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BIBLE STUDIES

**TESTED BIBLE STUDIES
FOR SMALL GROUPS**

VOLUME IV

by Rev. John Matson

To the Students of the Words, Works and Ways of God:

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible study lessons provided on *The SAGE Digital Library Vol. 2*, have been designed with the small group in mind. They were developed over a period of several years and tested in a number of small groups.

The following characteristics mark these lessons: they emphasize a personal relationship with God and caring for others; they are all Bible oriented; they are typically non-denominational in content. They are distributed with a liberal license for personal or small group use (i.e., you may alter them and/or make as many copies as you need for your ministry). The Lesson format assumes that the group either closes in prayer with several individuals praying or the group divides into small groups or in pairs for one-to-one praying. Please adapt the material to suit your situation or needs,

Please note that the lessons now come in a simpler format to accommodate copying and pasting to the widest possible number of text editing software packages.

Lesson 1 God's Basic Plan For Obtaining A Blessing

KEY VERSE: "...While they sleep The Lord provides for those He loves"
Psalm 127:2b

1. Take a few minutes and share some of the things you are thankful for, especially some of the things that you can identify as not having come to you as a result of something you did:

2. Some time ago it was written..

"I am a confirmed believer in blessings in disguise. I prefer them undisguised when I myself happen to be the person blessed; in fact, I can scarcely recognize a blessing in disguise except when it is bestowed upon someone else." Robert Lynd

Can you think of a blessing in someone else you could see but the receiver could not see?

- We sometimes miss seeing blessings that God is in the process of giving us. Why do you think it is hard to see personal blessings?

3. Read Job 36:11 (Job is oldest OT book written); James 1:25 (James is the first NT book written); I John 3:22 (I John was one of the last books of the Bible written). What is a basic requirement if a person wishes to experience the blessing of God on a sustained basis?

- What happens when we "blow it" and fail to keep the commandments of God? Does that mean we cannot have His blessing?

4. Read I Corinthians 4:7. In this passage Paul asks the Corinthians a question that is supposed to help them learn a lesson and get rid of their arrogance. In your own words, rephrase the question and see if you can suggest an answer...

5. God makes certain undeserved provisions for people He loves. These provisions often go unseen, particularly if they involve the prevention of problems. In the following passages, see if you can identify the particular blessing that the author has in mind when he says: “You are blessed...”:

Luke 1:42

Revelations 14:13

Matthew 5:5

Psalm 32:1,2

Proverbs 14:21

6. At this point, having looked at some passages that speak about blessings, see if your group can put together a definition of a “blessing”:

7. This week’s focus on care and prayer...

The Bible mentions the word “blessing” hundreds of times – literally, and yet is surprising how infrequently we use the word personally, seek a blessing directly, or give a blessing thoughtfully to another human being.

God's provision for good, and for our personal needs and sense of fulfillment come as a result of the unique unseen strategy regularly employed by Him called "the blessing."

If you have the freedom to do so, take a few moments to confer, by means of prayer, a blessing – sincerely and appropriately – upon two people: someone in your group and someone outside your group.

Lesson 2 Children – A Blessing from God

KEY VERSE: “Sons are a heritage from the LORD,
children a reward from him.” Psalm 127:3

1. Years ago, there was a TV program hosted by Art Linkletter in which children were given an opportunity to answer questions posed by the host. Their candid responses were the source of much laughter because “Kids [Do] Say The Darndest Things.” Frequently the children would reveal events that took place at home, events that might otherwise be secrets. Sometimes they said things that demonstrated when they became a teachers instead of a student at home.

- If you feel free to do so, share an event from your childhood, one in which you were able to teach your parent(s) an important lesson about life:

- Can you think of an important lesson about life that you learned from a child? – it can be humorous or serious... give it a try...

- 2. Read Psalms 127:3 and Matthew 19:14. According to these passages what does God think of children? What is his basic attitude toward them?

- Has His attitude changed over the centuries? Is it still the same as it was?

- Is this the attitude we find in our immediate world today? Are children viewed in the way God intended? What do you think?

3. In the following passages see if you can identify some of the reasons why God made children:

- Psalm 127:4
- Psalm 127:5
- Matthew 18:5,6
- Genesis 28:3
- Proverbs 23:24,25
- Proverbs 19:26, 23:22 and Matthew 15:3-6.

What do you think? Did God intend for Children to care for their parents when they are old, or when they were in need?

4. Take a few minutes and try to imagine what the world would be like today if there were no children under 12. What would our world be like?

- If we stopped having children today, what would our world be like in say 30 years?

5. Read Genesis 1:26-28. What do you think: Does God want people to have, if their situation makes it at all possible, a number of children?:

7. This week's focus on care and prayer...

The Bible says that children are a gift from God, precious to those who have them and fitly given so that God may – through them – fulfil His purposes in the parents and to succeeding generations.

Rather important are they not? Yet we too often we see them treated both verbally and physically as if they were mere animals. What can we do? At least four things: care for our own children in such a way so as to set an example for the world to follow; speak out when we hear people us words of contempt toward children; take action whenever an opportunity arises for us to support the sacred value of children; and pray for those children we know and see that they may grow up to be a godly seed.

Take time now to pray for the children in your world...

Lesson 3 Let The Spirit Of Oneness Flow!

KEY VERSE: “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!” Psalm 133:1

1. Most of us have experienced a conflict in a ministry setting, whether it be two individuals quarreling over the decorations in a classroom, to a church split over some “major” doctrine. We can all identify with the basic feelings that come with such a painful event. But many of these quarrels are ended in a wonderful way when someone decides to pursue love. Describe some of the things that go on in your heart and mind when a conflict is resolved:

- In situations like the ones mentioned above, does resolution of the conflict just happen? If not, what does it take to bring about resolution and where does its motivation and/or power come from?

2. Compromise is a familiar term to all of us. Is compromise – especially on matters of doctrine – a wise policy to follow in order to achieve and maintain unity?

- What happens to the group, organization or church which does compromise on important issues? Can it maintain its unity in the long run?

3. In the following passage are mentioned some of the things that make Christian unity work. While they do not cause Christian unity, they are linked to it:

Philippians 2:2 ...then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who... humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Identify as many unity factors as you can find...

1.

2.

3.

4

5.

6.

7.

8.

4. Read John 17:20-23.

20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so

that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

- According to this passage, where does unity actually come from?

 - How many times does Jesus pray that the believers will be unified in just this one passage?

 - What is supposed to be the result of the unity of believers that Jesus asks for?

 - What do you think is the relationship between love and unity as indicated in verse 23?
5. What do you think: is unity a promise from God that we claim (something like we claim eternal life based on Jesus' sacrifice) or is it a principle which we apply such as sowing what we wish to reap?

6. This week's focus on care and prayer...

When was the last time you prayed for unity in your family, work, or church. It does not come by accident: it is the result of the prayers of the faithful saints who persist in doing good and use good – a prayer for unity – to overcome evil such as disharmony.

Take a few moments to pray for unity...

