

## A SOLID FOUNDATION

### A PERSONAL NOTE

We thank God for the decision you have made to turn your life over to Him. We are in awe at the great love and power that causes our God to save us and make us new, just as you have recently experienced. The members of this church are committed to help you in your new life in any way we can. May God bless you on your journey.

#### WHAT IS “A SOLID FOUNDATION”?

The name suggests a comparison between the building of a building and the building of a new life in Christ. In both cases a solid foundation is absolutely essential.

The booklet itself is a day-by-day study guide. If you follow it as it is written, you will complete the study guide in fifty days. Each day you will be given some thoughts, Bible readings and questions. As you think and pray about the content of each day, you will be building a solid foundation for the new life you have in Christ Jesus.

#### HOW TO USE THE STUDY GUIDE

The following suggestions will help you get the most out of your study:

1. Set aside at least fifteen minutes for each day’s work. Find a quiet time and place. If at all possible, stay with the schedule, doing one day’s work each day. This is not so that you can say you did it every day, but so that God will have regular and consistent opportunities to touch your heart and life.
2. Put something into it – that’s the surest way to get something out of it. It is strongly recommended that you get a notebook and write out your answers and thoughts. Don’t hurry to finish. Spend time thinking and meditating about the questions and the subject for the day.
3. Ask for help. Remember, the church is committed to helping you. Ask questions when you don’t understand. Call someone up or ask him or her at the next meeting. You may even want to write your questions in your notebook so that you will remember them. Also be open to asking for help in getting the truths into your life. Members of the church may be asking how your study is going. This is not to ‘check up on you,’ but to carry out their God-given responsibility to help you grow. Be open to them when they ask you.
4. Pray about what you learn. Your prayer doesn’t have to be flowery or fancy. Just express to your Father how much you depend on Him and need His help with what you are learning.

May God bless you as you begin  
your journey to become like Him.

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### **FIRST WEEK: WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME?**

You have heard the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus. You know that His Death took place as a penalty for sins we have committed. You know that His resurrection shows Him to be the greatest power, the Lord of the universe. Because you believe in Him, because your heart has been moved to turn away from your old ways and turn toward Him, because you have stated publicly that you are embracing Him as your Master, and because you have been baptized in His name, the power of God has worked within you. You may not have felt it physically, but God has done something to you and you will never be the same. The exercises and meditations this week are designed to help you better understand what God has done in you.

### **DAY 1 - FORGIVENESS**

1. Yesterday your baptism was the key turning point in your journey to be right with God. Yesterday, when you were baptized, at that very moment, God forgave you for every wrong thing you have ever done (Acts 2:38; 22:16).
2. We sometime have difficulty forgiving ourselves for certain wrong things we have done. God, however, delights to forgive us (Psalm 103:8-13; Luke 15:4-7). His view of us is more significant than the way we feel about ourselves. And He now views you as a perfectly clean, forgiven person.
3. What are some specific sins you are especially thankful that you have now been forgiven for?
4. We must never take His forgiveness for granted. What is a better attitude concerning the forgiveness we have received? (Luke 7:36-50)

### **DAY 2 - HOLY SPIRIT**

1. The Bible promises that when we come into Christ, God will come to live inside us by means of His Holy Spirit (John 14:23; Acts 2:38-39). Again, you may not have felt it physically but two days ago, when you were baptized in faith, God came to live inside of you through His Holy Spirit.
2. The Bible compares the Holy Spirit to a tree that bears various kinds of fruit (Galatians 5:22-23). That means He has the power to produce these kinds of qualities in your life. Which of the qualities listed there do you most urgently desire right now?
3. The only thing that will stop God's Spirit from producing these things in you is rebellion on your part. He will not do it if you want to do something else (Isaiah 63:10).
4. Will you choose to let God change you and make you into the person He wants you to be?

### **DAY 3 - THE CHURCH**

1. Church is neither a place nor a building. It is people. It is all the people who are in Christ. Three days ago, when you came into Christ, the Lord Himself made you a part of His church (Acts 2: 41, 47).
2. Jesus taught that all those who follow Him make up a spiritual family. We are all brothers and sisters (Mark 3: 31-35). This is a way of saying we have very special and very close relationships with each other, and it is because we all have a relationship with the one Father.
3. What does it mean to you to think of some of the people you know who are a part of the church as your family members?
4. God has made you a part of His family, but you must decide to associate with it. What are some ways you can get involved with the family of God right now?

### **DAY 4 - THE OLD NATURE**

1. The Bible uses several words to describe that part within us that wants to do wrong instead of good (old self, old nature, the flesh, the sinful nature, the self). Another thing God did when you were baptized is that He crucified this old nature (Romans 6:3-5).
2. This is a paradox (something that seems contradictory but isn't), but even though God crucified your old self, it is not totally dead. The Bible indicates that even Christians still have this part of their nature (Galatians 5:13), and by now you have probably noticed it in your thinking or action.
3. We will continue to struggle with our old nature for a long time. We did not develop it overnight and we will not be freed from it overnight. But when we were baptized, God did something to the old nature that put a limitation on its power over us. Before, we may have had almost no power over it, but now we have been put in a position where we have the possibility of being free from it (Romans 6:3-7).
4. What part of your old nature (deeds, thoughts, attitudes) do you want (with God's help) to bring under control as soon as possible?

### **DAY 5 - DISCIPLE OF JESUS**

1. "Disciple" means "student, learner, pupil". However, since we are not only going to learn about Jesus but also do what we learn, perhaps "follower" is the best definition of a disciple. Five days ago, you became a disciple (follower) of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20). You are now His student.
2. What are some attitudes you think you will need to have if you are going to be a good student, one that He can readily and easily teach? (Matthew 11:25; Mark 4:24-25)

3. What are some of the ways and means that He will use to teach you? (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Ephesians 4:11-12; Colossians 3:16)
4. It is also very important to have the perspective that you are a follower and a disciple of Jesus, a person, a being. You are not a follower of a philosophy or of a set of rules. You are striving to be like the person Jesus, who came here to show us the way (Luke 6:40). What difference do you think this perspective will make?

## **DAY 6 - GOD WANTS BABIES TO GROW**

1. The Bible compares newly converted Christians to newborn babies (Ephesians 4:14; 1 Peter 2:2-3). It is obvious what will happen to a newborn baby if it is not fed and nourished. If a baby is not growing, something is severely wrong. What are some other applications you can think of as you think of yourself as a newborn spiritual baby?
2. Several verses make it clear that God not only wants to save us from our sins, but He also wants us to grow and mature as Christians (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:28; 1 Peter 2:2-3; 2 Peter 1:5-8).
3. Why do you believe God wants us to grow in our Christian lives? What do you believe will happen to you if you do not grow spiritually? (Compare it to a physical baby)

## **DAY 7 - PREREQUISITES TO GROWTH**

1. God has given the church the responsibility to help you in your growth. However, there are certain things you must do and certain attitudes you must have if you want to grow. If you are not willing to do these things and have these attitudes, the church will not be able to help you grow. If you are willing, the church's efforts will lead to the growth God desires.
2. Here are the prerequisites:
  - a. First and foremost, BE WILLING and OPEN to grow and learn (Hebrews 5:11-14 Note: "slow to learn" is literally "dull of hearing", that is, they had stopped listening.)
  - b. DEVOTE YOURSELF to the same things the very first Christians did: the apostles' teaching (the New Testament), the fellowship (time and relationships with Christians), the breaking of bread (the Lord's supper), and prayer (Acts 2:42).
  - c. CRAVE the pure spiritual milk of God's word (1 Peter 2:2-3).
  - d. USE what you learn (Mark 4:24-25).
  - e. MAKE AN EFFORT to grow (2 Peter 1:5-7).
3. This may seem like it is asking a lot, but it is more than possible. Remember, God has given you power over sin. He has given you the power to change, to become a new person. His Spirit, who is living in you right now, will help you on your journey. You do all these things because you believe that growth is God's will for you and is what is best for you.

4. Are you willing to develop all these prerequisites? What are some things you can do immediately to start acting on them?

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### **SECOND WEEK: A FOLLOWER OF JESUS**

Turn back and review the points and questions and any notes you made on Day 5. This week you will be studying a few characteristics of your Master / Teacher so that you can become more like Him. Remember you are now His student / pupil / disciple. As you study and admire what He was like, consider yourself and how you would apply those characteristics today. Those who spend time with Jesus will be changed (Acts 4:12).

