

# Strengthening Your Walk

## Introduction:

This series of lessons is intended to help us grow in our walk with the Savior. Repenting of one’s sins, asking Jesus to come in our hearts and accepting Jesus as the Master of our lives is the beginning of the believer’s walk with Him. God intended for believers to be victorious to the end—“...but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Mark 13:13). From the early church until now, believers have needed tools to strengthen their walk. The following lessons address some of the tools and concepts that every believer needs in order to be a victorious Christian. Walk with us.

*Pastor Jon*

*A very heartfelt thanks to all who contributed to the writing of these lessons, but special thanks to Elder J. Carson and Sis. D. Carson for their contribution in the editing and compilation of this work.*

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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible, public domain.

We are pleased to share these lessons for your spiritual enrichment. As with the ACTS magazine, we would like to take a moment and remind our readers that the General Council Churches of God, (Seventh Day), is in a state of constant growth and we all have different backgrounds, it is possible that your views may differ somewhat from those presented in this study. We pray these lessons may be used as a point of entry for your own study.

*“Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21 NKJV).*

# Lesson 1: The Importance of the Word

**Scripture Text:** John 1:1-14

**Memory Verse:** *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”*  
John 1:1

**Lesson Aim:** To highlight the importance and power of the Word in the life of the believer.

The memory verse speaks of the “Word” that was in the beginning, that was with and that was God. The Word embodies the personage, character, plan and eternal purpose of God which will never fail, for it is the very expression of God Himself. John 1:14 also states that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus is the Word and Colossians 2:9 describes Him as being the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

The Word is the same as God and is the same yesterday, today and forever. The Word is creative, self-fulfilling, powerful, true, inerrant, infallible, complete, and life giving. It is trustworthy and sure. God’s Word is settled forever in heaven. Earth and heaven may pass away, but the Word of God will never pass away (Luke 21:33).

God’s power is in His Word and the Spirit of God is the breath of God. It is impossible to speak without breathing. Therefore, all creation is the result of the Word of God going forth through His Spirit (God’s breath).

The Word is the consistent, absolute standard by which all other expressions, concepts, revelations, doctrines, decrees, preaching or teachings, and prophecies are measured. The Word reveals God and portrays His eternal principles and ordinances.

No angel, no human, no devil or any other power in the whole universe can keep the Word from eternally being and becoming all it proclaims.

The Word must be the sole source and foundation of our beliefs. Our success in overcoming depends on the Word because the Word is a mighty weapon of warfare. *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12).

Members of the Body of Christ should value the Holy Bible because it contains the substantive record of the Word of God. We should cherish it and hide it in our hearts to avoid sinning against God. In addition, we should memorize the Word and audibly declare and live by it.

## **Interact with God’s Word:**

1. Why is the Word of God so important? Psalm 119:140, 160; 138:2; John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 1:1-2; Luke 4:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17
2. Identify 11 outstanding functions or attributes of the Word of God in the following scriptures. Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 30:5; Jeremiah 23:29; John 17:17; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12
3. What did Jesus say about the words He spoke? Matthew 7:24-25; 24:35; John 6:63
4. Discuss the following New Testament Scriptures, i.e., how their fulfillment requires the believer to practice memorization, meditation, confession and profession of the Word of God. John 15:7; Mark 11:23-24; James 5:15; 1 John 5:14
5. Why is Bible reading and study so important? 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:12-16

## Lesson 2: The Battle of the Mind – Part 1

**Scripture Text:** Romans 7:14-25

**Memory Verse:** *“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”* Matthew 22:37

**Lesson Aim:** To help us recognize the importance of our minds and the significance of the battle of the mind.

God created man with incredible mental faculties. Before the fall, Adam had a perfect body, with a magnificent brain. He was fearfully and wonderfully made. Of all God’s creation, man is the only one that shares God’s image, including the ability to think and be creative. Though very minute compared to God’s abilities, the gift of the mind is nonetheless incredibly powerful. The mind is where our intellect, heart (as in emotions and will), perceptions, feelings, desires and thoughts (conscious and subconscious) exist. You cannot see the mind but it is real and governs whether we serve God or yield to the enemy.

When God created Adam, He gave him dominion and authority over everything on this earth (Genesis 1:28). He was blessed with super memory, recognition, communication and decision-making skills. He related directly with God. His mind was pure. There were no obstacles of doubt, fear, inferiority, guilt or unbelief until the serpent intervened. Satan knew that the only way he could rob man of his position with God was through the gateway of the mind.

It was a strategic move. Knowing the location of the battle with the enemy is vitally important. The serpent did not attack Eve’s body. He placed a subtle attack on her mind. From that time, we have been at war with the adversary; and he has maintained a continuous assault on our minds. Our minds are where the battle between good and evil begins. It is in our thought life that we are either victorious over the enemy or we lose the battle.