Lesson 4 Don't Get Lost Because Of The Signs

KEY VERSE: “Come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you!” Isa.64:2

1. Modern American advertising is a study in the purpose and use of signs. Plastered all over the buildings and along the roadways of the valley are huge signs informing us about products, events, or, real estate for sale. Some make their point, others fail miserably. Describe a sign that you believe failed to persuade you to take interest in what was advertised. What was it about the sign that made it such a disappointment?:

- By contrast, describe a sign which made a lasting and effective impact. Why did it work for you?

2. If you were about to set out to make a sign for your business – to place in front of your shop or store – what are some of the things you would want to take into consideration with reference to its construction and appearance?:

- How would you know that the sign accomplished its purpose? What evidence would you be looking for that the sign was “working”?

3. The following passages describe and discuss some of the many signs mentioned in the Bible. Identify the sign, describe its purpose (as best as you can with the information given) and give some indication as to its effectiveness:

Judges 6:36-40

I Kings 13:1-6

II Kings 20:7-11

Isaiah 7:14; Luke 2:12

4. Read John 2:12-25. In this important event in the life of Jesus, we have evidence of some of the ways that signs are misused.

- How did the religious leaders expect signs to be used?

- How did the people expect them to be used?

- What evidence do we have from this passage that Jesus was not very ready to use signs in a general way? (Or, putting it another way: What problem does mankind have that encourages them to look at the sign instead of what the sign is pointing to?)

5. Read Matthew 12:38-41. What does Jesus say is the problem with people who seek for a sign? What does he say will be offered to those do such seeking?

- Jesus says that key events in the life of Jonah will be a sign for those who seek a sign. It was not just the three days in the great fish that was this “sign of Jonah”. What do you think: did the the Ninevites respond to the message of Jonah because he spent three days in the fish or because he had seen God and they could see God in his face and message? Or, was their repentance for some other reason?

[Optional] 6. Read I Corinthians 1:20-23. What is it that the Jews and Gentiles were looking for – in general concerning spiritual things – during the time of the Apostles? How did this get in the way of their understanding Jesus' gospel message?

7. This week's focus on care and prayer...

Signs are symbols that point to real things – things that actually exist. A sign is ineffective when it either fails to reveal the thing it is pointing toward or – by being so interesting – it gets more attention than the thing it is pointing out.

When God uses signs, He only puts up a few, and He very carefully situates them in time and place to point to certain things: the authority of the Bible, the truth of the resurrection, the good news of salvation, the power and Justice and Love of God., the coming of Christ, and little else.

Signs point to God and it is with Him that our focus should rest. The signs that the Lord creates point to aspects of Him and His plan that He desires for us to see, remember and appreciate. When a sign becomes an end in itself, it begins to take God's place; it becomes an idol. When men seek for a sign, they are – in all reality – engaging in form of idol worship.

With your prayer partner, take a few moments and share some of the signs God has used in the Bible or your life, tell what you think they reveal about God, and then, praise Him for the greatness revealed through them.

Lesson 5 Generosity, God's Planning For Meeting Needs

KEY VERSE: “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. “
II Cor. 9:7

Note: This lesson is about generosity in general. While giving to the work of the Kingdom of our Lord is in view as well, we shall be examining principles that apply to all types of giving.

1. We have all received gifts of one kind or another. Tell about a gift that you received that was dear to you, one that represented a special sacrifice or understanding on the part of the giver:

- Tell us about how your relationship with the giver of the gift was affected by this special gift. Did it improve? Why or why not?

2. If you have the freedom to do so, tell us about what kind of gift giver you are. Are you a “last-minuter”? Are you “extravagant”? Are you “sensible”? Are you “personal”? Use words that would tell us about the manner of your giving:

- [Now this will take some thought and you may feel a little uncomfortable in answering it but give it a try if you feel free to do so:] Can you think of a gift you have given to someone that might explain what kind (or type) of giver you are?

3. In the Bible there are many examples of God giving gifts to people. Even if the Bible is not very familiar ground, there are a few that will stand

out. What – in your estimation – are some of God’s best gifts? What do these gifts that you have selected tell us about God’s way of giving?:

4. In the following passages are some of the principles that the Lord wants us to keep in mind when we give to others. See if you can identify the general principle involved in each of the following:

Romans 12:8

Matthew 6:1-3

Matthew 5:42

Matthew 10:8

II Corinthians 9:7

II Chronicles 31:5

4. Read II Corinthians 8:12 & 8:3a. Sometimes it seems that God says believers are to give “according to their ability” and at other times He says it is better to give “beyond our ability”.

- Is it possible for us to give “beyond our ability”? If so, how?
- When giving a gift, what considerations might apply to help us to determine which of the above rules [giving by ability or beyond ability] might apply?

5. This week’s focus on care and prayer...

God has so designed the universe, that generosity is a major component of the life we live with Him. Consider some of these aspects of generosity:

- Generosity is is freely giving to others as if they were Jesus and not just people.
- Generosity is more than philanthropy because generosity involves sharing from the abundant storehouse of God and not limiting our giving to our personal storehouse.
- Generosity involves faith: It is trusting God to use us to meet a need in the life of another.

Are you generous? Do you give by faith?

With your prayer partner, thank God for His wonderful gifts and ask Him how He might work through you this week to touch the life of another by expressing generosity.

Lesson 6 What The Bible Says About Truth

KEY VERSE: “For the word of the LORD is right and true; He is faithful in all he does.” Psalm 33:4

Note: This lesson focuses on truth. To remain consistent, when we use the word “truth” we mean that which is “actual, real, and authentic.” When we use “Truth” we mean the Bible as in both the Old and New Testaments.

1. Telling the truth has been a challenge for all peoples over the centuries. Describe some of the situations where telling the truth is vital. (Select examples from several realms that you’re familiar with):

- Describe some of the consequences that occur in the above situations when the truth is not forthcoming.

- What happens to you – in your heart – when you discover you have been told a lie?

2. What happens to relationships when they are built on a pattern of deceit?:

- What would probably happen to a person’s relationship with God if they discovered that God’s Truth turned out not to be true after all?

3. Read John 17:15-18, 8:43-46 and 1:14. Based on these passages, what does Jesus say is the nature of His words – any of them – as far as the truth is concerned? Does Jesus claim to be absolutely honest?

4. Read and consider each of the following passages, then summarize the principle given and ask...

- “Does God want us to be honest?” and
- “Does He want us to be honest all the time, every time?”

Proverbs 12:19

Zephaniah 3:13

Ephesians 4:24,25

5. Read Colossians 3:9,10. Identify the reason and the basis for our being truthful at all times as given in this passage:

6. What is the fate of the one who chooses falsehood over truth?

Proverbs 12:22

Proverbs 19:5

Revelation 21:8

7. This week's focus on care and prayer...

If God is true and truthful, we can rightfully anticipate His Son, His Word, and even His children to also be true. While it is also true that being honest/truthful does not mean that we tell everything on our mind or disclose all information we possess (to do so would be to give the details of evil or violate an appropriate confidence or relate very personal items), it is also true that God wants us to leave no false impression.

God never leads us – His children – astray. He never toys with us, never plays unrighteous games with our minds or hearts, never lies by telling us just what we want to hear. God is true. God is faithful.

Have you been honest with God? With yourself? With others? Those are big questions, more than we can consider in our moments together, but we can take a moment with at least one of them. Perhaps the first is the most important. With your prayer partner explore at least one of these questions, and to the extent you feel free to do so, share with your prayer partner(s) how you are doing in this area. Take another step with honest as God leads...