#### **DAY 8 - HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

1. One of the major reasons Jesus came to earth was to show us how to live. One of the main things He showed us is that we must live our lives in dependence and trust in God (John 5:19; 8:26, 28, 40). That is how Jesus got the direction for His life and the power for His life.
2. Nowhere is this more evident than in Jesus' praying. We see Him praying several times in the New Testament, and some of His prayers are recorded for us (John 17). On one occasion, He spent the entire night in prayer (Luke 6:12). He actually prayed even more often than we might think (Luke 5:16). If your Master believed He needed prayer that much, what does it say about your need for it?
3. The intimacy of Jesus' relationship with God is seen in the way Jesus addressed Him. His regular way was 'Father'. The word He used (Abba – Mark 14:36) is very intimate. It is the word Jewish children used for their fathers and is somewhat communicated by our word 'daddy'. It is not light-hearted, but is intimate and personal. Can you think of having a relationship with God that is warm and intimate enough that you could address Him as 'Dad' or 'Daddy'? Why can we have such an intimate relationship with the One who is our God and King? (Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:19-22)

#### **DAY 9 - HIS HUMILITY**

1. Matthew was one of Jesus' twelve close followers. He walked with Jesus for about three years. In Matthew 12:15-18, Matthew quotes a text from the Old Testament that he believed described Jesus well. Based on this text, what can you learn about Jesus' character?
2. Not only does humility describe what Jesus himself was like, it also describes the way His kingdom would grow. Matthew 5:13 and 13:31-33 describe the influence of

Christianity on the world. What three metaphors are used in these verses to describe this influence? What do these metaphors tell us about the way in which we will influence the world?

3. Jesus clearly states the importance of humility in our lives (Matthew 5:3; 18:1-4). Why is humility necessary in our relationship with God? (Luke 18:9-14) How do you think you can develop humility?

## **DAY 10 - HIS SELF-DENIAL**

1. All desire is not wrong (1 Timothy 4:1-5; 6:17), but many desires are wrong. Even the good and wholesome desires we have become wrong if they are abused or carried to an extreme. Our old self (old nature) constantly promotes desires that are wrong (Ephesians 2:3; 4:22). For this reason, Jesus taught that we must DENY OURSELVES (Mark 8:34). A similar idea is taught in different language in John 12:24-25.
2. Once again, Jesus not only taught this, He also demonstrated it. Read the following verses and see if you can determine how Jesus was denying Himself in each instance (Mark 1:40-41, 35-37; 10:45; Matthew 4:1-2; Luke 15:1-2).
3. Self-denial does not mean “grin and bear it”. Jesus Himself expressed what He was thinking and feeling in the midst of wrestling with what God wanted Him to do. The key is that He ended up denying what His “self” wanted and did what God wanted instead (Mark 14:32-42).
4. What are some past or expected future situations that will call for self-denial on your part? What would self-denial mean in each situation?
5. Self-denial will be a long and difficult thing to learn. Begin now, however, because this is the way of your Teacher / Master. Remember, the power of God is available to help you in this area. He has crucified your old self (Day 4) and He now lives in you by the Holy Spirit (Day 2). Because of this, God can help you deny yourself if you choose to do so.

## **DAY 11- HIS INTEGRITY**

1. To have integrity or be sincere means to be the same on the inside as you are on the outside. The presence or absence of integrity in a Christian will have a profound influence on other people, for good or for ill. Are you the same on the inside as what you show on the outside?
2. Have you noticed that Jesus DID what He TAUGHT? He taught dependence on God and He depended on God. He taught humility and He was humble. He taught self-denial and He denied Himself. This is one of the secrets of the power of His life.
3. This quality of Jesus is pointed out by Luke in Luke 20:20-26.
4. Jesus’ integrity is also seen in that He not only had the right concern in life, but He also lived according to those concerns. What concern does Jesus express in the following texts: Matthew 6:33; Mark 9:42-50; John 13:34; Mark 6:34; John 17:21; Mark 11:22?

Can you think of anything Jesus DID that showed He was actually concerned about these things?

5. Probably the clearest statement of how to develop integrity is Matthew 23:25-26. God has acted within you to cleanse your heart and make you new. He will continue to purify you heart, thoughts, motives, and desires if you allow Him to. How can you allow Him to do this?

## **DAY 12 - HIS COMPASSION**

1. One of the most noticeable characteristics about Jesus is His compassion (Matthew 15:32; 20:54; Mark 1:41; 6:34).
2. Re-read each of these verses and notice that in each instance Jesus DID something for the people He had compassion on. What did He do in each instance? Compassion is having enough feeling or sympathy for someone that it leads you to DO something for them.
3. Compassion begins on the inside of you and leads to the outside. God can and will develop compassion in you if you are willing for Him to. What are some things you could do that would help you in developing compassion?
4. Who are some people you know right now that are hurting or are in need? What are some ways you could show compassion on them? Will you do so?

## **DAY 13 - HIS LOVE**

1. The idea of Christian love is far different than the idea of love in this society. Christian love means doing what is best for the other person regardless (whether they deserve it, you feel like it, etc). Love comes from the inside but always shows up in tangible actions.
2. With this definition of love, you can readily see that doing what is BEST for someone may not always be the same as doing what he or she WANT you to do. Because of this, love may sometimes look a lot different than we would expect. How does Jesus show true love in each of the following instances? (John 13:1-17; Mark 10:17-22; Matthew 11:28-30)
3. Jesus taught us to love each other, just as He loved us (John 13:34-35; see also 15:13). What are some ways you can show love toward the members of this church?
4. What is the main way we show love for Jesus?

## **DAY 14 - HIS PURPOSE**

1. Another very noticeable about our Teacher's life is that He came here for some very specific purposes. He had a mission to accomplish. This in itself is pretty impressive to people who feel they have no reason or purpose for living.

2. Read each of the following verses and write out what purpose it gives for Jesus coming to earth: Mark 10:45; John 3:17; Luke 4:43; 19:10; 1 John 3:8.
3. When Jesus left the earth, He handed this purpose and mission over to us, His people, His church. No one of us can carry out that entire mission, but all of us working together can. All of us will be involved in it in some way. What are some ways you could be involved in continuing the purposes of Jesus, beginning today?
4. A major hindrance to God's people fulfilling this mission we have been given is that we seem to adopt so many other purposes in our lives. Jesus had His mission clearly in mind and He did without some things other people might think essential to life (wealth, marriage, pleasures, and sometimes even food). We should not feel guilty for having or wanting a marriage or a job. These are good and wholesome in God's eyes if we have His outlook on them. But there may be some other purposes that we could abandon for the mission of God (1 Corinthians 9:1-12; 2 Timothy 2:4). Remember, only God gives real life, none of these other purposes will. Focus on the pearl of great value (Matthew 13:45-46) and the other less important purposes will diminish.

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### **THIRD WEEK: THE INNER LIFE**

Jesus taught that the inner life of each of His disciples is very, very important. He knew that a real change on the inside of a person would lead to the right changes in the person's actions. Because of this, He spoke a great deal the HEART and FAITH as well as other aspects of inner life. In spite of His emphasis on this, there is still a great tendency among people to interrupt this natural sequence (inner leads to outer). We are very prone to try to change our outer actions without changing our hearts. This leads to hypocrisy. Because this tendency is so common and so deadly, Jesus sharply rebuked those who lived that way (Matthew 12:33-37; 15:8; 23:25-26). Let us heed His warnings by making sure that we give much attention to the change God wants to bring about in our HEARTS.

### **DAY 15 - HIS PURPOSE**

1. The heart (in its spiritual sense) may be described as your "spiritual perception device". It is the "organ" God has given you that is able to hear and understand spiritual truths. A person's mind (intellect) is also involved in hearing and understanding spiritual truths, but the Bible makes it clear that the mind will not be able to understand without the heart (John 5:38-40; 1 Corinthians 1:19-21).
2. This means that the heart is the only "place" at which God can touch you. He will either get through to you in your heart or He will not be able to get through to you at all. In addition, the heart is the "place" from which all of our response to God flows. The condition of your heart will be very influential in determining whether you respond to God (Matthew 13:4-9; 18-23). Because the heart is the only place God can get through to

you and because it is the source of all your response to God, your heart is EXTREMELY PRECIOUS. WE MUST ALL TREAT OUR HEARTS WITH VERY SPECIAL CARE!

3. Some of the major SIGNS of spiritual heart trouble are:

Having difficulty in really hearing the Word of God (Matthew 13:14-15)

Criticism and legalism (Mark 3:1-5)

A lot of sensually gratifying activities (Ephesians 4:18-19)

Going in our own way (Deuteronomy 29:18-19)

Too much involvement in the things of the world (Matthew 6:21; Luke 21:34)

The last two items mentioned, along with anxiety (Luke 21:34) are not only signs but also CAUSES of heart trouble.

