Lessons On Spiritual Growth And A Pilot Test Of Their Effectiveness

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ABSTRACT

LESSONS ON SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND A PILOT TEST OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

by

Delbert W. Dunavant

Adviser: Abraham Terian, Dr. theol.
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

D.Min. Project Report

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: LESSONS ON SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND A PILOT TEST OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

Name of researcher: Delbert W. Dunavant
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Date completed: June 1988

Problem

A congregation's primary expectation of their pastor is his/her ability to provide competent guidance in spiritual formation. My education never offered me a class in spiritual formation and this deficiency has not been eliminated since my formal theological education. Therefore, I felt inept when I tried to provide spiritual guidance.

Method

This study began first with the Bible and included literature on spiritual formation. The selected materials were summarized into seventeen lessons. The
first eleven lessons explain the obstacles to spiritual formation, the holiness of God, and how Christians can experience holiness. The last six lessons explain the practical aspects of spiritual formation, such as Bible study, prayer, and journaling. Each lesson concludes with exercises to assist the reader to better understand and apply the lesson's concepts.

Five people were selected to write their understanding and practice of spirituality before their study of these lessons. After completing the lessons, they again wrote their understanding and practice of spirituality. The difference in their responses indicates possible growth.

Results

First, this study developed for me a clearer understanding and a more consistent practice of spirituality. Second, I believe I have developed an acceptable tool to assist my congregation in spiritual formation. Third, participants in this study have grown spiritually in the following ways. They can now explain spirituality more clearly and know how to develop the spiritual life. Two months after their study, their devotions were more consistent than before beginning these lessons. Fourth, I gained valuable experience in providing spiritual guidance.
Conclusions

Four conclusions resulted from this project. First, factors that stimulate spiritual growth are complex and defy both isolation and quantification. Claims for spiritual growth must ultimately be based on the participant's perception. Second, a direct relationship exists between the respondent's temperament and their spiritual development. Spiritual counselors must be able to adapt to different temperaments. Third, a prolonged study of spirituality appears to stimulate spiritual growth. Fourth, advanced spiritual growth lessons are needed. Additional lessons should include practical suggestions for continuing spiritual growth and explain how to live the contemplative life within society.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

LESSONS ON SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND A PILOT
TEST OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

A Project Report
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Delbert W. Dunavant
June 1988
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8 July 1988
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the contributions of the following persons. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Abraham Terian, my advisor, and Dr. C. Raymond Holmes. These two professors rigorously challenged me to do my best, demonstrated continual patience, and provided many helpful suggestions. I also wish to thank the five respondents in this project. Their acceptance of this task, their arduous efforts, and their openness throughout my inquiry made the completion of this project possible. Editorial assistance was provided by; Wanda McCook, Joyce Connors, Marjorie Bruce, and Joyce Jones. Each of these persons not only provided editorial corrections but also showed me how to write better and provided much encouragement. I wish to thank the members of the Stockton Central Seventh-day Adventist Church who assisted me in ways too numerous to delineate. I am especially grateful for my family's support. My daughters, Michelle and Kimberly, washed the cars, mowed the lawns, and did many other tasks so I could work on this project. My wife Mary Ellen, along with my daughters, graciously accepted my many absences and provided unending encouragement. In honor of their sacrifices, I dedicate this work to them.
INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this D.Min. project was to accomplish the following three goals. The first goal was to better understand and personally experience the discipline of spiritual formation. Without first making significant progress toward this goal, efforts toward the second and third goal would have been futile. The second goal was to develop a series of lessons on spiritual formation. These lessons explain the theoretical concepts of spiritual growth and include exercises to assist the reader to apply those concepts. The third goal was to have five members of my congregation use these lessons. This project provided me an opportunity to observe and record the lessons' effects upon the respondents' spiritual lives.

Justification

A congregation's primary expectation of their pastor is his/her ability to provide experienced, dependable guidance in spiritual development. I completed the customary theological training to become a pastor. However, the Christian universities I attended did not offer a class in Christian spirituality. Without
this training, I felt unprepared to meet this important expectation. Therefore, I needed this project to develop an experiential understanding of spiritual formation and to gain experience in providing spiritual guidance.

Spiritual formation confuses many Christians today. This confusion becomes obvious when a person is asked to define spirituality. People need a tool to help them understand and implement the principles of spiritual formation. In my opinion, other works on spiritual development are not totally satisfying. Therefore, this project was needed to develop a tool that would reduce this confusion and would assist in the development of spirituality.

Sources

Four major sources were used in this project. The primary source was the Bible. Paul's comments in Rom 5 through 8 provided the conceptional framework of especially the first eleven lessons. I selected these chapters because I believe they are the most complete biblical passage on this subject. Other Bible passages provided much insight and information on this subject as well. The second source of information was some of the current literature on spiritual formation. The third source was two classes on Christian spirituality taken at Fuller Theological Seminary. The classes included a two-day retreat at a nearby monastery. The last source
was the people chosen to study and respond to the lessons.

**Methodology**

I began by preaching a series of sermons on Rom 5 through 8. Expounding upon these chapters required me to formulate my understanding of spiritual formation. Next, I took two classes on Christian spirituality. The classes exposed me to additional perspectives and to current literature on spirituality. Following this, I wrote a series of lessons on spiritual formation. The first eleven lessons explains the fundamental principles of spiritual development. The last six lessons show how to practice these concepts and principles. Next, I invited five members of my congregation to complete the lessons. These people came from different age, sex, educational, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Before the respondents began the lessons, they wrote replies to the following questions: 1. What is a spiritual person or what is spirituality? 2. How does one develop the spiritual life? 3. How often do you practice the concepts and/or methods described in questions one and two. After answering the first two questions, the respondents read and answered the third question. The respondents then read the lessons and completed the exercises.

Two months after the respondents completed all the lessons, they replied to the same three questions. I
compared each respondent's initial and concluding reply and interpreted the differences, or lack thereof, between them. By dialoguing with each respondent, I verified my interpretations. This information and interpretation, in the format of five case studies, comprises the last section of this document.

**Definition of Terms**

Certain terms and concepts used in this document need an explanation. The word, with its different forms, that most needs a definition is spirituality. My definition of spirituality is "the cognizance of and the experience with the Transcendent." This definition is intentionally spartan in order to retain its binary emphasis of knowing and experiencing God. A fuller definition unfolds throughout the lessons.

Another word with its various forms that might cause confusion is holiness. The concept of holiness is difficult to define, let alone explain with clarity. For example, one author describes holiness as "imponderable and incomprehensible, an inarticulate feeling of an inviolable potency." When a person can describe God, they can describe holiness. This is because holiness is, as the same author said,

the distinctive mark and signature of the divine.

More than any other term, 'holiness' gives expression

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to the essential nature of the 'sacred.' It is therefore to be understood, not as one of the attributes among other attributes, but as the innermost reality to which all others are related.

I use the term holiness synonymously with godliness which means "one who is like God." The Holy Spirit generates the desire to emulate the character of God, to become holy. Holiness and stimulation to holiness is a gift from God. This gift then actively seeks to bring into harmony the recipient's character as that person beholds his Beloved. Unlike the holiness attained through cultic or ceremonial observances, Christian holiness is predominately ethical.

Limitations

This project has three significant limitations. The first limitation involved the nature of the inquiry. My perceptions, instead of quantitative analysis, provided the basis for the conclusions. The second limitation was the materials used to stimulate spiritual growth. Only the author's lessons were used to encourage the respondent's spiritual formation. The third limitation was the five members chosen to study these lessons. Other people would have responded differently. Even these five people would respond differently at another period in their lives.

In Conclusion

I have now studied spirituality and attempted to incorporate these concepts into my life for more than
two years. However, there is still a significant gap between my knowledge and my performance. Nevertheless, I plan to continue to grow spiritually and to assist others on their spiritual pilgrimage. Perhaps the ensuing lessons will facilitate this.
PART I. LESSONS ON SPIRITUAL GROWTH
A natural attachment exists between parents and their children. An attachment between the Creator God with those created in His image also exists. Since the beginning of mankind, God desired this attachment to mature into a trusting relationship. Therefore, throughout the centuries God repeatedly invited people to enter into a relationship with Him. God has expressed these invitations in many different ways. For example, the figurative invitation recorded in Rev 3:20 where Jesus says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."  

In spite of repeated invitations, one wonders why so few people enter into a trusting relationship with God. What hinders Christians from developing the spiritual life? From my studies on this subject and from my observation of Christians, I have noticed six common obstacles. Any one or any combination of these obstacles hinders spiritual growth. The first obstacle is

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1 All scriptural references are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.
compulsive busyness. The second, the influence of a simplistic perspective of reality. The third, a misunderstanding of the essence of spirituality. The fourth, the confusion resulting from the conflicting methods suggested for spiritual growth. The fifth, the fear of appearing sanctimonious with a corresponding loss of self-esteem. And finally, the last obstacle is the failure to appreciate the discipline necessary for spiritual growth.

**Compulsive Busyness**

The parable of the great banquet in Luke 14:15-24, is one of many that illustrates God's willingness to have everyone come to Him, to grow spiritually. In the parable, the master extended three invitations. However, these invitations were repeatedly spurned by many of the recipients. Those who refused these invitations allowed daily cares to prevent their coming to God.

Today people cite different excuses. Nevertheless, the same underlying problem exists: people are compulsively busy. There is nothing wrong with being busy, even Jesus was often very busy. Instead, the problem is compulsive busyness. Compulsive busyness has two major characteristics. First, there is an inner compulsion to be busy. Compulsively busy people feel guilty when they are not busy. Second, those afflicted with compulsive busyness usually do not know why they feel driven to perpetual action.
It is important to understand why people are compulsively busy if this obstacle is to be surmounted. Both internal and external forces perpetuate compulsive busyness.

The Internal Force of Compulsive Busyness

The internal force behind compulsive busyness is the people's need to fill their inward emptiness. People can feel lonely, inwardly empty, even though surrounded by many activities, noises, or a crowd of people. They attempt to fill this void, this inner emptiness, by different means. Some people overwork and others overplay in an attempt to fill this void. Some people fill their environment with noise from a radio or television, and still others engage in an almost continuous conversation. All attempt to fill a void in their lives. They feel uncomfortable with silence for any length of time. When they are compulsively busy, they do not have to face the internal emptiness within themselves. In other words, compulsive busyness is not the deeper problem; it is merely a coping mechanism to deal with the real problem.

The real problem is an internal emptiness or feeling of loneliness that is best understood in light of the fall. Human beings, by sin, alienated themselves from their Creator. People deprived of that relationship sense a loneliness, an inward emptiness. Therefore, any resolution of this problem and its corollary, compulsive
busyness, must include a reentering into a trusting relationship with God.

The External Force of Compulsive Busyness

An external force that encourages compulsive busyness is the tyranny of the urgent. It is necessary to distinguish between two key words to understand this concept. These two words are: urgent and important. The urgent are the pressing things which call for immediate attention. The important are the essential things one wants to accomplish in life.

It is often difficult to postpone urgent demands. For example, the ringing of the phone, or a salesperson standing at the door demands an immediate response. Whereas, the important things have a high priority in a person's life, for example, a person's relationship with God and family.

Each person struggles to maintain a healthy balance between these two pressures. People experience the tyranny of the urgent when they allow urgent demands to prevent them from accomplishing their important goals. Since one can defer the important, postponement is common. This deferment, however, can be detrimental to spiritual formation. Satan knows he can slow spiritual growth by preoccupying people with things that are urgent, thus compelling them to postpone the important.

Why do people react to the urgent and postpone the important? People afflicted most with this problem
have two particular characteristics. First, they are uncertain if others love or respect them. Therefore, they react to urgent demands because they believe that by doing them they might be better appreciated. They are not secure enough to risk what others might think of them if they did not respond to these urgent interruptions.

Second, people are uncertain of their life goals and priorities and therefore react to urgent demands rather than the important ones. These people have not spent enough time clarifying what is most important to them. Nor they have delineated specific steps to acquire their goals. Because their long-term goals are not clear, they react to immediate pressures.

In summary, people in an attempt to fill an internal void created by their alienation from God are compulsively busy. Because of this void, they perpetually react to urgent demands compelled by personal feelings of inadequacy.

**Influence of a Simplistic Perspective of Reality**

The second obstacle to spiritual growth comes as an unfortunate by-product of the tremendous progress and achievements of science and technology. Countless time-saving devices have resulted from these advancements. In spite of them, people feel they have less time than in the "good old days." In an attempt to simplify their lives, people restrict the boundaries of their reality. They want a reality that consists of only that which is
apprehended by the five senses or is discernible by their intellect. Simplistically stated, these people accept the philosophy: "I believe only in what I can see." Only when something is scientifically proven, will they believe in it.

People have made rapid improvements in their abilities to study and explain phenomena which had baffled them for centuries. Because of these quantum leaps in science, people assume they have the capacity to determine what is, or is not, real. For them, anything that is not physical, or provable, is not real. Consequently, by this decision, people have eliminated the spiritual dimension of reality from their lives. Thus, people think they have made their world simpler and easier to live in.

This reductionistic perspective of reality is further intensified by the many pressures of modern society. Rapid changes and movements occur within our society. The media continually bombards people's senses. These, as well as many other factors, tend to perpetuate this limited view of reality. The response to these external pressures is the desire to reduce everything to its simplest form. Television programs that promise all the world's news in thirty minutes are very alluring. Condensed books or magazine digests are popular since they promise to save people time. More people desire immediate gratification. Waiting for that which is
perceived as pleasurable seems too stressful.

With these limitations, people naturally revert to a reductionistic or simplistic perspective of reality. They cannot accept any concept or belief that exceeds these physical limitations because it is empirically unprovable.

This perspective influences even Christians. By their actions throughout the week, many deny the importance and existence of God. They live as if the physical world were all there was to life. They seem to deny the concept of 2 Cor 4:18: "For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." How applicable for modern humans is Rom 1:22: "Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools." Christians are impeded in their spiritual growth to the extent these perspectives and pressures influence them.

Misunderstanding the Essence of Spirituality

The third major hindrance to spiritual formation is the inherently vague nature of spirituality. Grasping or understanding a non-physical reality is not easy. I have asked a number of persons for their definition of spirituality. They gave varied answers, most of which were theologically problematic. Most Christians do not have a viable definition and, thereby, do not have a clear understanding of spirituality. Some of these same people were quick to identify individuals as being or not being a spiritual person. Most definitions of
spirituality are descriptions of the behavioral characteristics of people whom they think are spiritual. Most of these descriptions would be the same if they were describing an emotional, humble, or sensitive person. They simply do not understand spirituality. These people only know how it affects a person. Without understanding the essence of spirituality, intentional development is impossible.

My definition of spirituality is this: 

**Spirituality is the cognizance of and the experience with the Transcendent.** Spirituality is the process of knowing and experiencing God. This definition intentionally gives only the barest essence of spirituality. A concise definition is needed since most other definitions of spirituality, being lengthy, are more confusing than enlightening.

According to this simple definition, most primitive people are spiritual persons, because they usually do not make a dichotomy between supernatural forces and their physical world. Nevertheless, the brevity of definition is essential to maintain the focus on its twofold emphasis of knowing and experiencing God. A fuller definition of Christian spirituality would clarify each phrase as to its meaning and method of implementation. For example, people might ask, "Who is the Transcendent? How does one come to know God? How does one foster an experience with God which is in
harmony with concepts expressed in the Bible?" The following lessons will go into greater details and attempt to answer such questions.

Confusion Resulting from Conflicting Methods for Spiritual Growth

The fourth hindrance to spiritual formation is the result of conflicting methods proposed by different writers. Confusion is especially common among spiritual novices. In bewilderment they ask, "What does one actually do to grow spiritually?" Some of this confusion results from sermons that emphasize the importance of Christians fighting the good fight of faith. Sermons such as these have been instrumental in causing some Christians to think they are entirely responsible for their spiritual development. In contrast, other sermons express that spiritual maturation results from only believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. These sermons seem to suggest that God, almost without human involvement, performs everything necessary for human's spiritual development.

The responsibility for spiritual development is neither exclusively God's nor humans'. A more balanced view has a person responding to the initiative of God. This person then places himself where he can learn about God and experience His presence. The following lessons describe how a person responds to God's Spirit more effectively.
Potential Loss of Self-Esteem

The fifth major hindrance in spiritual development is the fear of what others might think if one pursued this invitation. Most people base their self-esteem on their conjecture of what people who are significant to them think about them. A negative response from one's peers could result in a loss of self-esteem. When a person attempts to develop the spiritual life, other people commonly think he is trying to appear sanctimonious. These other people may question the importance or reality of his quest. Some people in modern society look with disdain upon those who pursue spirituality. Some believe only the psychologically weak need a religious crutch. Still others think of spirituality seekers as an undesirable vestige from antiquity. Being confronted with these sentiments could be damaging to a person's self-esteem.

Today, what people do affects their self-esteem. A prestigious position of employment tends to bolster a person's self-esteem. Also, how hard one works is significant to one's self-esteem. This is especially true where people honor the "Protestant work ethic." A person doing well at work receives accolades and affirmation from the significant people in life. For many people, this affirmation provides the basis for, or

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contributes to, their self-esteem. However, in the pursuit of spirituality there is less emphasis on doing and a greater emphasis on being. What is the real purpose of life? How can one be in harmony with God? How can one reach his or her greatest potential? Questions such as these need well-thought-out answers. Indulging in this contemplative activity, instead of being compulsively busy, could threaten a person's self-esteem.

Amount of Discipline Needed

The sixth hindrance in the development of a spiritual life is the discipline needed to develop a relationship with God. The desire to know God and to have an experience with Him continues to grow as this quest continues. However, many distractions challenge this quest. Also changes in life-style are usually necessary and require time. The sinful habits that would prevent spiritual growth are ingrained in our character and must be eradicated. Developing habits of holiness takes repeated effort. Therefore, discipline is always necessary with these types of significant changes.

Fortunately, God continues to extend an invitation for people to develop a relationship with Him. He has been patient as people allowed these six obstacles to hinder the development of this relationship. God continues to wait for each person to experience what Calvin declared in the Geneva Catechism to be man's most
important quest: "the chief goal of man is to know God and to enjoy His presence forever."

Spiritual Exercises

Before you begin the assignments in these lessons, supply yourself with a notebook. A spiral notebook of about one hundred pages should be adequate to complete all the exercises in these lessons. Complete each exercise before proceeding to the next. Make sure you record the date you completed each exercise.

Day One: Read carefully Lesson One.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Reread the section called "Compulsive Busyness." Spend the next several minutes questioning whether you are compulsively busy. Ask yourself the following questions: Do I feel uncomfortable when it is quiet for any length of time? Do I have regular time for reflection and contemplation? If I do not have time for reflection, why not? Do I react so often to the urgent that I seldom do the important? Why? Write your responses to these questions.

Date Completed:

Day Three: Reread the section entitled "The Influence of a Simplistic Perspective of Reality." Does God seem real and important to you during the week? Do you think often of Him when you are not in church? Write out a list of at least five ways in which a simplistic perspective of reality has hindered your spiritual growth.

Date Completed:

Day Four: Reread the section called "Misunderstanding the Essence of Spirituality." Write your understanding (definition) of spirituality.

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Day Five: Reread the section on the "Confusion Resulting from the Conflicting Methods for Spiritual Growth." Write out, as clearly as possible, your understanding of the following question. What is God's role and what is my role in developing the spiritual life?

Day Six: Reread the section entitled the "Potential Loss of Self-Esteem." Write out your concerns about what people think about you. Write what makes you feel good about yourself. Ask yourself whether it is more important who you are than what you do.

Day Seven: Reread the section mentioning discipline. Write your thoughts regarding the ease or difficulty of establishing habits for spiritual growth. Begin experimenting with different times and places where you can learn more about God and experience Him personally.

Day Eight: Think about God's invitation to humans to enter into a relationship with Him. Meditate upon what that means to you, then write out what you determine will be your response to that invitation.
LESSON II

ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD

What would happen if a person overcame the obstacles of spiritual formation and encountered God? What would it be like to know and experience Him? Unfortunately, the Bible does not systematically record the developmental stages of spiritual growth. However, the Bible does portray God as One who has taken the initiative and revealed Himself to mankind. Therefore, it is informative to review the Bible passages where God visibly revealed Himself to His people. In the following accounts, especially notice the people's reaction as they met God.

Biblical Accounts of Human Encounters with God

After his affliction at the hands of Satan, Job responds to the charges of his friends. He asserts his righteousness and challenges God to prove otherwise in Job 31:35. God, in response to Job's accusations, confronts him. The record of Job's reaction to his visible meeting with God is in Job 40:3,4. This passage says, "Then Job answered the Lord: 'I am unworthy--how can I reply to you? '" Job's second reply to God as recorded in Job 42:5,6 says, "My ears had heard of you,
but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

It was a privilege for the children of Israel to visibly meet God at Mt. Sinai. They witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the smoking mountain. Their response as recorded in Exod 20:18,19 (NKJV): "the people were afraid and trembled; and they stood afar off, and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die.'"

During this time, Moses asked to see the glory of God according to Exod 33:18. The Lord responded by promising him a revelation of His goodness. He stipulated, however, that Moses must not see His face. To accomplish this, God placed Moses in a cleft in the rock and covered him until He had passed. Once passed, God allowed Moses to see His back. The record of Moses's reaction to his visible meeting with God is in Exod 34:8. This passage says, "Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped."

Centuries later, God revealed Himself to Isaiah in the same year that King Uzziah died. Isaiah was ministering in the Temple when this event occurred. The record of Isaiah's reaction to this visible meeting is in Isa 6:5: "Woe to me! I cried. I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, . . . and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty!"
Several experiences of prophets visibly meeting God are noteworthy. Prophets repeatedly lost their strength and collapsed as if dead. The Bible records that they trembled and some could not speak or breathe. For example, read Ezekiel's reaction in Ezek 1:28, 3:23, or Daniel's reaction in Dan 8:17, 10:5-10, 12, 15, 17, 19.

In the New Testament times, Peter, James, and John went with Jesus to the top of a mountain. When Jesus arrived, His face began to shine like the sun. His garments were transformed into a dazzling bright white. Then God spoke from the cloud that overshadowed the disciples. In Matt 17:6,7 is the record of the disciples' reaction: "When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified."

After Adam sinned, he could no longer commune face to face with God and survive. Therefore, people experience extensive apprehension and fear when they visibly meet God. From such a meeting, people feel unworthy and despise themselves. Being terrified, these people collapsed as if dead. When sinful beings visibly meet the sinless God, it is emotionally devastating.

