



WordPoints
Challenging Every Person to Take God More Seriously

Daily Family Bible Studies

Biblical Themes for Families to Think About Together

Year 3

Gary Henry

January 2018

Daily Family Bible Studies: Biblical Themes for Families to Think About Together (Year 3)

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PREFACE

MANY YEARS AGO I BEGAN PRODUCING A SERIES OF BIBLE STUDIES TIED TO THE THEME OF MY SUNDAY MORNING SERMONS. Whatever the topic of the lesson the congregation heard, they could take home a copy of the *Daily Family Bible Studies* that would allow them, as families, to talk about the lesson throughout the coming week. Families in the church, especially those with young children, found this to be a way to dig more deeply into what they heard the preacher say and discuss its practical application.

Over time, these *Daily Family Bible Studies* have been used not just by families but by individuals, small groups, and Bible classes to provide a five-lesson set of topics for meditation and discussion. Four years' worth of these studies are now available: (1) in the form of PDF ebooks, and (2) as posts on the WordPoints.com website. Readers can also subscribe to an email which arrives each Saturday morning with the study for the following week. (If you'd like to subscribe, <https://wordpoints.com/subscribe/> is the web address to go to.)

There is great value in families talking about God's word together (**Deut. 6:6-9**). If we intend to transmit our faith to our families (**2 Tim. 1:5**), we must do more than take our kids to church services: we must talk about God at home. These *Daily Family Bible Studies* are meant to foster the habit of family Bible study. If you have another study tool that accomplishes that purpose, by all means use it; many such resources are available nowadays. But if you need something to get you started, these studies might give you the nudge you need.

But you don't have to be a "family" to use these studies. Now that I live alone, I continue to use them myself. They make a good framework for a Monday-Friday Bible study or as the basis for one's daily devotional time. These themes are adaptable to a wide range of uses. I hope you'll "take the ball and run with it" — be creative and see what you can do to modify these lessons for your own use.

The *English Standard Version* is used as the base translation for the studies, and the *New King James Version* is often used for comparison. But you can use the studies with whatever translation you normally use. When there are differences in translation, you will profit from discussing which translation you think most clearly brings out the true meaning of the passage. (And it may not be the one you simply *like* the best.)

Each day's study ends with some words of wisdom from Proverbs. In sequence, these readings go straight through Proverbs in two years. In other words, Years 1-2 cover the entire Book of Proverbs, as do Years 3-4.

The lessons are set up in a yearly format, with 52 lessons for each "year," but you don't have to start January 1. Feel free to use any of the lessons at any time. That said, starting off a new year with this kind of plan is a good way to have a better year. To families as well as individuals, I recommend beginning each new year with some specific goals for spiritual growth. It's not enough to say, "We need to do better." The question is: what *activities* are we going to engage in that might make a difference . . . and will we stick with them?

As a preacher, I always tried to be balanced in my choice of topics. Not all of the themes here (based as they were on sermons) are equally suitable for children, but I believe that even the more “adult” topics are important for families to discuss, and each topic is adaptable to any age group. There is some repetition in the topics, and that is intentional. I believe in the value of spaced repetition, so don’t fear to use a study that sounds very similar to another study from several months ago. It will help you to look at that theme from a little different angle.

And that brings me to the subject of *adaptation*. When I originally wrote these studies, people would sometimes say, “These studies don’t fit the age of our children” or “This kind of format doesn’t work for us.” Well, I admit that I wrote these lessons for my own use as a father in those days, and I confess to having my own children in mind as I wrote them. But any Bible study tool, no matter who it’s written by, will need to be *adapted* by anybody else who uses it. So whoever you are, I never meant that you could use these studies “straight out of the box,” just as they are. I meant them only as a *suggestion*. Depending on the specifics of your situation, you will have to modify these lessons in some ways. But I hope you will find them suggestive. They will give you something to work with, so you don’t have to start from scratch in devising your family Bible studies. At the very least, the topics for the studies will give you some *subjects* your family could discuss. If all you do is take these topics and teach them to your kids in your own way, you will have done well.

And as for the topics, many have told me they have used the topics for Wednesday night invitation talks, table talks at the Lord’s Supper, small-group studies, or even sermons. So the index of topics is a good “idea thesaurus,” if nothing else. If the question “What can I talk about?” ever stumps you, here are some ideas to get you started.