4. On the other hand, these items are good for the heart:

Confessing / humility (Psalm 51:1-10)

Repentance / decision (Matthew 6:21; James 4:8)

Obedience / responsiveness to the Word of the Lord (Hebrews 3:7-8)

Encouragement/ exhortation (Hebrews 3:12-13); and

Prayer (Philippians 4:6-7)

5. How open and responsive do you think your heart is? (Use point 3 as a guideline.) What are some things you can do to improve the condition of your heart, starting today?

## **DAY 16 - AVENUE: THE WORD**

1. The main avenue by which God can and will touch our hearts is His Word. His Word is very powerful and will have a tremendous effect on us if our hearts are open to it (Isaiah 55:10-11; Jeremiah 23:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 4:12; Matthew 13:23).
2. God's Word has already touched your heart at least once. That is what led you to your decision to give your life to Him. When your faith led you to baptism, God worked in your heart to cleanse you and forgive you. Indeed, He gave you a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26). Now it is important that you nurture and protect your heart by exposing it regularly to His Word (Hebrews 3:15).
3. Here are some practical suggestions to help you in reading the Bible (exposing your heart to God's Word):
  - a. Find a quiet time and place.
  - b. Select a book of the New Testament and read it all the way through. The longer books will take more than one sitting to complete, but you can pick up where you left off the next time you read. You may want to ask someone what they think might be a good book for you. Otherwise, some good starting books might be: Mark, Galatians, James or 1 John.
  - c. Don't get in too big of a hurry as you read. The purpose is not to read as much as you can in one sitting, but to make sure God has a chance to break through into your heart as you read. It would be better to read only one paragraph and have it make an impression on you than to read a whole book without understanding.

You may need to re-read a paragraph a few times before you go on to the next one.

- d. Write down any questions you have as you read and ask someone for help in answering them. This is an excellent way to learn and grow. You may also want to write down significant things you learn.
  - e. Read regularly and consistently. This is not so you can say you read the Bible every day, but so that God will have a regular and consistent opportunity to get through to you.
  - f. Always read with a view to obeying. If the Word confronts you or rebukes you, let it. Repent. If you hear His voice, do not harden your heart (Hebrews 3:15).
4. If you are not already doing so, choose a book of the New Testament right now to begin reading through. Each day, after you work through the points and questions in this study guide, spend a few extra minutes reading in the book you chose.

## **DAY 17 -**

## **AVENUE: PRAYER**

1. Another avenue by which we come into contact with God is prayer. Prayer will help protect your heart from one of its main enemies: anxiety (Philippians 4:6-7). Prayer delivers us from anxiety and keeps our hearts open and attuned to God.
2. The following considerations may help you get started if you are not used to praying:
  - a. Don't be concerned about "praying right", using the right words, or making it sound good or pious (Matthew 6:7). Just express yourself thoughtfully and honestly to God. Avoid "pat" phrases because they probably won't be a genuine expression of yourself. Don't worry too much about the length of your prayer either.
  - b. You may bow your head, kneel, close your eyes, or not, depending on what seems best to you. You may also pray aloud or silently. Your physical posture is not nearly as important as your inward posture. Your inward posture should be one of humility and dependence on God.
  - c. Your prayer may include praise to God for who He is or something He has done (Matthew 11:25), confession of your sins (1 John 1:9), thanksgiving to God (Philippians 1:3-6), and requests from God (Romans 1:10).
  - d. Remember, the Father knows what is best for the child and will do what is BEST even if the child asked for something else. We must trust our Father in this. Our greatest desire is not that our prayers be answered the way we want them to be, but that God's will be done (1 John 5:14). Pray fervently that God's will would be done in all instances.
  - e. The one thing that is prayed for in the New Testament more than anything else is PEOPLE. Pray for the growth and maturity of your Christian family and for the salvation of non-Christians you know.

3. If you are not already doing so, begin a regular time of prayer to God on your own. It might be good to do it at the same time you do your reading and this study guide.

## **DAY 18 - FAITH**

1. The words “faith” and “believe” are so commonly used that it may be difficult for us to really understand them. It is helpful to think of faith, first of all, as an ATTITUDE or an OUTLOOK. It is an outlook on God that says, “God, you are reliable and trustworthy. You are true and right and can be depended on!” (John 8:26).
2. When the Bible speaks of faith, it does not just say, “Believe that...” but “believe in...” Faith is not just believing THAT certain facts are true, but believing IN God. This is perhaps better communicated by the word TRUST. Faith is a trusting, personal relationship with the God of Heaven. Who is a person you would say you believe in? What do you mean when you say you believe in him / her? Does this help you understand what it means to believe in Jesus or God?
3. If we believe in God, we will also believe in His resources, just as if we believe in a doctor we will trust his resources. To Christians this means primarily that we believe in His resource for dealing with our sin – the death and resurrection of Jesus and the grace God gave us through Him (John 3:16-18; 8:24; Ephesians 2:8-9). Read 1 Peter 1:13. Is this the ONLY thing you are counting on to make you right with God? What are some other things you are tempted to count on from time to time?
4. If we believe in God, we will also believe in His words, just as if we believe in a doctor we will trust his instructions for our treatment. If God Himself is true, right, and reliable (Point 1), then His Words will be true, right, and reliable. If we believe in Him, we will not view His Words as a burden, but as a statement of absolute truth from our Creator concerning what is true, right, and reliable for our lives (John 17:17). Do you view the words of God (in the Bible) as a reliable message that tells you what is really best for your life? Can you say that about these words: John 6:27; Matthew 6:31-33, 19-21?

## **DAY 19 - FAITH**

1. If we do indeed have faith, it will show up in many ways. Probably the main way is that IF WE BELIEVE WE WILL OBEY. In fact, if we do not obey, something is severely wrong with our faith (James 2:14-26). What are some ways your faith is showing up in your actions?
2. This is one of the unique features of Jesus’ teaching and one that you will constantly have to remind yourself of: the outer actions grow out of the inner change (Romans 1:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; Matthew 7:15-20; 12:33-35; 23:25-26).
3. Humility is essential to faith. Without humility, we simply will not believe. Why do you think this is so? On two occasions Jesus said a person had “great faith”. It is significant that both of these people showed humility. Read the following passages and find the

verse that shows the person's humility (Matthew 8:5-10; 15:21-28). Are there any ways in which pride hinders your faith?

4. Read Romans 10:17 and find out where faith comes from. Now that you realize this, what are some things you can do to grow in faith?

## **DAY 20 - HOPE**

1. Read the following verses and determine what our hope is in each one (Romans 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Titus 1:2; 2:13; 1 John 3:2). For Christians, hope is not a doubtful thing. It is not an "outside shot" or a "fifty-fifty chance". Rather, it is solid and certain, and we wait for it expectantly (Romans 8:24-25). If the basis for our hope was ourselves or our accomplishments or our possessions, our hope would be more doubtful. But that is not the basis for our hope. What IS the basis for our hope? (1 Timothy 4:10; 6:17; Colossians 1:27; 1 Peter 1:13).
2. What effect does hope have on us? (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 John 3:2-3; Hebrews 6:19).
3. How is hope developed according to Romans 15:4; 5:3-4? Re-read 5:3-4. How are suffering and hope related? How can we respond to suffering in a way that will develop hope? Is there any situation in your own life right now that you can apply this to?

## **DAY 21 - RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT**

1. Another part of our hope is that we will one day be raised from the dead (John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Philippians 3:21). We are not doomed to nonexistence for eternity after we die. Paul wanted to make sure the Corinthian he taught understood this, because he did not want them to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13).
2. Read the description of the Lord's return in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. What will occur then? In what way are these words encouraging to you? (v.18). In what way could you encourage someone else in the church with these words?
3. After the resurrection takes place will come the Day of Judgment. The Scriptures make it clear that we will be judges based on what we have done in this life (Matthew 16:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelations 22:12). However, this does not mean we can save ourselves by our works. In fact, one can do many religious deeds and still not be saved (Matthew 7:21-23).
4. The phrase "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:23) points us to a proper understanding. If we KNOW GOD (have a close relationship with Him), we WILL change our lives. Our faith in Him will lead us to become what He desires and do what He says. True faith always leads to obedience. Therefore, He can accurately judge us by looking at our faith or at our deeds. (Review the first two points from Day 19.) Are you DOING what you BELIEVE? List some examples.

5. For Christians, the Day of Judgment is not a cause of fear. If we belong to Him, we have confidence before Him (1 John 4:13-17). We know He has changed us and will continue to do so. We also know He is merciful and patient and eager to help us (Hebrews 4:14-16). He has forgiven our past sins and will continue to do so, if we confess them to Him.