The writer of the book of Hebrews, in Heb 10:31 and 12:29, said it well: "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" "our God is a consuming fire." A more in-depth look at one of these visible meetings will explain these responses more clearly. Isa 6 provides one of the clearest pictures of what happens
when a human visibly meets God.

A Brief Sketch of Isaiah's Encounter

Isaiah lived in the declining years of the nation of Israel. God called him to be His spokesperson. As a prophet, he was to tell Israel of their upcoming destruction and downfall. Isaiah's position was not popular and was often dangerous, as is attested in Heb 11:34-38 and Matt 23:37.

Mentioning the year King Uzziah died was probably more than just a chronological reference. Perhaps Isaiah was contemplating the reason for the king's death. Perhaps he was mentally reviewing the life of King Uzziah looking for such clues. This review could have been similar to the record of the king's life found in 2 Chr 26. This passage states that he sought wisdom and instruction from God's prophets during his fifty-two-year reign. Under his administration, the Israelites dug many cisterns. Being a warrior king, he built up many cities' defenses and developed a large army. He conquered the Ammonites and received tribute from them. In comparison to other Israelite kings, he had done many good things for his nation. As 2 Kgs 15:3 records, King Uzziah "had done what was right in the sight of the Lord."

Unfortunately, another incident happened at the end of King Uzziah's life. Isaiah surely recalled that horrible incident which precipitated the king's contracting leprosy. King Uzziah attempted to offer
incense in the temple, a duty only consecrated priests could perform. Uzziah became angry when confronted by the high priest and because of his impropriety, contracted leprosy. The scripture records in 2 Chr 26:16, "his heart was lifted up to his destruction."

Isaiah must have pondered why this incident had happened. King Uzziah must have known that King Saul, taking Samuel's place, had offered a sacrifice. He had to know this incident provoked God's pronouncement to King Saul, in 1 Sam 13:14, "your kingdom will not endure." Why did this happen? Why do good people sin, especially after they have been seemingly good for so long? Perhaps Isaiah was also wondering why God allows the good to suffer. In other words, what type of a God would allow a good king to die like that? Is God a capricious God? Is He vengeful? Is He indifferent to the suffering of His people? If Isaiah was contemplating this, he must have been wondering if God is really good and holy. Within this context, God reveals Himself to Isaiah.

**The Importance of Isa 6's Three-fold Declaration of God's Holiness**

The passage begins with a description of the seraphim. Next, is the seraphim's proclamation of their adoration of God: "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts; and the whole earth is full of his glory." Why is God called holy three times? Scripture uses repetition
primarily for emphasis. For example, recall in the gospels Jesus' use of the word "verily." Jesus used this word to emphasize what He was about to say. When He wanted to give greater emphasis He said, "verily, verily I say unto you." A threefold repetition must therefore be of utmost importance.

In the Bible, holiness is the only characteristic of God repeated three times. Therefore, as one begins to know God, the first characteristic to understand and emulate must be His holiness. In fact, as one author has noted, "Among the most frequent appellations for Deity is 'the Holy One.'" This same article also states that holiness is "the distinctive mark and signature of the Divine. [God's holiness] is therefore to be understood not as one attribute among other attributes, but as the innermost reality to which all others were related." ¹

Another author states that a confrontation between man and God "awakens in man a sense of absolute nothingness, a 'creature-consciousness' or 'creature feeling' leading to absolute self-abasement." ² Isaiah clearly demonstrated this in Isa 6:5. In this verse, he bewails his utter sinfulness in contrast to God's utter holiness.

The work of a prophet often includes pronouncing

messages of doom. In this scene, Isaiah pronounces judgment upon himself. One glimpse of a holy God utterly destroyed Isaiah's hopes concerning his righteousness. Therefore, as a spokesman of God, he officially declares himself deserving of divine justice. Many years later he continued to believe that his righteousness was like filthy rags as attested in Isa 64:6.

Isaiah as a prophet of God and as a minister in the temple must have been godly. As long as Isaiah compared himself with his fellow humans, he could have thought himself righteous. However, God does not require His followers to be only as good as other humans. Instead, God requires a righteousness that can withstand His presence. Without this righteousness, no one can know Him or experience His presence.

God knows every person's secret sins according to Heb 4:12,13. This passage says, "the Word of God is living and active . . . nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." Since nothing can hide from God, Isaiah's level of righteousness was inadequate in His presence.

Isaiah's reference to himself as a man with unclean lips is significant. He might have said that he was a man of unclean thoughts or a man of unclean habits. Why does he focus upon his mouth? Jas 3:6 calls the tongue a fire that sets the whole life on fire, thus
corrupting the entire body. The mouth displays the real inner self. Isaiah, along with his nation, had problems with their inner selves.

Fortunately, God does not reveal Himself as vividly today as He did to Isaiah. God usually reveals Himself gradually as people continue to study His Word. This allows people to have a gradual recognition of their sinfulness. This gradual recognition prevents an overwhelming sense of one's utter corruption. Standing in the presence of God is comparable to standing at the epicenter of an atomic detonation. Sinful beings would cease to exist in the presence of a holy God.

Thankfully, our holy God is also a God of grace. Isa 6:6,7 states that God provides the only effective remedy possible for Isaiah's condition. A seraphim comes, as Heb 1:14 says, to "serve those who will inherit salvation." In these verses, the coal is burning hot. It is so hot the angel uses tongs to carry it. The lips are very tender. To apply the hot coal there, would have been very painful. Besides the physical pain, the few moments of fearful anticipation would have been emotionally painful. However, this painful act of cleansing was an act of mercy. God did not burn Isaiah's entire body. Only the unclean portion received the coal.

In summary, when the people of the Bible visibly met God, His holiness became paramount to them. These people despised themselves when confronted with the
contrast of their sinfulness and God's sinlessness. During this visible meeting with God, they recognized their creatureness and felt absolute self-abasement. Based upon the consistency of their responses, one must conclude this is the result of an encounter with God.

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Read this lesson carefully.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Read Job 1, 2, 38-42 and visualize those scenes. Write out what you think it would have been like to have been there beside Job. Use all five of your senses.

Date Completed:

Day Three: Read Exod 19, 20:18-21, 33:18-34:9 and visualize those scenes. Write out what it would have been like to have been Moses and/or one of the Israelites. How do you think the people around you would have reacted? How would you have felt?

Date Completed:

Day Four: Read Isa 6:1-7 and visualize the inside of the Temple. Imagine a priest ministering there. Next, using all your senses, visualize being in that scene. Write what you might have felt and sensed if you had been standing beside Isaiah.

Date Completed:

Day Five: Attempt to describe in your own words the holiness of God. Include why you think those exposed to the visible presence of God reacted as they did. Write out how you think you would have reacted.

Date Completed:
LESSON III

GOD'S HOLY JUSTICE AND HOLY MERCY

What type of God would have a person killed just because he picked up sticks on the Sabbath? What type of God would have children stoned just because they were disobedient to their parents? What type of God would turn Lot's wife into a pillar of salt just because she looked back? Is God really holy, just, and good?

Biblical Stories that Challenge God's Justice

Two stories in the Bible challenge God's holiness. A review of these two stories is necessary to determine if God is as holy as angels claim. The story recorded in Lev 10:1-4 is a difficult story for people to accept. Why would God destroy His two ministers, Nadab and Abihu? They had only used a flame from an unauthorized source. How could a holy God be just in destroying them? Many people claim "fire is fire." How could anyone tell a difference in the source of the flame?

A number of people look with pity on this situation. Here were two young ministers just trying new and creative forms of worship. They were new in the ministry, having been ordained just a few weeks before.
They could not have known all the rules and regulations. Therefore, it was unjust to hold them accountable.

People are shocked by God's response. This story offends their sense of justice. These people rationalize that a just and holy God would have at least warned them. Was God being just in this story? Was justice being served? Can one maintain the claim for God's holiness in light of this story?

A person must first ask, "What is justice?" A common definition is "punishment that fits the crime." Did Nadab and Abihu's punishment fit their crime? Could they really claim they did not know any better? Notice what Exod 24:9-11 says: "Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel . . . But God did raise His hand against these leaders of the Israelites, they saw God, and they ate and drank." Nadab and Abihu had personally encountered God and witnessed His holiness. They must have recognized the tremendous difference between their righteousness and God's. This incident happened some time before the incident recorded in Lev 10.

Nadab and Abihu could not have claimed ignorance because they had previously assisted their father, Aaron, in a number of services. Just before their ordination they had a week to contemplate the significance of God's call. They had ample opportunity to contemplate the responsibilities of religious leadership.
Their problem was not ignorance. Apparently, Nadab and Abihu never dreamed sin was so serious or that God would really hold them accountable. Before further inquiry into the holiness of God, a person should review an even more puzzling story.

The story of Uzzah more seriously challenges some people's belief in the holiness of God. Uzzah merely touched the ark to prevent it from falling and God immediately killed him. This story so embarrasses many Christians they try to ignore it. Others give the most incredulous explanations to reduce its impact. People have claimed the ark's design was such that it functioned as a battery. To these people the "Shekinah glory" was merely high voltage energy. They conclude Uzzah was electrocuted. Others have claimed that Uzzah held the ark in such reverence and awe that when he touched it, he had a heart attack.

This story portrays God differently than desired by many Christians. Some people view God as a grandfatherly type who in His senility does not see people's sins. Even if God does see the sins of people, they imagine Him ignoring all but the worst sins because of His love. Because of their preconceived ideas about God, they question how He ever could have killed Uzzah. Some wonder, since this was not a premeditated act of

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defiance, why did God react so harshly? Some suppose it was merely a reflexive reaction by Uzzah to a falling piece of furniture. Instead of being killed, Uzzah should have heard a big "thank you" from God. As 1 Chr 13:11 records, even David was angry with the Lord over this incident. Therefore, they believe it is justifiable for Christians to be at least embarrassed about this incident.

Is God holy, just, and good? Is He really worthy of being worshiped? Can a person choose to worship Him in love and not out of fear? A reading of the chapters around this event clarifies some of the misconceptions. 1 Chr 13:1,2 and 15:1,2,12,13 reveals those involved in the transportation of the ark knew they were doing wrong.

Those involved in transporting the ark knew only the Kohathites were supposed to transport the furniture of the sanctuary. These sanctuary articles were so sacred that, as Num 4:20 records, the Kohathites could not even look upon them. The furniture was covered by Aaron and his sons before they could come to move it.

David assembled the Levites to discuss how to transport the ark. Clearly, they knew it must be moved by using poles inserted through the rings anchored in the furniture. Nevertheless, they chose to use an ox cart. The suddenness and finality of the punishment, rather
than the punishment itself, is what apparently shocks people.

Misunderstanding the Relationship Between God's Justice and Mercy

Why is God's response so surprising? Why are these Bible stories so hard to accept? This problem results from a misunderstanding of two key concepts: God's justice and mercy. Today the story of Nadab and Abihu or Uzzah receiving divine justice shocks people. People have come to expect from God only His divine mercy. They need to remember the true meaning of justice and mercy.

Justice occurs when a person receives the consequences of his behavior and decisions. Mercy is not receiving the full consequences of one's behavior and decisions. Divine mercy is not injustice; it is nonjustice. God chooses to delay the results of justice so people might repent and have opportunities for righteousness. Rom 2:3,4 says: "Do you think you will escape God's judgments? Or do you show contempt for the richness of His kindness, tolerance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?"

According to Rom 3:23, everyone has sinned. Paul says in Rom 6:23 that the consequences of sin is death. Therefore, one must conclude that all people deserve to die. If God were to exercise His justice today, no
sinner could continue to live. The day-to-day continuance of life is a gift from God. It is because, as Rev 13:8 records, the Lamb was "slain from the foundation of the world" that people continue to live.

Why is sin so serious? Gen 1:26 states that God created humans in His image. Humans were created to be image bearers, reflectors of what God is like. Every time a person sins, presumably this is a demonstration of what God is like. For example, when Christians reveal their impatience by their actions, they are saying God is also impatient. The real issue is not whether God's people deserve to die, but that any should continue to live! No ambassador could so often falsely misrepresent his country as Christians, God's ambassadors, continue to misrepresent God.

When God rapidly executes justice, people are shocked, being unaccustomed to His rapid response. God is slow to anger, allowing all sinners another opportunity to repent and turn to Him. Yet, many abuse this opportunity and become even more bold in sin. Some Christians are as unconcerned about their sins as any secular person. They claim the promise of forgiveness in 1 John 1:9 and then continue sinning. Many believe God is not serious about sin. They reach this conclusion when they are not immediately punished for their sins. Thus many Christians have come to expect, if not demand, only God's mercy.
Do Christians deserve mercy? What is wrong with the idea of Christians deserving mercy? After careful thought, one must conclude this idea is intrinsically impossible! Mercy, by definition, is unmerited. One could never deserve it and thereby one could never demand it. Mercy is receiving what one does not deserve.

Fortunately, the Bible includes these stories about God's justice. These stories prevent God's people from falling into the error of demanding God's mercy. These few stories remind people of God's justice and how, apart from His mercy, none could be alive.

Is God holy, just, and good? When people appreciate the relationship between God's justice and mercy, when they recognize the seriousness of sin, they will emphatically declare, "yes!"

Spiritual Exercises

Day One: Read lesson carefully.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Spend several minutes meditating on the difference between justice and mercy. Write a well-thought-out summary of your meditation.

Date Completed:

Day Three: Imagine receiving the justice you deserve just now. Write out a list of five reasons why you think God is still extending His mercy to you.

Date Completed:

Day Four: Reread the section on why sin is so serious. Write out a list of ways in which you, as an ambassador, have misrepresented the character of God in the past.
Date Completed:

Day Five: Spend several minutes reflecting upon how you are demanding God's mercy by intentionally continuing in sinful habits. Write out a summary of your thoughts.

Date Completed:
LESSON IV

THE TRAUMA OF HOLINESS

Many Christians have established a false dichotomy between the temperament of Jesus and that of God the Father. Jesus is often the One whom they teach their children to love and pray to. Many people act as if they are unsure of the Father's love for them. Some act as if they believe the Old Testament stories of wrath describe the Father. They also act as if the New Testament stories of love and caring describe the Son. In the same vein, many Christians reduce Jesus to a good man who understands their weaknesses and excuses their sins. However, an in-depth study of the nature of Jesus fails to maintain this difference between Jesus and His Father. This fact is important because with imprecise Bible study practices come distorted Christian living.

Disciples Encounter the Divine Nature and Holiness of Jesus

Mark 4:35-39 portrays a clear picture of the nature of Jesus. A study of this passage can prevent the making of this false dichotomy between Jesus and God the Father. First, one needs to understand the context of this passage. This scene takes place on the Sea of Galilee, located less than thirty miles from the
Mediterranean Sea. Often strong winds blow off the
Mediterranean Sea through the hill country of northern
Palestine and over the lake. The winds on this lake can
blow like the wind in a wind tunnel. Many fishermen used
the lake to make their living. Experienced local
fisherman knew the frequent, and sometimes violent,
storms for which the lake is famous.

The disciples, seasoned veteran fishermen, had
their Master with them. Perhaps they were saying one to
another that nothing could go wrong on this trip. Yet,
what they may intuitively have feared soon became
reality. The storm was more violent than any they could
remember. They knew a small fishing boat could get
caught the wrong way between the waves. If this
happened, the boat would quickly come apart. Surely the
disciples strained every muscle attempting to keep the
boat afloat and headed hopefully toward shore.

In contrast with the plight of the fishermen-
disciples was the tranquility of Jesus. Mark 4:38
records that through the storm Jesus was sound asleep on
a cushion. When the disciples noted His serenity, they
awakened Jesus and asked if He cared whether on not they
drowned. They did not want an answer as much as they
wanted a solution to their immediate problem. In
reality, they were questioning whether Jesus really
loved them. They could have wondered why, if He really
loved them, He was allowing them to drown. They
remembered that Jesus had demonstrated His love to them on many previous occasions. Yet, at this place in the narrative, they were accusing Him of a lack of fidelity. They were acting as if Jesus had not done enough to prove His compassion for them.

What should Jesus have done? Should He have answered their question-accusation with logic or with some unanswerable argument? Should He have reminded them of the many times they had failed Him and thereby shame them into silence? Should Jesus have tried to prove that He really did care about their safety? Jesus decided to save His words for the wind and performed a tremendous miracle.

Notice that Jesus did not plead with the Father to deliver them from the storm. Instead, He dealt directly with the gale force winds. When in vs. 39 Jesus said, "Peace be still," the wind responded to the Living Word. The air was so calm there was not even enough wind to make the boat's sails flutter.

It is hard to imagine the disciples returning to the normal chatter of everyday life. Would they have talked about the weather since this would have been an item of current interest? In vss. 40, 41, something interesting happens. The disciples knew theoretically that God could take care of them. However, they did not know without question that He would. Having only this
theoretical knowledge of God's abilities, they had been afraid.

Their reaction in vs. 41 shows they were even more terrified after the sea calmed. It was then they recognized that Jesus' power is so much greater than the power of the storm. They had been so close to such infinite power, yet they had not realize it. They now recognized they were in the presence of the great I AM, the Holy One of Israel. They were filled with awe of His majesty and power.

Luke 5:1-7 provides an even clearer understanding of what the disciples must have felt. This story took place on the same lake with the same disciples, only it happened at an earlier date. The disciples fished through the night and their catch was dismal. The disciples joined Jesus as He finished preaching to a crowd. The disciples were probably extra tired from the combination of these two events.

Then Jesus asked them to go fishing again. One can sense the frustration of Peter in vs. 5. He blurted out that they, professional fisherman, had already tried all night without success. Peter must have wondered how this carpenter could do any better than professional fishermen. He might have thought, "Who does Jesus think He is telling us where to cast our nets? Does Jesus not realize how tired we are?" In addition to this, they probably did not have enough time to finish cleaning the
nets. Their nets would not be ready for re-use when Jesus asked them to go out again.

Notice Peter's response in vs. 5: "But at your word, I will let down the nets." Only because of the futility of arguing with Jesus does Peter take the boat back onto the lake. In essence, Peter is being disrespectful. He is really saying, "We will humor you by doing this. You will see that you cannot fish in the middle of the day. We have tried and the fish are just not there."

Then the unexpected happens. The catch is so large, another boat must come out to help. One would think this miracle would have solved all of the fishermen's problems and the story would have ended. One might expect Peter to thank Jesus or perhaps request Him to do this again sometime. Instead, such request is the farthest thing from Peter's mind.

Peter recognizes that he is in the presence of the Holy One. He feels dreadfully uncomfortable and says, "Go away from me, Lord I am a sinful man." When he realizes the great difference between his sinfulness and his Lord's holiness, he is emotionally traumatized. He feels like a thief in the presence of a policeman. Sinful people naturally feel discomfort in the presence of the One who is Holy.

The Essence of Holiness

Does holiness just mean purity? Are the angels
praising God by proclaiming without ceasing "Purity, Purity, Purity?" The word "holy" comes from the Hebrew word qadosh. Though the most common meaning of this word is ethical purity, it means more than this when it refers to God. It also means a "cut above" or "more than." Being holy is the difference between a Creator and his creatures. To man holiness means something that is totally foreign or different. This difference is not surprising if one remembers how the Bible describes the righteousness of humans. The Bible says that our righteousness is like filthy rags and describes our heart as being very deceitful.

People naturally fear the unknown; they feel uncomfortable around that which is foreign to them. It is a wonder that Christians do not feel more traumatized in the presence of God. Could the reason be they have never intentionally entered into His presence? People can know and experience God only when they recognize the holiness and majesty of both God the Father and His Son. Christians today need to recognize that God is not only a God of love, but that He is also the Holy Lover.

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Read this lesson carefully.

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1 Ibid., pp. 53-60.
Day Two: Spend several minutes reflecting on the holiness of God the Son. List the three most important ways this emphasis affects your understanding and relationship with Jesus.

Day completed:

Day Three: Try to recall a time that you became aware of the contrast between your sinfulness and God's sinlessness. How did you feel? Summarize that experience. If you cannot recall such an experience, spend some time thinking about the holiness of God. Then reflect upon how different you are from this.

Day completed:

Day Four: Write out why it is important to remember that Jesus has the same temperament as God the Father.

Day completed:
LESSON V

HOLINESS AS A CHRISTIAN IMPERATIVE

Would you like a humanly impossible assignment? What if the most intelligent, the most courageous, the strongest have tried and failed? How hopeful could you be if you realized your life depended upon the successful completion of that assignment? Yet, God has given to every Christian such an assignment. This assignment, given human reasoning and abilities, is impossible to accomplish.

This assignment is in 1 Pet 1:14-16. This verse says,

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all that you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy.

God requires every Christian to be holy as He is holy, in everything he does.

Holiness Required of Every Christian

As expressed in the previous lesson, without holiness no one will see God. Holiness is a requirement of every Christian. Holiness is not just for ministers or for special saints. The phrase "to be holy as He is holy" shows the standard for holiness is not a
person's peers. God is not calling people to be as good as those around them, but to be holy as He is holy. The following verse adds the phrase, "in all our conduct." This phrase proves that the experience of holiness is not for only select times.

The Biblical description of God emphasizes the importance of continual holiness. God's holiness is referred to over 600 times in the Bible. There are more references to God's holiness than any other descriptions of His character. Since this is God's major characteristic, it should be the major characteristic of every Christian as well.

A sampling of other Bible passages reveals a similar request for holiness. For example, God says in Lev 11:44 (NKJV): "For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Paul says, in Rom 6:12-14 (NJKV),

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies, present . . . your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace.

Jesus says in Matt 5:48, "Be perfect therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect." Paul states in Eph 4:13 that Christians will receive spiritual gifts until all reach spiritual maturation. That texts says, "... till we all come to the unity of the faith, and the

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knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." God's requirement for perfect holiness is obvious from these and similar passages.

How can Christians experience holiness when, humanly speaking, it is impossible to achieve? Reinforcing a Christian's despair are passages such as Jer 17:9 and Isa 64:6. These verses say, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" and "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags." How can Christians ever see God when they cannot meet the necessary requirements?

Holiness as a Gift

God has provided a two-phase solution for this dilemma. I will call the first phase of this solution, "holiness in principle." This phrase applies when God gives us the gift of His Son's perfect righteousness. As we accept this gift, we are holy in principle. The following situation clarifies this concept. For example, a person purchases a house for $100,000, and finances $75,000 over thirty years at 12 percent interest. Total payments over the next thirty years would equal about $225,000 to pay off the principal and the interest. However, as soon as the escrow closes, the buyer is called "a homeowner." Even though the buyer has not begun to pay the $225,000, he is considered a homeowner.
In a similar way, a person's spiritual escrow closes when he has accepted Jesus as his personal Savior and Lord. As soon as Jesus is his Savior, he is "holy in principle."