Lesson 7 The Believer's Staying Power

KEY VERSE: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Galatians 6:9

1. Take a few minutes to share with the group how it feels to go through a period of "dryness" with respect to your job, career, or some other endeavor to which you have committed yourself:

- What is it like to go through a period of "dryness" in your relationship with God or in the reading of the Bible (most Christians have had at least one such period)?

- Suggest some possible reasons why God might permit these periods of dryness to occur:

2. What is the opposite of spiritual dryness? If a person is spiritually saturated, what might such an experience be like?

3. The Bible indicates that spiritual dryness can occur for several very different reasons. From the passages listed below, see if you can identify some basic reasons for its occurrence:

Psalm 32:3,4

Psalm 31:9-13

Isaiah 28:12

Psalms 68:6c

Amos 8:11-13

4. The scriptures are full of the antidote for the naturally occurring periods of spiritual dryness we have in our lives. From the passages below, see if you can identify the basic ingredients of the antidote:

Isaiah 55:1,2

Matthew 5:6

I Peter 2:2,3

Acts 3:19

Proverbs 2:3-5

Isaiah 58:9b-11

Hosea 10:12

5. See if you can recall some of the things that the saints of old did to get “cheered up” spiritually? Which ones have been the most helpful to you?

6. A Time To Share and A Time To Pray...

Most of us have an area of our life which is not in a growth mode at present. Sometimes it is because we need a much deserved rest. (Praise the Lord! REST is in God’s vocabulary!) But “rest” is not the only reason for inactivity: there are usually areas that are experiencing a “dry” period. In fact, our whole life may be experiencing that strange dry time. Can you talk about it? Can you share how it is going in that area? Can you identify the reason as indicated above in question #2? Read the quotation below and share as you have the freedom to do so.

A Testimony Concerning One Man's Blessing Following A Period Of Dryness:

Adam Clarke was one of the greatest Bible teachers of the 19th century, but he too went through a dry period which, in his case, lasted for 2 years. During this long stretch of seeming unfruitfulness, he continued to devote a portion of each day to faithfully studying from the Bible, usually for several hours, though he seemed to get almost nothing from it. One day, the Lord rewarded his faithfulness by opening up his mind to all manner of spiritual understanding to the great themes, hidden truths, practical wisdom and important spiritual threads of thought in the Bible. The discipline of the long spell of dryness was rewarded with a great shower of blessing.

Lesson 8 What The Bible Says About The Value Of The Bible

KEY VERSE: “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”

John 8:31

1. Think back to the first time you can actually remember reading the Bible for yourself. [Select a memory from your high school or adult years.] What were your initial impressions of the Bible? Was The Book mysterious? Encouraging? Difficult? Frustrating? Wonderful? Overwhelming? Or...?

- When you had problems understanding the Bible during the early years of your exposure to it, what were some of the questions or type of questions you remember asking?

- To whom did you direct these questions? Do you feel you received adequate answers?

2. Read II Peter 1:20,21; Hebrews 1:1; I Corinthians 2:13 (in the NIV). According to these passages, where did our Bible come from? Specifically, who was responsible for it being written? Did anyone help with this project?

3. According to the following passages, how does a person go about understanding the meaning of the Bible as it is being read or studied? Or, looking at the issue in a different light, what kinds of things should a student of the Bible expect to discover?

I Peter 2:2

II Timothy 3:16,17

Psalms 19:11

Matthew 7:24

Psalm 119:130

4. How long is the Bible good for, ie, how many generations, peoples or tongues will it be valid for?

Matthew 5:18

Matthew 24:35

I Peter 1:23-25

5. In order to grasp these important life changing truths as found in the Bible, what practices make it possible to study and retain the truths effectively?

Joshua 1:8

I Peter 1:22

John 5:39

Acts 17:11

6. In light of our study, how much time do you think it would take (give a minimum, please) in study of the Bible to begin to experience the kind of results promised?

7.. A Time To Share and A Time To Pray...

Both Moses and Jesus have said: “Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”

There is a minimum amount of food that it takes for the body to stay healthy – an amount that varies according to the amount of activity in that body. The same is true spiritually. There is a minimum input for the soul to stay healthy, too, and this minimum increases with any increase in the activities of the soul.

How much time does it take to become a man or woman influenced by the Word of God for the good? What kind of minimum threshold do we need to cross in order to come to the point where we are fed (ie, nurished or satisfied) in our soul rather than starved?

Discuss this with your prayer partner, and, to the degree you are free, share how well you're doing in reaching a personal minimum in spiritual feeding. Pray as the Lord leads you.

Lesson 9 Last Words – Vital Words

KEY VERSE: “...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matt.28:20

1. **FAMOUS LAST WORDS.** There used to appear in the newspaper a comic strip by that title. It contained amusing and clever words spoken by the wise and the foolish at their last moments in a position, job, relationship or just before some catastrophe struck them. Can you recall any “famous last words” from history or fiction?

2. Picture this unique scene: You have just discovered that within 24 hours you will be leaving this earth for heaven. Your friends are all aware of your departure and have planned a party of sorts for you. They want to say “See you later!” and spend some parting time with you. They ask you to say something about your life. What might be some of the things you would say?

- If these were all people in your church, what might you say to encourage and help them with their ministry after you are gone?

3. Jesus also had some last words for His followers. They were spoken at several events at the very end of His life on earth (after His resurrection). In these “famous last words” He touched on several topics He knew to be of utmost importance to those that were to deal with the circumstances of life after He left.

In the following passages, see if you can identify these basic topics. (Note: It will be difficult, but please try to limit yourself to a basic one or two word summary of each mentioned topic).

Matthew 28:18-20

Mark 16:15,16

Luke 24:46-49

Acts 1:4-8

4. Referring to the material gleaned in the previous question, what was Jesus basic message concerning each of the following questions?

- In leaving His disciples, what was He leaving behind to help them?
(Caution: this is not the same thing as what they could expect to receive from Him shortly):

- What was the typical follower of Jesus now going to be able to do with relation to the Good News?

- What were the geographic or cultural limits set on the sharing of the Good News?

- What was to motivate the followers of Jesus to share the Good News?

- What things should be avoided that can distract His followers from sharing the Good News?

5. How well do think Jesus' followers are doing – today – in their response to His last words?

6. A Time To Share and A Time To Pray...

Jesus saved some of His most important words to the very end of His earthly life. His followers were keenly aware of their importance in that they spoke of them often and acted on the constantly.

Today the followers' response to Jesus' message seems to vary considerably. But, lest we be tempted to judge someone else before we look at ourselves, we need to ask: "How am I responding to His words?"

With your prayer partner(s), consider Jesus' message and how you yourself are responding to it. Share as you have the freedom to do so...

Lesson 10 Who Is Jesus? Part I

KEY VERSE: “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Matthew 16:14

1. During the ‘60’s, a well know Christian campus organization designed a community survey form to be used as a tool to discern the religious attitudes of both students and non-students in college towns. One of the questions proved to be unusual in that it provoked a great deal of interest and produced a wide variety of different answers: “Who – in your opinion – is Jesus Christ?” What were some of the answers that you would guess might be given?:

2. Read Matthew 16: 13-17.

- In verse 14, several answers are suggested by the disciples as to who Jesus was. What did they say and why do you think they suggested these particular answers?