## **A SOLID FOUNDATION**

### **FOURTH WEEK: BASIC MORALITY**

God has called you to life! It is a life that is abundant (John 10:20) – it has quality. It is rich and full. His word of truth tells us that certain things will contribute to this new life and other things will take away from it. We may not always understand or desire the things He says, but He is our Father, and He is true and reliable. Therefore, we trust Him. We believe that what He tells us is really what is best for us, and based on this, we do what He says. This week you will be learning about the things in your everyday life that He says are right (helpful) and wrong (harmful). When we disobey these things, God is angry because He knows we are hurting ourselves (as well as trusting in our own insight over His). But when we obey these things, He is pleased with us and considers us faithful and obedient children.

### **DAY 22 - THE HEART AND OBEDIENCE**

1. Turn back to Day 15 and review the first points concerning the heart.
2. Every time you hear the Word of God, a crucial decision is made in your heart. You choose between your only two choices: you can open your heart to God's Word and do what it says or you can close your heart and disobey. There is no way to hear the Word of God and disobey it without hardening your heart (consider Hebrews 3:7-8 carefully). To obey softens the heart and makes it more open to God. To disobey hardens the heart and closes God out. If anyone disobeys for too long, his heart will become so hard that God can longer reach him (Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-27). Again, this indicates how precious our heart is and how carefully we need to treat it.
3. This week, as you study the basic morality God wants you to develop, remember how critical it is that you keep your heart open before God. You probably will not be able to do everything God will exhort you to do in the Scriptures you will be reading this week, at least not immediately.

Sin has ensnared you for quite some time and it will take a while to become free. However, this does not mean you should sit back and take it easy. Rather, make every effort to do all He says. But if you realize it will likely take you a while to make these changes, it will help you not to get discouraged if you fail.

4. Next week you will study sin in more detail. For now it is important to know that when you do fail (sin) in some of the areas you will be learning about this week, that you humble yourself, confess your sin to God, and ask His forgiveness. Never think He will

be tired of hearing from you. His forgiveness is unlimited because He is full of mercy. What He CANNOT ACCEPT is for you to close your heart to Him. But if you humble yourself in this way, it will ensure that your heart will remain soft, even though you have disobeyed.

5. Re-read Psalm 51:1-10. David, who wrote this Psalm, was called a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). Does the Psalm show anything of what his heart was like? Would you like to have such a heart that God would describe YOU as a person after His own heart?

## **DAY 23 - THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH**

1. There is a part of us that tries to reduce our relationship with God to a series of rules and regulations. We think that if we keep certain rules we will be right with God. Some of the rules we come up with seem to be good and helpful. But God says this is the wrong way to understand what our relationship with Him means (Colossians 2:20-23).
2. What God really desires is "the obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5). That is, He wants us to obey Him, but He wants it to come from our faith. (Remember, the inner leads to the outer.) He wants us to really trust Him and believe that what He says is best and right and helpful. And even in cases when we can't see the reason for what he asks us to do, He wants us to do it because we trust Him.
3. It is also important for us to remember that we do not live up to His teachings merely by our own power. Remember, He has given you a totally new beginning (Day 1). He has given you power to change through His Spirit who now lives in you (Day 2). He has given you a loving, supportive family to help and encourage you (Day 3). And He has limited the power that your old sinful self has (Day 4). **BASED ON THESE THINGS HE HAS DONE**, we are now called to choose to follow Him in every aspect of our daily lives. What impact does each of these four items make on you? How can each of them actually help you to change the way you live your life?
4. It is also very important to remember that your goal is to become like Jesus (Day 5 and Week 2). As you read the exhortations and commandments the rest of this week, do not view them as rules to keep, but as descriptions of the way Jesus lived. They will help you and guide you and give you direction as you try to live each day like Jesus did.

## **DAY 24 - EPHESIANS 4:20-32**

1. Read through Ephesians 4:20-32. Make a list of all the things we are told to "put on" (do) as disciples of Jesus and a list of all the things we are told to "put off" (not do or stop doing). Use a dictionary to define any words that are not clear to you.
2. Now look through the text again. Write down the phrases and the verse numbers that tell a REASON or THE BASIS for living this way. These phrases are not the ones that tell WHAT to do, but WHY or HOW. Example: this is the way Christ is (vs. 20). If you cannot find these phrases, be sure to ask someone for help.

3. Review all of the points from Day 23 (numbers 1-4). Don't skip this – it is very important!
4. In view of your study of Ephesians 4:20-32, what do you need to do differently starting today? Pick one item you are convicted you need to develop in and decide right now on a specific way you can put it into practice today.

**DAY 25 -                   EPHESIANS 5:1-21**

1. Read through Ephesians 5:1-21. Make a list of all the things we are told to do as disciples of Jesus and a list of all the things we are not to do or stop doing. Use a dictionary to define any words that are not clear to you.
2. Now look through the text again. Write down the phrases and verse numbers that tell a REASON or THE BASIS for living this way. These phrases are not the ones that tell you WHAT to do, but WHY or HOW. Example: “just as Christ Loved us” (vs. 2). If you cannot find these phrases, be sure to ask someone for help.
3. Review all the points from Day 23 (numbers 1-4). Don't skip this – it is very important!
4. In view of your study of Ephesians 5:1-21, what do you need to do differently starting today? Pick one item you are convicted you need to develop in and decide right now on a specific way you can put it into practice today.

**DAY 26 -                   EPHESIANS 5:22 – 6:9**

1. Read through Ephesians 5:22 – 6:9. Make a list of all the things we are told to do as disciples of Jesus and a list of all the things we are not to do or stop doing. Use a dictionary to define any words that are not clear to you.
2. Now look through the text again. Write down the phrases and verse numbers that tell a REASON or THE BASIS for living this way. These phrases are not the ones that tell you WHAT to do, but WHY or HOW. Example: “as is you were serving the Lord” (6:7). If you cannot find these phrases, be sure to ask someone for help.
3. Review all the points from Day 23 (numbers 1-4). Don't skip this – it is very important!
4. In view of your study of Ephesians 5:22 – 6:9, what do you need to do differently starting today? Pick one item you are convicted you need to develop in and decide right now on a specific way you can put it into practice today.

## **DAY 27 -**

## **1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-10**

1. Read through 1 Thessalonians 4:1-10. Make a list of all the things we are told to do as disciples of Jesus and a list of all the things we are not to do or stop doing. Use a dictionary to define any words that are not clear to you.
2. Now look through the text again. Write down the phrases and verse numbers that tell a REASON or THE BASIS for living this way. These phrases are not the ones that tell you WHAT to do, but WHY or HOW. Example: “in order to please God” (vs. 1). If you cannot find these phrases, be sure to ask someone for help.
3. Review all the points from Day 23 (numbers 1-4). Don’t skip this – it is very important!
4. In view of your study of 1 Thessalonians 4:1-10, what do you need to do differently starting today? Pick one item you are convicted you need to develop in and decide right now on a specific way you can put it into practice today.

## **DAY 28 -**

## **YOUR JOB**

1. Sometimes Christians feel their job is a waste of time and is not spiritual. It is true that some jobs fit into God’s kingdom better than others. But working and having a job in and of itself is not wrong nor is it a waste. In fact, God expects Christians to provide for themselves and their families and to be responsible workers.
2. What are some REASONS for working according to 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; Ephesians 4:28; Titus 3:14?
3. What are some attitudes and ways of working in a job that we need to develop now since we are disciples of Jesus? Titus 2:9-10; Colossians 4:22-24; Ephesians 6:5-9 (Note: for “slave” substitute “employee” and for “master” substitute “boss” or “employer”).
4. Review all of the points from Day 23 (numbers 1-4). Don’t skip this – it is very important!
5. What are some specific things you can do to put some of these teachings into practice on your job?

## **A SOLID FOUNDATION**

### **FIFTH WEEK: WHEN I DON’T DO RIGHT**

On the day of your new birth, God forgave you for every sin you have ever committed. In doing so, He took care of a problem that we simply could not take care of ourselves. As we continue in the Christian life, we will need ongoing forgiveness because we will still sin. When we sin, it burdens our consciences and makes it hard for us to keep going. God knows we need help with this. He wants to keep on forgiving us. It is His nature to do so. Because He so much wants to

help us, He has told us what to do when we sin so that He will continue to forgive and be merciful to us. The meditations this week concern sin, God's gracious nature, and how to handle sin.