When Jesus became man, temptations continually assailed him, yet he never sinned. Jesus perfectly kept the law, fulfilling all of its requirements. He is willing to give this perfect righteousness as a gift to all who will accept it. It is as if God has a gift certificate of holiness made out in the name of anyone who will accept it.

Holiness As a Gift That Must Be Practiced

Why is not the possession of this gift certificate enough? Jesus was the supreme sacrifice for all of mankind. Because of this, all repentant sinners in principle have holiness. Therefore, why is anything else necessary? The Bible portrays holiness from two perspectives, the work of God and the response of humans. This second phase describes mankind's response and is very important. This second phase I refer to as "holiness in practice."

Throughout the Bible there are illustrations of this combination of "holiness in principle" and "holiness in practice." Ps 15:2 says that no one can abide in God's holy mountain except "he whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous." Ps 66:18 says that our prayers are not answered if sin is retained in our heart.
Ps 32:3-5 declares that our physical and emotional health is dependent upon our pursuit of holiness. To have the assurance of salvation, according to 1 John 3:3, Christians must also practice righteousness. The author of Heb 12:14, admonishes Christians to "make every effort . . . to be holy." Writing to different churches, Paul said they were called to holiness and referred to them as saints (holy ones).

In the area of business, two books entitled, In Search of Excellence and Passion for Excellence were popular. These books stressed the importance of excellence in business. This need to achieve excellence—holiness—should be within every Christian. If Christians love God, they will come to adore His holiness, since He is holy. Christians will experience holiness when they esteem God's holiness. This is because of the principle of "by beholding we become changed." Holiness is not only a gift, it is also something each Christian must practice. It is the Holy Spirit that makes these efforts effective. Therefore, the title "Holy Spirit" could be the "Spirit of Holiness."

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Read this lesson carefully.

Date Completed:

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1 Eph 1:4 and 1 Cor 1:2.
Day Two: Meditate upon what it means to be holy as God is holy. Write out a summary of what you think this means.

Date Completed:

Day Three: Explain in your own words how we are declared fully righteous once we accept Jesus' gift of righteousness.

Date Completed:

Day Four: Write out the areas in which you need to practice holiness, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Date Completed:
HANDICAPS TO HOLINESS

When people describe you, what do they say? Do they say that you are a well-groomed person? Or perhaps they say you are intelligent, or that you are a kind person. Do people ever refer to you as a godly or a holy person? If they do not refer to you as godly, why not? Holiness is not optional for Christians. Notice Heb 12:14: "Make every effort to live in peace with all men, to be holy, without holiness no one will see the Lord." Jesus asserted the importance of holiness in a more positive manner in Matt 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God." Purity in heart, or holiness, is not optional for Christians regardless of the cost or the consequences.

If holiness is so important for Christian life, then why is it not understood and experienced more? Why is conformity to the standards of the world seemingly easier than being transformed by God? Besides the six obstacles mentioned in the lesson 1, three major misunderstandings forestall Christians from experiencing holiness.
Self-centered Versus God-centered Focus on Sin

The first misunderstanding concerns how a Christian deals with sinful habits. Christians with this misunderstanding focus upon their sinful habits instead of focusing upon God. For example, many dedicated Christians read books on the "victorious life." The primary focus of these books is usually the Christian's personal victory over sin. These books torment Christians regarding the number of sins yet within their lives. Mentally, they conjure a list of their sins and anxiously wonder when they will overcome. Holiness for them is primarily the removal of sin from their lives. Though the discontinuance of sin is very important, making it the primary goal of spiritual growth transforms this quest into legalism.

This misdirected quest is one of Satan's most subtle counterfeits. By making victory over sin the focal point of spiritual development, the Christian is breaking a fundamental principle for spiritual growth. 2 Cor 3:18 sets forth the principle that people become what they behold. To whatever people expose themselves, they will begin to imitate. Therefore, if the primary focus is their sins instead of God, they inevitably become more sinful. Instead, Christians need a greater understanding of what sin is and especially a greater appreciation of what sin does to God.

The simple admission that one has sinned does not
change the sinner. Pharaoh, Balaam, and Judas, all acknowledged that they had sinned. Yet, this admission did not transform their lives. However, when the prodigal son, David, and Joseph realized they had offended God, changes followed. When the prodigal son, as Luke 15:18 records, recognized he had "sinned against heaven and against God," he came back to his father. David, following his incident with Bathsheba, repented and cried to God in Ps 51:4, "Against you, you only, have I sinned." Joseph, addressing the tempting wife of Potiphar in Gen 39:9, exclaimed, "How can I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" He then refused to engage himself in the sinful act. As illustrated by these incidents, a God-centered approach to the sin problem enhances the development of holiness within Christians.

Confusion of Divine Versus Human Roles

The second misunderstanding that hinders spiritual development has to do with who does what in spiritual formation. What does God do and what does people do to enhance spiritual growth? An illustration from farming will clarify these roles.

A farmer must prepare the ground, sow the seed, fertilize, and cultivate. During all these efforts, he recognizes his total dependence on outside forces for a harvest. For example, he cannot make the seeds germinate, the sun to shine, nor the rain fall. Yet, if
he does not do his part, he can never expect the external forces to help produce a harvest. In other words, a farmer cannot do what God does, nor will God do what the farmer should have done.

The development of holiness is a joint venture of a person with God. Unless placed in the soil, the seed does not grow. Neither do Christians grow unless they place themselves where they can mature spiritually. Christians must place themselves in a quiet place where they can read their Bibles, where they can meditate and pray. If they do not do this, God's "outside force," the Holy Spirit, will not affect them. Phil 2:13 describes God's and human's roles for spiritual formation. There it says, "God works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose." We must ask ourselves if we are doing our part or trying to do God's part.

Deceptiveness of Sin

The third major misunderstanding hindering spiritual growth is the failure to appreciate the deceptiveness and consequences of sin. When people sin, they choose another master to control their lives. When a person persists in sinful habits he is reinstating himself in bondage to Satan. In contrast, when a person accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior, he has the freedom to choose his master. Christians who continue in sin act as if they do not appreciate their heavenly Father. By their disobedience they act as if He has not done enough
beform them. Their disobedience truly deceives them. They accept a life that is less than what is legitimately theirs as sons and daughters of God.

By sinning, people act as if their way is better than God's way. In essence, they claim they are superior in intelligence and discernment to God. Sin is so deceptive that those caught in its power become morally irrational. Once deceived they believe what they would have never believed before. What was sheer foolishness before is now rationalized as being acceptable. Then sin displays its perpetuating nature. One sin leads to another sin until a vicious cycle of sin entraps the participant.

When Christians sin, they perform a great injustice to Christ and to His name. Especially during the Bible times, a name could represent the character of the bearer. For example, the name Jacob meant a deceiver. This name was appropriate for Jacob because of his acts of deception. When people call themselves Christians, they have accepted the name (character) of Christ. However, when they persist in sinful habits, they are acting totally different from Christ. Christians, as Christ's representatives, proclaim to others that their lives reflect what He is actually like.

According to Heb 6:6, when Christians sin they crucify Christ afresh. When people continue in sin, they act as if His death was insufficient to empower them to
"live in the Spirit." By crucifying Christ afresh, they must accept anew the responsibility of putting Him to death for their sins.

Sin deceives people into accepting an immediate short-term gratification instead of a greater, long-term reward. Though sin can be enjoyable for a season, its pleasures are never as lasting as what God offers to His children. Satan is willing to offer a little fun in order to cheat people out of a greater joy. By the time Christians discover these little joys to be more harmful than enjoyable, they have entrenched habits to overcome.

Today, people divide sin into different categories. On one end of the spectrum there are little white lies; on the other end, there are cardinal sins. People act as if the more obvious the sin the worse it is. Hidden sins, sins committed only in the mind, are culturally acceptable. Yet, notice what Jesus says in Matt 5:28: "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." From God's perspective, sinful thoughts are as unacceptable as evil deeds. These concepts and many more reflect the deceptiveness of sin.

Christians experience a greater degree of holiness when they meet the following conditions. First, their primary focus must be on God instead of on their sins. Second, they must clarify God's and man's role in spiritual formation. Third, they must respect sin's
deceptiveness and consequently avoid it.

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Read lesson carefully.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Reflect upon how you have attempted to deal with sinful habits in your past. Was your focus upon the sinful habit or more upon the character of God? Write about your experience.

Date Completed:

Day Three: Study your Bible to clarify the role each party is to play in spiritual formation. Make sure you also read Rom 5-8, Phil 2:13, and 1 John 1:9. Then explain the roles in this partnership as clearly as you can in your journal (notebook).

Date Completed:

Day Four: Reread the section about the deceptiveness of sin. Recall how Satan has tricked you in the past. Write out some examples along with some defensive measures to limit this deception in the future.

Date Completed:
Most Christians would respond affirmatively when asked whether they wanted to be like Jesus. A person could pursue this question further. Christians could be asked if they would like to be like Jesus in leading a holy life, in being completely sinless. With this question many would begin to doubt if this is what they could do or even wanted to do. Why would they hesitate? Christians do not doubt Jesus' sinlessness. They know He invites each person to be holy as He is holy. Yet, the development of holiness seems too ominous.

This is an age characterized by self-actualization, where a person strives to develop the perfect mind and the perfect body. This movement has definitely influenced Christians. Some Christians develop a magnificent mind and a healthy heart but satisfy themselves with a sick soul. It is as if these Christians had the reasoning of a certain little boy. This boy heard that cleanliness is next to godliness. He then concluded that since cleanliness is next to impossible, so is godliness.

Christians are no more sinful today than previously. In fact, most church members are good,
moral, upstanding people without any readily noticeable sins. However, if honest, many Christians would admit they have discontinued the pursuit of holiness. Too many Christians have settled for a moral mediocrity that is neither pleasing to God nor satisfying to themselves.

Lesson 6 introduced two concepts, first, "holiness in principle" and second, "holiness in practice." The first concept is relatively easy to understand and accept. The second concept has been a hurdle for many people. Many who have attempted to experience this second concept have felt guilt and frustration. These Christians have marshalled their energies to experience this holiness. However, with physical and mental fatigue comes moral defeat and greater feelings of failure and sinfulness. How does one practice holiness without becoming a legalist?

Holiness is Not the Suppression of the Sinful Nature

To achieve holiness, some people base their methodology upon Rom 8:13. This verse says all are to "put to death the misdeed of the body." Does this text mean to modify or suppress one's sinful nature? Does one just determine what is wrong and then try to stop doing it? Is holiness just doing fewer and fewer sinful things? Is it just a modification of a person's sinful nature? This approach is only partially and temporarily successful.
The sinful nature of humankind can be likened to a heavy-duty coil spring. A person can suppress the spring for a short time. However, when they release the pressure, the spring returns to its original position. Doing right things, or even the ceasing to do evil things, does not eradicate the sinful nature.

For example, Abraham gave up his family, home, and friends to obey the call of God. The Bible records a number of stories demonstrating the godly character of Abraham. However, on at least two occasions he lied according to Gen 12:13 and Gen 20:3. He claimed Sarah was his sister and did not indicate that she was also his wife. During these moments Abraham's sinful nature was in control and he sinned.

Moses experienced God in the burning bush. He encountered God on Mount Sinai. Moses had seen the many plagues performed in Egypt and witnessed the dividing of the Red Sea. Nevertheless, toward the end of his life, Moses sinned by disobeying God and striking the rock twice. Even after all these years, his sinful nature was able to dominate him. Because of this sin, he could not enter the promised land.

Another example of the resurgence of sinful behavior after years of exemplary living was David. God referred to David in Acts 13:22 as "a man after my own heart." David could have killed King Saul, but would not since Saul was the Lord's anointed. David was also
the writer of those beautiful literary pieces in the book of Psalms. Yet, in his later years he committed adultery and murder.

These three men, and many more, demonstrated a godly life for years, then committed grievous sins. Their sinful natures did not dissolve because they had done many good things. Their sinful natures were always present, ready at any time to spring into action. Therefore, to "mortify the flesh" must mean more than to modify or suppress one's sinful nature.

Holiness Is Not an Intensification of Religious Pathos

Many other Christians have tried the "way of faith." Eph 2:8,9 makes it very clear that God's grace through faith saves people, not their works. Therefore, some have theorized that one can experience holiness by just believing harder. A common phrase reflecting this thinking would be: "If only I trusted God more to change me, I could then experience holiness." These people try to concentrate their mental powers to bring about holiness.

Unfortunately, moral defeat is inevitable. As the mind becomes tired, it loses its focus on heavenly themes. Soon the mind begins to wander to old sinful habits. Failing to "just have more faith," many people experience an even greater sense of guilt. In desperation many Christians have try something else.
They emotionally flagellate themselves about not being "completely surrendered" to God. Their quest is characterized by a deep fear of some elusive thing which prevents their development toward sinlessness. They laboriously plead that God will change them. They spend hours in prayer asking God to remove their temptations. They read repeatedly Phil 2:13, which tells that God wants to work within them to desire and accomplish His will.

After self-examination, those who try this method often determine they have not made any significant progress in holiness. They then conclude, they have not asked often enough. They intensify their introspection and fear they still have not fully surrendered. In essence, they think they may not have not done enough to get God to respond as they think He should. Some express, "If only I had prayed more, God would have cleansed me from every sin by now."

An Abandonment of Concern for Holiness

Christians who have suffered moral defeat from using the above-mentioned methods have turned to another perspective. This perspective is, "Nothing else seems to work. Why not let go and let God concern Himself regarding my spiritual life?" Unfortunately, licentiousness inevitably results from this perspective. These seem to be the major pitfalls that I have noticed for those who seriously pursue holiness.
Becoming Dead to Sin

One might then ask, "What does it mean to be dead to sin?" Does this mean that a person is no longer able to feel the power of temptations? In Rom 6:16-18, Paul gives the answer. He compares living the Christian life to being under new management. Paul maintains that once everyone was under the dominion of Satan. During that time, people inevitably sinned since they were slaves of unrighteousness.

Now as Christians, people can echo the words of Paul in Rom 7:24,25. This verse says, "Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Once people personally accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, they are under His management. Previously, they were under the control of Satan. However, now by choice they are under the control of God. Christians are now unshackled from the propensity, the power, and the penalty of sin. They now have access to the power by which they can overcome sin.

Life in the Kingdom of Grace

How does one continue to live under this new management? First, a person needs to become better acquainted with the new Manager-King. This is because of the principle: "You become what you behold." Second, a person must acknowledge the old sinful nature is ever-ready to express itself. Each person, trained in ungodliness, has established habits of unholiness. These
habits seek expression whenever allowed. Third, Christians still live in a sinful world surrounded by the enemy's agents. Though God's victory is secure, the evil forces continue a guerrilla warfare. Fourth, Christians must accept the inevitability this prolonged struggle. Satan continues to attempt to ensnare God's people until Christ returns. The fifth concept is extremely important to remember. As Paul expresses it in Rom 8:37,39, "we are more than conquerors through . . . Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Role of the Holy Spirit

God wants to give to His people the Holy Spirit. According to Luke 11:13, He wants to do this more than a father wants to give good gifts to his children. The Holy Spirit can now dwell within His followers to provide all the strength necessary to overcome the enemy.

The Holy Spirit's first job is to lead people into all truth. Next, He leads them into a relationship with God. Thirdly, His task is to lead them to a greater knowledge of the ways of God. Besides the Holy Spirit, Christians have angelic assistance. The angels are, according to Heb 1:14, "ministering spirits who are sent forth to help those who will inherit salvation."

In summary, to practice holiness, a Christian must (1) become better acquainted with the new Manager-King, (2) acknowledge the reality of his/her sinful nature in order to avoid the previously mentioned
pitfalls, (3) accept the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to become more like his/her new King, and (4) accept this struggle as being lifelong in duration or at least until Christ returns.

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Carefully read this lesson.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Review the above-mentioned pitfalls: (1) suppression or attempted modification of the sinful nature, (2) "just have more faith," (3) "surrender more," (4) "let go and let God be concerned about it." Reflect how any of these methods affected you. Write which one, or two, has affected you the most, how it has, and why.

Date Completed:

Day Three: Meditate on how you can become better acquainted with your new King. Write at least three specific steps that will help you to achieve this. Then begin implementing these steps in your life.

Date Completed:

Day Four: Write how you feel about your struggle with the development of holiness being life-long. Is this discouraging to you? If so, why? What can you do about this feeling?

Date Completed:

Day Five: How can you remember to ask the Holy Spirit for power to live in the land of the enemy? Write some suggestions that would be helpful to you. Be practical and realistic.

Date Completed:
LESSON VIII

THE CHRISTIAN'S BATTLE FOR HOLINESS

Christ won the battle over sin. All those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior are now within the kingdom of grace experiencing its blessings. So why does the battle for holiness continue to rage so strongly within Christians? It is as if there was an enemy within them? Notice this experience as described by Paul in Rom 7:19,23 (NKJV):

For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil that I will not to do, that I practice. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Why is this conflict so strong? How can one better understand these two warring laws which dictate such divergent behavior?

A Person's Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Spheres as it Relates to the Battle for Holiness

To enhance spiritual growth, one needs to understand the basic components of human personality. Human personality is the composite of what one thinks, feels, and does. The names given for these three divisions are the cognitive domain, the affective domain, and the domain of behavior. These three basic spheres
are sufficiently diverse to be distinguishable. However, they function in such an integrated way as to make them indivisible.

An understanding of the threefold nature of human personality helps resolve the conflict for holiness. When there is a conflict within a person, there is a conflict between one or more of these three spheres. Sin is often the result of the struggle between what people know to be right and what they think they really want.

Gen 1:26 tells us God created humans in His own image. As there is perfect harmony within God, there was perfect harmony within humans. Before sin, Adam and Eve knew what was right. This is what they desired, and therefore this is what they did. All three spheres were in complete and perfect harmony. The tree of knowledge of good and evil should not have been a major problem for Adam and Eve. They knew eating from it was wrong, and they wanted to do what was right. With this inner harmony, their behavior should have harmonized with the will of God. Satan knew he would have to create conflict within humans, between their three basic spheres, if he would cause them to sin.

Satan's Attack on the Affective Sphere

Gen 3:1-6, (especially vs. 6), clearly shows that Satan made his attack upon human's affective domain. Eve came to believe that the tree was good for food. She
began to value it as being beautiful. Eve desired it as a means to obtain wisdom and become like God. Therefore, she took the fruit and ate it. Satan's successful attack was targeted at Eve's affective domain.

Satan knew what many social scientists now claim. People struggle between doing what they know is right versus doing what they think they want. This struggle usually results in people doing what they think they want versus what they know to be right. Some social scientists even claim this result happens 80% of the time. This is why media companies direct their advertisements at people's affective sphere. Advertisers know people's desires will move them the most effectively. To know what one should do is always easier than doing it. Why does this discrepancy of knowing, but not doing, exist?

**Difficulty in Controlling These Three Spheres**

A person can control the three basic spheres of his personality with different levels of ability. Before you go any further in your reading, try this demonstration. To demonstrate your control of your behavior, at this moment raise your hand. You probably noticed that this was not too difficult to perform. Next, picture in your mind the color green. Spend a few

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moments thinking of different shades of green or different objects that are usually green. [STOP READING - visualize green] Don't think for a moment about the color red. [STOP AND REPEAT TO YOURSELF THE INSTRUCTION NOT TO THINK OF THE COLOR RED.] Remember you are not to think of the color red. Why did you begin to visualize the color red?

The mention of the color red seriously impaired the ability to concentrate only upon the color green. A person is able to control his thoughts for only a limited time. Even this control is not as easy as controlling one's physical movements. These two activities demonstrate a person's ability to control his behavioral and cognitive domains. Will it be as easy to control one's affective sphere?

Attempt to feel hatred toward God for sending His Son to earth to die for you. [STOP READING - generate this feeling.] Are you capable of generating this feeling? For Christians, this request is contrary to everything they know and feel. It is basically impossible for them to feel this way toward God. This demonstration shows that one's affective domain is the hardest to control. Yet, this domain is at the same time the most effective in motivating people.

These two facts provide the basis of the problem. Christians have struggled with this conflict between their cognitive and affective domain. Therefore, they
empathize with Paul when he says in Rom 7:24 (NKJV), "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of death?" The affective domain is the hardest to control. Yet, when there is conflict between it and our cognitive domain, the majority of the time the affective domain will win. Therefore, if the Christian is to grow spiritually, he must develop concurrently in all three spheres. During this development he must recognize his affective domain will be his most vulnerable spot. Using concepts social scientists expressed in the 1980's, Paul's two inward conflicting laws become easier to understand and resolve.

In summary, a person's personality is the composite of what one thinks, feels, and does. Of these three spheres, people are most capable of controlling what they do and least capable of controlling what they feel. In a conflict between what one knows to be right and what one wants to do, usually the "feelings" win. The affective domain is the most powerful, yet it is the hardest to control. Therefore Satan almost always makes his attack there. He tries to convince people "if it feels good, do it." One might well ask, "Is there any hope for struggling Christians?" The next lesson will answer that question.

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Read this lesson carefully.

Date Completed:
Day Two: Reread the section on humans being a composite of what they think, feel, and do. Write out in your own words your understanding of this three-part composition.

Date Completed:

Day Three: Spend some time reflecting upon a specific temptation that commonly causes you to stumble. Identify what you know to be right. Write how you feel, or what you desire, during the peak of the temptation? And then describe what you normally do. Next, think of some sin that is particularly difficult for you to overcome. Plan what you can do to avoid the development of this desire. Write out your thoughts and plans in your journal.

Date Completed:

Day Four: Reread the section on how controlling the three different spheres varies in difficulty. Write out what steps you can take to guard your affective domain better. Be specific and realistic.

Date Completed:
Is there any hope for twentieth century Christians to be holy as God is holy? People who realize the intricacies of the sin problem may question the possibility of such holiness. Many despair when they realize the power of their affective domain for sin. When they realize their ineffectiveness to control this domain, their despair is compounded. Nevertheless, Paul proclaims there is hope for the sincere Christian. The book of Romans gives an explanation of this hope.