Some find the discussion questions in the lessons “too simple.” My response is that “common sense is not always common practice.” People often overestimate how much they understand the “simple” things they know. You might profit from talking about these basic truths again (in your own words, rather than the parrot-language we normally use). But again, the questions were only meant to be suggestions. Don’t just give the obvious answer, but discuss the *significance* of the points made and talk about their *application*. Make this material *your own*.

I’m often asked, “What is the best time of day for families to study together?” Well, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to that question. Many families find the breakfast table is a good place to have a family devotional, but you will need to figure out what works for your family. Whatever you come up with, I will tell you this: no time is going to work if you are not willing to *sacrifice* to make it happen. If any little interruption that comes up is enough to derail your family Bible study, you may as well quit saying that Bible study is a priority in your family.

If there is one recommendation I would make, it is this: whatever you do, keep *the Scripture text* for each day’s study the central focus of the study. Don’t just use the idea of the study as a springboard for opinion sharing; keep the *passage* at the center of your discussion. *What does the passage teach? How can we use this passage today?* You want these studies to be *Bible studies* — and not just topical talks on abstract ideas.

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Thanks to all who have used these studies over the years. At present, nearly a thousand of you get them by email every week! May God bless you for your interest in *daily . . . family . . . Bible studies*.

Gary Henry — *WordPoints.com*

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Faith in God gives us victory over life's problems

Heaven will be for those who overcome the difficulties this earthly life presents to us. Jesus said, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7). Day by day, it is important that we focus our attention not on ease and the avoidance of every problem but on conquering the problems that confront us. The Bible teaches that those who genuinely believe in God will find in their faith the key to being a conqueror. The apostle John wrote, “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 Jn. 5:4,5). **Faith in God gives us victory over life's problems.** This week, let's make that thought our theme.

Whatever obstacles block our path to God, God is greater than those obstacles. Jesus assured His disciples: “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33). And John, one of the disciples to whom the Lord spoke these words, later wrote: “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 Jn. 4:4).

It is our faith — our trust in God and our reliance on His strength — that opens up to us the powerful reservoirs of God's help. And it is this help that will cause us to triumph in the end. Peter spoke of this when he said that God “has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pt. 1:3-5). May it be our goal this week, and every week, to learn more of what it means to live by faith in Christ and experience the victory of God through Christ over every hindrance to our salvation. God is our Rock, “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psa. 46:1). To have faith in God is to have available the power of the very Creator of the universe.

Monday: Psalm 37:1-11

Key Idea: Faith means that we rely upon God.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to “trust in the LORD, and do good” (v.3)? How do we “commit” our way to the Lord (v.5)? What are some ways that we can “be still before the LORD” and “wait patiently” for Him (v.7)? What points are made in Prov. 3:5,6.

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 1:1-6.

Tuesday: Daniel 6:16-24

Key Idea: Faith gives us courage.

Questions for Family Growth: How would you define “courage”? What difference did Daniel’s faith make in the way he faced the ordeal of the lion’s den? What difference did faith make in the attitude of Paul in passages like [Ac. 20:22-24](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 1:7](#).

Wednesday: 1 Kings 18:20,21

Key Idea: Faith helps us to be decisive.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some reasons we sometimes find it difficult to make firm decisions about doing right? What does the word “resolute” mean? If God is truly God, what should we do: continue to debate the question or make a commitment to obey Him?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 1:8,9](#).

Thursday: Acts 4:18-20; 5:27-29

Key Idea: Faith is the foundation of true integrity.

Questions for Family Growth: When pressure is put on us to do wrong, how can we keep our conduct consistent with our convictions? What is “compromise” and why is it so dangerous? How can faith keep us from compromising our principles?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 1:10-19](#).

Friday: 1 John 5:4,5

Key Idea: Faith is the victory.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to be “born of God”? In what sense do those born of God “overcome” the world? Why is faith so important in winning this victory? In this passage, what is the specific thing we must have faith in?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 1:20-33](#).

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Marriage was instituted by God, and it should be guided by God's will

Although many people today disregard God's authority over the marriage relationship, it is still true that *marriage was instituted by God, and it should be guided by God's will*. No matter what the laws of the land or the customs of society may be, it is the abiding will of the Creator that determines the true quality of any marriage. His will should be respected.