## **DAY 29 - THE CHRISTIAN AND SIN**

1. Read 1 John 1:5-2:2. Why does John say he is writing this (2:1)? This is clearly God's purpose for us. Does the text indicate that we will or will not sin (1:8, remember, he is writing to Christians)? This probably does not surprise you, but it is helpful to know that God is aware of this fact.
2. Based on what you have learned from 1 John 1:5-2:2, what is a good way to sum up a proper view toward sin?
3. The Bible compares a person becoming a Christian with a slave being released from one master and entering into the service of another (Romans 6:15-23). As you think about trying to get the sin rooted out of your life, it may be helpful to think of it as trying to "shake free" from your old master. A change of ownership has taken place. You no longer belong to your old master; you belong to the Lord Jesus. You may still be in the habit of serving your old master because you have done so for quite some time. But your new master will be very patient as He teaches you a new way of life. What are some things you can do to become free from your old master?

(Note: A few days ago you were given a very important assignment (Day 16 number 4 & Day 17 number 3). If you are not doing this, decide right now to begin. It will be a tremendous help to your spiritual growth.)

## **DAY 30 - THE NATURE OF SIN**

1. The word "sin" is often used today in a way that causes us to misunderstand its true nature. When someone is criticized he may defensively respond, "Well, excuse me, I guess I'm a real sinner." Or someone who does something out of the ordinary may jokingly refer to it as "sin". This light-hearted use of the term dilutes the power and ugliness of sin in our thinking. Until we see sin in its TRUE nature, we probably won't see the need to be saved from it.
2. One major characteristic of sin is that it makes us GUILTY before our Creator. Our Creator has a true standard of right and wrong. Things that He says are sinful are really wrong. And when we do something that is wrong, we become guilty before our Creator (James 4:10-11).
3. Sin also ALIENATES us from God. The essence of sin is rebellion. Our Creator tells us what is best for us and we rebel and try to do things in our own way (Jeremiah 5:23; 7:23-24; 9:13-14). In any relationship, when one person rebels against the other person's wishes, alienation sets in. So it is in our relationship with God (Colossians 1:21; Ephesians 4:17-19). Pause and reflect for a moment on how awesome it is to do something that alienates you and makes you guilty before the God of the whole universe.
4. Another major characteristic of sin is that it is an ENSLAVING POWER (John 8:34; 2 Peter 2:19). This means that when we sin, we are giving sin power over us. The Bible

indicates that sin will take a greater and greater hold on us if we continue in it (Romans 1:21-32; 6:19; Ephesians 4:19). To help you feel the truthfulness of this characteristic of sin, ask yourself: “Do the sins in my life have greater or less hold over me than they did the FIRST time I committed them?” Also, do you still fight as hard not to commit a particular sin as you used to, or have you pretty much given up?

5. Based on these characteristics, sin may perhaps be better understood if we compare it to cocaine: it is destructive, very addictive, and yet to some it is perversely attractive. If I can come to see sin in this light, destructive to my relationship with my Creator and a power that enslaves me, I will strongly desire to be set free from it. What are some of the specific sins that you want to be freed of?

## **DAY 31 - GRACE**

1. God is a “just” God. The common understanding of this phrase, that “He will cut me a break,” is not correct. Rather, it means He will do what is really just, right, and fair. And whether we agree with it or not, the just thing to do about sin in a person’s life is to punish it. The Bible describes the punishment that people deserve and will receive for their sins, and it regularly reminds us that this is ‘just’ or ‘righteous’ (fair)(Romans 1:32; 2:2; 2Thessalonians 1:5-10).
2. In spite of this, God’s nature is such that He wants to do something to help man with the problem of sin. We will consider what He did in more detail on Day 33. For now it is important to see that even though God is a just God and even though sin really does deserve to be punished, God is also a God of grace and mercy
3. Grace means “gift”. It refers to something God does or gives. We do not earn or deserve it, He gives it freely. Read the following verses and notice how each emphasizes that WE are not EARNING the gift; God is GIVING it FREELY (Romans 4:4-5; Galatians 3:18; 2 Timothy 1:9). Do you have any trouble receiving gifts from people? If so, why?
4. The Bible teaches that we are in a desperate situation due to our sin and that there is nothing WE can do to solve this problem (Romans 5:6). Therefore it will be necessary for us to receive a gift from God to solve it. This may go against our nature, but it is the ONLY solution. One way we learn to receive from God is to learn to receive from people. Determine right now that you will graciously and appreciatively receive any gift or favor anyone tries to do for you today (or this week).

## **DAY 32 - GRACE**

1. In order for us to respond to God as we should, we must really believe that grace is a part of His nature He wants to deal with us according to His grace. Read the following Old Testament texts and note this aspect of His nature (Exodus 34:6-7; Numbers 6:22-26; Nehemiah 9:17; Isaiah 30:18).
2. The New Testament describes God in a similar way (1Peter 5:10). But what is even more helpful is that Jesus DEMONSTRATES grace to us. It is important to know that when Jesus demonstrates something to us, He is showing us what God is like (Hebrews 1:3;

John 14:8-10). That is why the stories of Jesus' dealings with people in the New Testament are so important. They put flesh and blood on the grace of God.

3. Read the following story and substitute your name for the "woman". This will help you see how God's gracious nature touches you (John 8:1-11). What did the woman and the man deserve (Leviticus 20:10)? Did Jesus treat her according to she deserved? What did the woman do to get Jesus to forgive her? What effect does it have on you to know God views you like this?
4. Another important demonstration of God's grace is seen in the way Jesus dealt with Peter. Peter denied Jesus on the night of His arrest (Mark 14:66-72), but that did not end their relationship. After Jesus was raised from the dead, one of His angels gave specific instructions for Peter to join the other disciples when they went to meet Jesus again (Mark 16:7). After Jesus ascended into heaven, Peter became a key leader in the church preaching the first sermon about Jesus (Acts 2:14ff). How would you feel if you denied being a believer in Jesus? How would you feel, if soon afterward, Jesus gave specific instructions for you to join Him at the "class reunion"? What did Peter do to earn this kind of treatment?

### **DAY 33 - GRACE**

1. The greatest demonstration of God's grace was at the cross of Jesus. In the death of His Son, God solved the dilemma described on Day 31 (numbers 1-2). He counted the death of Jesus as the payment of the penalty we rightly deserved for our sins. We did nothing to earn this gift, and we certainly did not deserve it. For this reason, the New Testament often associates the word "grace" with the death of Christ and our salvation (Romans 3:24; Acts 15:11; Ephesians 2:5-9; Titus 3:4-7). Meditate for a few moments concerning what God did at the cross. Try to come to a greater realization and appreciation for what He did for YOU there.
2. Since Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, it is important for us not to try to pay that penalty ourselves. We sometimes do this by verbally "beating" ourselves or demanding of ourselves that we do certain things to try to "make up for" sins we commit. This all goes back to how difficult it is for us to receive gifts. It is hard for us to believe He really bore the penalty our sins deserve. We'd rather do it ourselves. But that's exactly what faith is: believing that you are forgiven and acceptable to God, NOT because of anything YOU do, but because of what HE did at the cross. Therefore, determine right now not to beat yourself or run yourself down or try to "make up for" any sins you commit. Rather, determine to do what 1 Peter 1:3 instructs. In this verse, what does the word "fully" or "completely" mean?
3. Not only did Jesus die to cover our past sins, He now sits at the right hand of God as our personal lawyer, appealing our case before God (Romans 8:34; 1John 2:1). Because of this, we have an ongoing gift of forgiveness. As stated in Day 29, He does not want us to sin, but He wants us to know that if we do sin, forgiveness is available (1 John 1:8-22; Hebrews 4:14-16).
4. All this means Christians have unlimited access to His grace and forgiveness. Tomorrow we will begin to see what a Christian is to do when he sins, so as to receive this forgiveness.

## **DAY 34 -**

## **REPENTANCE**

1. We have seen that God is a God of grace and that He very much wants to be merciful to us. He does not want to treat us according to what our sins deserve (Psalm 103:10). However, we must BE VERY CAREFUL not to take advantage of His grace (Romans 6:1-2). He is patient, but we must not take advantage of His patience (Romans 2:4-5). If we understand what He did at the cross and what He did at our new birth, we will be humbled, awed, and deeply grateful for it, and we will turn away from sin.
2. When we sin (and, remember, you will sin, Day 29, number 1), God wants us to repent (Revelation 2:5,16; 2 Corinthians 12:21). If we will do so, He will forgive us. Repentance literally means “change of mind”, but a true change of mind always leads to a change of actions. It is an inner change that leads to an outer change, and both aspects are important (Luke 3:8; Joel 2:13). Furthermore, it is usually a pretty drastic change. Repentance may be thought of as “a radical reorientation of the life”.
3. 2 Corinthians 7:10 teaches that repentance comes from godly sorrow. Worldly sorrow (which leads to death) is self-pity (“I’m such a bad Christian”, “I never do anything right”, etc.). Godly sorrow is seeing that we have sinned and how ugly, repulsive and painful that is to God, and being sorry about it. However, when we see this, we don’t go into self-pity. Rather, we get out of ourselves and turn in faith to the One who can help us with our sin (Hebrews 4:16). Do you view your sin as ugly and painful to God? Do your sins cause you to pity yourself or turn toward God?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-11. What changes were produced in these people when they repented (vs. 11)?
5. If we have the perspective that is described above, we will not “receive God’s grace in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 6:1). Rather, His grace will move us to live our lives according to what He says is best and right for us.

