrews 13:21 \_\_\_\_\_

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## HOMEWORK

As we face adversity, how can we submit to the Refiner's fire?

Will it involve sacrifice?

## TRUSTING GOD

To be able to trust God in times when sacrifice is required is a hard thing to do. To trust God is a matter of faith. But we can know that God is trustworthy and can heal circumstances, as well as our attitudes toward them. Often, we do not realize that our bitter circumstances may be a test.

Read the following account, and record what you learn:

Exodus 15:22-26 \_\_\_\_\_  
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This account happens immediately after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea. Moses and Miriam had just sung the famous victory song (15:1). And now the people had come to Marah where the bitter waters of Marah precluded quenching their thirst.

In the scripture, when we see "LORD" written in all capital letters, it is translating the Hebrew word, "Jehovah" or "Yahweh." In the verse we have just read, God calls Himself, "Jehovah Rapha," which means "The LORD your healer." Jehovah is the name of God that reveals Him as the self-existent one, the "I AM."

Did you notice the word "test" in this account? Like the children of Israel, we sometimes find ourselves drinking bitter water, not realizing that the bitter water is a test. God wanted Israel to learn an important lesson: When times are difficult—run to God—listen to God—TRUST GOD! He can take the bitterness and make it sweet because He is healer.

In Genesis 50:2, "rapha" is translated "physicians."

"And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel."

Sometimes we think of God's healing only in the realm of the physical. Is this the whole story? Look at the following verses and record what you learn about the realm of God's healing power.

Deuteronomy 32:39 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 19:22 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 57:17-18 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 147:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 30:26 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 53:5 and 1 Peter 2:24-25 \_\_\_\_\_

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Genesis 20:17 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 10:38 \_\_\_\_\_

If God calls Himself Jehovah-rapha, then that is what He is! And God never changes.

Read Hebrews 13:8 \_\_\_\_\_

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During hard times, during times of testing, where do you run? God, who created us, is not only our creator, but also our sustainer. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Jeremiah 17:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_

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Jeremiah 17:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_

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We need to always turn to God and His Word in times of trial and testing.

When we read Jeremiah 8, we saw that Jeremiah was greatly distressed over the condition of God's people in Judah. There was a balm in Gilead—a physician—Jehovah-rapha! But the people did not run to the physician. The condition was curable, but they were looking in the wrong place for the cure.



Read Jeremiah 46:11 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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The children of God are not to run to Egypt (the word and what it has to offer.) They are to run to God. In Jeremiah's time, the Word of God had become a reproach to the people.

Read Jeremiah 8:10-11 and notice the result: \_\_\_\_\_

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False prophets said what the people wanted to hear. Priests ruled on their own authority. (Jeremiah 5:31) And, the people chose this over God. Consequently, judgment came instead of healing. Read Jeremiah 2:14-19 and notice God's perspective of their plight: \_\_\_\_\_

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What the people of Israel did, we still do today. We go to people of the world, people without a godly perspective, for help in times of testing. We run to people trained in the world's wisdom, but do not run in prayer to our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. And then we wonder why we feel unhelped, powerless, orphaned, and filled with strife.

This does not mean that we should never go to others for help. But it does mean that we SHOULD NEVER FAIL TO GO TO GOD.

As we begin to think about relying on human strength in times of need, King Asa of Judah immediately comes to mind.

Read 2 Chronicles 14 and answer the following questions:

1. Did Asa have a good relationship with the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. When the Ethiopians came, what did Asa do? What did God do? \_\_\_\_\_

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Briefly look at 2 Chronicles 15 and consider these questions:

1. How did God warn Asa? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What was Asa's response? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Lastly, read 2 Chronicles 16, and answer these questions:

1. When the king of Israel confronted Asa, what did he do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What was God's feeling about Asa's position? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What sort of person is God searching for? Notice that Asa had many physicians (2 Chronicles 16:12).

Many people live as victims of situations of the past. Many people live in failure in the present. Many have been taken advantage of by people. But you don't have to be an emotional cripple. You don't have to descend the spiral of defeat! Read the following verses and record the alternatives:

Jeremiah 33:3 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Jeremiah 32:27 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 45:22 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 42:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 13:5 \_\_\_\_\_

During times of trials, we can trust God because He is completely trustworthy. Finally, read the following verses, written by men who understand trials. Note the circumstances for each person:

Psalm 56:3-4 \_\_\_\_\_

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Job 23:8-10 \_\_\_\_\_

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Because God has promised never to leave us or forsake us, we can choose God in times of trial. Like Job, we may waver between trust and doubt. But we must agree with Job's conclusion!

We may sometimes have the same experiences—the seeming inability to find God anywhere. God may even seem to hide from us. Isaiah 45:15 says, "Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel." But because God does not lie (Titus 1:2), we can really believe that He will never forsake us.

As we complete our study for today, let's look at God's promises:

Hebrews 13:5 \_\_\_\_\_

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Puritan preacher Thomas Lye emphasized that this passage in the Greek has five negatives which translate literally as "will not, not leave thee; neither will I not, not forsake thee." Five times God emphasizes that He will not forsake us! He will not leave us at the mercy of circumstances.