- In verse 16 the disciples – in this case Peter – gave what they thought was their own personal conclusion as to who Jesus was. What was his (their) answer? If we had the opportunity to ask them (before Jesus said what He said in verse 17) as to how they knew that Jesus was the Christ, what do you think Peter would have said?

- Jesus tells His disciples that they did not come to the conclusion that Jesus was the Christ by means of their own powers of observation or deduction. How did they find out who He was?

3. The Bible indicates that there were certain things about the message and ministry of Jesus that revealed His true nature. Identify these qualities (often more than one) as seen in each of the following passages:

Matthew 7:28,29

Mark 1:21-28

Luke 4:40,41

Matthew 8:23-27

4. Those that knew Jesus or were witnesses of the events of His life or the words of His message, came to very definite conclusions about Him. In the passages below are observations/testimonies from these observers. In each example, see if you can identify both the witness and the conclusions that witness came to:

Matthew 27:50-54

John 20:24-28

I Corinthians 15:3-8

John 4:19-26, 28-30, 39-42

5. Based on the information that these witnesses provide, and based on your knowledge of the human heart, what might be the conclusion you would draw if you were there in Israel with Jesus during His ministry there? Who would you have thought He was? [Note: try to put yourself in His shoes of someone that did not know much about the Bible.]:

6. A Time To Share and A Time To Pray...

He was a man whose deeds were so numerous and so extraordinary that to tell all about what He did and the consequent impact of His actions would – in the words of the Apostle John – “I suppose.. even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.”

What He did was strange and often wonderful to the observers, but the human heart is blind to the spiritual reality of his true character. It takes God to break through our blindness. Has He been able to break through your natural resistant barriers? Do you see Him as He is?

Sometimes we have seen Him as He is, but we have grown cold and hardened and we lose sight of His real nature and ministry. John recorded this as a loss of our first love. If things are not as fresh as they were at the start, it just might be time for you to take another close look at him and get some spiritual refreshment through prayer; ask Him to restore the “joy of your salvation” in Him.

Lesson 11 Who Is Jesus? Part II

KEY VERSE: “Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father.” John 14:9b

1. During the 1980’s, a number of individuals in the scientific community began to suggest (or admit – depending on how one looks at it) that there were some major mysteries in the world that seemed beyond scientific understanding. In fact one science magazine devoted most of one issue to these mysteries (example: “What caused the death of all the dinosaurs?”).

In a similar way, there are mysteries about the nature of God that are hard to understand and seem to have no explanation which most people can understand or agree upon. List some of the questions people might have about God that probably would be very difficult for them to come up with an explanation:

- Of all the questions your group came up with, which one seems to you to be the most challenging?

- What is(are) the reason(s) you think it might be the most challenging: Too little information available? Too much information available? Too confusing? Too complex? Over our heads? Too controversial? Or...?

2. One of the mysteries about God that seems to generate the most speculation – and controversy – is the belief that Jesus is God. In your experience has this been a difficult issue? If so, can you suggest one reason why it might be so?

3. In the following passages are some of the things that Jesus said about His relationship with the Father (God). Identify the position He expresses as indicated by each:

John 5:17,18

Mark 2:5-7 (Compare with Isaiah 43:25)

John 14:9

John 8:58

4. Next, let's examine some of the passages that describe how the Disciples came to understand who Jesus was:

John 1:1

John 20:28

Hebrews 1:8

Luke 24:52 (compare with Exodus 20:3-6)

5. Read John 10:31-33. Who did the enemies of Jesus (those that wanted to kill Him) understand as the one Jesus claimed to be?

6. Based on the information supplied thus far, what conclusions do you draw as to the identity of Jesus?:

7. A Time To Share and A Time To Pray...

If Jesus is only a man, what would this mean for the Christian faith? There would be no permanent forgiveness of sins, Jesus would be a liar and not perfect, and the Christian faith would all be in vain. Pretty serious stuff!

But if He is God, then He has all the attributes of God, stands with all of God's power and can do anything that He claims or promises to do – especially for us His children.

In your prayer time, take a few minutes to worship Jesus as the Disciples did and ask Him for His leading as you approach the challenges of your week. See if you can identify at least one promise from Him that fits an area that is of particular concern to you. God bless you as you pray.

Lesson 12 Removing Sin Obstacles

KEY VERSE: “Against You and only You have I sinned...” Psalm 51:4

1. Being right all the time. Most of us are uncomfortable with a relationship in which we are constantly exposed to a “I-gotta-be-right-all-the-time” attitude on the part of someone else. Someone who insists that their opinions and ideas are superior, their judgement the soundest, their facts the most accurate – even when they are open to question, is a hard person to get along with. Many of the following questions focus on dealing with this type of relational attitude:

- What is it about this attitude that is the most irritating for you?

- What are some of the problems that result from someone imposing this kind of attitude upon a relationship? What can it do to a friendship or a family?

- Do you have difficulty recognizing it when you are doing it?

- 2. In your estimation, what does God think about this kind of attitude? Is it “wrong”? Does He accept it as “normal”?

- Read Isaiah 65:2-7. In this account of Gods response to Israel’s self-righteous religious practices, what does God say are His feelings?

3. Read Romans 7:18-20 and Ecclesiastes 7:20. Is sin – on our part – inevitable? Why?

4. The Bible indicates that when we sin we are to take certain actions (indicated in the passages below). See if you can identify these particular actions and suggest why some might feel these actions might be difficult to do:

Psalm 32:5

Lamentations 3:40-42

I John 1:8,9

James 5:16

Psalm 119:59,60

5. Read James 4:10 and Matthew 23:12. What does God do with the person that comes to the place where they can fully confess their sin? [NOTE: See if you can give some particulars for examples.]

6. A Time To Share and A Time To Pray...

The Lord has a wonderful way of dealing with our sin. All He asks is that we confess things to Him in a regular and ongoing way. He promises that he will do something special if we do: to cleanse, to heal, to lift up, to strengthen.

As you have the freedom, share your burdens and see if you can experience the blessings the Lord promises when we do...

Lesson 13 Finding THE WAY In This World

KEY VERSE: “Apollos had been instructed in THE WAY of the Lord and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Him accurately...” Acts 18:25

1. A right way to do it – and a wrong way. In many professions there are certain activities that afford a certain amount of liberty in how they are done. Take interior decorating for example: there are many colors, fashions and styles to choose from in finishing a room. But there are some other occupations that have a very narrow range of chooses as to how something can be done. Consider some of these as your group responds to the following questions:

- There are a number of occupations which require (by the very nature of their field of operation) very limited choices, and often no choices at all. List some of these...

- What are some of the factors make the choices so limited in these various fields?

- In your occupation are there some activities that can be done only one way? If possible, give an example:

2. In our culture and society there are many choices whether it be of autos, canned tuna, magazines on gardening, or restaurants. Choices seem to abound concerning morals and religion as well. Do people really want more choices today? Do they want more moral and religious choices? Why?