A brief summary of the opening chapters is necessary to better understand the basis of this hope. Paul declares in Rom 1 that from nature all Gentiles should have known the ways of God. However, they chose to ignore God and His ways. In Rom 2, Paul reminds the Roman Christians that the Jews had the oracles of God for centuries. Therefore, there was no excuse for them not to have known and followed God's ways. Yet, they also failed. In Rom 3:23 Paul concludes, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." No person has done all that he knows he should morally. None have done enough to deserve eternal life. Therefore, the only solution to the sin problem is being justified by faith through the
death of Jesus, says Paul in Rom 3:24. This means God will graciously treat repentant sinners as if they had never sinned. If they would accept this as a gift, this gift would be theirs.

Paul illustrates the effectiveness of this solution in his plea recorded in Rom 7:25. There he cried asking who would rescue him from his struggle with sin. Then he replied, "Thanks be to God . . . through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Christ is the only effective solution for the sins of mankind.

No Condemnation for Those in Christ

Rom 8 expounds further upon this solution. The first two verses contain concepts which some people overlook. These verses say, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." Being treated as if one had never sinned means the removal of all condemnation. In spite of a sincere Christian's moral mistakes, this verse proclaims there is no condemnation. Through Christ's merits, repentant sinners are absolved of their sins.

What does Paul mean when he says, "to those who are in Christ Jesus our Lord?" This is an important qualifying phrase. Without this qualification, the guilty would be scandalously forgiven. This would be in conflict with Exod 34:7. This verse declares that God
will by no means clear the guilty. The phrase "in Christ" qualifies people for the blessed state of being forgiven and standing without condemnation. This phrase speaks of a close union that is beginning to develop between Christ and the believer. Sin destroyed face-to-face communion between the first couple and God. The phrase "in Christ" means to actively cooperate with the Holy Spirit in a restoration of that original relationship. In vss. 14 and 15 of this chapter, adoption into the family of God is part of this restorative process.

Adoption Into the Family of God

Adoption meant considerably more to the Roman Christians than it does to people today because the Roman culture had an elaborate adoption process. Each step in this process had significant symbolic value. To appreciate this metaphor of adoption, people today should realize the Roman patriarch had absolute control of his family. There were times in the Roman culture when patriarchs, with impunity, could order the death of his child. With this type of control, to leave one family for another was not simple.

Adoption significantly modified previous relationships. Adopted people were no longer under the power of their former owners. Adopted children would gain all the rights and privileges inherent in the new family. Those adopted could become an heir of the
family estate as easily as any blood relative. Also all their old debts were canceled. All of these advantages would be theirs, even though they had done nothing to earn them.

Similarly, adoption into the family of God would imply these advantages as well. Christians are free from their former owner, Satan. All of their debts—sins—are canceled. They can enjoy all the rights and privileges of their new family, even having access to God's power. Eventually, God's people will inherit the family estate in the new earth. All of these advantages and privileges will be theirs, even though they have not done anything to earn or to deserve them.

Spiritual power comes from our union with God, from being in Christ. John 1:12 (KJV) says, "As many as received Him, to them gave he power (authority-right) to become the sons of God." A previous lesson explained that people's emotions and desires are the hardest to control yet influence behavior the most. Nevertheless, Christians, by God's power, are "more than conquerors through . . . Christ Jesus our Lord" as Paul says in Rom 8:37,39.

Walking in the Spirit

The second qualifying phrase of Rom 8:1 is "those who walk . . . in the Spirit." What is this life, or walk, in the Spirit? What are some of the characteristics of this life? Rom 8:2 states that those
who live in the Spirit are free from the law of sin and death. This law could not be the Ten Commandments because of what Paul said in the previous chapter. In Rom 7:12,22, Paul says the Ten Commandments are "holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. For in my inner being I delight in God's law." Then what is this law of sin and death? According to one commentary, "It is the authority (which is) exercised by sin and ends in death." Rom 8:5 states another characteristic of those who walk in the Spirit. These persons will enjoy spiritual things. Rom 6:17 says "their obedience comes from the heart." Rom 8:11-13 states that these persons have "their mortal bodies quickened." Or according to Rom 6:4, these people will walk "in newness of life." These people will experience a new life, free from the bad habits of the old life. They will behave as one born with a spiritual nature.

The emphasis must always be more on trusting obedience than on victory over sin. Heading in the right direction on the path of holiness is more important than being worried about how far one has traveled.

How can trusting obedience become a more consistent part of a believer's life? How does one develop habits of holiness? Chapter 10 provides insights

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into the answers of these questions.

**Spiritual Exercises**

**Day One:** Read this lesson carefully.

**Date Completed:**

**Day Two:** Spend several minutes contemplating why Christians are no longer under condemnation even when they unintentionally sin. What does it mean to you to be "in Christ" and "to walk in the Spirit?" Write out in your own words your answers to this.

**Date Completed:**

**Day Three:** Reflect upon what adoption into the family of God means. As a son or daughter of God, how should I esteem myself and others? Think what being related to the heavenly Father means. How would it affect your self-esteem to associate with the One who holds all the resources and power of the universe. Next write a summary of these thoughts.

**Date Completed:**

**Day Four:** Read 1 John 3:1-3. Reflect, then write how this passage applies to your life.

**Date Completed:**
LESSON X

DEVELOPING HABITS OF HOLINESS

Previous lessons explained many concepts of spiritual formation. By now, a person may wonder how to carry out all these concepts in his life. Effective suggestions for spiritual growth must address the whole person. As previously stated, a person's personality is the composite of his cognitive, affective, and behavioral spheres. Therefore, there must be an involvement of all three spheres in the three stages of spiritual formation. These three stages are conviction, commitment, and compliance. The conviction stage involves primarily the cognitive sphere. The commitment stage involves primarily the affective sphere. The compliance stage involves the behavioral sphere. Without an integrated development of these three areas, imbalance and then failure are inevitable.

All significant changes in a person's life involves all three spheres. Real bodily weight loss illustrates the involvement of all three spheres. In order to lose weight, people need more than a reduction of the intake of food. By just cutting out food for a time people can weigh less. However, the weight loss is only a short-term success. For long-term success,
people must learn good nutrition. They must also
determine the reason(s) why they abuse the intake of
food. They would also have to develop a growing
conviction and commitment to a change in life-style.
Next, they would need a behavioral program that is in
harmony with the two previous steps.

If people consistently use all three stages,
they experience success in losing extra weight. Failure
would be inevitable with the use of only two of these
three steps. People can know how they should eat and
force themselves to comply. However, if their heart is
not in it, success is short-lived. Other combinations
could be devised to demonstrate the same point, but let
this suffice.

**Convicted to Learn About God**

Spiritual growth results when a person
understands the interrelationship of these three stages.
The first stage of spiritual growth is characterized by
cognitive activity. A deeper relationship with God
begins with a study of God, His character, and His will
for mankind. This study would define the boundaries of
this experience-relationship. Man must respond to God's
invitation as expressed in Isa 1:18, "Come now, let us
reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are
like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." God
created our minds, and through our minds He wishes to
communicate with us.
At the beginning of a relationship with God, the Holy Spirit is actively working through a person's mind. Using the law, the Holy Spirit convicts people of their sins. Next, He leads them to where they realize their need of a Savior. According to Paul, in Rom 1:19,20, people can know something about God even before they are a Christian. According to these verses, people can grasp the concept of the Godhead from God's created works.

When God created humans, He gave them dominion over the earth. Man, as earth's highest created being, was endowed with a cognitive ability that exceeded the animals. This became apparent when Adam needed a partner. The Bible records that Adam could not find a suitable "help-meet" from amongst the animals. His cognitive ability was the basis of his supremacy over the rest of creation. John 17:3 demonstrates the importance of the cognitive approach in spiritual growth. This verse says, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you." The Bible asserts that a knowledge of God, a cognitive emphasis, is essential for eternal life. This first stage of spiritual formation continues throughout each succeeding stage of spiritual growth.

Committed to Experiencing God

The second stage involves the affective dominion in spiritual formation. Christians must have this additional dimension in their spiritual development. They need to grow beyond the knowledge of man's sins and
of God's gracious resolution. Knowledge, a cognitive activity, does provide the basis and impetus to a relationship. However, people need to develop a personal relationship with the God who was willing to die for them.

The cognitive and the affective stages of spirituality must continue to develop concurrently. Based on what a person learns from the Bible through the Holy Spirit, he enters into a relationship with God. This relationship evokes concern over hurting the One he is beginning to love. When a person understands what sin does to God, a strong desire develops to "be holy even as I am holy." People influence those with whom they associate. As a person beholds the character of God, he is transformed into His holy character.

Without an understanding of sin and what it does to God, attempts to purge oneself of sin eventually descends into legalism. Wrong motives would prompt the removal of sinful habits. Purgation of sin must not follow only the affective stage without the cognitive stage. If this happened, knowledge and reason would not provide the standard for purgation. The changes within those persons' lives would be whatever they felt was right. They would have only a subjective standard by which to measure their holiness.

What are some of the basic cognitive convictions a person must have to grow spiritually? A conviction of
the reality of the unseen is needed. In 2 Cor 4:18, Paul stated this conviction: "For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." A believer must become like Moses. Moses was willing to forgo the pleasures of Egypt, which he could see, for the reward which he could not see. As expressed in Heb 11:25, Moses "chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time." (2) There must be a conviction of the importance of being transformed by God instead of being conformed to this world. A Christian must ask, "What has the greatest influence in my life? My life-style is most reflective of whom, Christ or the world?" (3) There must be a conviction to place one's self where the Holy Spirit can work effectively. (4) Pursuing holiness must become a Christian's highest priority. (5) A believer needs conviction concerning the holiness of God. They must come to grasp the meaning of this major, yet most neglected, characteristic of God. (6) A conviction of the deceptiveness of sin is necessary. A Christian must realize that sin will deceive him. Sin prevents a Christian from recognizing his moral depravity. Sin can deceive him into believing that his way is better than God's way. By sin, Satan deceives a person into believing he knows and wants their best good. Sin tricks a person into giving up his freedom of choice and becoming shackled to unrighteousness. Sin can deceive a
person into accepting immediate, short-term gratification in place of a greater good. (7) A Christian must share the conviction of 1 John 2:1, that they sin not, instead of just a little.

These convictions must develop in these basic areas. When these convictions develop, people will begin to commit themselves to God and to the outworking of these things in their lives. Christians must commit themselves to making space within their lives for God. When they begin to appreciate their adoption into God's family, they commit themselves to furthering this relationship. Believers need to value this adoption with the fervor of 1 John 3:1(KJV), which says, "Beloved what manner of love the Father has shown on us that he should call us the children of God." Christians need to commit themselves to being "slaves of righteousness" as Paul declared in Rom 6:18.

Complying With These Convictions and Commitments

The continuance of the cognitive and affective stages results in the third stage, the behavioral stage. Compliance naturally follows convictions and commitments. Force is not necessary to obtain compliance, it is the fruit of a relationship with God. Conviction, commitment, and compliance takes discipline. Paul expressed the necessity of this discipline in 1 Tim 4:7,8,(NKJV). This verse says,
But reject profane and old wives' fables, exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

How much discipline does this take? Is it too hard for an average Christian to accomplish? Lesson 11 deals with these questions.

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Carefully read this lesson.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Write out your understanding of the lesson's usage of conviction, commitment, and compliance. Explain why all three concepts are important in spiritual formation.

Date Completed:
LESSON XI

COMMITMENT TO A LIFE OF HOLINESS

Is the Christian life easy to live or is it difficult? How much time and energy is needed to grow spiritually? Some people claim that all that one has to do is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. How much energy does that take? Church history provides endless examples of Christians exerting tremendous energy for spiritual growth.

The Necessity for Exertion

Many Christians have followed the admonition in 1 Tim 4:7-9 which says, "exercise yourself rather to godliness." Notice the word exercise is a command. This verse shows exertion is a necessary part of a Christian's spiritual development. Vs. 9 says, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance." Apparently, exercising is not just for a few but for all.

The writer of Hebrews expresses this idea in Heb 12:1 (NKJV). This verse says, "Lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." In the New Testament, living the Christian life is repeatedly compared to running a race. Notice in Hebrews the
admonition is to run with endurance. From this, one must deduce that the race is not a short sprint but more like a long-distance marathon. Athletes in training was a common sight for Paul on his missionary journeys. For Paul, athletic training served as a good illustration of the necessary expenditure of energy for spiritual growth.

Paul's Analogy of Training for Godliness

To appreciate Paul's emphasis, a person needs a more in-depth study of 1 Cor 9:24-27. This passage begins with the question, "Do you not know?" To the original readers, this illustration would have been especially gripping. Corinth was the home of the famous Corinthian games held every three years. The size and popularity of these games were second only to the ancient Olympics. Corinthians lived in the sports Mecca of the ancient world. Therefore, Paul uses an illustration from sports to describe the development of the Christian life.

Paul states in vs. 24 what was obvious to every athlete. In this verse he says, "they which run in a race run all, but only one receives the prize." Many athletes trained rigorously even with these slim odds of winning. Athletes in Corinth often enrolled in a special athletic school. The instructors of this school rigorously trained the athletes for ten months before their events. Many athletes willingly underwent this stringent training, fully aware that only one of them would win. In contrast, Christians' odds of winning are
far better. Christians have the promise that all who run will receive the prize. There is no need of despair for Christians. A reward is certain for all active participants. Since this is the case, how much more should Christians be willing to run the spiritual race?

Paul then urges his readers on by saying in vs. 24, "So run that you may obtain." To begin the race, is not enough. The prize is only for those still making progress when the race ends for them. Paul also says in this verse that the way one runs is important. The Christian should run "in such a way as to win." As Heb 12:1 says, one needs to "throw aside every weight that so easily ensnares us and run with endurance." Every Christian must ask God what in their lives is weighing them down. They must ask what is making the race so much harder to run. Every Christian must analyze his stride. Is his stride in spurts of energy or with a steady pace? Is spiritual progress made only when one hears a revivalist or reads about the importance of spiritual growth? Is one consistently plodding along, ever headed toward the goal?

Paul continues this race analogy in vs. 25. This verse says, "Every man who competes for the prize is temperate in all things." The word "competes" is the Greek word agonizomenos. The word agony comes from this Greek word. The title of William Penn's book No Cross, No Crown expresses this concept. The spiritual life does
not evolve accidentally. In cooperation with the Holy Spirit, there must be a plan intentionally developed and faithfully executed.

Every Christian athlete must be temperate in all things. He must abstain from all that is harmful and be moderate with all that is good. Paul has given helpful principles for being temperate in 1 Cor 6:12, 8:12, and 10:31. Everyone who competes must ask himself the following questions based on the above verses. (1) Is it truly good for me? (2) Will it have control over me? (3) Will this cause me or others to stumble? (4) Will this bring glory to God?

Paul continues this analogy by making another contrast in vs. 25. Here Paul says, "Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown." The winning athlete would receive a temporary crown of evergreen leaves. In contrast, faithful Christians will receive an eternal crown. Branches from an olive, peach, or evergreen tree made up the athlete's laurel. Within a short time this crown would wilt and fade. Nevertheless, athletes hoped and expended much energy for this type of a crown. Paul, contrasting these two crowns, is saying how much more Christians must aim for their goal since their crown is eternal.

Probably Paul had seen the square pillar at the end of the track in the sports arena in Corinth. Perhaps he thought of that pillar when he admonished his readers
in vs. 26, not to run aimlessly. The athletes would rivet their attention to that pillar to keep themselves from wandering and expending needless energy in their race. In this passage, Paul also uses the example of shadow boxing. This illustration also expresses the idea of not wasting energy. Paul would not waste a punch with the enemy. Paul would hope every punch would be a knock-out.

Vs. 27 gives the last phase of this illustration. In this verse, Paul claims for himself what many people have not done. He said: "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection." In this school for athletes at Corinth was a manual of discipline. This manual had many rules. For example: "Eat simply and sparingly, drink no alcohol, and learn to bear fatigue." Many believed these rules were the key to victory. Paul knew that discipline would be needed to win the spiritual race. Gal 5:17 says: "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." One's natural desires can impede progress in this spiritual race. Therefore, every participant who is eager to finish the race must deny himself. By the power given by the Holy Spirit, he must deny the cravings of the flesh.

Notice the terrible consequences of not exercising self-control. Vs. 27 says: "Lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified."
The imagery that Paul is using here is that of the game herald. This person announced the rules and the names of all the participants. Following the race, this person would walk the victors around the stadium to receive the applause of the crowds. If anyone should know the rules, it was the herald. If anyone should know personal stories of hard work and triumph, it was the herald. Beside the victor, only the herald knew how it felt when everyone was standing and applauding. It would be a tremendous tragedy for a herald to become disqualified, having known and experienced all of these things.

An athlete is willing to risk so much, knowing all along that only one person will receive the temporary prize. He is willing to pay whatever the price to discipline his life. Secular people are willing to discipline themselves to reach their goals. How much more should Christians be willing to do this? This is especially true since all who run to win are victors, their prizes eternal and of infinite value.

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Read this lesson carefully.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Think about how much effort you are willing to expend to develop a spiritual life. Perhaps it would be helpful to begin to think about writing up a
covenant with God concerning this. (For what a covenant should include, see the next day's assignment.)

Date Completed:

Day Three: Now that you've had a day to think and pray about this covenant, write up a covenant with God. This covenant should be a written statement of your intentions to practice what you have learned about spiritual development. You should address this statement to God and then sign and date it. You might also want to show your covenant with another person to help you in being accountable in your commitment.

Date Completed:
A previous lesson divided spiritual growth into two facets. These two facets were a growing knowledge of God and a joyous experiencing of Him. This lesson addresses these two facets on a more practical scale. This lesson explains how to begin a cognitive approach to spiritual development.

If a person wanted to model his life after God, where would he begin? There is no place that one can go and see God. Once when Russian cosmonauts were in space, they claimed they never saw God. People could never have discovered God, except that He chose to reveal Himself to them. God could have hidden Himself from sinful humans, leaving them alone to destroy themselves. Instead, God took the initiative and revealed Himself to sinful humans. God did this even though many people do not appreciate these revelations. A reference to God's many attempts is in Heb 1:1. This verse says, "In the past God has spoken to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways." It is good news that God is the type of God who reveals Himself, even though it costs Him dearly.

How should these revelations affect sincere
Christians? First, 2 Pet 1:4 proclaims, "Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature." Partaking of the divine nature involves more than claiming the 3,000 plus Bible promises. This passage is referring to the entire Bible, as filled with exceedingly great and precious promises. In other words, one experiences and participates in the divine nature through His Word.

In Heb 4:12 is a description of the effectiveness of the Word. This verse says, "It is sharper than any two-edged sword, capable of dividing the thoughts and intentions of man." Paul in Eph 5:26 uses the image of being washed by the Word. Jesus prayed in John 17:3 for God to "sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." Paul expresses in Phil 3:8 that he counts all as worthless in comparison to knowing Him. Scripture repeatedly emphasizes that spiritual growth results from Christians being exposed to God through the passages of the Bible.

**Bible Study and the Parable of the Sower**

Does the average Christian consistently expose himself to God in the Bible? Jesus' parable of the sower illustrate Christians' study of the Bible. Some Christians' study of the Bible is like the seed the birds snatch up along the path. The Word is preached (thrown) to them, yet it does not take root in their lives. They
hear God's Word but seem not to understand nor apply it. They do not allow enough time to integrate the Word into their lives.

The seed which fell on the stony ground illustrates another type of Bible study. This seed fell where there was little soil and sprang up rapidly. However, it soon wilted and died with the coming of the heat. These Bible students turn to their Bible sporadically yet appear to have sensational religious experiences. However, their Bible study is shallow and insufficient for the troubles of everyday living. In times of crises, this shallowness is evident by their spiritual devastation.

The seed that fell among thorns represent another type of Bible student. They allowed external pressures to cut off their study of the Bible. They do not follow the admonition found in Matt 6:33: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Instead, things of less importance absorb all their time, leaving little time or interest in the study of the Bible. According to Jesus, Christians are sanctified through their exposure to the Word. However, these people are not exposed enough to the Word. Their sins choke them. The discipline of Bible study is not sufficiently cultivated to remove the weeds--sins--of their lives.

The seed that fell on the good ground represents
another type of Bible student. This type of student has come to know God better by regular Bible study. These students are promised a hundred-fold blessing.

**Basic Suggestions for Better Bible Study**

The following are nine basic suggestions to help you become like the seed that fell on the good soil: (1) Before opening the Bible, ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance into all truth; (2) discover who wrote that passage, to whom it was written, and for which reason, (3) ask how the original hearers would have understood the passage, (4) outline the major thoughts of the passage, (5) visualize yourself in that scene, using all five of your senses, (6) ask yourself what you would have thought, felt, and done if you had been there, (7) ask how this could apply in your life, (8) keep a journal of your discoveries, and (9) attempt to memorize at least one key verse from that passage. Inevitably, spiritual growth will result from this type of Bible study.

**Twelve Methods to Improve a Devotional Study of the Bible**

Twelve methods for studying the Bible can be outlined as follows.

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The Devotional Method

In the devotional method, the Holy Spirit brings insights to your mind as you read and meditate on the scriptures. Usually something from the passage provides the basis for these insights. These insights make the passage personal, practical, and applicable.

Four steps are usually taken in this method:

Step one - Pray for insight on how to apply this passage.

Step two - Meditate on the verse(s) that have been chosen for study.

Step three - Write out an application. You may want to ask if there are any:

1. Sins to confess? 2. Promises to claim?
3. Attitudes to change? 4. Commands to obey?
5. Examples to follow? 6. Prayers to pray?
7. Errors to avoid? 8. Truths to believe?
9. Things to praise God about?

Step four - Memorize a key verse from your study.

The Chapter Summary Method

When using the chapter-summary method, you will want to read the selected chapter of the Bible several times. After the initial reading, look for the key thoughts and important ideas and information.

Things to do using this method would include the following: (1) Summarize the contents, (2) list the chief people involved, (3) locate the key words used, (4) note any challenges given, (5) make cross-references
to other related verses, (6) note how this chapter portrays Christ, (7) describe the central lesson given here, and (8) write a conclusion of your findings.

The Character Quality Method

In the character-quality method, a person attempts to discover what the Bible says about a particular characteristic of a person. The Bible student then makes a personal application of his findings.

The Thematic Method

The thematic method is helpful in answering an inquirer's question. The inquirer tries to determine what a single book or the entire Bible says concerning his question or theme. Next, the person summarizes the findings. Following this, he writes an application that reflects the newly discovered information.

The steps involved in using the thematic method include the following:

1. Choose a theme, or a question, to study.
2. List all the verses you intend to study.
3. Ask what each verse says in regards to that theme or question.
4. Draw some conclusions from this study.
5. Write out a personal application.