1 Peter 5:7 \_\_\_\_\_

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But not leaving us is only one part of the proposition. God cares for us! His care is continual, not occasional. His care is sovereign. His care is infinitely wise and good. The verb translated "cast" seems to indicate that there is some considerable effort expended on our part. Jerry Bridges suggests the following:

**We must by an act of will in dependence on the Holy Spirit say something such as "Lord I choose to cast off this anxiety onto You, but I cannot do this by myself. I will trust You by Your Spirit to enable me to, having cast my anxiety on You, not to take it back upon myself." Trust is not a passive state of mind. It is a vigorous act of**

**the soul by which we choose to lay hold on the promises of God and cling to them despite the adversity that at times seeks to overwhelm us.**

## HOMEWORK

Read Proverbs 18:10-11 and reflect on your life perspective. What contrasts are being drawn in this passage of scripture? \_\_\_\_\_

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## GOD IS SOVEREIGN

When we accept the sacrifice of our Kinsman Redeemer, when we are freed from slavery to sin, our lives have purpose. Our value is not because of what we have done, or who we are, but because God has chosen us!

Read Romans 8:28-39. Look carefully at all words that refer to God, and the words that refer to us. Below, list what God has done for you: \_\_\_\_\_

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Now read Romans 10:3. What problem did the Jews have? How did they try to become righteous? \_\_\_\_\_

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Because the Jews lacked poverty of spirit, they could not understand the God does not save on the basis of works.

Read Titus 3:5-7 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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Look up the following verses and record what you learn about the way we are cleansed and changed. (Metamorphoo)

2 Corinthians 3:18 \_\_\_\_\_

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Romans 12:2 \_\_\_\_\_

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Ephesians 5:25-27 \_\_\_\_\_

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Suffering is one of God's methods of conforming us to the image of Christ. It is a comfort to know that we are not alone and that our suffering has a purpose. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Hebrews 5:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:16-18 \_\_\_\_\_

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God likens our sacrificial living to the purifying of silver and gold. Naturally, neither metal is pure; they are mixed with all sorts of other things that make them impure. They must be refined before their beauty is revealed.

The refining process is not designed to destroy the metal, but to bring forth its beauty.

Just as silver and gold are put into the crucible, so God puts us into the crucible of suffering to make us beautiful—in His image.

Read 1 Peter 1:6-8 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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We must learn to see each trial as part of God's refining process.

Now read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 and answer the following questions:

1. What is the treasure? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why are we delivered over to difficult situations? \_\_\_\_\_

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Write any insights you learned here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Now read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. What do you have to do if you are going to walk victoriously? \_\_\_\_\_

Whether or not the refining process is successful depends upon our response. We will either be refined or embittered. It is our choice. The trials that come into our lives are designed to move us toward God. \_\_

Read the following verses and record what you learn:

1 John 4:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Daniel 4:34-35 \_\_\_\_\_

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Isaiah 45:5-7 \_\_\_\_\_

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Psalms 103:19 \_\_\_\_\_

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According to Romans 8:29, why did God predestine us? \_\_\_\_\_

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Everything in creation is indebted for its existence to the continuous sustaining action of God exercised through Christ. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Hebrews 1:3 \_\_\_\_\_

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Colossians 1:17 \_\_\_\_\_

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Nothing exists because of its own power of being. Nothing stands or acts independently of God's will. The laws of nature are just the expression of the will of God. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Isaiah 40:26 \_\_\_\_\_

Nehemiah 9:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 147:8-9 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 17:25-28 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 31:15 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 9:10 \_\_\_\_\_

Every breath we breathe, the food we eat, everything that happens is under His control.

God's sovereignty is often questioned because we don't understand God's ways and God's thoughts. He just doesn't act the way we would act if we were God! But clearly the scriptures point to the fact that God created everything, and that He is actively sustaining and governing it.

Today we will conclude our study by reading the following verses. Record what you learn:

1 Chronicles 29:12 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Timothy 6:15 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 10:29 \_\_\_\_\_

Lamentations 3:37 \_\_\_\_\_

Daniel 4:35 \_\_\_\_\_

Daniel 4:17 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 55:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 11:33 \_\_\_\_\_

## HOMEWORK

Ask yourself today where you have substituted the doctrine of "chance" for the doctrine of God's sovereignty. Record these areas here:

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Now read Matthew 10:29-31. Record your findings here: \_\_\_\_\_

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## THINKING DIFFERENTLY

In the first week of this study, we began looking at the concept of being transformed by the renewing of our minds. This clearly involves some responsibility on our part. We will be considering this responsibility for next two weeks.

Read Philippians 4:6-8. Notice the order of events that are expressed in these verses, and record them here: \_\_\_\_\_

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When trials come, we aren't to be anxious, but we are to be doing something! This is not victim thinking. In fact, this is mind-renewing thinking.

Now, look at Acts 4:24-29. In this chapter, Peter and John had been threatened by the Jewish leaders and told not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. When the other believers heard this, they immediately prayed. Record what you learn about their attitude of prayer here: \_\_\_\_\_

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These believers knew that God was sovereign, but they saw this as a reason to pray. In fact, prayer assumes the sovereignty of God. If God is not sovereign, if He isn't in control, why pray to Him?

So, we can see that really trusting God's sovereignty will actually require us to adopt new ways of thinking and believing. And, we act on our new way of thinking.

Read Philippians 3:13-14 and record what you learn here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Whereas Satan wants you to focus on what you were, or on what the trouble is, or on thoughts that he plants, our responsibility is to refocus our thinking (Philippians 4:8) and to press on.

Now, move to 2 Corinthians 10:3-7 and record what you learn there. Specifically record what you learn about the nature of our warfare and the weaponry.