Our thoughts determine our destiny. We are what we think in our hearts. Adam and Eve were not forced to yield their minds to the enemy. Their minds were something over which they had control. Each had free moral will. They could either choose to believe God or believe the enemy. They chose to listen to and believe the adversary and were thus separated from God.

Once they ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, their eyes were opened; and their minds were flooded with more thoughts inspired by the enemy. Through Adam we inherited fear, shame, blame, curses, rejection, rationalization and further exposure to the enemy’s tricks.

The enemy continues to attack us through our minds. The unprecedented level of psychological disorders and mental illness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is evidence that the enemy has increased his assault on human minds in the last days. Neuroses, psychotic disorders, emotional disorders, etc., are conditions that do not have to be the case for believers.

Once we comprehend the location of the battle and are aware of the enemy’s strategy, we are better able to withstand and resist him. Jesus recognized the location of the battle and the enemy’s tactics and soundly thrashed the devil with the Word of God. As joint-heirs of the Kingdom, we have been given the same power, authority and ability as Jesus, and we can be just as victorious in the battlefield of the mind.

### Interact with God’s Word:

1. What do these Scriptures tell us about the important role of the mind? Proverbs 23:7; Matthew 22:37; Romans 8:4-8; Luke 6:45
2. What functions of the mind/heart are identified in the following scriptures? Genesis 6:5; 2 Samuel 17:8; Nehemiah 4:6; Mark 2:8; Luke 9:47; Romans 7:23; 2 Corinthians 1:15, 17; Titus 3:1
3. Paul describes the battle in Romans 7:14-25. Identify and discuss the significant factors in the conflict.

## Lesson 3: The Battle of the Mind – Part 2

**Scripture Text:** Genesis 3:1-7

**Memory Verse:** *“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”*  
2 Corinthians 2:11

**Lesson Aim:** To expose how the enemy attacks our minds.

Let’s look at the specific strategies that Satan uses to attack us. It was in the battle of the mind that Satan defeated Eve. First, the enemy deceives us and casts doubt into our minds about God’s Word. Satan knew that God had commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but he planted doubt in Eve’s mind. He lied to her and got her to question God’s Word. He uses the same approach today.

The first mistake Eve made was listening to Satan. She knew what God had said. After all, she had perfect memory. Yet rather than resist the devil, she listened to the devil contradict God’s Word and had a conversation with him. She began to entertain thoughts of doubt about God’s integrity and His holiness and believed the devil’s accusation that God was holding something back and did not mean what He said.

Next, the enemy appealed to her eyes. The fruit looked good. Every sin starts with a thought. Thoughts lead to feelings; feelings will lead to words. Words lead to actions. Before she knew it, Eve was eating the fruit.

Thousands of years later, we find Satan approaching Jesus in much the same way. He approached Jesus by twisting God’s Word, but this time he met more than his match. Jesus did not entertain the devil but resisted him by rebuking the devil and affirming the Word of God.

There are many Christians living in defeat because they listen to Satan’s lies. Instead of recognizing him as a liar, they continue listening, trying to reason with him, and fall into his trap. To live in victory over Satan, we must submit to God and resist the devil (James 4:7).

The enemy is an opportunist; and he is constantly looking for areas in our lives through which he can enter and dominate. Any area of our lives (including our thought life) that is not submitted to God, will be fertile ground for the enemy. When we habitually succumb to the wiles of the enemy, we establish a house of thoughts through which he can find comfort to wreak havoc in our lives.

In order to win the battle of the mind, we must do like Jesus: (1) know who the real enemy is; (2) know God’s voice and obey; (3) be full of the Spirit; and (4) be fully armored. These factors will allow us to recognize every desire, imagination and thought contrary to God’s Word, and give us the victory again and again.

### **Interact with God’s Word:**

1. Satan came at Eve with a subtle attack that cast doubt on the authority of God’s Word. Genesis 3:1-5  
How is he still using this strategy today? Discuss and give examples.
2. Consider Satan’s approach when he tempted Jesus. What did he appeal to? Luke 4:1-12
3. What are the three areas that we have to contend with according to 1 John 2:16?
4. How do these three areas relate to the temptations Jesus faced? Hebrews 4:15
5. What can we learn from the following Scriptures? 1 Peter 5:8; Luke 22:31; 2 Corinthians 2:9-11
6. In the final paragraph of the introduction, four points were noted which contributed to Jesus’ victory over Satan. How can we relate these to our battles?
  - Knowing who the real enemy is.
  - Knowing God’s voice and being obedient.
  - Being full of the Spirit.
  - Being fully armored.

## Lesson 4: Developing Spiritual Disciplines

**Scripture Text:** 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

**Memory Verse:** *“But his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”*  
Psalm 1:2

**Lesson Aim:** To introduce the importance and benefits of developing spiritual disciplines.

What are spiritual disciplines? A spiritual discipline is a habit or regular pattern in our life that repeatedly brings us back to God. Spiritual disciplines are tools that work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, opening us up to what God is saying and doing.