The Topical Method

The topical method is very similar to the thematic method. The difference between these two
methods is the originator of the theme. In the previous method, the inquirer asked the question or raised the theme and searched the Bible for relevant information. In the topical method, the Bible raises the theme. A person using this method primarily collects what different Bible authors said about this topic.

The steps involved in using the topical method include the following:

1. Compile a list of key (or related) words.
2. Collect Bible references that used these words.
3. Consider each reference individually, summarizing its thoughts on paper.
4. Compare and group the references.
5. Condense the study into an outline.
6. Conclude your findings.

The Biographical Method

Select a Bible character when using this method. Compile all that the Bible says about that person. Next, list that character's strengths and weaknesses. And last, apply this information to your life.

The Word Study Method

The word-study method is like using a microscope upon a particular word used in the Bible. The purpose of this method is to discover as precisely as possible what the author meant when he used that word.

The steps involved in using the word-study method include the following:
1. Choose the word for study.
2. Find its English definition from a dictionary.
3. Compare translations to see the other words used to translate the original word.
4. If you have the skills to work in the original language, find out the original word. Write its definition as found in a dictionary of the original language.
5. Read as many occurrences of that word in the Bible as possible, and summarize its usage.
6. Organize all the information up to this point.
7. Write out a personal application.

The Book Background Method

The book-background method is one's attempt to understand the background of a particular book. The research would include a study of the geography, historic events, culture, and political environment associated with that book.

The Book Survey Method

The book-survey method attempts to understand the entire book. Ask yourself why the author wrote the book and what did he hope to accomplish.

The steps involved in using the book-survey method include the following:
1. Read the book, preferably several times.
2. Take notes during the reading.
3. Do a background study of the book. Note its author, to whom it was written, and why.
4. Outline the major thoughts of the book.
5. Write out a personal application.

The Verse by Verse Analysis Method

When using the verse-by-verse analysis method, select a particular verse and attempt to better understand its meaning. Next make a personal application.

The steps involved in using the verse-by-verse analysis method include the following:
1. Write out a personal paraphrase of the verse.
2. List some questions, answers, and observations.
3. Find some cross-references for each verse.
4. Record any insights obtained from the verse.
5. Write down a brief application.

The Chapter Analysis Method

The focus of the chapter-analysis method is upon a particular chapter of the Bible. The person wants to look at each paragraph, sentence, and word in a detailed and systematic manner.

The steps involved in using this method include:
1. Write out a summary of the chapter.
2. List the major thoughts and their developments.
3. Ask repeatedly, "What does this mean?"
4. Correlate this chapter with surrounding chapters.
5. List some possible applications.
6. Write a personally meaningful application.
The Book Synthesis Method

The book-synthesis method is a follow up of the previous method. A person reads the book several times when they are using this method. Studying will not take too long since you studied these chapters in greater detail already. By this method, one attempts to summarize the contents from the previous method. Also they will make an application based on the whole of the book.

Never get discouraged about the speed with which you think you are growing spiritually. The primary concern must be placing of yourself where God can speak to you, where you can learn of Him. Your rate of growth becomes primarily His concern, not yours. The longer you persist, with the perspective of learning more about your best Friend, the more exciting your quest. You could experience feelings similar to that of a person who expectantly waits to talk with an especially close friend.

Start with a short time, if you are just beginning. Do not try to imitate the devotional giants. If you try that, you will only get discouraged and may eventually stop. This imitation would result in even greater guilt. Do not let yourself become discouraged if you do not remember to study every day. Some people begin their study and are faithful for a few days or weeks. However, because of the pressures of everyday
life, they stop. When you recognize that you have not been having your time with God as you should, start up again. Even intermittent growth is progress. If you persist in this, you will notice that over time you have become more consistent.

Remember the admonition of Paul in 2 Tim 3:15-17 (NKJV). This verse says,

and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The study of God's Word must always be at the beginning of spiritual growth, and continues all the way through. Mr. D. L. Moody exemplified this concept when he wrote "This book will keep me from sin, or sin will keep me from this book."

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Read the entire lesson carefully.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Reflect upon the importance of Bible study for spiritual development. List at least five reasons why studying the Bible is crucial for spiritual growth.

Date Completed:

Day Three: Using the illustration of the sower, which type of soil characterizes your Bible study. Write the reason you feel this. Write out what you plan to do, if necessary, to improve your type of soil.

Date Completed:

Day Four - Seven: Review the different methods and
the suggestions for their usage listed below. Select four that are most appealing to you and try them out. (In the weeks ahead, try the other methods you did not have time to try during this study.)

I have suggested portions from the book of Philippians to practice using these twelve methods. By staying with the book of Philippians, each method will deepen your understanding of this book. Be sure to review the necessary steps listed in this lesson for each method.

Date Completed:

1. The Devotional Method: Study Phil 2, especially vss. 5-11 or vss. 12-18.

2. The Chapter-Summary Method: Study Phil 1 using this method.

3. The Character-Quality Method: Ask yourself how Paul reacted to being imprisoned. Or, how did he respond being under other adverse conditions, as recorded in Phil?

4. The Thematic Method: How should Christians react to being imprisoned for their religious beliefs? Read Phil 1:12-18 and other references of Paul's reaction to imprisonment throughout this book.

5. The Topical Method: Study the topic of how the Philippians financially supported Paul. Read especially Phil 4:10-20.


8. The Book-Background Method: Read in a commentary on the book of Philippians. Also, if possible, read a study Bible's comments about the background of this book.

9. The Book-Survey Method: Apply these steps to the entire book of Philippians. Ask yourself what Paul was attempting to accomplish by the writing of this book.

10. The Verse-by-Verse Analysis Method: Use vss. 4-9 of chap. 4 of Philippians for this method.
11. The Chapter-Analysis Method: Now use the entire fourth chapter for this method.

12. The Book-Synthesis Method: The ninth method should have provided a beginning for this method. However, use the above method on the previous chapters if you still do not understand the book of Philippians. Then cover the entire book using this method.
LESSON XIII

PRAYER IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUALITY

Try to visualize Jesus as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Picture Jesus being in such agony that He is perspiring drops of blood. See Jesus' body trembling as He begins to suffer the consequences of the man's sins. Try to empathize with Jesus as He struggles with the horror of being forever separated from His Father. Jesus was in passionate prayer, yet His disciples were asleep about a stone's throw away. Which example most closely characterizes your prayer life? Is it the example of Jesus or that of the disciples? Are there times you have agonized in prayer, or during prayer time are you often asleep?

Overstating the importance of prayer for spiritual formation would be difficult. Many writers claim prayer is the most important ingredient for spiritual growth. For example, one writer said, "I can expect as much life from a corpse, as I can expect 1 spiritual life from a prayerless Christian." Why do so many Christians experience an ineffective prayer life?

The following paragraphs give some clues by listing indicators of a faulty prayer life.

Ten Indicators of a Faulty Prayer Life

The first indicator of a faulty prayer life occurs when a person prays before he determines what he wants to say. This person just says whatever comes to his mind. His prayers commonly consist of repetitious cliches. If this person was going to speak to an important person, he would plan what he would say. However, it does not bother these people to speak to the King of the Universe without any planning.

The second indicator of a faulty prayer life occurs when prayers are consistently brief. People with this problem claim they are too busy to converse at length with God. They are allowing less important things to crowd their prayer life. Apparently, by their actions, they believe doing something about a problem is better than praying about it. In other words, their actions say they have more confidence in their efforts than in prayer. Their prayer life has lost its proper priority.

The third indicator of a faulty prayer life is the sense of obligation that one should pray. For example, many people feel compelled to pray before meals and committee meetings. Praying at such times has become a custom for them. These people do not sense a need nor desire to pray at these times. Praying out of a sense of
obligation will not make a person sensitive to the presence and thoughts of God.

The fourth indicator of a faulty prayer life is the uncertainty whether prayer makes any real difference. Some feel the world will keep going on, with or without their prayers. Therefore, they question the need to pray. For these people, prayer is not a dialogue between God and themselves. It is merely an opportunity to beckon observable divine response.

The fifth indicator of a faulty prayer life is the belief people should not make petitions to God. These people base their belief upon the fact God knows what their needs are before they ask, as Isa 65:24 says. Others take this reasoning further and question how a sinful man could make a request of a sinless God. They reason, since God is holy, He will do all that is necessary without being asked. They believe that anything carnal man could want would have to be sinful. Therefore, God is sinning by fulfilling their sinful petition. These people have misunderstood the purpose of prayer. They think the sole purpose of prayer is to ask for things. Prayer includes more than asking. These people need to understand that it is right to petition God. For example, in Matt 7:7,8, God instructed His followers to ask Him for their needs.

The sixth indicator of a faulty prayer life occurs when praying increases only during times of
duress. These people feel something or someone is creating problems for them. They fear these problems are beyond their control. Wanting to be in control again, they petition God for this power or for a change of circumstances. For these people, prayer is an attempt to manipulate God to achieve their plans and purposes.

The seventh indicator of a faulty prayer life occurs when prayers are primarily petitional in nature. These people pray more when there is a scarcity of goods and stop praying in times of plenty. One must wonder where they developed the desire for those goods. Usually, the media stimulates the desires that exceed people's basic needs. Therefore, asking God to provide these goods is hardly a prayer. These petitions are a mimicry of advertiser's propaganda.

The eighth indicator of a faulty prayer life occurs when prayer is not a dialogue. These people tell God many things but never stop to listen to Him. They do not treat God like a close friend. Instead, they treat Him more like a place one goes to gratify one's desires.

The ninth indicator of a faulty prayer life occurs when there is extreme fear to pray in public. Many people with this fear pray so seldom they are incapable of public prayer. Additionally, they have a distorted perception of prayer. Many of those who will not pray in public have the misconception that public prayer is an oratory. Their first goal is to obtain the
applause of the people. Their secondary goal is for God to hear them.

The tenth indicator of a faulty prayer life occurs when a person demands an observable answer from God. Commonly, these people even insist on what that answer should be. Prayer by these people is primarily an effort to try to manipulate God. When prayer does not work the way they think that it should, they question the value of prayer.

**Summary of the Fundamentals of Prayer**

Many Christians have many or all ten indications of defects in their prayer life. Is it any wonder that many Christians are not growing as they think they should? Does this mean that they should not try to improve in this area? No! Instead, Christians must understand the purpose of prayer. Spiritually growing Christians, by God's grace, must correct these defects. Ellen White summarized the essence of prayer by saying: "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend." If people followed the counsel of this statement, they would have a more productive prayer life. People must reflect upon this statement's meaning and practice its truths.

Real prayer enables a person to realize more

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fully the presence of God. As promised in Jas 4:8, "Come near to God and He will come near to you." God seems more real when a person continues to seek Him through prayer. As one writer put it, "Prayer is the closing of the eyes to the things seen, so that we may see the unseen."

Real prayer impresses the mind about the character of God and produces an appropriate response within the one who prays. Prayer helps one recognize the holiness of God and fills the person praying with awe and humility.

Real prayer can bring inner peace. It is comforting to know that the Almighty God listens to each prayer and cares about each person. It is encouraging to realize He is willing to do all that is necessary for every one's best good. As Isa 26:3 says, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you."

Since prayer directs the mind to the holiest and best, prayer ennobles and elevates the one who prays. This happens because of the principle found in 2 Cor 3:18 which says that people become what they behold. Prayer, when done frequently throughout the day, keeps the soul sensitive to the influences and providences of God.

Prayer produces a submission of one's will to respond to

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the influences and directions of divine providence.

Real prayer first produces within the mind a deep sense of one's total dependence upon God. The one who prays often says as Jesus did in John 5:30, "By myself I can do nothing." Second, real prayer propels one into action. A Christian cannot pray for someone's relief and not empathize with them. Those who pray naturally desire to be part of the answer to their prayers.

Suggestions for Enhancing One's Prayer Life

A study of the original words translated "prayer" in the Bible usually gives the connotation of asking. Yet, prayer should consist of more than this. Prayer should include five ingredients: (1) Prayer should begin with adoration and praise for what God is like, (2) there should be a confession of one's sins, (3) it should include thanksgiving for the blessings of God, (4) intercession should be requested for the needs and concerns of others, and (5) prayer should include a petition for God to supply one's basic needs.

I recommend, from my own experience, that you should pray as you read the Bible. You may want to stop at some significant word or verse and talk to God about it. This provides the easiest medium for prayer to be a dialogue with God. I also recommend keeping a journal of your prayer life. There are at least three reasons for this: (1) it would provide an honest record of the frequency of your prayer life, (2) it would record the
content of your prayers, and (3) it would record how and when God answered your prayers. Some people write out their prayers to God in their journal. This might be a helpful practice.

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Read the lesson carefully.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Read the following texts and summarize their contents: Ps 66:16; Isa 65:24; Matt 6:6; Mark 11:24; Luke 18:1,4,5; 21:36; John 14:13; Rom 8:26; 2 Cor 12:8,9; Eph 3:20; Phil 4:19; 1 Thess 5:17; Heb 4:16; 11:6; 1 John 5:14,15; Jas 4:3; and 5:16.

Date Completed:

Day Three: Organize the information you learned from Day Two's assignment into a logical outline.

Date Completed:

Day Four: Write out your understanding of prayer, based on your study of these Bible texts.

Date Completed:

Day Five: Think about what you will do to enhance your prayer life. Try some of the suggestions, such as writing out a prayer or dialoguing while reading. Write out a list of things you could do to facilitate your prayer life. Make arrangements to be able to follow through with this commitment.

Date Completed:
LESSON XIV

EXPERIENCING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

1 How can one experience the presence of God in the twentieth century? Reading Practicing the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence could begin this experience. Brother Lawrence was born as Nicholas Herman in French Lorraine. He served briefly as a soldier in his later teen years. During this time, he saw a number of his comrades killed in battle. Confronted with death, he came under a deep conviction concerning his relationship with God. Therefore, in 1666 he joined the Carmelites, a barefooted monastic order, and devoted his life to prayer. From his eighteenth year until he died at age eighty, his exclusive theme was practicing the presence of God. His book is a summary of his knowledge and experience on this topic.

People might think Brother Lawrence's life was too different from theirs. They could argue he lived in

1 When I use the phrase "experiencing the presence of God," I am referring to an intentional contemplation of God. God's ways, character, truths, and His working in one's life would be the subject of this contemplation. Experiencing God's presence often involves a mental dialogue between God and the contemplative person through the Holy Spirit. The Bible is the primary source to prompt this contemplative act.
a different place and at a different time. Assuming this difference, they reject his thoughts as impractical for them today. People not exposed to the monastic life often assume one is shut off from temptations and daily stress in a monastery. They think it is easier there to experience God's presence. However, those who read his works would discover he faced many of the same problems we do.

Obstacles to Experiencing God's Presence

People desiring to experience the presence of God must first ask what hinders this experience. Three major obstacles may prevent one from experiencing the presence of God in the 1980s. First is the noise and distractions in people's lives. One report claims there has been a continuous rise in the noise level in the United States since the 1950s and that the number of decibels doubled within the average American home between 1950 and 1970. Most people have grown so accustomed to noise that they feel uncomfortable without it. Unless a radio, television, or recording is making noise around them, they feel something is wrong. Yet, without a time of silence one is unable to experience the presence of God. Without a time of solitude, one cannot hear that still small voice mentioned in 1 Kgs 19:12. The Psalmist

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admonishes in Ps 46:10, "be still and know that I am God." There must be a reduction of distractions in order to follow this admonition.

The second obstacle is the intrusion of many people into one's life. Their entrance distracts and demands one's attention and response. Some claim that the average person in the United States spends about one-fifth of his time talking to others. This source says it would take a fifty page book to record everything a person says each day. At the end of an average life span, these recorded words would fill 319 books of 419 pages each. The point is this, people spend too much time talking to other people. Because of this, they do not have time to face God or even themselves.

The third obstacle is the many tasks people try to accomplish each day. Many people claim they are too busy to have regular devotions. They claim the day is not long enough for God and everything else demanded of them. Today, people would have a hard time understanding the devotional lives of the spiritual giants. One reads that Martin Luther spent three hours in prayer because he was so busy. He considered three hours to be minimal. On extra busy days, he would plan to spend more time in prayer. He realized he needed more help from God on these days. Most people today do just the opposite.

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1 Ibid., p. 1408.
When their lives are busier, they spend less, not more, time with God.

Noise, crowds, and compulsive busyness are the three main characteristics of our society. They are also the three major obstacles to experiencing God's presence. People must recognize and challenge these three obstacles if they are going to experience God's presence today.

A careful study of Jesus' life shows His life was also busy, noisy, and extremely crowded. Yet, Luke 5:15,16 shows Jesus did not allow this to keep Him from prayer. In spite of these three major obstacles in His life, He maintained a oneness with His Father. He recognized the importance of experiencing the presence of God by prayer and meditation. He kept this as a high priority in His life. John, chapter seventeen, records Jesus' petition that his disciples be "one even as He and His Father are one."

**The Desirability and Necessity of This Experience**

People considering experiencing God's presence must ask if this is something they really want. They must be willing to accept changes in lifestyle. What would their friends think if they found out they wanted to experience God's presence? People might think they were weird or that they were trying to be sanctimonious. Is experiencing God's presence desirable anymore? David
experienced many of the same problems of human nature which people experience today. Nevertheless, he said in Ps 34:8, "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him."

Finally, people must decide if experiencing God's presence is really necessary for developing the spiritual life. Read the following Bible passages and think how you might answer this question of necessity. Moses said to Joshua in Josh 1:8,

> This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

David describes the godly in Ps 1:2. He says, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night." In Ps 119:148,149 (NKJV), David shares his personal experience. He says, "My eyes are awake through the night watches that I may meditate on your word. Hear my voice according to your loving-kindness, O Lord." In the Gospel, John 15, is the analogy of the branches abiding with the vine. Christ expects every follower to have this continuous connection with God.

Paul used the concept of the body being the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells in 1 Cor 3:16. Do you live so the Holy Spirit can dwell within you? Or, does He merely take an occasional vacation there? Paul could describe his experience with God in Gal 2:20.
There he said, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life that I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God." Paul continuously experienced the presence of God.

Could it be that many Christians are living in the time predicted by the prophet Amos? Amos 8:11 predicts, "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a famine of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." Many Christians go to church and involve themselves in various religious activities. However, they may be failing to hear God, through His Word, speaking to them personally.

A Preliminary Caution

Before listing suggestions to enable experiencing God's presence, a word of caution must be expressed. Christians sometimes express an interest in practicing God's presence because they want to develop a God-like character. If they only want to develop a godly character, there are problems ahead. Even a brief historical survey of spirituality or holiness movements would illustrate this fallacy. Whenever the development of a godly character has been a group's primary goal, there has been spiritual deterioration. Before long, followers lose the original leader's vision. There is a reduction of his or her vision to a method or system of becoming holy. As long as holiness is their major goal,
they are sure to fail. A vibrant relationship with God there can be only one goal, "To know Him is life eternal."

Righteous living must be a by-product of the God-focused life. It must never be its primary goal. Bible study, prayer, fasting, and meditation only enhance spiritual formation. These things help place people where God's Spirit can work more effectively through them. There is no merit earned by doing them. The primary focus must not be experiencing God so as to be transformed into His holiness. The focus must be upon what is God like and His will for us.

Practical Suggestions

One technique useful in experiencing God's presence is visualization. This is a popular term for an old concept. Solomon noted in Prov 23:7 (KJV), "For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Visualization is a powerful psychological tool to assist in the modification of a person's behavior and performance.

Some suggestions to assist experiencing God in His Word using visualization are as follows: (1) Use all five senses to mentally visualize a particular Bible scene; (2) personalize the story by placing yourself in it as one of the characters or observers; (3) (this one is very important) visualize Jesus living your life; ask yourself how would He deal with all your noise, crowds, busyness, and problems, (4) visualize His power working
through you to do what He had just done, when He was living your life; carefully relive the times when you have made mistakes and visualize God's power working through you to respond as you should have done (Overemphasizing the importance of this step is almost impossible); (5) respond to every person as if he/she was Jesus; (Jesus said in Matt 25:40 that His followers should feed the hungry and clothe the naked. When they did this it would be as if they had done it to the Lord himself); (6) if your mind wanders, perhaps God is trying to guide you to think or to work on another area, or, perhaps you need to develop the ability to concentrate for a longer time. To experience God, start with just a few minutes and extend the time gradually as it is comfortable. These suggestions you can enhance the awareness of God's presence more often, then eventually, continuously.

Some additional suggestions have also been helpful for some people in experiencing God's presence. (1) A person needs to isolate himself as much as possible from noise, crowds, and other distractions. (2) One must resist being controlled by the compulsive busyness of our society. (3) Some Christians use hand or breathing exercises to help them prepare to experience God and visualize important truths. For example, they visualize their hands as holding their worries and cares. Following this, they turn their hands over, facing
downward. This helps them visualize themselves handing their problems over to God. Some turn their hands upward to visualize themselves receiving the Holy Spirit. Other Christians exhale deeply to aid in the visualization of themselves being rid of their sins. Next, they inhale deeply, to help them visualize the reception of the Holy Spirit into their lives.

Eastern religions use similar methods in their religion. Since these methods have no intrinsically immoral overtones, these preparatory exercises can be helpful for Christians as well. The breathing exercises increase the oxygen in the body and thus naturally calms the mind and body. As thinking about food stimulates hunger, going through preliminary steps may more quickly bring one's mind into focus upon God.

Meditation or experiencing the presence of God is important for spiritual development. An artist could never paint a picture until he had contemplated the subject thoroughly. A superficial glance would make it impossible to portray the subject's angles, depth, and emotions. Yet, many Christians are content with a superficial glance at God. God would like His followers to experience Him constantly. Today may be the time Amos predicted concerning the famine of hearing the word of the Lord. However, this does not have to be true for you!
Spiritual Exercises

Day One: Carefully read this lesson.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Think about what you can do to reduce the noise, crowds, and busyness about you. With this reduction, plan time to meditate upon God's word. Make a commitment to follow it through.

Date Completed:

Day Three: Reread the six suggestions on enhancing an experience with God. Spend time practicing the first two suggestions with the story in the Gospel of John, 19. Write a summary of your insights.

Date Completed:

Day Four: Try the third and fourth suggestions. Write what you experienced when you tried these suggestions. Try especially these two suggestions for several days in the future and keep a record of any changes in your life-style.

Date Completed:

Day Five: Try the fifth suggestion. Notice how people react to this type of treatment. Record any significant experiences.