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Notice (v. 7) what the Corinthians were doing wrong. They were focusing on the circumstances. Compare with 2 Corinthians 5:16: \_\_\_\_\_

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As we look at 2 Corinthians 10, there are some things that we need to know. Notice especially verse 10. Apparently Paul had his fair share of critics in addition to his various trials. It seems apparent that the Corinthian culture (Greek) that especially worshiped beautiful bodies, worldly wisdom, and eloquent speech, didn't see much desirable about Paul!

Traditionally he is described as short, small boned, and bow-legged. Besides this, he is believed to have had some sort of eye ailment that was repulsive because of yellow, crusty secretion. Through people's words, the enemy was trying to tear Paul down. If he could get Paul to think about his physical appearance, he might destroy his ministry.

But Paul had done his intelligence gathering on the enemy. Therefore, Paul reminded the Corinthians that although we walk in fleshly bodies, we don't war with fleshly weapons. Satan's goal is to establish strongholds in our minds, and our responsibility is to stop him. In times of war, opposing sides try to establish strongholds in the enemy's territory. It is the same in spiritual warfare. When we think about things that are not godly, or think negatively about God, or fantasize evil, we give the enemy ground on which he can build a stronghold.

This is why we must destroy speculations (things we imagine) and everything and anything else that might be raised up against what is actually true about God. If Paul had not done this, the enemy might have used the circumstances to destroy his ministry.

Be assured that Satan doesn't just waltz into your mind and announce that it's him. He's clever and subtle. He can come as an angel of light—meaning, he can put out propaganda that looks pretty good. He drops suggestions and hints around. He casts doubt on the good things of God, and the truth of the Word.

Just as God's sovereignty doesn't invalidate our responsibility to pray and think in a renewed fashion, it also doesn't invalidate our responsibility to act according to our renewed mindset! This means we can use all legitimate, biblical means at our disposal to avoid harm to ourselves or others and to bring about what we believe to be the right course of events.

Although we may not know God's sovereign purpose in every circumstance, this is certainly no excuse to shirk the responsibilities that God has clearly commanded in the scripture. It is also no excuse to fail to carry out specific things that God has already shown us or told us.

Read Nehemiah 4:7-20. Record what you learn here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Did Nehemiah believe God? Yes, but he also used all available means, believing that God in His sovereignty would bless those means.

In Joshua 9, we find the men of Israel in a confrontation with the Gibeonites. In this meeting, Israel entered into a treaty because they did not pray. Read this section of scripture and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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In this section, we can see that prudence requires willingness to pray or seek counsel so that we can correctly see the situation for what it is. We can seek counsel not only from God but from godly people.

Read Proverbs 15:22. Combine it with Proverbs 16:9, and record what you learn:

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It is clear that God uses the wise counsel of others to bring our plans into line with His sovereign will. So, in the process of renewing our minds, we must remember that prayer acknowledges God's sovereignty and our dependence on Him to act on our behalf. Prudence acknowledges our responsibility to use all means that God has provided for us. We must not separate these two ideas.

## HOMEWORK

Read 1 Chronicles 5:18-20. Reflect on how much these well trained warriors trusted in their ability and training. Compare to Psalm 127:1 and record what you learn here:

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## A CALL TO OBEDIENCE

For many of us, the major problem has not been lack of knowledge of God's will, it has been the lack of personal discipline required to do it. This is why my computer has a screen saver that quotes 2 Corinthians 10:5. Read that verse, and write what you learn here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Abraham was greatly blessed by God. Read Genesis 22:18, and record why he was blessed: \_\_\_\_\_

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Obedience is the supreme test of faith in God and reverence for Him. The Old Testament conception of obedience was vital. It was the one important relationship which must not be broken. While sometimes this relation may have been formal and cold, it nevertheless was the one strong tie which held the people close to God.

The significant spiritual relation is expressed by Samuel when he asks the question, "Has Yahweh as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).

Continue reading in the following passages:

Isaiah 1:19 \_\_\_\_\_

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Zechariah 6:15 \_\_\_\_\_

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The greatest example of obedience ever observed is recorded in Paul's letter to the church at Philippi:

Philippians 2:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

By obedience to Him we are through Him made partakers of His salvation. Read Hebrews 5:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Continue reading in 1 Peter 1:14, and observe what Peter calls believers: \_\_\_\_\_

One of the most difficult verses hermeneutically in the New Testament is found Matthew 7:21. These are the words of Jesus. Read them and journal the interpretation here: \_\_\_\_\_

Deuteronomy 8:1 tells us to obey God's commandments. We do this by obeying God with...