Why do we need to develop them? We need to develop spiritual disciplines because they are the tools we use to win the battle. They train us to stay on a godly course and help us keep the channels open. Spiritual disciplines help keep our hearts turned toward God, keeping our relationship with God in good standing and developing intimacy.

Some of the spiritual disciplines we should use to develop us into mature Christ-like believers include: Bible study; prayer; fasting; worship; silence and solitude; meditation; and submission.

Our first lesson addressed the importance of the Word and the need to read and study the Bible. It is our life. Subsequent lessons will address prayer, fasting, praise and worship. In this lesson, we want to consider the overlooked spiritual disciplines of silence and solitude, meditation, and submission.

We live in a busy world. Hearing the still, small voice of our Creator can become difficult when we are continually preoccupied with work, school, our “to do” lists, ministry, crowds, TV, radio and entertainment. It is necessary for us to take time to pull away and be alone with God. Jesus did. Silence goes with solitude. There are times we just need to be quiet and listen.

Combined with prayer, fasting and solitude, meditation is one of the powerful ways that God speaks to us. Through meditation we can get to a place where we know His voice because we have spent time seeking His presence and desiring to know His heart and mind. When our heart begins to contemplate and consider a biblical truth or passage or just the goodness of God, meditation allows the truth to become rooted in us, allowing it to become alive and practical.

Submission is not a popular word these days, but it is necessary in order to be like Christ. The Greek word *hupotasso*, translated as “submit” means “to place in an orderly fashion under something.” Submission is a necessity in the body of Christ, but sometimes it has also been misused. The greedy, prideful or covetous have used submission to take advantage of people. Others have completely rejected submission and live as an island, independent of accountability and responsibility. However, the misuse and rejection of submission in no way negates its necessity.

The congregation is to submit to the elders, the wife to her husband, and the children to their parents. We are to submit to the Word of God whether or not the pastor, my spouse or child confronts me with truth. When I submit, I place myself under the authority of another because of the truth of God’s Word.

### **Interact with God’s Word:**

1. If a new believer approached you and asked, “How do I become more like Christ,” what instruction would you give?
2. In general, why is it necessary to develop spiritual disciplines? 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Psalm 119:11; 2 Peter 3:13-14
3. What does it mean to meditate? Luke 2:19; Proverbs 4:26-27.
4. What are some benefits of meditation? Psalm 1:2-3; Joshua 1:8-9; Romans 12:2
5. How did Jesus use solitude in His life and ministry? Luke 5:16; 6:12; Mark 1:35; Matthew 4:1-2
6. In what ways and at what times might we pursue solitude and silence? Psalm 4:4; 77:6; 139:18; Galatians 1:16-19
7. How does learning to submit help free us from our demands to get our own way? Philippians 2:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:24; Romans 12:10

## Lesson 5: Exercising Faith

**Scripture Text:** Matthew 7:7-11

**Memory Verse:** *“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”* Hebrews 10:3

**Lesson Aim:** To emphasize the importance of faith and encourage active and practical application of faith.

Faith is a must for successful Kingdom living. We all have a measure of faith (Romans 12:3). We receive it from God when we become a new creation in Him. When you accepted Christ, you were immediately enrolled in the “school of faith.” School is where we learn and grow. It is where we are introduced to concepts, their application and use.

Hebrews 11:1 lets us know that *“... faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.”* We do not need faith for what we already have or for what we can see. For example, faith in God’s Word is our only evidence for God, salvation, healing, provision, baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection. Except for the Word of God, what else do we have to stand on? Nothing.

That is why we must walk by faith and not by sight. To walk by faith is to use our faith to live a life that is built upon and totally reliant on God’s Word. This God-kind of faith is totally independent of our sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. It is a life that is lived in expectation and anticipation of God’s Word becoming a reality in our lives. This faith influences how we think, speak, and deal with the challenges of life.

Paul clearly instructed the church at Rome that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Notice that the verse did not say “faith comes by having heard.” Hearing is ongoing. We need to hear the Word and keep hearing it. We must surround ourselves with the Word of God. This is why attendance at services and Bible studies is so important. It is the repeated hearing of the Word of God that builds faith.

God does not play games and cruel jokes. He is better than our earthly fathers. The Bible says that God will give good things to them that ask Him (Matthew 7:11). That’s because He loves us. We must believe that God rewards those that diligently seek Him. That alone is sufficient reason to exercise our faith.