Date Completed:
LESSON XV

FASTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUALITY

Why include the subject of fasting in the development of the spiritual life? This unpopular topic is fraught with abuses and dangers. Many churchgoers believe they have already given up so much to be a Christian. To suggest they should also fast, would at least endanger one's popularity. For many Christians, eating is the only fun they have left. They have come to where they live to eat instead of eating to live.

The modern Christian community seldom addresses the sin of gluttony. To illustrate this, I searched through old church clerks' records. These records listed the reasons for disfellowshipping its members. Never once was a person disfellowshiped because of the sin of gluttony. Yet, old photographs of church members show the practice of this sin. As an indication of the unpopularity of this subject, another writer attempted to find books on fasting. He claimed he found only one book published on this topic from 1861 to 1954. My own search of the libraries of Fuller Theological Seminary

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and Andrews University uncovered only three books on fasting.

The phobia of fasting is partially the result of the many notorious abuses of fasting. People abused fasting during the time of the "Desert Fathers" and in some monasteries during the Middle Ages. Others fear fasting may be hazardous to their health. All these reasons, or excuses, have prevented many Christians from experiencing this important discipline.

**Three Types of Fasts Described in the Bible**

Fasting, when used in the Bible, basically means abstinence from food for a religious reason. Fasting is an outward activity that complements or demonstrates an inward reality. People fasted in the Bible when they felt sorrow for their sins, or felt overwhelmed by a problem. People who fast believe words are too easily expressed. People fast to demonstrate the intensity of their commitment. Fasting focuses one's entire being upon the crisis.

The Bible mentions three types of fasts. The most common form of fasting is the abstinence of food for a time. There is also the total, or extreme, fast. For example, in Esth 4:16, Esther requested Mordecai and their servants to fast. They agreed to abstain from food and water for three days. This is about the maximum time the human body can go without water. Only the most extreme conditions would require the use of this type of
fast. The third type of fast is really only a partial fast. Dan 1:8 and 10:3 states Daniel abstained only from certain foods, such as meat, wine, and other delicacies. He chose to restrict his intake to a vegetarian diet and to drink only water.

Jesus' Admonition on Fasting

Christians should know what Jesus said about fasting. Matt 6:16-18 (NKJV) is one of His clearest passages on this subject.

Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But to you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

The Jewish people fasted often. Many Jews fasted once or twice a week usually on a market day. On these days, they went about in tattered clothing and did not groom themselves. They would traverse the crowded market place, advertising their spiritual strivings for all to admire.

Just because some Jews abused the fast, is not a good enough reason for abandoning the practice altogether. In fact, twice in this passage Jesus says, "when you fast." He did not say, if you fast. Apparently, He assumed his followers would fast. The context of Jesus' words give further significance to fasting. The context is Jesus' instruction concerning
offerings, prayer, and other topics. Today, Christians continue to pray. They still give offerings. However, many do not fast. This seems to be an inconsistency on the part of modern Christians.

**What Biblical Fasting is Not**

A delineation of what Biblical fasting is not will reduce misconceptions and distortions surrounding fasting. Remember fasting is the abstinence of food for religious purposes. Therefore, most of today's fasting would not qualify as a Biblical or spiritual fast. The majority of those who fast today do so to lose weight. Solely physical benefits cannot be the goal of a Biblical fast. Vanity is often the primary motivator of a dieting fast, not a closer walk with God. Spiritual fasting is also not a political hunger strike. Fasting would then be for motivating someone to do something. Spiritual fasting is not even attempting to impress God to do what one desires.

Fasting does not secure God's attention nor force His response. Fasting is not primarily an outward display. According to Joel 2:12,13, fasting is more than a demonstration. Joel says, "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments." Fasting is not to make one more godly. Again, if godliness is the goal, these efforts inevitably end in failure. The goal must always be a greater experiential knowledge of God.
Biblical fasting is not what people from Eastern religions practice. Amongst these religions, fasting enhances the ability to hallucinate. Fasting can assist them to have an "out of the body experience." This is another attempt to force God to respond to the promptings of humans. This would be a denial of His sovereignty.

**Benefits of Fasting**

However, fasting can be beneficial. Fasting can help one prepare to communicate with God. Fasting can clarify a person's thoughts. Moses, Elijah and Daniel are examples of different persons who did this. Fasting also provides an intense focusing of one's whole being upon the problem or concern. A short fast could help a person who habitually abuses his body to increase his awareness of God. It could impress upon people the importance of treating their body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. On a secondary level, there may also be medical benefits from fasting.

Fasting assists one in developing self-discipline. Christians in a society which has as its dictum, "if it feels good, do it" should fast. Paul admonished, in 1 Cor 6:12, that nothing was to be our master. Yet, what happens when a person fasts? Often during a fast, the desire for food totally controls the person who fasts. Many claim, without medical substantiation, they cannot fast. Food, for these
people, may well be their master. Fasting may help people identify some of their inner drives and compulsions. The duress of fasting often brings to the forefront a person's emotional weaknesses. Fasting can encourage thankfulness for the many blessings of God. People can be thankful God made them with taste buds to enjoy food.

Suggestions for Using the Discipline of Fasting

How does a person begin the experience of fasting? Common sense and moderation are essential. A person should ease himself into a fast. Perhaps one could start by skipping a meal, preferably the evening meal. Then perhaps one could skip two consecutive meals. After a time, one could achieve the desired extension of the fast. Use plenty of water during your fast. Some people have suggested drinking water mixed with honey to relieve any headaches.

Contrary to other writers on fasting, I do not recommend regular fasts. Fasting is only for special occasions. Except to overcome the sin of gluttony, regular fasting could be more harmful than helpful. Regular fasting takes away the intensity of the situation or the special emphasis this demonstrates. Also, recent medical research indicates that regular fasting is a poor
dietary practice and can be harmful to the body.

**Fasting for Christians Living in the Last Days**

The Bible required fasting on only one day in the year. This day was the day of Atonement, as directed in Lev 23:27. This requirement can have significance for those living during the time of its antitypical fulfillment. To explain this, I will very briefly cover the historical fulfillment of the six major feasts of the Jewish year.

These six feasts portrayed significant events in the ministry of Jesus. These feasts portrayed either His ministry, on earth, between His comings, or at the Second Coming. The first feast was the Passover and, as Paul said in 1 Cor 5:7, Jesus was the Passover lamb. The second feast was the feast of first fruits, the time of the wave-sheaf. When Jesus arose from the tomb, other people were also resurrected. When He ascended, He took them back to heaven with Him. Paul describes this in Eph 4:8 by saying He "took captivity captive." Pentecost met its fulfillment with the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the early church.

Three more yearly feasts were held later in the year, during the seventh month. The Advent Movement historically fulfilled the feast of trumpets between 1839

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and 1844. The Day of Atonement is being fulfilled, beginning in 1844 with the pre-advent judgment. The last feast, the feast of harvest, representing the Second Coming is yet to be fulfilled.

All of these feasts were perfectly fulfilled. The priest killed the Passover Lamb at the right hour, day, month, and year according to the prophecy of Dan 9. Since each detail of each feast was perfectly fulfilled, could the command to fast on the day of Atonement still be in effect? I am not saying Christians must fast from 1844 to the second coming. I am merely raising the question.

Daniel recorded the time element for the antitypical fulfillment of the day of Atonement. Perhaps Christians from 1844 could fast the same way Daniel fasted. Deception is possible for Christians in the last days. Fasting could help keep their minds clear and sharp for this critical time. Therefore, it might be God's design for His people to now abstain from delicate foods and drinks.

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Read the lesson very carefully.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Read about Jesus's fast in Matt 4:2. Also read what Jesus said about fasting in Matt 6:16-18. Write out your understanding of fasting. Next, write about your experience (or lack of) with fasting.

Date Completed:
Day Three: Review the three types of fasting mentioned in this lesson. Also notice the irregularity of fasting. Write about your intentions of trying this discipline. It would be wise to consult your physician first.

Date Completed:

Day Four: Think about how you feel when you have not eaten for awhile. If you have not eaten for a day, what are you willing to do to eat? Ask yourself how you will survive during times of adversity or persecution if your appetite is your master now. Write your reaction to this.

Date Completed:
LESSON XVI

THE USE OF A JOURNAL IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF SPIRITUALITY

How well do people learn from their mistakes? To illustrate how some people fail to learn from their mistakes I asked the following question. I asked a church congregation if any of them had tasted vanilla flavoring. A number had done so. Next, I asked if any of those who raised their hands had tasted it twice. Several, along with myself, raised their hands. Even though these people had learned that vanilla flavoring tasted bad, they tried it again. People would experience less pain if they only learned from their past mistakes. One writer put it this way, "We have nothing to fear for the future except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us in the past."

Recording Encounters With God

This is an incredible statement, especially when placed beside the prophecy recorded in Dan 12:1. This verse says, "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time

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of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then." There have been terrifying times to be a Christian. But this time will be worse than it was during the reign of Diocletian or during the Spanish Inquisition. Apparently, the final tribulation will be worse than anything before it. Many Christians, in light of this prophecy, secretly wish they would die before the time arrives.

The quote, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget . . .," plagues many troubled minds. If this is true, Christians must ask: How can one remember the Lord's leading in the past? To add emphasis, one could state the reverse. In other words, a person has much to fear for the future if he forgets the way the Lord has led him in the past.

How can people remember the past, vividly, and with similar emotional impact? Seemingly miraculous answers to prayer excite Christians for a time. Yet after a time, they forget these experiences. Questions arise whether the answers to their prayers were just coincidences.

Researchers in the area of spiritual development frequently suggest keeping a journal. This task would appear to help remember the Lord's leading in the past. Nevertheless, one should be cautious concerning methods for spiritual formation. One should use methods found in some form in the Bible. Those who suggest keeping a
journal use Bible references to support this activity. However, they are often indifferent to the context of the verses quoted. Because of their hermeneutics, I have been hesitant to suggest keeping a journal.

**Biblical Examples of Such Recordings**

To be safe, a person must determine how the people of the Bible remembered God's leading in the past. Note the following stories from the Bible. Abraham, in Gen 12:7, built a pile of stones to commemorate the blessings of God. According to Gen 26:25, Isaac, when God appeared to him, also set up a pile of stones. Jacob had a dream of a stairway ascending into heaven. He took his stone pillow, set it up right, and poured oil over it. As Gen 28:18 records, he called this place Bethel, the house of God. Years later, Laban caught up with Jacob fleeing with his family. As they were about to leave again, Jacob set up a pile of stones according to Gen 31:46. During their separation, these stones were a witness of the Lord's protection.

Centuries later, the Israelites crossed the flooded Jordan river on dry ground. The previous generation of Israelites had done this at the Red Sea. Representatives from the different tribes retrieved stones from the center of the river. They placed these stones on the banks of Jordan river. Notice the reference of this incident as recorded in Josh 4:20-24 (NKJV).
And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' Then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land; . . . that all the people of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.'"

In this text, and in previous references, a pile of stones reminded the Israelites of the Lord's leading. Several benefits resulted from this record. This pile of stones was a testimony for "all the people of the earth" to know that the Lord is mighty. Whenever the Israelites saw this pile of stones, they would remember God's miraculous leading. They could believe He would do so again in their future.

This practice continued for hundreds of years. For example, according to 1 Sam 9:12, once the Israelites defeated the Philistines. Because of this victory, Samuel set up an ebenezer, a word which means "stones of help." Also, according to Jer 31:21, the Israelites set up piles of stones when they went into Babylonian captivity. These high heaps of stones reminded them from where they had come. These stones also assisted them to find their way back to their country.

A pile of stones, an ebenezer, most commonly reminded Old Testament people how God had led them in the past. One could not expect to find a model of a modern journal in the Bible. Rocks were more durable than papyrus or vellum. Also, rocks were considerably less
expensive. In addition, few people in ancient times knew how to write. Even today, with the advent of word processors, the keeping of a journal is changing.

After further reflection, a pile of stones was not the only means to remember God's leading. The Psalms of David might have been his journal. The Psalms record how he felt about his enemies, and his understandings and insights into the ways of God. These Psalms reflect David's struggles and triumphs of life. David, in his Psalms, revealed even his worst sins. Truly, the Psalms read like a personal journal.

One could, in fact, perceive almost the entire Bible as a journal. The Bible is definitely not just a collection of the "lives of Jewish heroes." The Bible records not only the triumphs but also the failures of even its best characters. The devastating honesty of the Bible reflects the honesty normally seen only in a journal.

Suggestions for Keeping a Journal

The following are some very brief, practical suggestions from my experience in keeping a journal. First, if possible, purchase a medium-size hardback, blank book. If you prefer, obtain a spiral notebook that has plenty of room for writing. Most diaries are too small to be a journal. Attach a pen to the book and keep it in a private place. Second, record the date each time you make an entry. The purpose of a journal is to be
honest about your relationship with God. Dating your entries helps you to be more objective about the frequency of your time with God. Third, do not feel that you have to make an entry into your journal every day. In Bible times, ebenezers were only for special occasions. Therefore, one might reserve journal entries for special occasions. Nevertheless, I suggest keeping a journal for a preset limited time. This activity could help you better understand this discipline.

Seven Phrases To Initial a Journal Entry

To assist you in beginning a journal, I have listed seven sentence starters. On different days, complete one of these sentence starters as you make entries in your journal.

First day, "Recently the Lord has done for me--"
Second day, "Today I learned from my devotional reading--"
Third day, "Right now my relationship with God is--"
Fourth day, "I'm especially thankful for--"
Fifth day, "I need to grow spiritually in the following areas--"
Sixth day, "I need God's help for these situations, people--"
Seventh day, "I would like to tell God--"

Many Christians know a multitude of facts about God. However, this knowledge is seldom effective in changing their lives. Their information needs to be internalized, personalized, and most of all, remembered.
By raising these ebenezers, there will be nothing to fear for the future since we can remember how the Lord has led us in the past.

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Read the lesson carefully.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Write out your response to the first three sentence starters for beginning a journal entry as given in this lesson.

Date Completed:

Day Three: Write out your response to the next three sentence starters given in this lesson.

Date Completed:

Day Four: Your responses to the daily exercises given throughout this workbook have been very similar to writing a journal. Therefore, you should be reasonably accustomed to this discipline by now. If not, follow the above suggestions for beginning this discipline. Remember to record the date of your journal entries.

Dates Attempted:
LESSON XVII

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A SPIRITUALLY GROWING CHRISTIAN

Have you grown spiritually while studying these lessons. Have there been some positive changes in your relationship with God? Have you integrated the major concepts of the previous lessons into your lifestyle? For most people, the topic of spirituality is vague. These lessons attempted to clarify the essence of spirituality. By now, you should be able to distinguish between a spiritual person and an emotional or sensitive person. Because a person frequently says, "Jesus," this does not make them spiritual. You have learned a spiritual person is one who personally knows God and regularly and actively experiences His presence. The author hopes each student has accepted adoption into God's family and is regularly making space for Him in his life. This last lesson will briefly review previous lessons. This review will provide the necessary context for the last part of this lesson.

Summary of the Identifiable Characteristics

Lesson 2 explains that God's first notable characteristic is holiness. When righteous people met
God, they were devastated. They realized the tremendous contrast between their sinfulness and God's holiness. The reader learned the basic concept of holiness is "foreignness." Holiness is so different from humanness that it is almost a total mystery to mankind.

Though holiness is hard to fathom, nevertheless, Jesus stressed the importance of it. He said, in Matt 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The author of Hebrews also stressed its importance in Heb 12:14. There he said, "without holiness no one will see the Lord." In other words, holiness is not optional for Christians. Holiness is a requirement of all sincere Christians.

The reader will remember Christians are admonished to be holy even as God is holy. Seemingly, this is humanly impossible. However, Christians must be holy because they are God's visible ambassadors to the world. If they are purposely persisting in sin, they are misrepresenting the character of God. Intentional misrepresentation is one of the worst sins an ambassador can commit.

The requirement to be holy even as God is holy, places humans in a dilemma. God resolves this dilemma by giving His righteousness to humans, as a gift. Next, empowered by the Holy Spirit, these people act like God's children. They are enabled to live in harmony with God's gift of righteousness.
Since God graciously resolves the sin problem, why do His children keep on sinning? Lesson 8 explains that people are a composite of what they think, feel, and do. When Adam was living a life of holiness, these three spheres were in complete harmony. Adam wanted what was right and did what was right. To get humans to sin, Satan had to create disharmony between the spheres of their personality. Satan realized a person's affective domain was his hardest to control. Yet, this sphere is the most influential in motivating people to action. Therefore, Satan pushed his attack in this area of human personality. He deceived Adam and created a conflict within him. Adam now desired something that he knew was wrong. Therefore, he began to do wrong things. Without perfect innerharmony, people are incapable of escaping the control of Satan.

Lesson 10 describes the only way back from the abyss of Satanic control. This return entails a re-creation of the three basic spheres of human personality. People's minds must be re-educated, their hearts re-stimulated, their hands re-activated in God's holy ways.

The following lessons explains that the mind is re-educated through the study of the Bible. This study is not an accumulation of trivial facts. It is a thorough search to better understand what God is like. Prayer stimulates the new heart. This prayer is not the
recitation of some memorized words. Instead, it is like opening your heart to a friend. The Christian listens to God speaking through His Word. This person completes the dialogue by speaking to God in prayer. A person's love for God will grow during this dialogue. They are now eager to do whatever possible to enhance their relationship with God. Some people enhance their relationship with God by fasting, others by keeping a journal. All will spend time meditating on some Bible passage to experience God's presence. Christians do not do these activities to become holy. These activities increase their knowledge of God and help them have a dynamic experience with Him.

The Necessity for Simplicity of Lifestyle

How can spiritual exercises have a long-term effect? Or will these lessons stimulate spiritual growth for only a short time? To insure continued growth, remember many may not appreciate your commitment to develop the spiritual dimension of your life. A passion for physical possessions plagues today's culture. Living in this type of culture, spiritual pursuits are often spurned.

A popular bumper sticker says, "He who dies with the most things is the winner." The American dream is about a poor boy who works hard and, with a little luck, becomes a millionaire. This dream continues to be canonized and preached from many pulpits today. Tithe
becomes "seed money" to get God to open the windows of heaven so one can have more things.

Many people today crave things they do not need nor will enjoy for very long. People buy things they do not need to impress people they do not like. Modern society has become spiritually sick. All who conform to its standards also become spiritually sick. Alerted Christians will avoid falling into this trap. How can a person continue to develop the spiritual life in a world dominated by a passion for physical possessions? To accomplish this, a Christian's life must be characterized by simplicity.

How can people live a simpler life today? Some suggest discarding all possessions. They think this will make it possible to lead a simpler life. This solution does not deal with the passion for, only the acquisition of, possessions. Such solutions are too simplistic for the complexity of the problem. Those who advocate discarding all possessions appear to forget God created those things. Man's enjoyment of them was His intention, especially when kept in proper perspective.

Others advocate wealthy people giving away all their money. They contend rich people will not make it to heaven. Quoting Jesus, they say it is easier for a rich man to enter heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. They view people who have more money than themselves as evil. Therefore, wealthy people
should relinquish their money.

These same people do not realize America's poor have more than many wealthy people during Jesus' time. Kings, in those days, lived in drafty halls. In the winter, they huddled close to open fires trying to get warm. Today, most of us live in homes controlled by central heating and air conditioning. The king's chariots did not have shock absorbers as do modern cars. The food they ate was seasonal. Local grocery stores today feature foods from around the world. One can purchase these foods with the earnings from a few hours of labor.

In trying to live simply, there is a danger in setting standards for others. It is easy to say that others should not have a better car than they have. Or that one should have a bigger house than they have. Such people are saying their standard for a simple life must become the standard for others.

There is a need for a perspective of simplicity, a life freed from the passion for possessions, that is not simplistic. When Christians obtain this balance, they are less encumbered with physical possessions. With this balance, they will find it easier to develop the spiritual life. This balance is portrayed in the Bible. One must carefully study two fundamental passages to clarify this balance. These passages are Matt 6:19-34 and Heb 13:5. At least three important principles in these verses: (1) Christians must be content with what
they have because God has promised He will never leave them or forsake them; (2) Christians must have as their first priority the seeking of the kingdom of God and His righteousness, thereafter God provides their basic needs for subsistence; and (3) since God has always met the needs of the world, Christians can have confidence He will provide for their present needs.

Three additional concepts can reduce anxiety over possessions and encourage spiritual growth. (1) Christians must realize everything in life is a gift from God. As Moses said in Deut 8:18, even the strength to work, comes from God. Or, as David said in Ps 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's." (2) Christians must believe that God is capable of protecting His own things. His followers do not have to be so anxious about their possessions. Whatever happens to them is for God's greatest glory and their greatest good; however, this does not free Christians from being prudent managers over the things entrusted to them by God. (3) the things Christians "own" must be available to others as they have need. Many Christians withhold their possessions when they see other people in need. This is because they fear what might happen in their future. They think they must jealously guard their possessions. They act as if God is not capable of seeing into the future or is unable to meet their needs then.

This balance between having possessions and
simplicity calls for a radical obedience to God that results in a life marked by simplicity. This is possible only when God has a person's complete allegiance, when one comes to know Him experientially.

**Service Stimulates Spiritual Growth**

Another characteristic that stimulates spiritual growth is a life of service. Serving others, as if they were Jesus, is an effective stimulant to spiritual formation. Another way to serve is to share your faith with them. This also stimulates spiritual growth. When a person studies to teach another, he is reaffirmed in his own faith. Assisting another in spiritual growth is impossible within the limits of human ingenuity and capabilities. Therefore, to help someone else grow spiritually, one has to be dependent upon the power and gifts of God. Working with God is a great spiritual blessing. Whatever mission God has enabled His followers to perform, if faithfully executed, brings them into companionship with Him. In conclusion, a life characterized by simplicity and service is the most conducive to long-term spiritual development.

**Spiritual Exercises**

Day One: Carefully read this lesson.

Date Completed:

Day Two: Study carefully Matt 6:19-34 and Heb 13:5. Ask yourself how this should affect your life. Write out a personal application from your study.
Day Three: Reflect upon your attitude toward your possessions. How attached are you to them? Think about what you would do if Jesus told you to sell all that you have and give it to the poor. Write out your response.