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|--------------|--|
| OUR HEART    | By loving him more than any relationship, activity, achievement, or possession.  |
| OUR WILL     | By committing ourselves completely to him.   |
| OUR MIND     | By seeking to know him and his Word, so his principles and values form the foundation of all we think and do.  |
| OUR BODY     | By recognizing that our strengths, talents, and sexuality are given to us by God to be used for pleasure and fulfillment according to his rules, not ours. |
| OUR FINANCES | By deciding that all of the resources we have ultimately come from God, and that we are to be managers of them and not owners.                             |
| OUR FUTURE   | By deciding to make service to God and man the main purpose of our life's work.  |

One of my favorite examples of obedience coming from scripture is revealed in the life of John the Baptist. We will end our study for today by looking at John's remarkable example of obedience. Begin your look in Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 4:5:

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John 3:30 \_\_\_\_\_

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## STAND IN THE LIGHT

**What you see and hear depends a good deal  
on where you are standing! It also  
depends on what sort of person  
you are. C.S. Lewis**

As we begin our study for today, read 1 John 5 – 2:14 \_\_\_\_\_

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Light represents what is good, pure, true, holy, and reliable. Darkness represents what is sinful and evil. The statement "God is light" means that God is perfectly holy and true and that he alone can guide us out of the darkness of sin. Light is also related to truth in that light exposes whatever exists, whether it is good or bad. In the dark, good and evil look alike; in the light, they can be clearly distinguished. Just as darkness cannot exist in the presence of light, sin cannot exist in the presence of a holy God. If we want to have a relationship with God, we must put aside our sinful ways of living. To claim that we belong to him but then to go out and live for ourselves is hypocrisy. Christ will expose and judge such deceit.

There were three claims being made.

1. first of three claims of the false teachers: that we can have fellowship with God and still walk in darkness. False teachers who thought that the physical body was evil or worthless taught one of two approaches to behavior: either they insisted on denying bodily desires through rigid discipline, or they approved of gratifying every physical lust because the body was going to be destroyed anyway. Obviously the second approach was more popular! Here John is saying that no one can claim to be a Christian and still live in evil and immorality. We can't love God and court sin at the same time.
2. that people had no natural tendency toward sin, that they were "without sin," and that they were then incapable of sinning. This idea is at best self-deception and at worst an outright lie. The false teachers refused to take sin seriously. They wanted to be considered Christians, but they saw no need to confess and repent. The death of Christ did not mean much to them because they didn't think they needed it. Instead of repenting and being purified by Christ's blood, they

were encouraging sin among believers. In this life we are always capable of sinning, so we should never let down our guard.

3. The false teachers also denied that their own conduct involved any sin at all.

That was a lie that ignored one basic truth: all people are sinners by nature and by practice. It takes humility and honesty to recognize our weaknesses, and most of us would rather pretend that we are strong. But we need not fear revealing our sins to God—he knows them already. He will not push us away, no matter what we’ve done. Instead he will draw us to himself.

Confession frees us to enjoy fellowship with Christ. It eases our consciences and lightens our cares. But some Christians do not understand how it works. They feel so guilty that they confess the same sins over and over; then they wonder if they might have forgotten something. Other Christians believe that God forgives them when they confess, but if they died with unconfessed sins, they would be forever lost.

These Christians do not understand that God *wants* to forgive us. He allowed his beloved Son to die just so he could offer us pardon. When we come to Christ, he forgives all the sins we have committed or will ever commit. We don’t need to confess the sins of the past all over again, and we don’t need to fear that God will reject us if we don’t keep our slate perfectly clean. Of course we should continue to confess our sins, but not because failure to do so will make us lose our salvation. Our relationship with Christ is secure. Instead, we should confess so that we can enjoy maximum fellowship and joy with him.

Do a study on the word translated “confess.” Record the result here:

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If God has forgiven us for our sins because of Christ’s death, why must we confess our sins? In admitting our sins and receiving Christ’s cleansing, we are:

- (1) agreeing with God that our sin truly is sin and that we are willing to turn from it
- (2) ensuring that we don’t conceal our sins from him and consequently from ourselves
- (3) recognizing our tendency to sin and relying on his power to overcome it.

To people who are feeling guilty and condemned, the following verses offer hope:



Romans 8:33-34 \_\_\_\_\_

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Hebrews 7:24-25 \_\_\_\_\_

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Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. He can stand before God as our mediator because his death satisfied the wrath of God against sin and paid the death penalty for our sin. Thus Christ both satisfies God's requirement and removes our sin. In him we are forgiven and purified.

How can you be sure that you belong to Christ? This passage gives two ways to know:

1. if you do what Christ says
2. and if you live as Christ wants.

To "walk as Jesus did" or living as Christ did doesn't mean choosing 12 disciples, performing great miracles, and being crucified. We cannot merely copy Christ's life—much of what Jesus did had to do with his identity as God's Son, the fulfillment of his special role in dying for sin, and the cultural context of the first-century Roman world. To walk today as Christ did we must obey his teachings and follow his example of complete obedience to God and loving service to people.

The commandment to love others is both old and new. It is old because it comes from the Old Testament:

Read Leviticus 19:18 \_\_\_\_\_

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It is new because Jesus interpreted it in a new way. Read John 13:34-35 and record your findings here: \_\_\_\_\_

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In the Christian church, love is not only expressed by showing respect; it is also expressed through self-sacrifice and servanthood. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

John 15:13 \_\_\_\_\_

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In fact, it can be defined as "selfless, sacrificial giving," reaching beyond friends to enemies and persecutors. Read also Matthew 5:43-48: \_\_\_\_\_

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Love should be the unifying force and the identifying mark of the Christian community. Love is the key to walking in the light, because we cannot grow spiritually while we hate others. Our growing relationship with God will result in growing relationships with others.

Christian love is not a feeling but a choice. We can choose to be concerned with people's well-being and treat them with respect, whether or not we feel affection toward them. If we choose to love others, God will help us express our love.