### **Interact with God’s Word:**

1. Why is faith essential? Hebrews 11:6
2. How do we receive faith? Romans 10:14, 17; Romans 12:3
3. What good is it if we say we have faith, but not the results? James 2:14-17
4. What is the relationship between faith and prayer? Mark 11:24; Matthew 21:21-22; James 5:14-16
5. Why is it important that we believe what the Word says rather than rely on our feelings and our minds? Romans 7:18; 1 Corinthians 2:5, 14; Romans 8:5-8
6. How do we act on the Word? James 1:22

## Lesson 6: Strength through Prayer

**Scripture Text:** James 5:13-18

**Memory Verse:** *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”* 2 Chronicles 7:14

**Lesson Aim:** To understand the authority and power of prayer.

Prayer is important to the believer. Because of its importance in the Christian life, we cannot overemphasize the need for and the benefits of prayer. It is important to the Church, its ministry and the ministering brethren. The disciples gave a lot of weight to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

Prayer may be defined as addressing God with adoration, confession, supplication, petition or thanksgiving, but in its most simple form, prayer is just talking with God. It is the means by which we converse with God. A conversation is two-way; it requires speaking and listening. However, prayer has even a greater meaning. It is the key to developing an intimate relationship with God, where communion with Him becomes natural.

What is the purpose of prayer? In the words of Dr. Myles Munroe, “Prayer is to commune with God, to become one with God. It means union with Him—unity and singleness of purpose, thought, desire, will, reason, motive, objective and feelings.”<sup>1</sup> Another purpose for praying is to understand God’s will and purpose for our lives. Prayer connects man to God so that man can function in His purpose.

Third, through prayer we can call forth what God has already purposed and predestined.<sup>2</sup> Fourth, “prayer is earthly license for heavenly interference.”<sup>3</sup> In Genesis 1:26, God gave man dominion over the earth and in verse 28, He commanded man to be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it. Man was given dominion over the fish, the birds, and every living thing that moved on the earth. Prayer is the way by which we exercise our God-given dominion on the earth by giving God the freedom to impact affairs on earth.

Prayer is a powerful tool, but a tool has no value unless we use it. We cannot expect anything if we do not pray. Then, when we pray, we must pray correctly. There are laws or principles that govern the success and effectiveness of prayer. We may be praying, but we may be praying incorrectly. What we believe and say when we pray, and after we pray, impact the results.

Since we are the Body of Christ, the same power in prayer that Jesus had should be manifested in us. Once we fully understand the position and authority that Jesus won by triumphing over sin, death and hell, and that this authority has been transferred to us, we will walk in the dominion that God originally purposed for us.

God has restored us to our original purpose and it is through Jesus that we have the right to pray with authority. God does not want sin, demonic powers, negative circumstances or unrighteous forces to govern your world. We need and want results, not just reaction. Therefore, our ability to agree with God by faith greatly impacts the power of our prayers.

Jesus was a master of prayer because He fully understood the legal authority governing prayer and He understood the purpose of prayer. Our prayers will determine what happens here on earth. Prayer is mandatory, not optional. Let us discover our power, authority and rights on earth so that we can bring heaven’s influence to the earth.

### Interact with God’s Word:

1. What does prayer have the power to do? James 5:13-18
2. What is effectual fervent prayer?
3. What part does humility play in empowering our prayers? James 4:6; 2 Chronicles 7:14
4. Consider James 4:1-3. What are some ways that we pray wrong? How do we correct that? James 4:7-10
5. What do you think made Jesus effective in prayer? John 11:41-43
6. How does prayer strengthen you? Luke 22:41-44; Psalm 138:3; Jude 1:20
7. What can you do to make prayer more practical and effective in your life?

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<sup>1</sup> Myles Munroe, *Understanding the Purpose and Power of Prayer* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2002), 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

## Lesson 7: Strength through Fasting

**Scripture Text:** Isaiah 58:1-12

**Memory Verse:** *“Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.”* Joel 2:12

**Lesson Aim:** To gain an understanding of fasting, its purpose and power.

It is time to fast! Learning to fast is one of the keys to successful Christian living, but in our society, the thought of depriving oneself of any indulgence seems ridiculous. Sometimes the mere mentioning of the word causes something to quiver inside of us. As noted by the late Dr. Bill Bright, “Fasting is the most powerful spiritual discipline of all the Christian disciplines.”<sup>1</sup> Fasting addresses our self-serving attitude the most directly.

Fasting is the voluntary abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Fasting may seem unfamiliar and frightening to some people, but fasting was regularly practiced by God’s people throughout the Bible. Fasting is also an accepted practice in most other world religions, for example, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

Fasting is a biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). Throughout Scripture, God requires His people to humble themselves before Him. Fasting will humble us under the mighty hand of God (1 Peter 5:6) and position us to deny the carnal for the spiritual.

The late Derek Prince put it this way, “... the essential nature of fasting is renouncing the natural to invoke the supernatural. The most natural thing for us to do is to eat. When we give up eating, we are deliberately turning away from the natural by turning to God and to the supernatural. This has deep significance.”<sup>2</sup>

Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life. The Holy Spirit will quicken the Word of God in your heart and His truth will become more meaningful to you!

Through fasting, you can transform your prayer life into a richer and more personal experience. The dynamic personal revival in your own life will make you a channel of revival to others.