3. Read Matthew 22:16 and Acts 24:14. The early Christians were called The Followers Of The Way. Why do you think they were given the title “THE Way”?

4. Read Acts 4:12. What was the basic reason why the early Christians were so narrow in their teaching?

5. The followers of Jesus had a number of secondary reasons why they understood the Master as teaching only ONE WAY to find eternal life. List the reasons suggested in the following passages :

John 6:67,68

John 8:24

John 3:16

John 6:35

John 3:3-5

6. Read Acts 19:9 and Acts 19:23-28. What is the reaction people will have when they are given such narrow choices about something that has such a big impact on their lives (not to mention eternity!)?

7. A Time To Share and A Time To Pray...

This was a difficult lesson because we have been faced with the fact that the truth and allegiance to it can bring pressure. But has this not been the case in all of history? Did not Columbus face it, or Galileo, or Noah face pressure because of the narrow choice selection they offered – which was often no choice at all.

The Lord Jesus says that He is THE way and THE truth and THE life and that no one comes to the father but by Him. That is a very narrow choice. Do we accept His way? His truth? His life offer? Are we ready to live by them? These are very narrow questions with broad sweeping implications.

In your prayer time, consider some choices that may be before you at this time and consider together what His choice may for you. Ask for wisdom and discernment. He stands ready to guide you...

Lesson 14 The KING Is The KING

KEY VERSE: “And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom ...” Luke 22:29,30

1. There are few individuals in this world who still hold the title of “KING,” but there are a number who have a type of authority that is similar to that once held by them. In your group, discuss some of the individuals you are aware of that exercise authority along the lines of a KING:

- Are there people in your profession or your immediate world who exercise (or attempt to exercise) KINGLY authority? [NOTE: Not all of those that use authority of a KING are ones who use it for evil purposes. In fact, many use it for the good.]

- KINGS were once numerous throughout the world. How did their power and authority differ from that of present world?

- Speculate as to the reason why there are so few KINGS today:

2. Read John 18:33-38. Jesus revealed to Pilate that He – Jesus – was a KING...

- What do you think Jesus meant by this? Was He a KING or did He mean that He would become a KING eventually?

- What do you think Pilate understood Jesus to mean when He said He was a KING?

- What was the outcome of His claim? Did it seem to have an effect on the outcome of his trial?

- 3. Read Revelation 19:11-16. According to the New Testament Jesus will return in a way that will give evidence of His KINGSHIP.

- In your own words, explain what Jesus will be like when He returns. Describe, also, what sorts of things He will have on the top of His priority list:

- Based on the way people are dealing with those in absolute authority today, what kind of reception do you think He will receive?

- 4. Read Luke 22:24-30; I Corinthians 6:2,3; Revelations 3:21. The Lord Jesus guards His authority with great care, yet He indicates that He will share certain aspects of His KINGSHIP.

- According the passages cited above, what are some of the major areas the Lord plans to share concerning His authority?

- Which ones will you receive personally?

- The responsibilities revealed above appear to be non-optional. Assuming that they are non-optional, describe – if you have the freedom to do so – your feelings about them:

5. A Time To Share and A Time To Pray...

The KING, King Jesus, will come to a place in time and history when He will settle all accounts, right all wrongs done by man, cleanse the world of sin and wickedness. Those that trust in Him will share in that process.

How does that change the here and now? Perhaps we will trust Him more fully, trust in our own initial judgement a little less, be somewhat more patient, and be a lot less worried about how things will turn out – at least those things we have placed in His hand.

Is there something you need to turn over to His Kingship? Is there some trusting of His judgement that you need to do?

With your prayer partner(s), consider these things and pray as the Lord leads...

Lesson 15 Experiencing The Kingdom Of Light

KEY VERSE: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12

1. Light is such a common phenomena – even the electric lights we use virtually every day, that we can take for granted its presence and usefulness. The following questions ask us to re-examine its place in our lives:

- Street lights are at most corners in the cities across our land. What is(are) their purpose(s)? Do they generally succeed in accomplishing this?

- The surgeon’s operating table is generally bathed in light – bright light. What is its function/purpose?

- In the following settings, one generally finds a restricted amount of light. In each case what might account for the small amounts of light? A photo developing studio; a tavern; a theater; a sleeping porch.

- 35mm cameras are usually equipped with a flash attachment. What is the purpose of this extra light source? Looking at it in another way, why do cameras need it when the eye seemingly does not?:

2. The following questions are based on John 3:19-21: “19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be

exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”

- Why is it that mankind reacts so indifferently or so negatively to genuine spiritual light?
- According to this passage what is the person who fears spiritual light actually afraid of?
- To what will the honest, truthful person be drawn eventually?

3. In each of the following passages there is a source of light mentioned and frequently a function for that light source. See if your group can identify each as they appear:

<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Light Source</u>	<u>Purpose of the Light</u>
Philippians 2:15		

James 1:17

I John 1:5

John 1:4,5

Matthew 5:14,16

4. Read I John 1:5-7.

- What is the “light”?

- What is the purpose of the light, ie, what does the light do?

- What happens to the group of people that make a commitment to live according to and “in” the light?

5. A Time To Share and A Time To Pray...

The Bible teaches us that God has called us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. By this He means that we have moved from a place of lies, self deception and the practice of evil to a place of truth, humility and the practice of love and purity.

The problem seems to lay in the prevailing love of darkness, the driving desire to keep things hidden, unconfessed, and unaltered for the good. When we refuse to move in the direction of light, there is a terrible consequence, fellowship with both man and God is hindered.

The bottom line in all this? God draws a vivid picture: we must look at our selves with accuracy and honesty. We must allow the brightest lights to shine down on us, and then we must open our eyes and see what we are really like. The temptation will be to want the lights – the light from

heaven – to shine down on others, not us. But God says that is where it must begin if we wish to be lights in this world.

With your partner(s), pray as the Lord lights concerning light in your life...

Lesson 16 Our God Is Bigger Than ‘Enough’

KEY VERSE: “...the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.” Deuteronomy 10:17

1. UFO’s. There is much talk about the possibility of visitors from other planets, and, the news media – both the sensational and the legitimate – have speculated about such visits. Some individuals convincingly describe encounters with “beings from other worlds.” In what ways does such an encounter seem to impact the one who has experienced it? What changes have you noticed or heard about in such people?:

2. Let us suppose for a moment that you actually met someone from another world. They demonstrated great power and shared some amazing secrets about health, personal fulfillment and the meaning of life. Do you think you would share that information readily? Or, would you be afraid? How do you think people would treat you once you told them about your discovery?:

3. The following passages describe some of the things our God has done to reveal Himself to men. Many of the things He has done were unusual. Note the thing which God did and the reaction by the Lord’s people as they experienced it:

Exodus 14:29-31

Matthew 8:23-27

Acts 1:9-11

Luke 5:4-11

4. Read Joshua 4:21-24. Why does God do the many awesome things He does?:

5. How do those that have not noticed or realized God is at work respond to the people who have seen His awesome power at work? [Note that there may be several different responses in each passage]:

Acts 2:7-13

Acts 17:30-34

Hebrews 11:31-40

6. Read I Thessalonians 1:5; Isaiah 40:29-31. Some people are telling the world about visits of aliens from space. Others are telling about God visiting man to save man from himself. What similarities and differences are there between these two “projects”?