## SACRIFICE INVOLVES SELFLESSNESS

Some people think that worldliness is limited to external behavior—the people we associate with, the places we go, the activities we enjoy. Worldliness is also internal because it begins in the heart and is characterized by three attitudes:

- (1) **the cravings of sinful man**—preoccupation with gratifying physical desires
- (2) **the lust of his eyes**—craving and accumulating things, bowing to the god of materialism
- (3) **boasting of what he has and does**—obsession with one’s status or importance.

When the serpent tempted Eve, he tempted her in these areas. Also, when the devil tempted Jesus in the desert, these were his three areas of attack.

Read the following verses and write your findings here:

Genesis 3:6 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 4:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

By contrast, God values self-control, a spirit of generosity, and a commitment to humble service. It is possible to give the impression of avoiding worldly pleasures while still harboring worldly attitudes in one’s heart. It is also possible, like Jesus, to love sinners and spend time with them while maintaining a commitment to the values of God’s kingdom.

When our attachment to possessions is strong, it’s hard to believe that what we want will one day pass away. It may be even harder to believe that the person who does the will of God will live forever. But this is our conviction based on the facts of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and promises. Knowing that this evil world and our desires for its pleasures will end can give us courage to control our greedy, self-indulgent behavior and to continue doing God’s will.

We usually think of the "last days" as the time between Christ's first and second comings. Antichrists (false teachers who pretend to be Christians and who lure weak members away from Christ) will appear. Finally, just before the world ends, one great antichrist will arise. Read the following verses:

Revelation 13 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 19:20 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 20:10 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

We do not need to fear these evil people, however. The Holy Spirit will show us their errors, so we will not be deceived. However, we must teach God's Word clearly and carefully to the peripheral, weak members among us so that they won't fall prey to these teachers who "come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves." Check these concepts against Matthew 7:15:

\_\_\_\_\_

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Today's antichrists are not total strangers to the church; they are in the church, but do not really belong to it. Some people may call themselves Christians for less than the best reasons. For some, going to church is a family tradition. Maybe they like the social and business contacts they make there. Or possibly going to church is a long-standing habit, and they have never stopped to ask themselves why they do it. What is your main reason for being a Christian? Unless it is a Christ-centered reason, you may not really belong. You don't have to settle for less than the best. You can become personally acquainted with Jesus Christ and become a loyal, trustworthy follower.

*Anointing* usually referred to the pouring out of special olive oil. Oil was used to consecrate kings and special servants for service, and also was used by the church when someone was sick.

Read the following verses:

1 Samuel 16:1,13 \_\_\_\_\_

James 5:14 \_\_\_\_\_

But no matter how much we learn, we must never abandon the basic truths about Christ. Jesus will always be God's Son, and his sacrifice for our sins is permanent. No truth will ever contradict these teachings in the Bible.

Christ had promised to send the Holy Spirit to teach his followers and to remind them of all that Christ had taught. Read John 14:26: \_\_\_\_\_

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As a result, Christians have the Holy Spirit within them to keep them from going astray. In addition, they have the God-inspired Scriptures, against which they can test questionable teachings. To stay true to Christ, we must follow his Word and his Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit help you discern truth from error.

It is important to realize that sacrificial living involves attitudes as well as choices.

## DON'T GET LAZY

It is important to realize that God doesn't allow our dependence on Him to be used as an excuse for indolence. Read Ecclesiastes 10:18 and Proverbs 20:4 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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We could summarize our thoughts as follows:

**OUR DUTY IS FOUND IN THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD.  
OUR TRUST MUST BE IN THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD.**

There is absolutely no conflict between trusting God and accepting our responsibility. We can clearly see that God's sovereignty does not do away with our duty to act responsibly.

The flip side of that thought is this:

Does failure on our part to act responsibly frustrate the sovereign plan of God? Read Esther 4:10-14 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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Once we understand that we are truly God's child, that we are not our own, that we've been purchased with a price, we can reorder our priorities—think differently—live with renewed thoughts. We are here in this time and in this place to do what God wants.

Read Ephesians 5:15-16 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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This is why Satan works so hard to keep our minds from being renewed. If we are saved, he can't take us back out of God's hand, but he can and does try to wreck the sort of life that we live.

Continue with Paul's thought in Ephesians 5:17-18 and record your thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

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The Holy Spirit helps us determine what God's will is. Our time is redeemed (bought back) when we walk under the control of the Spirit. This is very important. If we are

unwilling to walk under the control of the Spirit, we will not be able to tap into God's wisdom for us.

Read Romans 11:33 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Wisdom is commonly defined as good judgment. We think someone is wise if they can develop the best course of action, or respond the most appropriately to given circumstances. But, human wisdom is fallible. The wisest people never have all of the facts that God can have. From time to time, we all agonize over important decisions, trying to determine the best thing to do.

**GOD NEVER HAS TO AGONIZE OVER A DECISION! HE DOESN'T HAVE TO EMPLOY CONSULTANTS! HIS WISDOM IS INTUITIVE, INFINITE, INFALLIBLE.**

Read Psalm 147:5 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

God's actions result in His glory. Compare the following: Romans 1:21, Romans 11:36, Ephesians 1:12, John 15:8 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The good that God does in our lives is to refine us—to bring us into conformity with the likeness of His Son. It isn't necessarily for comfort or happiness.

Read Hebrews 12:10 and record what you learn about God's wisdom:

\_\_\_\_\_

Read also Psalm 119:71 and record your further thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Here we begin to see experiential learning discussed. We begin to see that our responsibility also includes learning from our circumstances. We begin by reading and studying the Word. But we also learn through the ways God works in our lives.