Days Ahead: Think about how you will be able to continue learning about God and consistently experience Him. Perhaps you could teach the things you have learned from these lessons to others. By helping them, you will be assisting yourself. List five things that you would like to do to serve God. Be specific and practical.
PART II. A PILOT TEST OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE LESSONS
RESPONSES TO THE LESSONS

Five members of my congregation responded to the following three questions: (1) What is spirituality? Or, what is meant by the phrase "a spiritual person?" (2) How does one grow spiritually? Or, what does one do to enhance spiritual growth? (3) How often do you practice the concepts and/or methods that you have just described? In this section, these questions are referred to as either question one, question two, or question three.

The members made their initial response a week before studying the lessons. They made their concluding response one to two months after studying the lessons. Included below, without editing, are the member's responses. The compilation of responses is in the format of five separate case studies.

I have attempted to clarify the five respondents' spiritual experiences during their exposure to these lessons. My comments and interpretations are intentionally brief. Although I do not claim perfect objectivity, I have attempted to present what I deemed pertinent information as concisely as possible.

Case Study #1

Donna is a female in her mid-thirties. She works
in an administrative position at a bank. She is intelligent, productive, and exhibits a professional attitude. She has been a Seventh-day Adventist for about three years. Before becoming an Adventist, she believed in and read the Bible.

Donna repeatedly expressed an interest in spiritual formation. She recorded her interest in this subject in one of her journal entries. She wrote, "I want very much to have a deep relationship with God." She hoped these lessons would assist her in developing such a relationship.

Donna's progression through these lessons was in three observable stages. The first stage was one of depression. At the onset, her expectant attitude toward these lessons rapidly began to deteriorate. She completed only two lessons when she began to feel what she later described as depression. She recorded in her journal some of her emotions: "I feel so unclean in His presence. I feel so unworthy of His mercy since I have grieved Him many times."

Even though depressed, Donna felt a commitment to complete the lessons. Therefore, over the next two months, she drove herself to complete the lessons. Often, she would complete several days' assignments on Saturdays. Through this period, she wrestled with the contrast between God's holiness and what she perceived as her failures. According to her, this contrast became
ever more apparent and depressing. When recalling this stage she said, "When answering some of the exercises I would cry. I knew that I was living a lie. I was pretending to be a good Christian yet I had not really been growing."

Her depressed attitude began to have a negative effect upon her performance at work, then upon her relationship with her husband. Finally, her husband informed me of Donna's attitude. When I asked Donna about her negative attitude, she admitted being depressed. I asked if she thought the lessons were causing her depression. She replied, "No. The lessons only made me confront the reality of my spiritual life." I tried to help her discern the difference between real and false guilt. I encouraged her to read Rom 5-8 to obtain a broader perspective of the concepts in the early lessons. Also, I attempted to instill hope within her. A week later she made the following journal entry, "There are still moments of discouragement. However, if I really concentrate on the scriptures, I can pull myself back into a positive attitude."

Donna's second stage was a stage of inactivity. As the following graph shows, she accomplished very few lessons during September. She had just begun to regain a positive attitude when she contracted a debilitating sinus infection. She was not able to work full time in September. She also had to curtail all
extra-curricular activities, including these lessons, during that time.

The following is a graph showing the days when Donna completed the spiritual exercises. The repeated sequence of letters indicate the days of the week. The numbers above the letters are the number of spiritual exercises completed on that day. The month is shown approximately where it began in the weekly cycle.

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Donna's third stage was a stage of growth. A brief review of her responses to the three questions illustrates this growth. The following are Donna's replies to the three questions on spirituality.

Question one: What is spirituality? Or, what is meant by the phrase "a spiritual person?"

Donna's initial response: A person who totally depends upon the Lord to take care of them. Who has such an intimate relationship with the Lord in prayer and study that the Holy Spirit radiates from them.
Someone who does not hesitate to witness for the Lord.

Donna's concluding response: Spirituality is seen when a person has total dependency upon the Lord to lead in their life.

Donna's initial and concluding response to question one are very similar. In fact, there is only one major difference between these two replies. The initial reply is more complete than the concluding reply. In both of these responses, the basic theme is a trusting dependency on the Lord.

Originally, I was concerned with the lack of any significant difference between the two responses. At first, I thought the concluding response would directly reflect concepts delineated in the lessons. I assumed a failure to reflect these concepts would illustrate a deficiency in the lessons. Therefore, I asked Donna why her responses were so similar. She expressed she had already developed her understanding of the essence of spirituality before studying these lessons. She added that she liked her definition better. She felt her definition was more practical and not abstract like mine.

Question two: How does one grow spiritually? Or, what does one do to enhance spiritual growth?

Donna's initial response: Prayer, study & witnessing through love.

Donna's concluding response: Spirituality is developed through regular study of the Word, prayer and meditation which allows for understanding and allows the Lord to communicate with us.

Here again her responses are very similar. The
reason for this similarity is again the result of her previous understanding of this topic. Her concluding response added one new concept. She mentioned meditation as communication between a person and the Lord. During Donna's exposure to these lessons, she began to understand and practice meditation.

Question three: How often do you practice the concepts and/or methods that you described in question one and two?

Donna's initial response: Not often enough - meaning it should be done daily. I pray daily and study four out of seven days. I need to make myself more aware of witnessing.

Donna's concluding response: I know that I'm weak regarding question one, but I am trying and will not become discouraged. Question two is much easier. I have daily study and prayer. My meditation time isn't daily. As quiet moments around my house are rare but, I plan to set aside time to start, a couple times a week with intentions of working up to daily.

The difference between her initial and concluding response to question three illustrates Donna's growth. It is her determination not to get discouraged regardless of what she might perceive as failure. Also, she stated she has become more consistent regarding her daily devotions. Though her time for meditation is not presently on a daily basis, she is making progress there as well.

Donna's growth could be summarized in one of her last journal entries. She wrote, "Right now my relationship with God has taken a turn for the better. I am gaining helpful insights. I'm especially thankful to
study these lessons. I feel they have given me another
chance."

Case Study #2

Mark is a male in his thirties. He presently
works as a fork-lift mechanic and also takes classes in
the evenings at a nearby junior college. Once Mark
completes his studies, he hopes to work in the field of
business, perhaps as an accountant. Mark became a
Seventh-day Adventist while he was a teen-ager. He has
served as a local elder in the Stockton Central Seventh-
day Adventist Church for several years.

Mark expressed a desire to learn more of the
illusive topic of spirituality. He readily accepted the
task of completing my lessons on spiritual formation.
However, he found it difficult to complete the
assignment. After six weeks, Mark informed me that he
would not be able to complete the exercises. I suggested
to Mark that he not write his comments for the exercises.
I thought this compromise might serve as an example of
what could happen with an abbreviated investment of time.

Mark tried another method to complete these
lessons. Before going to work in the morning, he would
try to read the lesson for that day. During his twenty-
minute commute to work he reflected on the contents of
the lesson. If he had time during one of his breaks, he
would write a summary of his reflections.

This compromise did not work well. After a five-
month exposure to these lessons, Mark had completed only two lessons. He admitted he did not understand how much time and effort it would take to complete these lessons. If he had understood the time involved, he would have declined the assignment.

Mark's progress through these lessons was not in any easily discernible stages. Instead, his progress was initially intermittent, as the graph below shows. After two starts, he completed only two lessons. Next, he reduced his efforts to only a weekly reading of a lesson. During this time, he did not do the exercises at the end of the lesson.

The graph shows of the days on which Mark completed reading the lessons. As in the graph above, the repeated sequence letters are the days of the week. The numbers above the letters are the number of lessons read completed on that day. The month is inserted about where it began in the weekly cycle.

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July
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The following are Mark's replies to the three questions on spiritual formation.

Question one: What is spirituality? Or, what is meant by the phrase "a spiritual person?"

Mark's initial response: A spiritual person is one who has consistently made time with God each day. This person has developed a relationship with his Lord in which he can draw strength from. A spiritual person is also a person who hears and knows the Lord's will through the holy spirit, and who acts out the Lord's will with holy boldness. I also believe that the Lord would have us to act out his will by witnessing to others of his love for mankind.

Mark's concluding response: I firmly believe that a spiritual person is one who listens to and is aided by the Holy Spirit in all aspects of his/her life. A person is not compelled to just listen to, but also to act out the suggestions related to him/her by the Spirit's still small voice.

No substantive difference exists between Mark's initial and concluding responses to this question. Though the initial response is more descriptive, the overall concepts are the same. His limited exposure to these lessons account for this lack of change. Also, a careful reading shows basic harmony between Mark's and my understanding of spirituality.

Question two: How does one grow spiritually? Or, what does one do to enhance spiritual growth?

Mark's initial response: I believe that as a
spiritual person develops his relationship with Jesus that his life must show in a tangible way, that he has been in touch with God. By acting or doing what the Lord tells us and then coming back to him to fill up our spiritual wells we will grow.

Mark's concluding response: Having a devotional life everyday is the best way that I know to enhance one's spiritual growth. This daily devotional must be a quality time with no interruptions. It must be filled with prayer and quiet contemplation of God's word. These are all very important factors to spiritual growth, but I also believe that one must share the lessons that have been learned with other people. Just head knowledge of God doesn't cut it. To have God in your heart is ideal. When this is accomplished one will be guided through each day by the Spirit which in turn that person will act out God's will. Not in a robotic way will the person do God's will, but in loving service which is chosen by that person.

Mark's initial and concluding replies were again similar. However, he was more articulate in his concluding response. His initial response was general and did not describe how to accomplish spiritual formation. However, his concluding response delineated the importance of a devotional life and loving service. He also expressed the importance of quality devotional time without interruptions, prayer, and quiet contemplation. Since Mark is a Christian of more than fifteen years, these lessons were not necessary to teach him these concepts. However, these lessons must have reminded him of the importance of these aspects for spiritual growth.

Question three: How often do you practice the concepts and/or methods that you described in question one and two?
Mark's initial response: As any other man who is struggling each day to keep in touch with God, I too have trouble consistently keeping up the steps I have outlined above completely. What I mean is that I will go along for many days keeping a good record in studying God's word and communicating to him through prayer, but then I will slip. When the subject comes to daily doing God's will each day by witnessing for him, this is where I have difficulty in doing so. But thank God for his forgiveness. For when I ask for his forgiveness I can then continue on with my life learning from my mistakes and hopefully not repeat them as Israel consistently did.

Mark's concluding response: No, I do not unswervingly have quality devotions every day. Praise the Lord, he is still working with me and others too. Sunday mornings when the family is gone and the house is quiet is the day when I have truly good devotionals. But usually every other day of the week I do spend some time with him. It seems as if the children are always interrupting me and their needs always seem to have to be met then and there. I long for the day when Christ comes and I can walk away from all of earth's vanities.

The difference between these two responses reveals Mark is now motivated to become more consistent with his devotions. At first his concluding response seems to show a decline in devotional regularity. However, Mark acknowledged greater accuracy in his concluding response.

Mark relies on God's forgiveness to excuse his inability to establish a consistent devotional life. In his initial response, Mark claimed God's forgiveness made it possible for him to learn from his mistakes. Apparently, Mark is making some progress in this area.

Mark must bear some responsibility for the failure to complete these lessons. Most of the other respondents were working and some were also taking
college classes. Nevertheless, future editions of these lessons might list two sets of spiritual exercises. There could be the regular exercises and an abbreviated set.

Case Study #3

Judy is a female in her mid-forties. She is a professional woman presently working as a commercial real estate agent. Judy is very gregarious and likes to help people. Eventually, she would like to become a social worker. Though Judy has been a Christian most of her life, she has been an Adventist for only a short time.

Judy's baptism was only a few months before she began these lessons. She had completed two series of doctrinal Bible studies and wanted to continue studying. During her Bible studies, she received instruction from me concerning the rudiments of spiritual formation.

Because Judy likes being around people, she had difficulty removing herself from people long enough to complete these lessons. A quiet time for reflection is a precious commodity in Judy's house. Before Judy could complete the first lesson, a friend requested her help on another job. Within a few days, she was working two jobs. Therefore, as the graph shows, she started late on the lessons. To catch up, she attempted to do many lessons at a time. Judy's experience illustrates what effect a one week exposure to these lessons could have.

The graph below shows the days on which Judy
completed the spiritual exercises. As in previous graphs, the repeated sequence of letters represent the days of the week. The numbers above the letters indicate the number of spiritual exercises completed on that day. The month is given about where it began in the weekly cycle.

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Judy's responses to the three questions on spiritual development are as follows.

Question one: What is spirituality? Or, what is meant by the phrase "a spiritual person?"

Judy's initial response: Boy, that's a really good question! It's like it's an undefinable entity! It's like something that you can't quite put hands on - something that's on the tip of your tongue and you just can't quite get it out!

Wow - what is spirituality? It's something we've always known about - or do we? Then my mind tried to come up with some sort of definition and the mind said, "it's prayerfulness - kinda!?!"
Answering this question is like trying to catch the wind - but who knows with God's guidance and knowledge maybe we can catch that wind!!

During youth Sabbath School our new youth pastor, Ray, asked us what we thought the three following words meant: 1. sacrifice 2. Spirituality 3. Tithe.

This is amazing! My attention became keenly expectant - some insight - some answers - a starting point for the answer to this question - what more could I ask for!?! And I got awareness alright! Awareness that confirmed that there was no real education regarding the understanding of spirituality.

Why do I say this - because words # 1 and #3 were answered with group participation and with ease - but with question #2 the question was met with silence until Ray finally spoke up and said, without total confidence or clarity, "it's being spiritual" and then we quickly proceeded on.

Again my mind goes "Wow, what is the answer to this question? It must be knowledge - maybe."

Now, I really haven't answered the question and maybe I can't at this time - but my feelings are such that spirituality or a spiritual person is one who acknowledges the love of God and incorporates it into all aspects of their lives - maybe acknowledges isn't the word I really want but a spiritual person would know God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Judy's concluding response: A spiritual person is one who lives their life in a God-like manner. To me this means that God's love shines through them always because they are so in tune with God through their prayers, studies, devotions, and sharing.

Judy's initial response demonstrated her difficulty in attempting to answer the first question. As she said, "Answering this question is like trying to catch the wind." Yet, Judy's initial answer also
reflected her previous instruction. She said, "A spiritual person is one who acknowledges the love of God and incorporates it into all aspects of their lives. . . . a spiritual person would know God."

Judy's concluding response was more brief and suggests greater clarity of thought. In her concluding response, knowledge of God and communication with Him is more clearly delineated. This suggests the lessons could have helped in this clarification.

Question two: How does one grow spiritually? Or, what does one do to enhance spiritual growth?

Judy's initial response: Well - if according to my answer to the first question a person would need to be in complete communion with God: studying, living, loving, communicating, practicing, plus -. Now we are all sinners and at times may fall out of step with God's word but if we are studying, etc. daily we will be aware of our own falling out because our spirituality will suffer and we will not be content. Somehow I've neglected the Holy Spirit and shouldn't have because I personally believe the Holy Spirit plays a tremendous part in our spirituality. Through the Holy Spirit we can be extremely aware of our spirituality or our lack of it.

Judy's concluding response: One grows spiritually by having the love of God in them and then, as importantly, having an out-pouring of this love to others. Giving and sharing are key words to me: giving yourself to God and sharing Him with all those around you.

To be able to share anything you must have something to share. Therefore we must know God to share Him. To know Him we must continually be studying and growing in all His ways.

Once we know Him we have the very greatest gift to share with others, His love!

This past weekend I was out of town in the snow area. While I was waiting for the others I had some time to
walk through a field of snow, trees, and all of God's glories that He has provided for us in this world. After being on my knees with Him for a time I got up and proceeded to go back. Along the way I got the urge to do something. I just completed a thirty by fifty foot heart shaped design that said "Jesus loves" in the snow when some strangers came walking by. They stopped, and before continuing, a lady with a big smile on her face and a happy heart said, "That's really nice, thanks!" There are so many ways the love of our Lord can be shared!

Judy's second response did not list as many concepts as her initial response. Judy's effervescent personality could explain these omissions. Though omitting some concepts, her two responses are in harmony with each other.

Question three: How often do you practice the concepts and/or methods that you described in question one and two?

Judy's initial response: Personally these ideas are not being applied consistently in my life as I believe they should. Why? Old habits not broken yet and not letting loose of this world enough - thinking "I" can do it!

When we incorporate 1 and 2 into our lives there is such a closeness to our Father that the feeling created could only be described as spiritual. When you daily open yourself completely to God's love it becomes a part of your being and that love flows out of you to others and thus lets your spirituality flow into others through the Holy Spirit. When we allow this to happen it seems to me to be one of the greatest forms of being spiritual and for creating spiritual growth not only for oneself but for others as well.

Judy's concluding response: I wish that I was more consistent than I am. I'm always rushing about and I'm too tired in the evenings to have very much time with God. In the mornings, I try to catch another forty winks before getting up. Therefore I am at times too rushed to have time with God. Often while driving in my car, I talk with God. I do spend more time with God than I use to, I only wish that it
was more! He's still working on me!!

Judy's third reply shows the spiritual growth she has made. She is now spending more time with God. It is not determinable whether these lessons prompted this growth. Judy's growth could be the spiritual maturation common amongst new Christians. Judy did express the following to me, "Knowing that I needed to do the lessons, as I promised, this urged me to become more regular in my devotions."

**Case Study #4**

Fred is a male in his late fifties. He recently retired from the sheriff's department with the rank of Commander. Following his retirement, Fred reactivated his painting company. Fred is a reflective, analytical type of thinker. Fred has been a Seventh-day Adventist for many years. He has served as a Sabbath School Superintendent as well as many other offices in the church.

Fred expressed concern when I asked if he would be willing to complete these lessons. He was uncertain whether he would be able to complete them satisfactorily. Some people might describe Fred as a perfectionist. Whenever Fred accepts a tasks he exerts more effort than is expected. Fred took several weeks to complete the initial questions. His lack of understanding of this subject, in contrast with his desire to express himself clearly, became painfully obvious to him.
During the time he was completing these lessons, he repeatedly expressed concern whether he was completing the lessons correctly. He noted that many of the spiritual exercises could, by themselves, take many weeks to complete. Because of his concern for quality, he took a month longer than other respondents to complete these lessons. This happened even though he was steadfast in his efforts. Because of his concern of going too slow, he did not record the date when he completed the lessons. Therefore, I was not able to graph Fred's progress.

Fred was the only respondent who made a simple progression in his understanding of spirituality. At first, he had a confused understanding of spirituality. Then, he progressed to an understanding that reflected concepts within the lessons. Fred's following responses best illustrate his linear progression.

Question one: What is spirituality? Or, what is meant by the phrase "a spiritual person?"

Fred's initial response: After three weeks of thoughtful, contemplative reasoning I have failed to formulate a clear and concise definition to the above question.

The Bible has many examples of spiritual people. Jesus stands as the model. He outlined briefly part of his life's assignment in Luke 4:18. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." For Him to be a spiritual person was to carry out His Father's will.

David, who lived 1,000 years before Jesus was another spiritual person. As a boy he put his trust in God and was able to dispatch the gigantic warrior of the Philistine Army. When driven into outlawry by Saul
he continued to seek God's help - and later became Israel's greatest and most loved king. Both Jesus and David were dependent on God for guidance in their daily lives.

A spiritual person is one who is able to recognize his own human weakness and limitations, and claim the power promised in the Bible. A person who is willing to ask God to be used in His service to others and then serve wherever God calls.

Fred's concluding response: A spiritual person is one who knows there is a God and communicates with God - and then attempts to follow the examples outlined by God for daily living.

God had made Himself available to all of us. He has a vested interest in our well being and in our eternal destination.

He created us in His image, spiritual people. When we isolate ourselves through sin, He made a way of escape, by sending His Son to show us how to live and how to die that we might be returned to our original status of spiritual people - people who can communicate directly with God face to face.

Fred was the only one who clearly reflected the contents of the lessons in his concluding response. His description of a spiritual person demonstrates a clearer understanding of spirituality.

Question two: How does one grow spiritually? Or, what does one do to enhance spiritual growth?

Fred's initial response: The Bible appears to indicate that an overt act is required to obtain the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says in Rev. 3:20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock . . . ." And in Luke 11:13 He indicates the Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.

Once the request has been made and the Holy Spirit has been assigned to assist an individual certain changes take place. Human weakness is replaced by meekness and love for God and for our fellowmen.

Recently I was jogging with a friend. He would stop and pickup sharp objects from the roadway to prevent damage to the tires of passing motorists. People he
would never meet - and people who would never know how he had prevented possible damage to their tires. I don't know what religion he claims. But I do know he demonstrated one of the fruits of the Spirit, "love."

The way to grow spiritually is to ask for continual guidance in all things, and do nothing to offend the Holy Spirit.

Fred's concluding response: To grow spiritually one must enter into a relationship with God. He has extended the invitation to every member of mankind that He will come into our lives if we will only allow Him to. All of us develop some type of a relationship with God either positive or negative or luke-warm, (we know what He thinks of negative or luke-warm relationships).

Six examples were given in the outline of obstacles that prevent spiritual growth, some of these are present in most of us.

The easiest way for me to advise someone on how to grow spiritually is to tell them to take God as a partner in every phase of life. He created us, knows our blueprints and various systems and can guide us to where we can best serve Him. He can help in our social life, business contacts and mental health, if we will only let Him.

This response again shows a considerable increase in clarity and understanding. This response also reflects the basic concepts of the lessons without a mere regurgitation of my words.

Question three: How often do you practice the concepts and/or methods that you described in question one and two?

Fred's initial response: I practice growing spiritually on an on going basis with lots of highs and lows. Highs usually come after hearing an inspirational sermon.

Fred's concluding response: I didn't realize, or understand, what you meant by spirituality. For many years I have been conscious of God and have thought of Him as my partner. These lessons helped me to
realize how much I yet needed to grow, I have learned so much from them. I would say that my devotional life has improved since I began studying these lessons.

Fred's knowledge and experiencing of God has been an ever-growing experience. Through the years, he has regularly communicated with God in the morning. These devotionals instilled in him the discipline of regular Bible study. His awareness of God's presence has been a common experience in his past. Because he has often been aware of God's presence, it is hard for him to isolate any special occurrence of His presence.

Case Study #5

Wanda is a female in her early sixties. She has been a homemaker most of her life. It was only in the last few years that she returned to college and completed an Associate degree. Until last year, Wanda considered herself a Free Will Baptist. In that denomination, she and her husband were very active in leadership positions.

Then about twelve years ago a series of events began which destroyed her faith in God. The first major event was her pastor committing adultery, which she felt was left unpunished. Then later, her husband died in a car accident. Wanda felt that it was unfair that a good man, her husband, had to die, especially when a bad man, her pastor, remained in the ministry. She felt she could no longer trust a God that would allow such events to happen. In rebellion against God, she began doing almost
everything she thought was wrong.