6. This week's focus on care and prayer...

Weak and weary? Full of fainting instead of power? The Bible is full of stories of weak people trying to do the impossible and feeling faint. The surprise is that they accomplish their goal not because of their own power but because of His power. He is a great and mighty God!

The Bible says that being good, doing good works, and turning the world right side up are things that only God in us can accomplish. They cannot be done consistently by any human power alone. To lean on this power requires a simple trust in and an accurate picture of the our powerful God.

Can you call to mind His mighty acts? Have you seen His hand at work in the past or the present? Take time with your prayer partner to review His power and seek his power in the situations that are at hand in your life this week. God will bless you and enable you...

Lesson 17 Getting Help When Following God

KEY VERSE: “.If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow—to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him— 23 then the LORD will... “ Deuteronomy 11:22b,23a

1. Following directions. From the correct solution to that question on the Geometry Test, to opening the the lid on a new medicine bottle, to preparing a batch of cookies like Grandma used to make, following the the directions correctly is vital. The wrong choice, the wrong sequence, or leaving something out can leave us with a disaster on our hands. Tell about a time in your life or in the life of someone you know when failure to follow directions caused a REAL problem:

2. Why is it that some of us “freelance” when it comes to following directions; why do we chose our own route rather than adhere to the directions that come with the product, package, or procedure?:

3. Read Matthew 22:34-40 and I John 5:3-5. Just how complex are God’s expectations of us if we are to follow Him? Now, estimate the degree of difficulty that goes with following God’s directions:

4. According to the Scriptures, what are some of advantages available to those that would say “Yes!” to following God’s directions in this life?

Mark 3:35

John 15:10,14

John 14:23

I John 3:22

Luke 11:27,28

5. Read II John 6-9. The Bible has some strong things to say about our expressing faith in Jesus but not obeying His teachings. In your own words, describe this principle as Apostle John has given it:

6. Read Psalm 44:5; John 16:33; Romans 8:35-37. If we follow God's direction, can we expect help from God to do it? Can we expect to win in the end against those forces that would seek to discourage, deceive, or defeat us?:

7. This week's focus on care and prayer...

God loves us and gives us directions that help us respond in a practical way to that love. He tells us how to please Him and He tells us that what pleases Him will be the best possible situation for us. (What a terrific arrangement!) The end result is that we are all pleased and fulfilled.

But in our lack of understanding of what God is doing, in our difficulty in believing that His requests are in our best interest, we build up skepticism and, sometimes, bitterness: we feel we could do a better job writing up commandments, laws, and directions. As a result, we have no faith in the laws or in the person of God. No wonder we suffer from a lack of spiritual power.

With your prayer partner, consider this question: “Have I accepted the Lord’s right to make all final decisions in my life?” Or, putting it another way, “Have I said ‘Yes!’ to the laws, commands, and directions from the Lord for my life?”

Perhaps you can identify one place where you have yet to say yes. It is the place to begin. Can you say yes tonight?...

Lesson 18 Sustaining The Blessing Of God

KEY VERSE: “The faithless man shall be fully repaid for his ways, and the good man shall be rewarded for his.” Proverbs 14:14

1. Hidden defects can make for difficult, unexpected problems. Mis-repaired machinery, diseased farm animals, defective computer programs (they have viruses too!), genetically faulty seeds, all are hidden problems that can cause terrible consequences. Give some examples of hidden problems in people that usually eventuate in a disastrous outcome:

2. By way of contrast, see if you can identify several hidden qualities in people – perhaps an individual you know personally – that have led to unexpected blessings to others.

3. Humans have the tendency to evaluate situations based on inadequate information. God evaluates things in a very different way. In the Bible we see examples of superficial analysis (earthbound wisdom) and genuine discernment (the wisdom that comes from above). In the following two passages, we have an example of these two points of view. Decide which is which and which is accurate:

Psalm 125:3-5

Ecclesiastes 9:2

4. The following passages cite examples of people in a backslidden condition. See if you can identify a characteristic which qualifies the person described as a “backslider”.

I Kings 11:4

II Chronicles 25:1,2,14

Psalms 78:57

Hosea 6:4

Luke 8:13

5. Although outwardly the difference might not be very great – especially at the start, inwardly there is a considerable difference between the backslider (the faithless man) and the good man (the one who is faithful). Note the character of the “good” man in the following passages:

Proverbs 12:14

Proverbs 13:15

Proverbs 14:22

Psalms 34:10

Proverbs 13:22

6. Read Zepheniah 1:4-6. In the days of the prophets mentioned in the Bible, the peoples turned from God to worship idols made with hands and the gods of the pagan peoples (gods of water, land, the harvest, etc.) To were do the peoples of our day turn when they become faithless?:

7. This week's focus on care and prayer...

To discover whether we are faithful or faithless – in any given area of our life, all we have to do is take an inventory of the kind of thoughts we are having in that area. What is the desire of our heart there?

Backsliding is to be faced with the same reality and courage as any other problem, although it is more in the category of cancer than that of say acne. It is serious, even deadly, but it need not be that way.

Are you adrift in an area of life? Can you talk about it? There is always someone someplace willing to identify with your problem and be a prayer partner in your recovery. Open your heart to the degree that you can. Remember, it is the Lord who wishes to bless you and it is the Lord that waits for you...

4. Read Luke 5:13-17. What types of difficult things happened in the life of Jesus that prompted Him to prepare Himself by prayer? Do similar difficult things happen to people today?

5. Read Luke 6:12,13,17. What length of time did Jesus spend in prayer in this situation? What circumstance prompted Him to pray in this way? What do you think: did He ever pray on other occasions in this way?

6. Christians do not have the same position, duties, and responsibilities as Jesus. Does this mean Christians do not need to pray as Jesus prayed? Does Jesus' example in the area of indepth, lengthy prayer have meaning for us today?:

7. This week's focus on care and prayer...

There are many important points that we can discuss about the prayer life of Jesus, but the fact remains that the most significant aspect of His prayer life is that He actually did pray and with great earnestness and energy.

If He needed to pray in this way, are we not even more in need? If He, being God, needed to pray, how much more we mere humans?

Take a few moments to thank God for the model of Jesus prayers, and ask the Lord to show you how you might appropriate overcoming power in the degree that Jesus did.

Lesson 20 Living With Evil Without Becoming Evil

KEY VERSE: “Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will wither, like green plants they will soon die away.” Psalm 37:1

1. In the ‘60’s there was a train robbery in Great Britain in which an enormous amount of money was taken. Many of the thieves were captured, but one made his escape with a great deal of the loot to South America – or so the story goes. Assuming for a moment that he made his escape, on what do you think he spent his money?:

- Do you think he enjoyed himself?
- Would you want to have his money? Why or why not?

2. A number of so called “white collar thieves” perpetrate crimes on an unsuspecting public and seem to get away with their misdeeds. One recent investment scandal in the east took a large number of unsuspecting Christians for a great deal of money. The “thieves” have not been charged with a crime. Do you think these thieves really get away with their crimes or do they pay? If they do “pay,” in what way?

3. According to the following passages, what are some of the things that will actually happen to the individuals that seem to succeed in their evil deeds?