For example, we might admire the trait of patience, but we learn patience when we have to “suffer long.” (The definition of patience). This usually involves trials.

In fact, if we think carefully of the fruit of the Spirit, we will see that most of them have a “natural” counterpart. But the fruit become spiritual when they have been learned at a deeper level as a result of walking with the Spirit.

God’s wisdom is fathomless, his decisions are unsearchable. Read Romans 11:33, 34 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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Skim the book of Job. Think through what you learn of God’s revealed wisdom in this book. Especially concentrate on Job 42:3. Contrast this with Psalm 131:1 \_\_\_\_\_

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## THE UNIQUENESS OF OUR SACRIFICE

God is more concerned about our faith in Him, our firm belief that He can do what He desires through us, than He is in developing a handbook of operational methods. This is why God does not focus on a particular methodology. Although the church has developed many methods over time (is anyone thinking Pharisees?), we see God giving direction but rarely the specific instructions on how to accomplish it. This is where listening to the Spirit comes in!

When a person is a new Christian, they have to grow and learn to use their spiritual senses. They need to learn to function within their spiritual family. This takes time and experience, and the help of a believer who is farther along in his/her walk with God. God raises up and equips some people in the body specifically for the purpose of helping the new believer recognize his calling.

Read Ephesians 4:1-14 and record what you learn about giftings and discipling new believers \_\_\_\_\_

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Continue your reading in Philippians 3:12-15 \_\_\_\_\_

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Carefully reread the "great commission" found in Matthew 28:17-20. Is the goal to make converts or disciples? Who can be a disciple? \_\_\_\_\_

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Name the things that mature believers are to do for new believers:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

The job of a discipler isn't easy. In fact, it can be very time consuming. It is also spiritually demanding. There are certain things that the new believer must understand before he/she can begin to fully appreciate the uniqueness of an individual call to sacrificial living.

In the space provided, write how each of these can be accomplished. Provide a scriptural reference that affirms your entry:

Receive spiritual nourishment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Develop spiritual senses (discernment) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Develop a sensitivity to sin \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Learn the strategies of Satan \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Know the nature of confession \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Learn holy living (position yourself to hear from God) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Read Matthew 13:11 and see how this corresponds with your answers above:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Continue this thought in Matthew 13:16 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 5:13-14 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

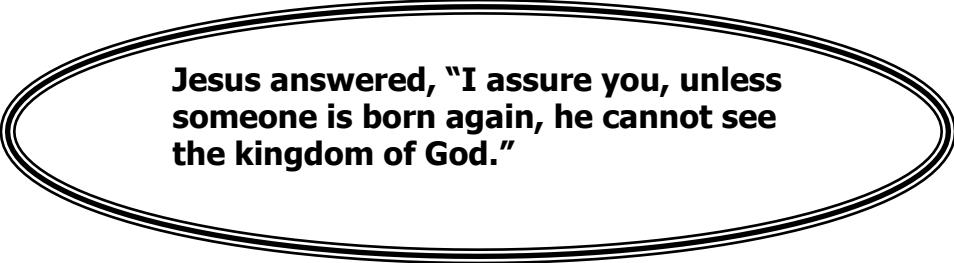
Hebrews 5:13-14 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus assured His disciples that they would hear and recognize His voice. Read John 10:2-4, 27 \_\_\_\_\_

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Unsaved people cannot understand what we are talking about when we quote the above verses.



**Jesus answered, "I assure you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

## FOLLOW THE LEADER

If you want to hear God's call, you have to be following Him. God takes the initiative. He leads. He most certainly wants human leaders as well. But they have to be yielded to God (standing in the light) and under His control.

Read John 12:26 \_\_\_\_\_

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Every teacher has a good sheep parable. Here is mine!

**One spring day, we were returning from a ski trip, driving east on I70, headed for Denver to catch a plane home. We rounded a mountain curve and traffic on the interstate was completely stopped. The reason? Several hundred sheep were on the road, in all four lanes. They were apparently unwilling to go back up the mountain on the north side of the road. They were unable to go down the mountain on the south side of the road because there was a guard rail. People began getting out of their cars trying to shoo the sheep around the rail, but the more the people shouted and waved their arms, the more distressed (and noisy) the sheep became. Not a single sheep actually got off of the road, despite the best efforts of the motorists. After ten minutes or so, a very disheveled shepherd came running down the mountain. He paused a few feet up the mountain from the roadway, looking over the sheep. Then, he calmly walked onto the road, told the motorists (politely) to please get back into their cars, went and took one sheep by the neck and led it around the guard rail. All of the others fell into line, following the shepherd and the lead sheep, and the road was cleared in a couple of minutes.**

This parable taught me a number of things:

1. Sheep don't seem to have great perception, so when people are compared to them, it might not be the nicest compliment we have ever received.
2. Sheep can get lost and have no idea how to get where they want to go.

3. Non-shepherds trying to act like shepherds create more chaos than helpful solutions. (screaming "shoo, fluffy" at the top of your lungs isn't helpful)
4. Sheep recognize the voice of the shepherd.
5. Sheep will follow a recognized leader sheep.

Read the following verses, and see if you can figure out the lessons I learned.

Isaiah 53:6 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 15:4-6 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 50:6 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

John 10:27 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

John 10:4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This is why we always have to be very, very careful when we decide to follow a particular leader.