There are a number of different fasts in the Bible, e.g., (1) the absolute fast, i.e., no food/no water as in the case of Esther (Esther 4:16) or the city of Nineveh (Jonah 3:7); (2) the supernatural absolute fast as with Moses (Deuteronomy 9:9); (3) the Daniel fasts (see Daniel 1:12, 10:3). In terms of the length of fasts, Biblical examples include one day (as in the Day of Atonement), three days, 10 days, 21 days and 40 days, but please note that fasting is about the condition of the heart, not the number of days.

As preparation for special time with God, you want to examine your heart for any unconfessed sin. Confess not only the obvious ones, but the less obvious ones, too—sins of commission as well as sins of omission, e.g., spiritual indifference, worldly-mindedness, low priority for God, poor relationships. If you need to ask forgiveness or forgive others, do that, too.

When you fast, you want to refrain from secular media and entertainment (TV, movies, novels, comics, etc.). Couples should also refrain from sex (1 Corinthians 7:5). You will want to schedule your time so that you can spend more time with God in fellowship, worship, and adoration. The more you read and meditate upon His Word, the greater your effectiveness will be in prayer and the more meaningful your fast will be.

### Interact with God’s Word:

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| 1. Draw a line to match the following fast(er)s with their length.   | Esther           | 1 day            |
| 2. Why did the people of Nineveh fast and what were the results?<br>Jonah 3  | Moses            | 3 days absolute  |
| 3. What can we learn from Isaiah 58:1-7 about our fasting being acceptable to the Lord?  | Daniel           | 40 days absolute |
| 4. How did Jesus advise His disciples about fasting? Matthew 6:16-18   | Day of Atonement | 10 days          |
| 5. We encourage believers to make fasting a part of their personal spiritual discipline, but there is a time for corporate fasting. Why is it important that God’s people as a group (congregation, community or nation) fast together? Joel 2:12-19 |                  |                  |

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Bill Bright, *Your Personal Guide to Fasting and Prayer* (Campus Crusade for Christ International). Web. 06 January 2012. <<http://www.ccci.org/training-and-growth/devotional-life/personal-guide-to-fasting/index.htm>>.

<sup>2</sup> Derek Prince, *Fasting* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2002), 16.

## Lesson 8: Strength through Praise

**Scripture Text:** Psalm 149

**Memory Verse:** *“Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightiest still the enemy and the avenger.”* Psalm 8:2

**Lesson Aim:** To inform or remind us that praising God is an effective tool in the weaponry of the Christian.

It is probably safe to say that the church at large understands very well that praises exalt God. We are often admonished by our worship leaders and moderators to praise the Lord. We do it because God is good and He deserves our praise. But fewer of us praise God with the understanding that praise is a powerful weapon of warfare.

In 2 Corinthians 10:4, Paul wrote, *“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)”* We cannot use carnal weapons because *“...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers”* (Ephesians 6:12). These scriptures tell us that this faith walk is a war.

We must understand that the Bible teaches that we, the Church, are to enter into spiritual warfare and fight with spiritual weapons; and praise is one of the weapons we must use. Praise is powerful, but as it is with any other weapon, if we use it without having a good understanding of how it should be used, it will be ineffective. God ordained our praise because of our enemies. When we praise God, we do ourselves a favor and great damage to the enemy.

Satan, is ruthless. He does not want us to prosper. He wants to strip us of our possessions, our physical and emotional health, and our spiritual inheritance. The devil has invaded many of our territories and has taken what belongs to us. Jesus said, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy”* (John 10:10, NIV). For the Israelites to possess Canaan, they had to go to war. To possess what is promised to us, we will have to enter into spiritual warfare. In war, we must be fully armed, and praise is one of the weapons we should have in possession.

Psalm 149:6-9 tells us that our praises can execute vengeance upon the heathen and punishments upon the people. Our praises can bind kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron, and they can execute the written judgment upon them. Our high praises can immobilize the powers of darkness. They can stop the adversary from executing whatever plans or strategies he and his throng have in place. We have a weapon of warfare to drive out the forces of darkness and take possession of what God has given us.

Praise has the power to stir the heart of God and cause Him to rise up with a zeal and vengeance against our enemies. Praise creates the atmosphere for God to manifest Himself as a warrior. The Lord rises up as a mighty man of war on our behalf when we praise Him. Our praises get God’s attention. They put our Jehovah- Nissi (the Lord is my banner) in the mood to come where we are and defend us against the enemy of our souls. So, use the ready and powerful weapon of praise.

### **Interact with God’s Word:**

1. What two elements need to be present in order for our praise to be effective? Psalm 149:6 and Psalm 47:6-7
2. Knowing that God has given us the privilege to use this weapon of warfare, how should we feel? Psalm 149:9 Discuss in the context of 2 Corinthians 10:4 and Ephesians 6:12.
3. God needs a place of habitation in order to war on our behalf. How do we create this place of habitation? Psalm 22:3; Exodus 15:1-3
4. Discuss how 2 Chronicles 20 is or is not a demonstration of this: Praise creates the atmosphere for God to manifest Himself as a warrior. The Lord rises up as a mighty man of war on our behalf when we praise Him.
5. Our praises stimulate action from God. Discuss using Psalm 68:1-4; Isaiah 30:29-32, and Isaiah 42:10-13.