Psalm 37:1-11

Psalm 1:3-6

Psalm 73:12,18-20

4. In the Psalm 37 passage, what are some of the temptations people experience in the face of the wicked seeming to get away with evil? In other words, what are some of the erroneous attitudes and actions faithful people might do in the face of evil doers?

5. Again reading from the Psalm 37 passage (seen at right), what kinds of positive practices on the part of the righteous prevent the “upset” spirit, attitudes and activities that accumulate so naturally when evil people are in view?

6. What is God’s attitude toward those that do evil? Does he hate them with an everlasting anger, or is he very concerned about their fate wanting very much to rescue them without compromising His holiness?:

7. What would happen to the wicked if their eternal fate were left up to people like us?:

8. This week's focus on care and prayer...

Everyone has a concern about evil, a particular concern that sets them off into anger and resentment. The Bible says that we should visit that anger place only briefly ("don't let the sun go down on it") and that we should turn that energy into something more constructive – like perusing righteousness and being a light and an example. The Lord can then use us to deal with evil in His special way.

Perhaps there is a situation close to you in which evil is being practiced – even on you! Have you given the Lord a chance to deal with that evil one by your sincere concern for their spiritual condition?

Let the Lord lead you as you pray...

Lesson 21 The Meaning Of Pain

KEY VERSE: “But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.”
Psalm 37:11

1. Here is a provocative statement on pain. After you have read it, tell us if you think it is true and, if so, one reason it might be so: “Disasters are inevitable in life, and with disaster comes pain, the personal side of experiencing a disaster. Most of us don’t deal well with pain. Rather than process the pain, deal with it now, we tend to postpone or delay the pain. The attraction to immediate gratification drives people away from pain...”
Timmons & Arterburn

2. What are some of the things that cause pain and what are some of the things people do to postpone that pain? (Share some examples):

3. Read Genesis 3:16-19 Describe the circumstances under which pain first made its appearance into this world:

4. Read Romans 8:20-23. Is pain really something that is inevitable for us all?:

5. Read I Corinthians 4:9-14. When individuals are “spiritual” and mature, and really know how to have victory in prayer (as the apostle Paul surely demonstrated), are they assured less pain than those who are less mature?:

6. In the Bible there are many references to the relationship between pain, suffering and deprivation on the one hand, and blessings and rewards on the other. In the following passages, see if the “pain” can be identified and also the reward:

PASSAGE

THE “PAIN”

THE CERTAIN REWARD

a. II Timothy 2:8-12

b. Hebrews 10:34

c. Romans 8:17

d. Matthew 5:11

7. Read Psalm 37:11 and Matthew 5:5. The word “meek” in the Hebrew language means “to experience pain with the idea of becoming more mature,” in this case, becoming more dependent on God. In the Greek

Language (the language in which the New Testament was written) it means “power or strength that has been brought under control or under direction of a leader or master,” in this case by the Master Himself.

What is the method by which the meek “inherit the land and the earth” as indicated in this passage? In personal terms, what does God promise to do for YOU if you take on the goal of meekness in the face of His program for you to obtain it.

7. This week’s focus on care and prayer...

Is there a “pain” in your life right now that you are running away from? Is the Spirit of God trying to make it work for you – or is the evil one trying to discourage and humiliate you with it?

It is not easy to share a real hurt that is difficult even for you to share.

Lesson 22 A Ready Heart For Worship

KEY VERSE: “I call on the Lord in my distress and he answers me.”

Psalm 120:1

1. You’re a senior in High School (what, again? – once was enough!) and you are just about to go out on a very important date with someone very special, someone you admire and respect. What are some of the things you would do to prepare for the occasion?

- If there was something negative going on between you and your date, in your opinion, would it be better to take care of the matter before you went out to the special event, during the event, or after the event?:

2. You are on your way to the worship service of the church home you have adopted. It’s a 15 minute drive and just as you begin your trip, the man on the radio station to which you were listening says something odd: “Are you ready to worship God when you arrive at church this morning?” Your initial answer: “I don’t know.” How would you prepare yourself for worship during the next 14 minutes?:

3. Read Micah 6:6-8. When the Hebrews came to the Lord to worship, there were things that the Lord requested, but there were some things that were even more important that He required...

REQUESTED

REQUIRED

4. Reviewing the passage in the previous question, what things do you think the Lord requests and requires in the church today?:

REQUESTED

REQUIRED

5. There are a number of things that are part of the worship of God that He has told us about through His servants. In the passages below, identify the act of worship, and speculate as to its purpose:

<u>PASSAGE</u>	<u>The Practice</u>	<u>The Purpose</u>
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a. Psalm 95:1-7

b. Romans 12:1,2

c. Psalm 40:6-10

d. Psalm 51:15-17

6. This week's focus on care and prayer...

The worship of the Lord is one of the most frequently discussed topics in the Bible. Preparation for worship is right up there with worship itself. In fact, we would be hard pressed to distinguish between the two in actual practice. In your prayer and share time, take a few moments and talk about some of the things you do to prepare for worship, and then – exchanging ideas and suggestions, and if you have the freedom to do so – prepare yourself for worship with your partners...

Lesson 23 Being There For And With God's Team Members

KEY VERSE:

“I rejoiced with those who said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD.’” Psalm 122:1

1. “Team sports.” Just about everyone on planet earth has played team sports at some time or another, whether it be bridge or tackle football. Describe some of the consequences when (in a sport you can chose as an example) one or two of the members of your team decide to be a spectator instead of a genuine participant in the game? Will this effect the outcome of the game?

- Focus for a moment on what happens to the spirit and the attitude of the other members of the team?

2. Read Psalm 122:1-3. What kind of attitude does David (the author) describe as his when he considers spending some time in worship with his friends and fellow believers? Try to put this idea in present day language and discuss how this emotion might express itself in everyday conduct:

3. Read the following passages and describe the attitudes and corresponding actions related to the house of God as seen in these passages. (We need to realize that these are all experiences that would

normally be shared with other believers, times of praise, rejoicing, thanksgiving and worship in its various forms.):

<u>PASSAGE</u>	<u>Any Attitudes Revealed</u>	<u>Any Action Initiated</u>
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a. I Chronicles 29:3

b. Psalm 26:8

c. Isaiah 37:1

d. Psalm 27:4

e. Micah 4:2

f. Psalm 84:10

4. When you worship God together with believers, what are some of the most meaningful things to you personally?; what activity enables you to most freely give expression to your “team worship”?

5. Read Hebrews 10:19-25. The author of Hebrews gives instruction about effective and enduring worship of God. Notice that the context is one of worship on the model of the Old Testament Temple...

What does he say about the role of a clear conscience?

What does he say about our general attitude?

What does he say about the role of joining with others in worship?

6. This week's focus on care and prayer...

Worship was designed to be not only a personal activity, but to be a group activity. In fact, there are things that God will do through groups worshipping together that he will not do any other way. The power of the group sing, the incredible joy sharing an answer to prayer, the testimony of god's hand at work in our midst shared with many people.

The mere thought of getting together with others to worship can be that which sparks a special joy in our hearts: "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.'" Psalm 122:1.