## **DAY 35 -**

## **CONFESSION**

1. Hand in hand with repentance is confessing our sins. If we will confess them, He will forgive them (1 John 1:9).
2. To confess a sin is not the same as the general phrase, “we confess that we have sinned”. Rather, it is to say what you have done / not done and say it with humility, indicating that you believe it was, in fact, sin. This forces us to face our sin, to own up to what we did. If we do this, it will help us see the harmfulness of sin and help us in our efforts to be from it. When you pray, starting today, make it your practice to confess specific sins to God.
3. Read Psalm 32:1-7. What were the effects on this man when he had sinned and was not confessing it (vs.3, 4)? What happened as soon as he confessed it (vs. 5)? The writer indicates that if we hide our sins too long, we will put ourselves in a position where it will be very hard for us to ever find our way back home (vs. 6). God is patient, waiting for us to repent, but there is an end to His patience (Luke 13:6-9).
4. One of the most beautiful aspects of Christianity is that we do need a human priest to approach God on our behalf. Jesus Himself is our great High Priest, and because of what

He did, we can all have open, constant access to the presence of God (Hebrews 10:19-22). Because of this, you can confess your sins directly to God. And because of His nature and His promise, you can know that you will be forgiven.

5. We are also instructed to confess our sins to one another (James 5:16). This does not mean you will have to confess every sin you commit to every other Christian. You will need to use some discretion about this. But it does mean you need to find at least one person you can confess sins to. This will remind us that we are all in the same situation: plagued by sin and in need of a powerful and merciful God. It will also provide a way we can help and encourage each other in the battle against sin. Who in the congregation would you feel most free to confess your sins to?

## **A SOLID FOUNDATION**

### **SIXTH WEEK: THE FAMILY OF GOD**

The meditations and exercises this week will concern the church. The idea of “church” is often misunderstood. We refer to it here as the “family of God” because the Bible refers to it in this way (1 Timothy 3:15) and also because it may give us a better feel for what the church is about. The word “church” means “assembly” and refers to the “assembly of the people of God”. It is neither a place nor a building. It is PEOPLE. All those who have entered into the Father / Son relationship with God through Jesus Christ have become the children of God. And these children, along with God their Father and Jesus their brother, make up the family of God, the church. Your study and thinking this week will help you understand and appreciate this to a fuller degree.

### **DAY 36 - WHAT IT IS**

1. Read Mark 3:31-35. What does Jesus say a person must do to have a close relationship with Him? What does Jesus call those people who do the will of His Father (vs. 35)? If all of us who have obeyed Him have become His brothers and sisters, what does that say about our relationship with each other?
2. Read Mark 10:28-30. How do we receive the things mentioned in vs. 30? (Your understanding of WHAT THE CHURCH IS should help explain this.) Notice that if members of the church are going to receive these things, that means other members of the church are going to have to be or give these things. That means you, as a member of the family, will need to think both in terms of receiving AND giving.
3. Remember, the day you were baptized, the Lord Jesus Himself made you a part of His family, His church. Go back and review the questions and comments on Day 3, as well as any notes you made about the questions. Are you satisfied with how you have acted on question number 4 of Day 3? Try to answer that question again now that you have been a part of the family a little longer.

## **DAY 37 -**

## **WHAT IT IS FOR**

1. The purpose of the church is to continue the work that Jesus started in the world. Read Acts 1:1-2. The “former book” is the Gospel of Luke. Luke (who wrote both Luke and Acts) says here that his first book (Gospel of Luke) was about “all that Jesus BEGAN to do and teach”. This current work, the book of Acts, will tell the story of the growth and work of the His church. Apparently Luke is saying that what Jesus began to do and work during His lifetime is now being continued by His church. From what you know of Jesus’ work, what would it mean for you (as a member of His church) to continue His work in the world?
2. We may summarize the work of Jesus (and therefore also the work of the church) under three headings: doing good to people, speaking the Gospel to people who are not followers of Jesus, and teaching the followers of Jesus so as to help them mature and grow. There was a lot of overlap in these three areas during Jesus’ work and during the work of the early church. We should therefore expect that there would be overlap among these areas still today. Because of this, we should not make too big of a distinction between the three – they are all a part of the same mission. However, dividing it up into these areas helps us see more clearly the kinds of work we need to be involved in.
3. As a member of Jesus’ church, you will be involved in some way in each of these three areas. By doing so, you will be continuing His work in the world. Not everyone will be involved in these areas in the same way, but everyone will be involved in them in some way. Think of an example of how Jesus was involved in each of the three. Now think of one way you could be involved in each of the three. If you cannot think of answers for these questions, be sure to ask one of your brothers or sisters for help.
4. Remember one of the purposes of the church is to teach those who have decided to follow Jesus and help them grow (see number 2 above). This means you will need to learn to do this for others, but it also means you will need to be open to member of the church who seek to help YOU grow and mature. They have a God-given responsibility to do so. No one ever gets to the point where he does not have to learn any longer. Remember, to be a disciple of Jesus means to be a life-long learner of Jesus (Day 5). If we all have this attitude, it will create an atmosphere for real growth and learning. What are some ways some of your brothers and sisters have tried to teach you and help you to grow (formally and informally)? How have you responded to their efforts? What could you do to respond better next time?

## **DAY 38 -**

## **A BODY**

1. To help us understand the church better, the Bible compares it to something we are more familiar with: the human body. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-30 and note this comparison.
2. Notice the following important conclusions we can make from this text and the comparison of the church to a body:
  - a. The people in the church are all different and have differing roles, just as the parts of a human body are all different and have different functions. This means you will not be quite like any other part of the body. What you do in the body may be different also.

- b. Just as God arranged the parts of the human body, as He wanted them to be, so He arranged the parts of the church just the way He wanted them to be (vs. 18). This means God has put together all the members of this congregation, including YOU, just the way He wants them to be.
  - c. In spite of the tremendous diversity in a human body, all the parts work together to accomplish certain goals. So in the body of Christ, all of us are to work together to accomplish His goals, to finish His work in the world. These means we should not work against the other parts of the body, but learn to work together with them to accomplish God's purpose.
  - d. In the human body as well as the body of Christ, there is a tremendous inter-relationship between the parts (vs. 26). The parts of the body are all connected, so they go through things together – good and bad.
  - e. In the body of Christ, there is no room for any feeling of inferiority (not being needed)(vs. 15-20). Nor is there any room for feelings of superiority (not needing the other parts)(vs. 21-26). Rather, God says all the parts are necessary and we are to show equal concern for each part (vs. 25).
3. What evidence of these principles (a-e above) have you seen in the congregation here?
  4. How would you apply each of the principles to yourself in relation to the congregation here?

### **DAY 39 - ONE ANOTHER RELATIONSHIPS**

1. The church consists of all the people that are in a relationship with God through Christ Jesus. And because of the special relationship we all have with Him, we have a unique relationship with each other. This unique relationship is spelled out in the Scriptures in a number of passages where Christians are taught the special way they ought to treat “one another”.
2. Read the passages that follow and list what each one says we are to do for or with “one another” (that is, with our fellow Christians): Ephesians 4:23; 1 Peter 4:9; Romans 15:7; Colossians 3:12-13; Galatians 5:13; Hebrews 3:13.
3. Remember, we are to treat each other in these special ways due to the special relationship we all have with each other. This special relationship with each other is due to us all having a special relationship with God. We are all His children, brother and sisters, and God wants us to treat all His children in this special way.
4. Think of at least one way you could do each of the items listed in the verses in number 2 above.
5. Turn back to Day 23 and review numbers 2-4. How does this help you in thinking about treating your new brothers and sisters in this special way God is teaching us?