## Lesson 9: Holy Spirit Empowerment

**Scripture Text:** John 14:15-26

**Memory Verse:** *“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”* Romans 15:13

**Lesson Aim:** To outline the impact the Holy Spirit should have in the life of the believer.

The Holy Spirit (Spirit of God) is first mentioned in Genesis 1:2. There the Spirit of God is involved in creating the heaven and the earth and everything else that is in them. The work of the Holy Spirit is awesome. He is alive, creative, powerful, influential, and overwhelming.

Almost 2,000 years ago, the Holy Spirit made an incredible impact on the Day of Pentecost. The disciples were empowered, giving them unsurpassed zeal and fervor. The fearful, cowering disciples were transformed into powerful witnesses. Rivers of living water began to flow. People received salvation, were healed, delivered, set free from demonic oppression and filled with gladness and joy.

That same experience is for us today. Every believer should seek for the power that comes from being full of the Holy Spirit. The following paragraphs discuss five areas of empowerment that result from the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The power to witness (Acts 1:8). The baptism of the Holy Spirit gives us power to be witnesses of Jesus Christ—not a doctrine, not just an experience, but of Jesus Himself.

Power for prayer. This experience should produce a revolution in the believer’s prayer life. Notice Romans 8:26-27, *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”*

In this aspect of prayer, the believer becomes a temple in which the Holy Ghost conducts a prayer meeting. When you are baptized with the Holy Ghost you become an instrument of the Holy Spirit, and He prays through you. Ephesians 6:18 and Jude 20 encourage praying in the Spirit. You may not always pray in your understanding, but the Holy Spirit can.

Teaching and understanding. *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance...”* (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit is the greatest teacher of the Scriptures. He is also the great revealer of Jesus. The Bible is the written Word. The Holy Spirit is the author of the written Word. What better teacher could we want?

Guidance. We need supernatural guidance and direction to live in victory. *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself ... and he will shew you things to come.”* (John 16:13). If we live merely in the natural, we will go wrong many times. Noah had a supernatural revelation of what was coming to the earth. He was given the steps to take and the way to safety. Likewise, in these chaotic days we need to have contact with heaven in a very real and personal way.

Unity. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, *“In one spirit we were all baptized into one body.”* God had a unifying purpose in baptizing believers with the Holy Ghost. It is not to separate them, but to unite them.

### Interact with God’s Word:

1. In what ways does the Holy Spirit enable a believer to be a witness for Jesus? Mark 16:15-20; Matthew 5:16, 43-46; John 14:26
2. In what way does the Holy Spirit impact our prayer life? Romans 8:26-27; Jude 20
3. How does the Holy Spirit impact our understanding? 1 Corinthians 2:9-14
4. In what ways can the Holy Spirit guide us? John 16:13; Acts 11:12; 13:2; 16:7
5. How does the Holy Spirit bring unity? Ephesians 4:1-4, 11-13; 1 Corinthians 12:13

## Lesson 10: Strength through Fellowship

**Scripture Text:** 1 John 1:3-7

**Memory Verse:** *“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”*

Romans 12:5

**Lesson Aim:** To explain why we need to be connected to God’s family.

Everybody needs somebody. Several years ago, our church conducted a “40 Days of Community” campaign. We learned that we are “better together.” Whether it is in worship, outreach, serving or growing, it is better when we do it together. No one is intended to live life alone. We were created to be a part of a community. We need each other.

As newborn babies, we are dependent. Someone has to take care of us, feed us, protect us (even from ourselves) and nurture us. We eventually grow enough to become more independent. We are able to take care of ourselves, feed and fend for ourselves. Ultimately, we want to be interdependent, reflecting the need each of us has for each other and meeting one another’s needs. This is true in the natural as well as the spiritual. There is strength in true community. Community is God’s answer to loneliness, fatigue, defeat, despair and fear. Let’s look at five reasons we need to be a part of a church community.

(1) We need others to **walk** with us. The spiritual life is a walk. We should always be moving toward the Kingdom. We are to walk in the light, walk by faith, walk in love, walking in obedience, walk in wisdom. God did not intend for you to walk this walk alone. You may prefer to walk alone, but when you walk through life with other people, it is safer. Isolation brings death. Walking with others is supportive and it’s smarter. You learn more and faster when you go through life with other people close to you. Community is God’s answer to loneliness.

(2) We need others to **work** with us. You were put here to work (Ephesians 2:10). Your good works are your ministry. Anytime you use the talents and gifts God has given you to help other people, that’s called ministry or service. However, you were not put here to do it all by yourself. You get more done and enjoy it better when you work together with someone else (Ecclesiastes 4:9). Community is God’s answer to fatigue.