2 Peter 2:1-3 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

This is also the reason that we are warned to beware those who only look like sheep. Read the following verses and journal your thoughts here:

2 Corinthians 11:14,15 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Complete your reading for this section in John 10:11-18 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

IF A CHRISTIAN DOES NOT KNOW WHEN GOD  
IS SPEAKING, HE/SHE IS IN TROUBLE AT THE HEART  
OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. IF THIS IS A  
DIFFICULTY FOR YOU, STOP EVERYTHING ELSE  
AND ASK GOD TO TEACH YOU UNTIL YOU  
ARE CERTAIN OF HIS VOICE.

## A LIVING SACRIFICE

When God knows that you are in a growing, loving, and responsive trustful relationship with Him, He continues His call on your life. This happens most usually in the middle of our daily routine. Through this routine, God calls a person to a special and deeper relationship with Him. It is remarkable that this daily response brings the enabling presence and power of the Holy Spirit into the forefront as we accomplish our assignment from God.

Today we will begin by looking at the life of Moses. Read the call of Moses in Exodus 3 and 4. Record the highlights here, noting specifically the sacrifice involved:

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Particularly note Exodus 4:14. But God placed His Spirit on Moses, and later the seventy elders who were appointed to work with him. Read Numbers 11:16-25 for this story: \_\_\_\_\_

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When God told Moses to build a tabernacle, God placed His Spirit on the men who would do the work. Read Exodus 35:30-36:21 for this story: \_\_\_\_\_

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Throughout the Bible, we see God placing the Spirit on people who are called to do His work. God has, in our time, given all true believers in Jesus, the Holy Spirit as a helper.

Read Ephesians 1:13 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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As we look at our nation today, we readily identify with the words of the prophet Ezekiel. Read Ezekiel 22:30 and record your thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

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Just as God has used the apostles, the believers of the early church, and the men and women of the Reformation, He desires to use us today. The world is changing and God is orchestrating His people for His purpose. So much is in the balance. God's process involves us.

Read 2 Chronicles 16:9 and relate it to yourself: \_\_\_\_\_

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The really good news is that God equips those He calls. Read Philippians 4:19 and write here how many of your needs are supplied: \_\_\_\_\_

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Read also 2 Corinthians 1:20 and 2 Peter 1:3-4 \_\_\_\_\_

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The Holy Spirit is God, present and active in our lives, enabling us to do whatever God has commanded. The Holy Spirit reveals, guides, and causes remembrance.

Read the following passages and record your thoughts:

John 16:13-15 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 2:9-16 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:26-28 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 6:17 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

It is important to remember that God can and will affirm His will for His servants. When God promises to do something, He does it. If you sense that you have heard God's will, but you don't see God doing what He promised, then God may be trying to tell you that either you are not in His will after all, or that His timing has not yet come. God may be taking the necessary time to develop character in your life before He can give you all He has planned for you. Ask God and He will guide you into the truth of your situation.

As we end this session, read the following verses:

Isaiah 46:11 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 14:24-27 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 Kings 8:56 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## RELATIONSHIP REQUIRED

One of the most difficult, even frightening, accounts in the Bible is found in Matthew 25:34-46. Read through these verses and journal your thoughts as we begin our study for this week: \_\_\_\_\_

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Particularly note the actions that were discounted here: \_\_\_\_\_

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If we saw Jesus walking down the road, thirsty and tired, we would definitely go out of our way to offer Him a drink. But would we go out of our way to help someone we didn't know? Someone who looked a bit bedraggled? Someone who looked a bit dangerous?

It is very clear in scripture that we aren't saved by doing good things. We all know people who do many "good things," honest people who love their families, and work hard, but who do not have a relationship with God.

Read Ephesians 2:8-10 \_\_\_\_\_

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But this passage also teaches us that God does have good works for us to do. And when we stand before Him, we will give an account of how we accomplished the work He had for us to do.

Many times people mistakenly think that Paul and James were at odds regarding salvation. Read James 2:14-20 and journal your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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James clearly believed that, if you really have saving faith, that faith will result in doing what God has for you to do. James also makes a distinction between "belief" and "saving faith."

Many who are not saved believe in Jesus. James tells us that demons believe. Muslims believe in Jesus. Some in New Age religions believe in Jesus. But these don't have a saving faith in Jesus. There is a HUGE difference.

God rewards those who live sacrificially out of their relationship with Him. One of the most important verses in all of scripture is found in 1 Corinthians 3:8. This verse speaks of the value of teamwork, and the rewards based on a person's individual contribution. If you have ever been a part of a team where everyone didn't do their share of the work, you are going to LOVE these verses. Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-9 and record what you learn here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Continue reading in 1 Corinthians 9:17-18 \_\_\_\_\_

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Our attitude toward the job that God gives us is very important. Read Colossians 3:23-25 and journal your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Complete your study for this section by reading the following verses, noting the time frame and what is promised:

Revelation 11:18 \_\_\_\_\_

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Revelation 22:12 \_\_\_\_\_

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## FORGIVENESS REQUIRED

When we begin to acknowledge that God is sovereign over people, nations, and nature, we sometimes begin to struggle with the reasons that God did not “fix” events in our lives for us. “Why me, God,” we ask. Keeping a proper attitude is difficult, especially when we realize that God’s sovereignty did not work events as we would have liked.