When I first met Wanda, she had eight years of entrenched behavior and feelings that strongly mitigated against spiritual formation. Early in our acquaintance, she struggled knowing what was right and often doing just the opposite. To cope with the struggle, she repeatedly denied there was any problem. However, even her physicians claimed this struggle was taxing her physical and emotional health.

Wanda's physicians, about a year ago, claimed she would live for only a few more months. As a result, she went to Weimar Institute which she understood was a physical rehabilitation center. Wanda discovered that the Institute also emphasized spiritual recovery. She was extremely upset, feeling God had trapped her in this environment.

Soon after her return home, some of Wanda's friends invited her to an Adventist evangelistic crusade. During this time, I met her and began Bible studies and counseling. At the end of these sessions, Wanda expressed her acceptance of God as her Savior and Lord. She expressed her desire to live in harmony with the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Within a few weeks of her baptism, Wanda's relationship with God began to wane. Her old conflict between right and wrong was beginning to create problems for her again. I thought these lessons might assist
Wanda to grow spiritually. Because of her trusting relationship with me, Wanda accepted this project.

Wanda's progression through these lessons was in two observable stages. During the first twelve lessons, she made slow, painful progress. Then Lesson 13 proved to be the turning point in her progression. An explanation of her decline is clear in her answers to the third question. The graph plots her progress until she began Lesson 13. Wanda stopped dating her entries from that time onward.

The graph below shows the days on which Wanda completed the spiritual exercises. As in the previous graphs, the repeated sequence of letters indicate the days of the week. The numbers above the letters show the number of spiritual exercises completed on that day. Again, the month is given about where it began in the weekly cycle.

```
| July   | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3
|--------|---|---|---|---
| S,m,t,w,t,f,s,— | S,m,t,w,t,f,s,— | S,m,t,w,t,f,s,— |
| August |   |   |   |   
|        | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1
|         | S,m,t,w,t,f,s,— | S,m,t,w,t,f,s,— | S,m,t,w,t,f,s,— |
| 12      | 3 | 4 | 6 | 4 |
|         | S,m,t,w,t,f,s,— | S,m,t,w,t,f,s,— | S,m,t,w,t,f,s,— |
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The following are Wanda's replies to the three questions on spiritual formation.

Question one: What is spirituality? Or, what is meant by the phrase "a spiritual person?"
Wanda's initial response: A spiritual person is someone who has yielded their life to the Lord and lets the indwelling of the Holy Spirit lead, guide, and direct them.

It is a person who trusts Christ, who is humble before God, and grateful for God's saving grace.

It is someone who is obedient to God, walks by faith, and lets their light shine before men. They have love for one another.

In the scripture we are shown the characteristics of a spiritual person as being love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness and faithfulness. A spiritual person is one who has permitted God to reveal His righteousness in them and through them.

Wanda's concluding response: A spiritual person is someone who has yielded their life to the Lord and allows the Holy Spirit to live in and through them. This is a person who not only believes there is a God but one who believes God. It is vital to believe God - in all that He says, all that He does, and all that He is.

It is a person who has an active living personal relationship with Christ. The KEY is relationship. In order for this special relationship to develop, a person must spend time with God in study and in prayer. It takes a two way communication. We not only need to talk to the Lord, but we need to take time to listen. Because of this relationship there is a trust, and a dependency that develops. This person realizing who God is humbles himself before the Almighty knowing his own righteousness is as filthy rags before God.

A spiritual person listens with an open mind and an open heart. Not only does he listen but he responds. He allows God to work in and through him to touch the lives of others. A spiritual person is willing to live for Christ and is "obedient even unto death."

It is a person who is not conformed to this world but is conformed to the character of God. Actually one takes on the character of Christ and lives the fruits of the Spirit.

A spiritual person has a security that the world cannot offer. There is no fear of the unknown because God is the blessed controller of all things. They know and accept that God knows even the unknown.
God is the beginning and the end. He is the "Great I Am." And the security of the believer is in God's hands.

Wanda's concluding response included many more details and more accurately reflected the contents of the lessons. The concluding response added the emphasis of the following ideas: "one who believes God . . . the KEY is relationship . . . spend time with God . . . we need to take time to listen . . . a spiritual person is not conformed to this world . . . a spiritual person has security." These lessons on spiritual formation are in harmony with, and could have reminded Wanda of, these concepts. However, after reading Wanda's journal, it was clear these concepts were not new to her. Wanda's many active years in the Free Will Baptist Church had already taught her these concepts.

Question two: How does one grow spiritually? Or, what does one do to enhance spiritual growth?

Wanda's initial response: To enhance spiritual growth one must walk daily with God. Daily communication with God is necessary so one must develop a daily prayer life. To grow one must have daily devotions and study God's Word.

We, as Paul said, must die to self daily. We do this in order for Christ to live in and through us.

We are to partake of the milk of the Word when we are babes in Christ, as we mature we become partakers of the meat of the Word.

We are taught in the scriptures not to forsake the gathering together with fellow Christians.

Sabbath School is vital for our spiritual survival, for it is here we learn more of God and the things He has in store for us.
The Worship Service is a filling station where we are given fuel to sustain us for the week.

Sometimes one grows the most when they have gone through the most painful trials. "No pain - No gain!"

Wanda's concluding response: To enhance spiritual growth one must take time for God. To take time for God means we must discipline our lives and get our priorities in order. We need daily prayer, devotions and a daily walk with God. We must not forsake going to Church and Sabbath School. There is a song, "Sitting at the Feet of Jesus," which we need to take time for every day.

We are born into the family of God not as a mature full grown Christian, but as a baby. A baby needs milk for nourishment, but in order to grow and as it grows, it needs more substantial food to maintain a healthy life. He needs this food throughout life. As babes in Christ we partake of the milk of the Word. One cannot survive on what he has learned in Sabbath School the rest of one's life. It is not a one time meal. You must continue to feed on the Word to maintain spiritual health. This process is necessary for normal spiritual growth.

It is vital for us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we are to gain knowledge we must not forsake the gathering of "Fellow Christians." We must also attend Sabbath School, for it is here we learn more of God. One must place himself where he can learn.

In order for spiritual growth to take place there must be a spiritual emptying of self daily. We, as Paul, must die daily - we must die to self and allow Christ to dwell in and through us. Our thoughts and responses need to be in God's hands. He must be in control. When self has been emptied and God has filled the emptiness, we are ready for all that God has in store for us.

In the valley of trials we seem to grow the most. Many times when things are the toughest that is when God speaks the loudest.

To grow up in the spiritual life, we need the right climate. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Gal. 5:25.

Wanda's two responses to the second question were
basically the same. There is a completely different arrangement of concepts, but there were not any new ones. The similarity is the result of Wanda's previous understanding of spiritual formation.

Question three: How often do you practice the concepts and/or methods that you described in question one and two?

Wanda's initial response: Prayer and devotions about three or four times a week. Do not go to Sabbath School. Attend Worship Service once a week. Try to show love and kindness to people every day. The rest I can't say I practice at all.

Wanda's concluding response: I pray about once a week. I do not have my devotions. I attend Sabbath Worship regularly, but I only attend Sabbath School occasionally.

Here is vividly illustrated the contrast between what Wanda knows and what she practices. The first twelve lessons were primarily informative. Whenever these lessons asked for a commitment, she avoided making such a commitment. Lesson 13 discussed the subject of prayer. Talking with God, when she wanted to deny His existence, proved to be very upsetting. When Wanda did the exercises in the thirteenth lesson and onward, she would not date them. The penmanship in her journal became considerably more cramped and her sentences were often fragmented. This could reflect the stress that she was experiencing.

Wanda came to a critical point in these lessons. She had to fully surrender to God or continue to be angry with Him. She would not commit herself to God, therefore
she felt guilty doing what she thought was wrong. Along with this guilt came depression. During this time, Wanda claimed she did not know why she was not willing to surrender. After further dialogue, she acknowledged the struggle. However, she would again refuse to make the decision to surrender to God.

The date of Wanda's concluding response is also significant. She wrote her concluding response during the Christmas season. This was the time of year when she worked with her husband making crafts for the family. The absence of her husband made her angry with God for taking away her husband and she became depressed. Her concluding response reflects these sentiments.

She became less regular in her daily devotions. She went from three times a week to only once a week. After the Christmas season, Wanda was beginning to become regular again in her devotions. Her progress is painful, nevertheless, her relationship with God is growing again.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Five members of my congregation tested the effectiveness of the lessons on spiritual formation. Before these respondents studied the lessons, their understanding of spirituality was expressed in a written form. They listed the methods which they thought were helpful in developing the spiritual life. Also, they stated how frequently they practiced these methods. After the respondents submitted their responses to these three areas, they began to study the lessons.

The first lesson begins by mentioning God's invitation to humans to enter into a relationship with Him. Next, the lesson explains the obstacles that prevent spiritual growth. The first obstacle is people's compulsive busyness. The second obstacle is secular peoples' tendency to restrict their perception of reality to what is discernible through their five senses. The third obstacle is a misunderstanding of the essence of spirituality. The fourth obstacle is the confusion resulting from the variety of methods proposed for spiritual growth. The fifth obstacle is the fear of appearing sanctimonious. The sixth obstacle is the discipline required for spiritual growth. This lesson
concludes with exercises to assist the reader in personally applying the lesson's concepts.

Lesson 2 covers three main areas. First, the lesson briefly describes some of the incidents in the Bible where people visibly met God. Next, the lesson explores Isaiah's exposure to God as recorded in Isa 6. And last, the lesson clarifies the importance of the three-fold declaration of God's holiness. Again this lesson concludes, as did all lessons, with exercises to assist the reader in applying these concepts to life.

Lesson 3 outlines God's holy justice and His holy mercy. It explains the tension between God's justice and mercy. The lesson summarizes two Bible stories that challenge God's holy justice. Also, the lesson delineates present day misunderstandings of God's holiness along with exercises for the reader.

Lesson 4 explains the emotional trauma that results from people visibly meeting our holy God. It describes the common failure to appreciate the divine nature, the holiness, of Jesus. Also, the lesson summarizes two Bible stories where the disciples recognized the divine nature, the holiness, of Jesus.

Lesson 5 explains holiness is not optional for Christians. It notes the seeming impossibility of being as holy as God requires. The lesson gives God's solution to this dilemma, the gift of God's holiness. The lesson
concludes by emphasizing the importance of living in harmony with this gift.

The sixth lesson sets forth the handicaps to holiness which Christians experience. It lists three reasons why so few Christians experience holiness. The first reason is a self-centered versus a God-centered focus on sin. The second reason is the confusion of Divine versus human roles in the resolution of sin. And the third reason is the deceptiveness of sin. Exercises to enhance the reader's personal application concludes the lesson.

The seventh lesson explains what life is like in the kingdom of grace. The lesson begins with a description of what holiness is not. Holiness is not a suppression of the sinful nature. It is not an intensification of religious pathos. Nor, is it an abandoning of concern for holiness. The lesson clarifies what Paul meant by the phrase "becoming dead to sin" and summarizes the role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual formation.

Lesson 8 outlines the battle for holiness which exists within Christians. It explains how a person's cognitive, affective, and behavioral spheres relates to this battle. The lesson demonstrates the comparative level of difficulty in controlling these three spheres. The lesson gives the reason why Satan focuses his attack on the affective sphere. Also the lesson was meant to
instill hope for experiencing holiness along with exercises for the reader.

Lesson 9 discusses the spiritual life in the context of Rom 8. This lesson explains the following three concepts. The first concept is that there is no condemnation for those in Christ. The second concept regards the law of the Spirit versus the law of sin and death. This concept explains "walking in the Spirit." And the third concept involves adoption into the family of God. Exercises for the reader concludes the lesson.

The tenth lesson describes how to develop habits of holiness. These habits are instilled by the following steps. First, there must be a cognitive conviction of the importance of holiness. Second, Christians must recognize the necessity of affectively committing themselves to a life of holiness. And third, Christians must accept the necessity of a behavioral compliance with that knowledge.

Lesson 11 illustrates the necessity of self-discipline in spiritual formation. This lesson explains Paul's analogy of training for godliness. The lesson ends with exercises to assist the reader in applying these concepts to life.

Lesson 12 explains the place of Bible study in the development of the spiritual life. It states that Bible study is foundational to the cognitive stage of spiritual growth. This lesson lists twelve methods to
improve one's devotional study of the Bible. The exercises involves the reader with four of these methods.

The thirteenth lesson discusses the subject of prayer in the development of spirituality. Ten indications of a faulty prayer life are listed along with a summary of the fundamentals of prayer. Practical suggestions for enhancing one's prayer life are delineated along with exercises to accomplish such.

Lesson 14 depicts the possibility, the desirability, and the necessity of experiencing the presence of God. Also the lesson gives practical suggestions along with exercises to foster this experience.

Lesson 15 explains the practice of fasting as it relates to spiritual formation. First, the lesson delineates the three types of fasting described in the Bible. Jesus's admonitions on fasting are reviewed. Also, the lesson gives a brief description of what biblical fasting is not. The benefits of fasting and suggestions for using this discipline are set-forth.

Lesson 16 explains the use of a journal in the development of the spiritual life. It expresses the importance of recording one's experience with God. Various biblical examples of such recordings are listed. This is followed by practical suggestions for keeping a journal along with seven phrases to begin a journal entry.
The seventeenth lesson summarizes the general characteristics of a spiritually growing Christian. It explains the necessity for simplicity of life-style to enhance spiritual growth. Also, it explains that service is a product of, and further stimulus to, spiritual growth. Again, exercises to aid the reader's personal application concludes this lesson.

The five members described above, after studying the lessons, again wrote their understanding of spirituality. They listed the methods which they now thought were helpful in developing the spiritual life. Also, they stated how frequently they were now practicing those methods. I then compared their concluding replies with their former ones. Based on their responses and on their journal entries, I discussed the effect of the lessons with each respondent.

The first person, though being a Christian for only three years, had already developed her understanding of spirituality. Therefore, her initial and concluding responses to the first two questions changed very little. This person became depressed as she perceived the contrast between her sinfulness and God's holiness. However, once assisted out of her depression, she claimed the lessons helped her to have a more consistent devotional life.

The second person readily committed himself to using the lessons. However, he did not complete them.
The similarity of his initial and concluding responses reflected his brief exposure to the lessons. Though he basically read only half of the lessons, he claimed the lessons encouraged him to become more consistent with his devotions.

The third person experienced a personal emergency soon after accepting the lessons. Therefore, she postponed the completion of the lessons until the last possible date. Her concluding responses nevertheless demonstrate a considerable increase in clarity. Completing the lessons in a short time could have kept the major concepts clear in her mind. She also claimed an improved devotional life as encouraged by the lessons.

The fourth person expended considerable energy to complete the lessons. He quickly realized he did not understand spirituality and this greatly bothered him. He desired to complete the lessons correctly. Therefore, he took more time than the other respondents to finish the lessons. His concluding response most nearly reflected my concepts, yet was phrased in his own words. He claimed the lessons helped him, not only to clarify spirituality, but also to practice it more faithfully.

The fifth person had been a Christian leader for many years. However, for more than a decade, she had become bitter toward God. Her responses to the first two questions reflected considerable knowledge of this subject and therefore changed very little. During the
lessons, she continued her struggle between what she believes to be right and what she practiced. Therefore, it was not surprising to find her third concluding response was more negative than her initial response. This deterioration resulted from her refusal to surrender completely to God.

**Conclusion**

This conclusion covers four areas. The first area explains problems with which I struggled during the concluding stage of this project. The second area lists what I learned regarding spiritual formation from observing those who studied the lessons. The third area delineates how this project sharpened my pastoral skills. The last area includes my plans for future developments in this topic.

**Concluding Problems**

I struggled with four major problems in attempting to conclude this project. The first problem was that of objectivity. The second problem was the difficulty of measuring spiritual growth accurately. The third problem was how to make accurate conclusions about successes or failures in this project. The fourth problem was that potential readers might assume general applicability of the lessons. The following paragraphs will explain these concerns.

Objectivity became a concern for both the
respondents as well as myself. The respondents had this problem because I am also their pastor. With each respondent, I have either officiated at their baptism, wedding, or at a family member's funeral. This relationship may have inhibited them from expressing their actual perceptions of the lessons. I also had problems being objective. I probably focused on any positive indicator of growth, since I was the author and guide of the lessons. Therefore, the reader of the previous case studies should exercise discretion regarding the implied results.

The second problem was how to measure spiritual growth accurately. How can a person quantify spiritual development? Just because a person studies his/her Bible or prays more, does this confirm spiritual growth? Could other influences prompt these behavioral changes? I concluded a modification of behavior is too simplistic to confirm spiritual growth. Spiritual formation is complex, it involves the entire person. Therefore, I concluded, using the case study method, there was only one acceptable indicator of growth: the respondents' belief in their spiritual growth.

The third problem was how to report accurately successes or failures in this project. This problem is related to the first problem. It was difficult to draw accurate conclusions from the five case studies described above. Each respondent exerted a different
level of energy when completing the lessons. The respondents' different levels of spiritual maturation complicated the process of making accurate conclusions. The benefits derived from the lessons could be proportional to the involvement of the respondent. Expressions of growth could more accurately reflect their investment of energy than reveal the quality of the lessons. Therefore, I again decided to rely upon the respondent's perception of his or her growth.

The fourth problem was the concern that readers would attempt to use the lessons and expect similar results. The reader should exercise caution regarding general applicability or potential effectiveness based on the above case studies. The studies merely describe what I perceived happened during this project. Even these same respondents would relate differently to these lessons at a different time. Though I believe the respondents made growth, I can only postulate these lessons contributed toward that development.

Spiritual Formation Lessons Learned by Observing the Respondents

I learned much concerning spiritual formation by observing the respondents. This information can be divided into two areas. The first area focused on the respondent, with the second area focusing on the spiritual guide.

By observing the respondents, I began to
appreciate more fully the design of this project. The respondents, when confronted with the three questions, recognized their confusion and ignorance of spirituality. Without this awareness, they did not recognize so clearly their need of this study. In the future, I plan to repeat this step before any person studies the lessons. Another observation was the positive effect of a prolonged exposure to this topic. As the respondents continued through the lessons, they increased their interest and level of involvement. Each respondent who completed this project began to study more consistently by the end. Apparently, studying spirituality over a number of weeks, or months has a favorable effect upon the student.

I observed that the exercises by the end of the lessons helped the students grow spiritually. They stated that other works on spirituality lacked instruction on practical application. These lessons' exercises assisted them to internalize and personalize the expressed concepts of spiritual formation. I now more clearly recognize the benefit of repeating the same questions following the completion of the lessons. When I compared the respondent's initial and concluding answers evaluation and accountability were then possible. I learned that each of these steps are very important for spiritual formation. I plan to use each of these steps with future students.
I also learned much regarding spiritual guidance by observing the respondents. The major lesson learned was my need to be adaptable. The respondents' temperaments reflected their patterns of spiritual formation. If they had an aggressive personality, they eagerly approached these lessons. For them, spirituality was another goal to achieve. Those persons with a more relaxed perspective of life took a relaxed approach to these lessons. To be able to provide competent spiritual guidance, a guide must be adaptable. Understanding a spiritual novice's personality is critical in providing spiritual guidance. Guides must be sufficiently knowledgeable, understanding people as well as spirituality, so they can be flexible.

Project Sharpens Pastor's Skills

This third area delineates how this project sharpened my pastoral skills in five ways. First, the project required me to obtain an experiential knowledge of spiritual formation. Competent spiritual guidance is possible only when the guide has personally experienced this discipline. Before this project, I had a limited theoretical knowledge of spiritual formation. Now I can empathize with sojourners on their spiritual pilgrimages.

Second, this project benefited me by enabling me to be more competent in providing spiritual guidance. I am feeling increasingly comfortable in assisting members in their spiritual growth. Before this project, I felt
some trepidation when members asked for my advice on
spiritual formation. Not having studied spirituality nor
having personally developed this discipline, I knew my
advice was simplistic. I now believe I am reasonably
competent and can be honest regarding my own spiritual
growth.

Third, the completion of this project required
me to study the Bible and current literature on spiritual
formation. Many current writers on spiritual formation
reflect concepts from Christian mysticism. From my
exploratory study, I better understand and appreciate
Christian mysticism. I can now assist Christians to
better understand, evaluate, and implement appropriate
concepts from literature on this topic.

Fourth, the project required me to develop an
acceptable tool to assist others with spiritual
formation. Previously, I recommended various chapters in
a number of books for those who sought spiritual
guidance. The inquirers often could not afford to
purchase all of these books. Besides the inability to
purchase these books, the recommended chapters seldom
offered suggestions for implementing its concepts.
Therefore, these lessons are an acceptable tool for me to
use in filling this deficiency.

Fifth, this project sharpened my skills by
giving me much needed experience in providing spiritual
guidance. Future students might have an experience
similar to one of the project's five respondents. Should this happen, I can anticipate potential problems and outline possible steps to alleviate them.

Future Developments

There is a need for at least two more series of lessons on spirituality. This present series was intentionally elementary. There needs to be a more advanced series of lessons. The first advanced series should cover two major areas. First, it should deal with common problem encountered in spiritual formation. These problems would include; the area of consecration, the use of the will, how to deal with doubts, failures, and temptations. The second area should expand on the last six lessons of this series. More information and suggestions would be helpful in the practical "how to" of spiritual formation. Another advanced series of lessons would explain how to live the contemplative life within modern society.

Another area I would like to explore is the influence of music on the spiritual life. Both music and spirituality significantly involve the affective domain. A study of their affect upon one another would be provocative.

In my opinion, the three major goals stated in the introduction were acceptably met. Progressively, I am experientially understanding spiritual formation. I have developed a tool to assist my members understand and
implement spirituality. I have gained experience in
guiding my members through the use of the lessons. To
God be the glory, amen!
BIBLIOGRAPHY
BIBLIOGRAPHY


VITA

I was born in 1953 and was raised in a rural community in a northern California valley. I attended Loma Linda University graduating with a B.A. in theology. Following an internship at the Pleasant Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church I attended the Theological Seminary at Andrews University. Before becoming an Assistant Pastor at the Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church, I completed the basic unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at Loma Linda University Medical Center. Following our service at Paradise, we helped begin the Upper Ridge Seventh-day Adventist Church. For the last six years, I have served as the senior pastor of the Stockton Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. In 1988, I will have been married to Mary Ellen for fifteen years. We have two daughters, Michelle age fourteen and Kimberly age eleven.