The ultimate pattern for marriage as God would have it is the relationship between Christ and the church. The apostle Paul draws this parallel in [Eph. 5:23-27](#): "For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." When husbands serve their wives as Christ served the church, they will receive from their wives a respect that comes from love and not just compulsion.

When Jesus was asked by the Pharisees whether a man could divorce his wife for just any reason, He replied: "He answered, 'Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate"' ([Mt. 19:4-6](#)). Jesus based the permanency of marriage on the solid rock of God's purpose concerning that relationship. God is the Originator of marriage, and it is His law that governs it. To the extent we can keep that in mind, we will find marriage not only to be more stable, but also more rewarding.

As we begin this week, let's resolve to think more seriously about God's sovereignty over marriage. As with any other relationship, God's way is always the highest and best way. We are blessed when we let Him guide us. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" ([Prov. 3:5,6](#)).

Monday: Genesis 1:27

Key Idea: God created human beings male and female.

Questions for Family Growth: Who created mankind? Are the differences between male and female just physical or is more involved? If God created the distinction between male and female, should we not consider that distinction important?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 2:1-15](#).

Tuesday: Genesis 2:18-25

Key Idea: God joined the first man and woman in marriage.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did God make a companion for the man He had created? Was there any other living creature that could fill the man's need? According to **v.24**, what do a man and woman become when they leave their parents and are joined together?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 2:16-22.**

Wednesday: Matthew 19:3-12

Key Idea: God allows only one reason for divorce: fornication.

Questions for Family Growth: In **vv.3-6**, what question was Jesus asked and what was His answer? In **v.7**, what was the second question? In **vv.8,9**, what was His answer to that? In **vv.10-12**, what did Jesus say to His disciples?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 3:1,2.**

Thursday: Ephesians 5:22-33

Key Idea: Spouses are to relate to one another according to the pattern of Christ and the church.

Questions for Family Growth: What instruction is given by Paul to wives? To husbands? How does the relationship between Christ and the church help us to understand how the marriage relationship should work?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 3:3,4.**

Friday: 1 Peter 3:1-7

Key Idea: Husbands and wives are heirs together of the grace of life.

Questions for Family Growth: In **vv. 1-6**, what teaching is given to wives? In **v.7**, what does it mean when Peter tells husbands to "live with your wives in an understanding way"? What is said about the prayers of husbands?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 3:5,6.**

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We ought to accept our responsibilities as members of a local congregation

Paul wrote, “For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom. 12:4,5). To be a “member” of Christ’s body is not merely to have an official status as a “Christian,” but rather it is to be a working part of the body. The body as a whole has a function to fulfill, and all of us as individuals are to be parts of that work. And as for our fellow workers in the local congregation, we are to see ourselves as “members one of another.”

In Christ, we have obligations not only to the Lord Himself but also to the others who make up the Lord’s church, and *we ought to accept our responsibilities as members of a local congregation*. We can’t have a saved relationship with the Lord and not have a working relationship with His people.

Wherever we live in this world, we are sojourners, or pilgrims, on our way to heaven. We are “saints,” the unique possession of God and those devoted to Him and His work. As such, we need to seek out an assembly of the Lord’s faithful people where we live and “join” ourselves to them (Ac. 9:26-28). The local church will benefit — and so will we — from our commitment to assume the responsibilities of being a “member” of the Lord’s body.

This week, let’s think about our relationship to the local church. Let’s be reminded that it is a blessing to have siblings in God’s family, and we can’t love the Lord without loving those brothers and sisters. “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him” (1 Jn. 5:1). A proper relationship to Christ involves properly relating ourselves to others who have the same relationship to Him that we do, especially those who are near enough to us locally that we can work and worship with them.

It is easy to talk about the importance of our responsibilities, but the challenge is to put our talk into action. Do we really love our brothers and sisters in the local church? If we say we do, then we need to hear John’s admonition about love: “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (1 Jn. 3:18).

Monday: Ephesians 1:22,23

Key Idea: The universal church is a relationship of saints to God through Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: Who gave Christ the authority that He has over the church? If the church is the “body,” who is the “head” of it? What does it mean that the church is “the fullness of him who fills all in all”?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 3:7,8.