As we begin our study today, read John 5:1-9 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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For thirty-eight years, this man had been ill. He spent his days with those who were sick and crippled. He did not work because he had a physical ailment. The world gave him a living because fate had dealt him a torturous blow. When Jesus came along, He asked the man if he wanted to get well. Was this a valid question?

Sometimes in the midst of our sacrificial living, we begin to embrace an attitude of victimhood. We take our identity from our problems. We begin to love our hurts, sicknesses, and wounds.

**Why?** Because our pain brings attention and pity. We somehow receive comfort by seeing others reject those who have reject us.

**Why?** Because our wounds are an excuse for our shortcomings and failure. We reason that we “are the way we are because of what has happened to us.” Healing would remove the excuse to be what we are and make us responsible for becoming what we should be.

**Why?** Because we are angry with God. If God healed us, we would have some obligation to become what God wants us to be. To relinquish self would mean to lose control to God.

**Why?** Because we fear change. There is a “comfortableness” in our victimhood. Some don’t believe the change could really happen anyway.

And, so, Jesus asked the man if he wanted to be healed. To be healed, in light of God’s sovereignty, almost inevitably means that some forgiveness must occur. In the physical world, we know that our wounds never heal unless they are cleaned. The same principle applies to the spiritual and emotional levels of mankind. Healing won’t come by ignoring the debris or putting a bandage over the wound.

You can never cover the infection of hurt and expect to get well. The wound must be opened and thoroughly cleaned. Then healing can be done. This doesn't mean that we uncover things that we have already confessed or that we rummage around using unbiblical methods. Read Philippians 3:13 and record what you learn:

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However, things that have been denied, or buried, need to be exposed. God can call this to our minds as we pray according to Psalm 139:23-34.

If there is anyone in the Bible who demonstrates forgiveness, it is Joseph. Read Genesis 37:1-36 and summarize what you learn about Joseph's rejection by his brothers: \_\_\_\_\_

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Read on in Genesis 39:1-23 and record the temptation Joseph suffered, and his unjust imprisonment: \_\_\_\_\_

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Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 and record what you learn in this regard: \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Genesis 50:20 and record Joseph's eventual position: \_\_\_\_\_

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Now, read Matthew 6:14-15 and record what you learn about forgiveness:

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Finally, we will conclude our study today by reading Matthew 18:21-35. Read Jesus' response very carefully. What was the teaching of the story?

When reviewing stories such as this, we must always remember that God assures us of forgiveness. Read Hebrews 10:10 and record what you learn:

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A guilty conscience can destroy relationships, emotions, and even cause physical illness. There is no guilt that cannot be cared for at the mercy seat of God. Read Hebrews 10:19-22 and reflect on what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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Whether sin is blatant or disguised, the only way to receive God's forgiveness is through the blood of Jesus Christ. God's forgiveness is an act of grace that is appropriated by acknowledging sin and accepting pardon.

Read 1 Timothy 1:15 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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God wants His children to walk in the reality of forgiveness—from Him to us, and from us toward others. How can we do this? Here are some practical steps:

1. 1 John 1:9. Agree with God that you have sinned. "Confess" is from the Greek homologeō which means "to say the same thing."
2. James 4:17. Accept responsibility for the sin.
3. Matthew 5:23-24. Tell God that you are willing to make restitution if necessary.
4. Romans 5:20. Thank God for the blood of Jesus which cleanses sin.
5. Romans 8:1. Take God at his word.
6. Galatians 5:16. Thank God for the Holy Spirit that helps us with struggle with lust of the flesh.

When we have suffered unjustly at the hands of others, it is hard to forgive, especially if the other person isn't sorry for what they have done. What can we do when we have no desire to forgive?

1. Realize that forgiveness is a matter of the will, not of the emotions. To forgive is a matter of choice.
2. Realize that forgiving another person does not let that person "off the hook" with God. Verify by reading Hebrews 10:26-27.

Read Luke 7:36-50. Discuss the point of the story that Jesus told Simon the Pharisee. Contrast the love of the Pharisee and the love of the woman. Were they both sinners? What made the difference in their responses to Jesus?

To refuse to forgive is sin. To obey and forgive is to love God and keep His word. Take some time to review what you have learned this week about forgiveness. Record any areas where you need to exercise forgiveness toward those who have wronged you.

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Conclude your homework this week by reading the following verses and recording what you learn:

Ephesians 5:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

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1 John 4:20-21 \_\_\_\_\_

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## COUNT IT ALL JOY

One of the hardest things to do is to hang on to joy when we have been living sacrificially and things are still going wrong.

As we conclude our study on sacrificial living, read James 1:2-3 and journal your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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There is a moral joy which is a delight of the mind arising from the consideration of a present or assured possession of some future good.

There is also a joy that arises from doing the right thing. It leads to peace and a clear conscience before God.

Spiritual joy is a spiritual fruit that develops as we are directed by God and live accordingly.

Philippians 4:4-7 gives us some valuable information. Read those verses and in the space below, write your part and God's part:

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In the parable of the talents, Jesus stresses the "joy of the Lord" which is the reward of faithfulness

Read Matthew 25:21-23 and write your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Jesus His followers not only with peace, but also participation in His own fullness of joy.

Paul speaks of joy as one of the fruits of the spirit and of "joy in the Holy Spirit" as an essential mark of the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:22 \_\_\_\_\_

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Romans 14:17 \_\_\_\_\_

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Even our Jesus Himself "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame."

As we end our study on sacrificial living, read through Hebrews 12:1-3 and write what you learn here:

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