(3) We need others to **watch out** for us. We need people to defend, stand up and warn us. In the same way, that some places have a “Neighborhood Watch”, so it is in the community faith. We are under attack. Many people are defeated because they try to fight their flesh and the devil on their own—habits that they cannot seem to break, hurts they cannot forgive, hang-ups that they can’t hang up, closets that they won’t clean up, problems, circumstances, situations and bad relationships that mess up their lives. They go into battle alone and naked – no people and no armor. Who is watching your back? Community is God’s answer to defeat.

(4) We need others to **weep and wait** for us. There are inevitable crises of life. We need people in our lives when we get bad news. We were not meant to face life’s crises alone. Community is God’s answer to despair.

(5) We need others to **witness** with us. One of the best ways to witness to people who do not know the love of Jesus is by our love one to another (John 13:35). It’s not the buildings, music and programs, but our love for others that matters. Perfect love casts out fear and there is great power in group witness. Each of us has a life message. Is anybody going to be in the Kingdom because of you? Community is God’s answer to fear.

### Interact with God’s Word:

1. Why do you think the writer of Hebrews instructed the believers as he did in Hebrews 10:24-25?
2. How does Colossians 2:6-7 connect with the concept of walking together?
3. How does Ecclesiastes 4:9-11 address God’s answer to loneliness?
4. How does Paul admonish the saints in the context of being there to weep and wait for each other? 1 Peter 3:8; Romans 12:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 12:26
5. What has been your experience when witnessing? Has it been easier when done together with someone else? Philippians 1:27

# Lesson 11: Learning to Forgive

**Scripture Text:** Luke 17:1-5

**Memory Verse:** “Great peace have they that love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.” Psalm 119:165

**Lesson Aim:** To emphasize the importance of learning to forgive.

Forgiving does not come naturally. It is not in our human nature to forgive. Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness was radical. The apostles were so challenged by Jesus’ response in Luke 17:4 that they cried out to the Lord, “*Increase our faith.*” Jesus let us know that we must love even our enemies. Forgiveness is still a challenge for us today.

Jesus admonished the disciples that if a brother trespassed against you seven times in a day, and repented, to forgive him (Luke 17:4). In Matthew 18, Jesus dealt with offenses and used the parable of the two servants to emphasize the necessity of forgiving. He increased the number of times we should forgive our brother from seven to 490 reinforcing the lesson that we must forgive others if we expect God to forgive us.

It takes faith to forgive. It requires a special trust in God to pray for those who have hurt us. However, we are instructed to be willing to forgive and love unreservedly (which is what forgiveness is), if we want to experience the blessings of God’s love.

When we ask forgiveness and accept with faith that it has been given, our sin is gone. “*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*” (Psalms 103:12) This renewal of the spirit is the miracle of forgiveness and faith. When we are forgiven, our spirit is renewed and made whole and perfect again. God is faithful to forgive us; therefore we must be faithful to forgive others.

“Forgiveness is not making excuses or explaining why someone did what they did to you. Forgiveness is not forgetting about the offense and believing that time will heal the hurt. Forgiveness is not asking the Lord to forgive you for being angry and enraged at the person who hurt you. And forgiveness is not denying you were hurt or down playing your wound in light of what other people have suffered. Forgiveness is recognizing that you are hurt and what the person did to you was wrong. As an act of your will you choose to forgive their offense, cancelling the debt they owe you, just as God the Father cancelled your debt through faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

The key to maintaining an attitude of forgiveness is preparation. You do not want to wait until you are in a confrontation or conflict then try to feel forgiving. Begin to build a forgiving attitude into your daily walk. Build it into your prayer routine and not only ask God to forgive you of your errors, but to give you a heart of love to forgive others.

Make a decision at the beginning of every day to forgive others the same way the Lord has forgiven you. As you ask God to forgive you of your sins, prepare yourself to forgive others. Make up your mind in advance and choose to live in a spirit of forgiveness. Decree and declare forgiveness as a matter of fact. Then claim the help of the Holy Spirit and obey.

## **Interact with God’s Word:**

1. What assurance do we have that God will forgive us of our sins? 1 John 1:9; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Micah 7:18-19
2. Consider the parable of the two servants in Matthew 18:23-35. How does it relate to the 21st Century?
3. What impact does unforgiveness have on our prayers? Matthew 5:20-26; Mark 11:24-26; 1 Peter 3:7
4. Read the disciples’ response to Jesus in Luke 17:1-5. Why do you think they responded that way?
5. What should we do daily in order to maintain a forgiving attitude?

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<sup>1</sup> John Bevere, *The Bait of Satan Workbook* (Palmer Lake, CO: Messenger International), 165.

## Lesson 12: Walking in Love

**Scripture Text:** 1 John 4:7-21

**Memory Verse:** *“And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.”*  
1 John 4:21

**Lesson Aim:** To motivate us to find strength through loving God and others.

Being loved and giving love can be the most gratifying experiences of all. Receiving love satisfies a need that is present in all of us and our ability to love is often shaped by the love we receive.