Tuesday: Ephesians 1:1,2

Key Idea: The local church is a relationship of saints with one another in Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What does the word “saint” mean? How is the relationship of the saints in a local place, like Ephesus, different from the relationship of the Lord’s people in a universal or worldwide sense? What does it mean to be “faithful in Christ Jesus”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 3:9,10](#).

Wednesday: Romans 16:16

Key Idea: A faithful local church is a church that is “of Christ.”

Questions for Family Growth: If Christ only has one church ([Mt. 16:18](#)), how can there be “churches of Christ” ([Rom. 16:16](#))? What does it mean for a congregation to be “of Christ”? What eventually happens if a local church becomes unfaithful to Christ? Consider [Rev. 2:4,5](#); [3:15,16](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 3:11,12](#).

Thursday: Acts 9:26-28

Key Idea: We ought to “join” ourselves to the Lord’s disciples, if there are any, where we live.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Saul desire to do when he came back to Jerusalem as a new convert to Christ? What mistake did the saints in Jerusalem make? What would it mean today to “join” ourselves to the Lord’s disciples in a particular place?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 3:13-18](#).

Friday: Romans 12:5

Key Idea: We ought to conduct ourselves properly as “members” of Christ and of one another.

Questions for Family Growth: How can we show that we are “one body in Christ”? What does it mean to be “individually members one of another”? What do we learn from [1 Cor. 12:12-26](#) about our responsibilities as “members”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 3:19,20](#).

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It is a blessing to have others who will correct us

Whether we like it or not, all of us need to be corrected now and then. The trick is to have the right attitude about the process. We will help ourselves a great deal if we learn to see that *it is a blessing to have others who will correct us*. Rather than resent correction as an intrusion on our privacy, we ought to see that it is for our benefit.

In the world at large, a great deal is said about the advantage of being a “learning” person. Business organizations and managers are coming to see that in the modern world the only real competitive advantage one company can have over its rivals is to be able to learn faster and better. But if a company is to be a “learning” organization, those who are members of it must have the humility to learn about their shortcomings. If they are afraid of being corrected, they will stay at their present level of knowledge and performance — and their competitors will pass them by.

As Christians, of course, we are not interested in competing with others. But we certainly are interested in reaching the highest level of character and obedience before God that we can achieve. We want to grow, improve, and do better tomorrow than we did today. Without correction, we will make much less progress than we should. We need what others can help us learn about ourselves in order to grow beyond our present state of maturity in Christ.

Sometimes those who correct us may err in the way they do it. But no matter who is the source or how misguided the delivery, we should profit from the feedback we get. The source shouldn't matter very much. In fact, our enemies will often tell us more of the truth than our friends will.

God loves us too much to simply leave us where we are. He wants us to grow in His direction. To that end, He brings correction into our lives. Only the fool despises that correction. Solomon wrote, “My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights” (**Prov. 3:11,12**). This week, let's grow in our appreciation of the various ways God blesses us with correction, especially through the loving correction that godly people can give us.

Monday: Eph. 6:4

Key Idea: Parents have a responsibility to correct us.

Questions for Family Growth: How can parents correct their children without provoking them to anger? Does that mean parents should never do anything their children don't like? What is the “training and admonition of the Lord” (NKJV)?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 3:21-26.**

Tuesday: Titus 2:3-5

Key Idea: Older people have a responsibility to correct us.

Questions for Family Growth: What are older women instructed to do in this passage? In v.4, what does the word “admonish” (NKJV) mean? How does the principle in this passage apply to older men as well as older women?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 3:27-30](#).

Wednesday: Titus 1:9

Key Idea: Elders in the local church have a responsibility to correct us.

Questions for Family Growth: What must elders be able to do regarding “those who contradict” sound doctrine? What does the word “exhort” (NKJV) mean? What can we do to avail ourselves of the help and correction that our elders are in a position to give us?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 3:31-35](#).

Thursday: 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Key Idea: Gospel preachers have a responsibility to correct us.

Questions for Family Growth: What responsibilities of the evangelist did Paul command Timothy to observe? In vv.3-5, what did Paul say that some hearers would prefer rather than correction? Should preachers only teach what is comfortable and pleasing to hear?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 4:1-4](#).