With your prayer partner(s), give some time of worship, praise and thanks to God. Experience that Joy together...

Lesson 24 In The Service Of The Lord

KEY VERSE: “As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master.. so our eyes look to the LORD our God...” Psalm 123:2

1. It is one of the nicest restaurants in town. You’ve just spent the evening with some dear friends that you have not seen in some time. The dinner is over and you are about to depart. It’s time to leave a tip so you take a moment and ask those at the table, “What did you think of the service at our table?” “Terrific!” ..”Best I can remember!”.. are the unanimous responses. Describe some of the characteristics of service that might deserve those kinds of comments:

- When you look back on the service you receive at a church “service” who are the “servers”? In what ways does their service compare with the service given in your favorite restaurant?

2. During Biblical times, in the New Testament era especially, estimates are given that approximately two thirds of the population were slaves. The general population was very familiar with the role of a servant and the meaning of good service. In the New Testament there are numerous passages that describe the quality of a servant’s service. Some of these are listed below.

As you read these passages, note in column one the conduct befitting a faithful servant to men, and in column two, indicate how a servant/Christian might express this quality in a worship service to God:

PASSAGE What the Word says about the conduct of a faithful servant

How it might be expressed in a worship service

a. Ephesians 6:5

b. Colossians 3:22

c. I Timothy 6:1

d. Titus 2:9

e. I Peter 2:18

f. Psalm 84:10

3. Read Psalm 123. In verses 3 and 4 there is a description of the kind of treatment servants sometimes get while carrying out the assignments of their master. Imagine for a moment (the write down) the kinds of things that might have happened to this worship service servant in this Psalm that could have prompted him to utter his prayer to God:

- How does this treatment compare with the typical treatment given to the average waiter or waitress in a local restaurant?

4. Based on what we have studied thus far, would you say one should expect some measure of difficulty to be encountered when conducting a service of worship?

- Read Romans 12:1,2 (..the NASB has it “spiritual service of worship” at the end of verse 1). What does it take to do an effective worship according to this passage?

6. This week’s focus on care and prayer...

In a worship service, we are the servants and God is the master. Our fellow Christians and those that do not know Christ are the ones that receive our service. In fact, the words “minister,” “deacon” and “service” all come from the same basic origin (of meaning) so that all the people in the body of Christ are actually united as fellow servants.

Serving takes time and effort. And serving is best accomplished when it is done at the loving direction of a loving master. Because the Christian has the latter, the former becomes much easier.

How is your service – especially your worship service – doing? Share with your prayer partner about your service as the Lord leads...

Lesson 25 Dialing “911” For The Lord

KEY VERSE: “...if the LORD had not been on our side when men attacked us, when their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive.” Psalm 124:2,3

1. In almost every city in America there is some sort of rescue squad to help deal with an emergency involving people. In most major cities anyone can pick up the phone and dial “911” and get a host of services. Give some examples of the types of situations that would require such services:

- What are some of the situations which might qualify as a real emergency but for which “911” could offer no real help? Are there some difficult, emergency situations in which medical or police training is of little help?

- Who and how do we call in the case of a spiritual emergency?

2. In the following situations described in the Bible, the writer tells about a predicament and then describes the Lord’s help. In most every case, there is also listed a second and sometimes unexpected result of that help. List those helps and their results in the spaces provided below:

PASSAGE	Help The Lord Offers	Results Of The Lord’s Help
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a. James 1:5

b. II Corinthians 1:3,4

c. John 16:33

d. I Peter 4:12,13

e. Psalm 23:4

f. Psalm 37:16-19

g. Luke 12:28

3. Read Acts 27:14-26, 42-44. In this story of Paul's shipwreck during a storm on the way to Rome, we encounter several truths about God's care of His people and how He can care for people not yet in His family:

- Does man have control over the weather and the ocean currents? Where does one go when dealing with such forces?; where do we make our appeal?;

- What kind of protection did the Lord provide for His children in this situation? Physical? Mental? Emotional?

4. Read Philippians 4:4-7. As implied by this passage, what are some of the typical aggravations that might bring a person to find no satisfaction with earthly “911” and speak with God instead?

- What kind of practical results can we expect in calling Him?

5. This week’s focus on care and prayer...

Most emergencies can be most effectively dealt with if we have done the basic preparation (having a medical kit for example) and having the proper mental attitude (which means, basically, expecting them to arrive – they are inevitable!).

But many, if not most of life’s emergencies will find little help from “911”. The Lord has a vast array of people, power and tools at His disposal to help deal with things like major depression, unexpected feelings of hostility, deep fears, impending death, etc. In each case, the Lord has some very important and unexpected blessings in store for the “emergency victim”.

A piece of paper was left in the church sanctuary recently that made its way to the church office. On it was written: “Pain is inevitable; misery is optional.” With your prayer partner – if you have the freedom to do so, share an area of “pain” and dial “911” – to God – together.

Lesson 26 The Meaning Of Godly Courage

KEY VERSE: “Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.” Psalm 125:1

courage, n. 1. the quality of mind or spirit that enables one to face difficulty, danger, pain etc., with firmness and without fear; bravery. Also, to act in accordance with one’s belief’s, especially in spite of criticism.

1. There are various everyday situations in our society that call for the use of courage. Take a few minutes to identify some of these:

- There are also some extraordinary situations that require courage –ones which are rare; they don’t happen every day, and sometimes not in a month or a year, but they come along. Identify some of these:

2. In thinking about some of these instances that take courage, where would one expect to obtain this important quality if one did not have it or lacked enough of it to deal with a particular situation?

3. Read II Chronicles 32:7. The Bible records many instances where people are asked to “take courage” or “be courageous” or “act with bravery.” Obviously the source has something to do with God. But how do you suppose the follower of God is to get this thing called bravery?

4. There are many instances in the Bible where one or more of God’s people are told to “take courage” in the midst of some challenge, difficulty or obstacle in the path. In the following passages, see if you can identify

what it is that will take courage, and from where or how we are to “take courage”:

PASSAGE | Situation Requiring Courage | Its Source &/or Basis

a. Deuter. 31:6

b. Joshua 1:6

c. Joshua 10:25

d. I Chronicles 19:13

e. I Chronicles 22:13

f. II Chronicles 32:7

g. Philippians 1:27-30

4. Someone has defined godly courage as “confronting an opponent with the confidence that we will ultimately succeed.” In light of the passages we have examined in this study, how might we come to have this confidence referred to in this definition?

5. Most of the passages in the Bible referring to courage mention either the presence or the promises of the Lord or both. What would happen to Christian courage in the following situations if either of these were absent?:

Facing personal death...

Telling others about Jesus within a pagan culture...

6. This week's focus on care and prayer...

Bravery is a very special quality that every person has to some degree (after all, every human has been fashioned in the image of God), but having enough of it and using it wisely are the critical issues. If a person fails to use it properly, bravery becomes mere foolhardiness. If a person is in short supply, timidity and cowardice are the result.

The presence of Christ provides the perfect direction and guidance that bravery needs. The power of Christ provides the necessary energy and endurance to keep bravery in the picture throughout.

If you feel free to do so, see if you and your prayer partners can identify an area in which bravery is needed and ask the Lord for His presence and power to face and deal with it.

God be with you as you share...

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