## **DAY 40 -**

## **ONE ANOTHER RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Read the following passages and list what each one says we should NOT do in our relationships and dealings with “one another”: James 4:11; 5:9; Colossians 3:9; Romans 14:13.
2. Remember, we are to treat each other in these special ways due to the special relationship we all have with each other. This special relationship with each other is due to us all having a special relationship with God. We are all His children, brother and sisters, and God wants us to treat all His children in this special way.
3. Have you done any of the things that we are taught not to do in our relationships with each other (number 1 above) since you became a part of the Christian family? When will you be most tempted to do these things with your new brothers and sisters?
4. Turn back to Day 23 and review numbers 2-4. How does this help you in thinking about treating your new brothers and sisters in this special way God is teaching us?

## **DAY 41-**

## **LOVE ONE ANOTHER**

1. The “one another” teaching that is most frequently repeated in the New Testament is the exhortation for us to “love one another” (John 13:34; Romans 13:8; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11). Turn back to Day 13 and review number 1 to refresh your memory about the meaning of Christian love.
2. This exhortation to love one another is very important. It serves as the basis for all of the “one another” responsibilities listed above (Days 39-40). If we really love one another with Christian love, as Jesus and the rest of the Bible instructs, we will learn to treat each other in these special ways.
3. Read 1 John 3:16-18. How do we know what real love is? What must we do to show real love to each other (see also John 15:13)? What does it mean to lay down one’s life for someone? According to vs. 18, what is NOT real love and what IS real love?
4. Jesus said we should love one another “as I have love you” (John 13:34; 15:12). Remembering that true love is laying down one’s life and doing what is best for the other person, what examples can you think of that show the way Jesus loved people?
5. How can you show genuine love to your brothers and sisters in this congregation?
6. Read John 13:35. What does genuine love among the members of the congregation communicate to the outside world? What do you think the absence of this love communicates?

## **DAY 42-**

## **WORSHIP AND ASSEMBLY**

1. God wants His church to worship Him. “Worship” means to show reverence, adore, venerate. This is the attitude we should have toward God. However, we need to pay careful attention to God’s Word to see HOW He wants us to show this adoration and reverence. In John 4:21-24, Jesus announced the coming of a new and different way of worshipping God. A major part of this new and different way of worship is spelled out in Romans 12:1. What does this verse say worship is? (Instead of offering ourselves as a one time dead sacrifice on an altar, we are to **CONTINUALLY USE OUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE FOR GOD, BY LIVING A LIFE THAT IS HOLY AND PLEASING TO GOD.**)
2. **THIS MEANS ALL THAT WE DO IS WORSHIP TO GOD, IF WE DO IT IN A WAY THAT IS HOLY AND PLEASING TO HIM.** This includes your job, your home and family life, and even your leisure. What changes should you make in your daily life so that the way you go about doing what you do will be worship, holy and pleasing to God?
3. All our life is worship, but the Sunday meetings of the church are still very important. God has set aside this special day each week for His family to gather together (Acts 20:7). What is the purpose of these gatherings according to 1 Corinthians 14:26 and Hebrews 10:25? This means God has set us this special time of assembly **FOR OUR BENEFIT.** We should view it as a resource for helping us in our faith and we should view it as a privilege. This is why the early church “devoted” themselves to the fellowship (Acts 2:42) and it is why we are told not to give up meeting together (Hebrews 10:25). Are you “devoted” to meeting together with your brothers and sisters on Sundays?
4. The purpose of the assemblies of the church is to edify and encourage. In the early church, this was accomplished by reading the Scriptures, teaching and exhortation, singing and having the Lord’s Supper. Often they would take up a contribution to help people with their needs. As you experience these various activities during the Sunday assembly, think of them as avenues to the encouragement and building up of your faith.
5. The Lord’s Supper is of special importance. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. What is the purpose of our eating the bread and drinking the cup? (To remember Him and what He did for us.) Elsewhere the Scriptures indicate that the Lord’s Supper also reminds us of our unity and special relationships with each other in Christ, and causes us to look forward to His return (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11; 17-34).
6. To summarize today’s lessons, you are to live your daily life in such a way that is holy and pleasing to God. If you do, it will be true, spiritual worship. In addition, you are to meet together with your spiritual family on the first day of the week. The purpose of this is for you to be encouraged and edified in your faith, and to encourage others. At first, your mere presence will encourage others because it will remind them that another person has made a serious commitment to follow Jesus. As time goes on, you will learn other ways to encourage your brothers and sisters as well.

## **A SOLID FOUNDATION**

### **SEVENTH WEEK: SERVICE AND MISSION**

The church of Jesus Christ does not exist merely for itself and its own interests. It is neither a self-centered nor a self-seeking organization. Rather, it exists for a purpose. This means you, as a member of His church, exist for a purpose. Your purpose: to participate in God's mission in the world. Your identity: a servant. Now is the time for you to begin thinking seriously about how you can be involved in God's mission in the world. Your involvement will be a learning and growing process. You will make mistakes. You will be more useful to Him later than you are now, because you will have grown. Yet you must begin. Jesus sent the twelve apostles out for the first time long before they were "totally prepared". If we wait until we are totally prepared, we will never begin.

#### **DAY 43-                      **SERVANT****

1. Jesus said His role and purpose was that of a servant (Mark 10:45). Not only did He say this, He demonstrated it (John 13:1-5). If we are to follow in His steps, we, too, must come to view ourselves as servants.
2. We may resent thinking of ourselves in this way. It is not too hard for us to think about serving God or Jesus, until we realize that the way we do this is by serving PEOPLE. We would rather control people. We think it is a sign of weakness to be "under" them. Yet the view of Jesus is different. What does He say about being a servant (Mark 10:42-44)?
3. What is the proper attitude of a servant? (Luke 17:7-10)? This may be a difficult attitude for you to have at first. But the better you understand what God has done for you, the more humility you will have. You will realize that there is nothing you can do to make yourself acceptable to Him. In appreciation for Him accepting you, you will humbly listen to Him, and you will follow in the way of His Son, which was the way of a servant.
4. It is also helpful to think of serving as a spiritual weapon. Fleshly weapons will not be effective in furthering God's cause (2 Corinthians 10:3-5), but spiritual ones will, and serving is a powerful, spiritual weapon.
5. List several specific things you could do to serve each of the following groups of people: your family or roommates, the people you work with, your brothers and sisters in Christ.

#### **DAY 44-                      **GOD'S MISSION IN THE WORLD****

1. For thousands of years, God has called and blessed people. His purpose in doing this has never been so that His people could just hoard up His blessings. Rather, He calls and blesses people so that they can share the blessing with others (Genesis 12:1-3; 1 Peter 2:9). This explains why Jesus told the twelve, "freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). Any blessing you have received from God, physical or spiritual, is to be freely shared with others.

2. The reason God wants His people to pass the blessing on to others is that He has a mission in the world. God created man and hoped man would live in fellowship with Him. But man turned his back on God and got himself messed up and enslaved to all kinds of harmful things. In spite of this, God still loves all mankind wants to reach out and help them. Read the parable in Matthew 21:33-41 and notice how it makes this point.
3. This loving desire to reach out to mankind in his dire situation and help him be restored to relationship with God is God's mission in the world. Write out the way Jesus stated God's mission to Paul when Paul was converted (Acts 26:15-18). Now rewrite it in your own words.
4. We also need to realize that God has made the decision that His mission in the world will be carried out primarily by people. He could have done it other ways, but He chose people as His instruments for reaching out to people. He still guides, directs and empowers us from heaven; it is still His mission. But He has entrusted His mission into our hands. With this understanding, it is very urgent that you take on the role of a servant and make yourself available to God and useful to Him for the carrying out of His mission (2 Timothy 2:20-21, 15).
5. Review Day 37 number 2. Each of the three aspects of mission that are mentioned there will be explored over the next three days.

## **DAY 45-**

## **DOING GOOD**

1. One part of God's mission in the world is doing good to others. Jesus is our model for this. In fact, one way of summarizing His life is that "He went around doing good" (Acts 10:38). In His first public sermon, He explained His ministry in terms of an Old Testament text (Luke 4:16-21). What is meant by each of the phrases in verses 18-19?
2. Throughout the New Testament, we are instructed to be involved in doing good things for other people (Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14; 3:8). In the last verse, Paul tells Titus to stress "these things" (i.e., the things he had written in verses 4-7) so that the people would engage in good deeds. What are "these things" that are described in verses 4-7? How do they cause us to be involved in good deeds? (Hint: review Day 23, numbers 1-3.)
3. One way of doing good is to share our money and possessions. When you became a disciple of Jesus, you "gave up everything" (Luke 14:33). You realized that all of your money and possessions really belong to God – you are merely using them. One way of using them correctly for God is to give and share with others. The early Christians gave on an individual basis in their everyday lives, and they gave to the church (Acts 4:32-35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
4. Before you go on with your day today, set a time to discuss with your spouse (if you have one) about giving. Think of ways to give in your daily life and give to the church. You should probably try to set a fairly regular amount to give to the church. Don't feel enslaved to that amount, but realize that if you don't set any amount it is very easy not to give anything or to just give the "left-overs". Remember, all your giving, whether to the church or to individuals, will be a way of you participating in God's mission. If you need

additional Guidance in this, study 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; Acts 4:32-35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4).