Friday: Luke 17:3

Key Idea: Fellow Christians have a responsibility to correct us.

Questions for Family Growth: If a brother in Christ sins against us, what are we commanded to do? When we do this, what will help us avoid a harsh or arrogant attitude in correcting others? What are we to do when a fellow Christian makes the correction that was needed?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 4:5,6](#).

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God has graciously revealed to us His character and His will

The gods of ancient paganism were for the most part unknowable and unpredictable. People lived in fear of what might be done by gods they knew nothing about. In stark contrast, the God of the Bible makes Himself manifest. He openly declares who He is and how we may have fellowship with Him. We often take this for granted, but we should be thankful that *God has graciously revealed to us His character and His will.*

Learning more of the truth about God ought to be the ultimate aim of our Bible study. We do not search the Scriptures simply to glean information about the things God commands us to do. As important as that is, it is even more important that we learn the character of the God who gave the commandments. To the extent we come to know Him more deeply, we come to love Him more fervently. And it is only when we love Him that it can be said that His commandments “are not burdensome” (1 Jn. 5:3).

Ultimately, of course, it is in Jesus Christ that we get the clearest and fullest revelation of God. When Philip asked Jesus to show God to the apostles, Jesus replied, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (Jn. 14:9). John wrote, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (Jn. 1:18). In Christ, we do not merely get a vague representation of God; Jesus is the “exact imprint of his nature” (Hb. 1:3).

So we do not have to guess what God is like or speculate about what His will for us might be. The Scriptures contain the written record of the words and deeds by which God made Himself known to a world that had lost the true knowledge of Him. He wants us to know the truth about Him!

This week, let’s remind ourselves to be thankful for what we can know about our great God and Father. Through Christ, we can know Him and live in fellowship with Him. We can live in the light of the truth about our Creator and about ourselves. And most important, we can live, based on this truth, in the hope of eternal life.

Monday: Romans 1:18-20

Key Idea: God reveals Himself in the creation.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Paul say can be “clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made” (NKJV)? What is meant by the statement that what may be known of God is “manifest” (v.19 NKJV)?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 4:7-9.

Tuesday: Acts 17:22-29

Key Idea: God reveals Himself in the nature of mankind.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.28**, what point did Paul say had been made by the Greek poets? If we are indeed the offspring of God, what does Paul say in **v.29** must be true about God? According to **v.27**, is God far away and hard to find?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 4:10-19.**

Wednesday: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Key Idea: God reveals Himself in the Scriptures.

Questions for Family Growth: What does the word “Scripture” mean? How do the Scriptures make us “wise for salvation”? What does it mean that the Scriptures are “given by inspiration of God” (NKJV)?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 4:20-27.**

Thursday: Exodus 10:1,2

Key Idea: God reveals Himself in the mighty acts He has performed in history.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did God instruct the parents of Israel to tell their children about the powerful things He had done in Egypt? If the amazing deeds recorded in the Bible really happened, what does that tell us about God’s nature and His purposes?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 5:1-14.**

Friday: Hebrews 1:1-4

Key Idea: God reveals Himself in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **v.1**, how did God reveal Himself in previous ages of the world? How has He revealed Himself now? What does it mean that Jesus Christ is the “express image” (NKJV) of God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 5:15-20.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We must love God's truth more than we love our sins

When God shows us steps that we must take in His direction, it is a dangerous thing to say no and take steps that lead us away from Him. The reason it is dangerous is this: sin has not only a hardening effect on our conscience, but it also has a darkening effect on our understanding. The longer we persist in sin, the less we will be able even to recognize the truth by which God can save us. By how we respond to the truth, we make it either easier or harder to understand God's will in the future. By our choices, we may make understanding the truth harder as time goes by. So if we are to be saved eternally, *we must love God's truth more than we love our sins.*

Very often, truth calls upon us to exercise our free will and make a decision. When there is a choice to be made between following truth (however painful that may be) and following our own desires, it is imperative that we choose to follow truth. Only in that way can we grow in our understanding of God's will. In fact, the Bible teaches that if we do not love the truth, God will allow Satan to deceive us with greater and greater falsehood ([2 Thess. 2:9-12](#)).