Love is important to God. He is love (1 John 4:8). God commands His people to love—to love Him, to love one another and to even love our enemies.

The depth of our love for God will be reflected in our obedience to Him. We love Him because He first loved us. But He requires us to love Him with all our heart, soul and might (Deuteronomy 6:4). It is in the hours, days, weeks and months of daily living that we must prove our love to God by being obedient to His Word. To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. An ounce of obedience is worth a ton of sacrifice.

Loving in the context of God's Word allows us to reach up to God and to reach out to others. John speaks of the parallel Christians must recognize in our love being expressed upward (to God) and outward (to others). We cannot say we love God if we do not love one another (1 John 5:2-3).

Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church about love—Love that is not based on human affections or good feelings. The love Paul describes when exercised to its fullest dimension is the God kind of love that every believer should strive to attain. Note Paul's description of God's (agape) love:

*“Charity [love] suffereth long, and is kind; charity [love] envieth not; charity [love] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity [love] never faileth....”* (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a emphasis added).

Here are a few principles that can help us understand *agape* love.

- 1) Love is an act of will. The kind of love that Jesus modeled requires deliberate decisions and conscious effort. It takes work to love, but it is the love of God in us that will enable us to love like Him.
- 2) Love is action. It is not just words, but something we do. Actions speak louder than words. Backing up our words is proof of our love (1 John 3:18).
- 3) Love reaches out to the unlovely. If you love only those who love you, what makes you any different than sinners (Luke 6:32-33)?
- 4) We need God's help to love. It is not in our nature to love like God loves. That's why we need to mature in the fruit of the Spirit.
- 5) Love expects nothing in return (Luke 6:35). If we are to love as God loves, we find that we need to love without any thought of personal return.
- 6) Love is self sacrifice. Here are some practical ways to love others as Jesus loves us: (1) helping when it is not convenient; (2) giving when it hurts; (3) devoting energy to others' welfare rather than our own; (4) absorbing hurts from others without complaining or fighting back, true forgiveness.

When the young lawyer tempted Jesus with the question about which was the greatest commandment, Jesus summed it up perfectly, *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”* This is the love worth seeking. This is the love worth finding. This is the love worth sharing and walking in. There is strength in this kind of love.

### Interact with God's Word:

1. What is the ultimate measure of our love for God? John 14:15, 23-24
2. Identify and discuss at least one fact or concept about love in each verse of 1 John 4:7-12.
3. Why is it important that we love one another? John 13:35; 1 John 4:20-21
4. What does it mean to walk in love? Ephesians 5:2; 2 John 1:6; Romans 12:9-10

## Lesson 13: Quarter Review

**Scripture Text:** 2 Timothy 2:1-7

**Memory Verse:** *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”* Ephesians 4:1

**Lesson Aim:** To provide a summary review of the last 12 lessons on spiritual disciplines that strengthen the believer.

We have walked together through the last 12 lessons, looking into the disciplines and tools that strengthen the believer’s walk.

God’s desire is for us to be mature and victorious. As we travel the road together, let us be continuously aware of the importance of the Word and where the battleground is as we exercise our faith and find strength prayer, fasting and praise.

As we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, we will find strength in fellowship as we learn to forgive and walk in love with each other.

### Interact with God’s Word:

1. Why is Bible reading and study so important? 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:12-16 **Lesson 1, Question 5**
2. What do these Scriptures tell us about the important role of the mind? Proverbs 23:7; Matthew 22:37; Romans 8:4-8; Luke 6:45 **Lesson 2, Question 1**
3. Satan came at Eve with a subtle attack that cast doubt on the authority of God’s Word. Genesis 3:1-5 How is he still using this strategy today? Discuss and give examples. **Lesson 3, Question 1**
4. What are some benefits of meditation? Psalm 1:2-3; Joshua 1:8-9; Romans 12:2 **Lesson 4, Question 4**
5. How do we act on the Word? James 1:22 **Lesson 5, Question 6**
6. What does prayer have the power to do? James 5:13-18 **Lesson 6, Question 1**
7. How did Jesus advise His disciples about fasting? Matthew 6:16-18 **Lesson 7, Question 4**
8. What two elements need to be present in order for our praise to be effective? Psalm 149:6; 47:6-7 **Lesson 8, Question 1**
9. In what ways can the Holy Spirit guide us? John 16:13; Acts 11:12; 13:2; 16:7 **Lesson 9, Question 4**
10. Why do you think the writer of Hebrews instructed the believers as he did in Hebrews 10:24-25? **Lesson 10, Question 1**
11. What impact does unforgiveness have on our prayers? Matthew 5:20-26; Mark 11:24-26; 1 Peter 3:7 **Lesson 11, Question 3**
12. What is the ultimate measure of our love for God? John 14:15, 23-24 **Lesson 12, Question 1**