5. In addition to giving and sharing, what are some other good deeds you can do? ...Among your family members and in your home? ...At work? ...For people in the church?...for your neighbors?
6. Jesus' example in giving teaches us a very important lesson: give with no strings attached. Read Luke 17:11-19. How many were healed? How many turned to Jesus? Why did Jesus not give leprosy back to the others? What "strings" might you be tempted to attach to your giving? (Note: It is fine to have high hopes that the people you do good will to will, in fact, turn to God.) However, we must not condition our doing good on how they respond.)

## **DAY 46-**

## **SPREADING THE NEWS**

1. A second part of God's mission in the world is spreading the news of what God has done to make it possible for people to be saved from the dire situation sin has put them in. Again, Jesus is our example for this part of the mission (Luke 19:10; 4:42-44).
2. We are instructed to always be ready to give an account for the hope we have as Christians (1 Peter 3:15). Therefore, it is very important that the basics of the good news be very clear to you. Write out what you understand to be the good news, including some Bible verses if you are able. Show this to some of your brothers and sisters in Christ this week and let them help you clarify your understanding of the news.
3. In the text just referred to, Peter also tells HOW we state the news to others is important. In what manner should we explain it (vs. 15)? What else must you pay great attention to if you want the news you speak to have an effect on others? (Vs. 16, see also Titus 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 1 Peter 3:1-2).
4. The relationships you have with family members and friends are very valuable to God's mission. You have a relationship and trust with these people that the rest of the members of the church do not have. The good news often spread through such family networks in the New Testament (John 1:40-42; Acts 10:21-27; 16:13-15). Who among your family and friends might be open to learning more about Jesus and what God has done for us? How could you talk to them about this? Who in the church could you connect them with that might be able to help you teach them? How would you make this connection?

(Note: It is very important that you live a Christian life for these people to see. We are tempted to preach at them but not set a very good example. The Scriptures listed at the end of number 3 above show just how important your example is. This is not to say you will never fail. You will, but when you do, just admit it and ask them to forgive you.)

## **DAY 47-**

## **MATURING OTHERS**

1. A third part of God's mission in the world is to help those who have become Christians to grow and mature in their faith. Jesus did this with the ones who followed Him (Mark 9: 30-31; Matthew 5:1-2, followed by the Sermon on the Mount). Paul had this concern as well (Colossians 1:28-29).
2. What qualities must YOU begin to develop if you want to help other Christians mature? (Galatians 4:19-20; Colossians 1:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Timothy 4:2; 2:24-25)
3. One thing you can do to help others mature is to speak to them. Speaking can take many forms: teaching, sharing, warning, encouraging, admonishing, consoling, etc. Start now trying to learn to speak to people in these various ways, according to what they need. Always speak the truth and always do it lovingly (Ephesians 4:15). Do worry about what you do NOT know how to say to people. Just say what you DO know. Share what you have learned from God or life. What is one thing you have learned about the Christian life that you think is very important? Who in the church could you share this with?
4. Another thing you can do to help others mature is to have fellowship with them. To have fellowship is to share, to have something in common. As we associate with each other, we will rub off on each other and help each other grow (see Acts 4:13; their association with Him rubbed off on them). What are some ways you can have fellowship in the congregation?
5. Another thing you can do to help people mature in Christ is to pray for them. What can you learn about this from Colossians 4:12-13? Who in the congregation do you know that really needs your prayers? What should you pray for them?

## **DAY 48-**

## **NURTURING**

1. People need to be nurtured. To nurture is to feed, nourish, develop, train. It is similar to what good parents do for their children. All people need to be nurtured physically and spiritually. Just as a physical baby will not survive if it does not receive love, so spiritual babies will not survive if they do not receive love and nurture.
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:6-12. Paul compares his relationship with the Christians at Thessalonica to the relationship that a mother has and that a father has with their children. What things does he say he did for his "children" in his role as a "mother" to them? What things does he say he did for his "children" in his role as a "father" to them?
3. Who do you know in the church that really needs some nurturing? How could you do some of the things in number 2 above for that person? Who do know that is not in the church that really needs some nurturing? How could you nurture them?
4. All Christians are responsible for actively looking out for those who need our care and nurture. However, it sure helps if the person who needs to be nurtured will make their needs known. What areas of your life do you need to be nurtured in? Who in the congregation could you share this with?

## **DAY 49-**

## **EMPOWERED BY GOD**

1. Everything you have studied this week concerns God's mission in the world. The Lord is calling you to be involved in His mission. He needs people who will do good to others, who will spread the news of His salvation, who will help Christians mature, and who will nurture people. As you think about all this, it may be overwhelming. It was for Paul (2 Corinthians 2:16). That is why he determined to trust God for the power to be involved in His mission in these ways (2 Corinthians 3:5; cf. John 5:19; 15:1-4). You must adopt this same attitude. You cannot carry out His task on your own. He has promised to be with you and help you (Matthew 28:20), and He will do so. Make sure you pray to Him constantly about your involvement in His mission.
2. Remember, too, that you do not earn your salvation by participating in His mission. You received His favor and grace when you became His disciple several weeks ago. Trying to earn salvation is an incorrect motive for being involved in His mission. What are some PROPER motives for being involved in His mission, according to the verses that follow? (Matthew 9:35-38; 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 4:13; 5:14-15)
3. The best way to be involved in God's mission is to be full of His truth and love that you just can't help but be involved in it. This is the motive Peter and John refer to in Acts 4:18-20. What had they seen and heard? What have you "seen and heard", so to speak? What can you do to make God's truths more and more real to you so that you will not be able to help but speak and act in His mission?
4. God has also made it clear that those who get involved in His mission will suffer (2 Timothy 3:12). One reason for this is to make sure we don't start to think we are something special. He wants us to keep our hope and faith in **HIM**, not in ourselves (2 Corinthians 1:8-10). What are some ways you may have to suffer if you get involved with God's mission? How should you respond to these?

## **A SOLID FOUNDATION**

## **DAY 50-**

## **WHAT NOW?**

1. Congratulations on your perseverance and effort in working through this study guide! You have been exposed to the basic teachings of Christ. These will help you tremendously in your growth, if you have assimilated them. Feel free at any time (now or later) to work back through any part of the study guide you believe you need to concentrate on. You may even want to go back and work through the whole thing again at some point.
2. Today is a big day for you. In a sense, you are going to be "weaned". This bottle is now empty and it is time for you to start learning to feed yourself. **THE TIME YOU SPEND FEEDING YOURSELF ON THE WORD OF GOD ON A REGULAR BASIS WILL BE ONE OF THE KEY INGREDIENTS TO YOUR ON-GOING GROWTH** (Matthew 4:4; John 6:63). **MAKE SURE TO MAKE THIS A PRIORITY.** Turn back to Day 16 and follow or re-focus on the instructions there.

3. Prayer is another absolutely necessary part of your continued growth. Go back to Day 17 and follow the instructions there once again.
4. Another very important part of your continued growth will be for you to keep (or start) getting together with Christians. The Sunday assembly is a gift from God, designed to help you grow and be encouraged in this way of life. Don't neglect it. You should also look into the other meetings of the congregation. You may have to make some changes in your schedule or routine, but all of these times of association will be very helpful to you. Their purpose is to help us grow. In addition, make sure you find ways to get together with Christians during the week. It may be just one other person or it may be a small group. It may be to study, or to pray or may be just to talk. In any case, you need much regular association with your brothers and sisters (Hebrews 3:12-13). Be sure to let your brothers and sisters know what your needs and problems are. Remember, the family is there for you.
5. You will also need to make a conscious effort to participate with this congregation in carrying out God's mission. The congregation has some ways you can get involved in doing good for people, spreading the news, and helping people mature. Ask some of your brothers and sisters how you can get involved with them in these things, as well as what you can do on your own.
6. You are now leaving the "secure" environment of a study guide that channels your thinking and study. It is important that you take up the reins and actively pursue your own growth and faithfulness. This, too, is a big part of your maturity. Whatever you do, make sure you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-3). He has walked on our planet and lived faithfully to God. He calls you to follow Him.

**“May God Himself, the God of Peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it”  
(2 Thessalonians 5:23-24)**