Certainly, none of us has a complete, perfect grasp of truth. For now, we are all "works in progress." But although our imperfections mean that we should be humble, we should also be willing to take a stand whenever our conscience indicates the difference between truth and falsehood. For most of us, the problem is not the difficulty of understanding the deep things of God; it is our unwillingness to deal straightforwardly with the parts of God's will that are simple and clear. Bible texts are often "hard" because they challenge us to obey God in ways that displease us.

When it comes to truth, most people have definite ideas about what they "want" to hear. But wherever God is concerned, we need to be careful. What matters most is not what we want to hear, but what is, in fact, the truth. If we insist that our religious teachers tell us we are all right just as we are, in the end the truth will condemn us. Paul warned about the danger of those who "will not endure sound teaching" and who "turn away from listening to the truth" ([2 Tim. 4:3,4](#)). As we study the Bible this week, let's concentrate on the need to value God's truth more than we value anything about ourselves. Jesus said that it is the truth that will make us free ([Jn. 8:32](#)).

Monday: Psalm 19:12-14

Key Idea: We ought to want to have our eyes opened to the truth.

Questions for Family Growth: In [v.12](#), what does David say is hard for us to understand or discern? Can God help us with this understanding? Concerning our faults, should we welcome the truth or run away from it? Consider [Jn. 3:19-21](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 5:21-23](#).

Tuesday: Ephesians 4:17-19

Key Idea: Sin darkens our mind and hinders us from understanding the truth.

Questions for Family Growth: How does sin affect our ability to understand God's truth? What does **Hb. 3:13** say about the deceitfulness of sin? If we're not honest, can we progressively lose the ability to recognize the truth? Consider **Jn. 8:42-47**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 6:1-5**.

Wednesday: John 6:44,45

Key Idea: The people drawn to God are those who love His truth more than they love their sins.

Questions for Family Growth: If God must "draw" us before we can come to Him, does this mean some individuals are predestined to be lost? Can we choose to be the kind of person who is drawn to God's truth? Consider **Jn. 6:66-69**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 6:6-11**.

Thursday: 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

Key Idea: If we don't love the truth, Satan will be allowed to lead us further away from the truth.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **v.10**, why do some perish? What is said in **vv.11,12** about what God will do in the lives of such individuals? What does Paul say about the devil in **2 Cor. 4:3,4**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 6:12-15**.

Friday: 1 Corinthians 13:4-6

Key Idea: We ought to "rejoice with the truth."

Questions for Family Growth: What effect does love for God and our fellow man have on our attitude toward truth? What does it mean to "rejoice" in regard to the truth? What does David say about God's word in **Psa. 19:7-11**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 6:16-19**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Preparation is an important part of faithful service to Christ

In our fast-paced world, the need for preparation is often minimized, and sometimes completely overlooked. We'd rather have things that are quick and easy than those that require a long period of diligent effort. If something requires more than a little bit of preparation, it usually has a hard time getting to the top of our "to do" list.

But think of the years of preparation that often preceded the great works done by heroes of the faith in the Bible. Consider, for example, Moses. He spent eighty years (forty in Pharaoh's household and an additional forty tending sheep in Midian) before he was ready to lead Israel out of their Egyptian bondage. His leadership of Israel lasted only another forty years before he passed away at the age of 120. So it took eighty years of preparation to do forty years of work. The proportion of preparation-time to work-time was even greater in the case of the Lord Himself. He was about thirty years of age before He was prepared to begin a ministry which lasted only about three years. Clearly, the time of preparation was important to His mission.

In our own service to the Lord, we dare not leave out the necessary element of preparation. *Preparation is an important part of faithful service to Christ.* If we neglect this step, we risk lessening the effectiveness of what we do, and we will certainly make our work much harder. Solomon wisely observed, "If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength, but wisdom helps one to succeed" (**Eccl. 10:10**). It's only the fool who thinks he doesn't have time to prepare his work adequately. Time in preparation is never wasted or lost. If we cut that time short, we find later on that we have to spend more time in our work than if we had prepared that work properly to start with.

But in regard to preparation there is also one other thing to keep in mind: whatever we may be prepared to do today, we need to be preparing to do even more tomorrow. Throughout the coming week, let's identify some things in the Lord's work that we either can't do or can't do as well as we'd like. And then let's lay out a plan of preparation, so we can be vessels "for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work" (**2 Tim. 2:21**).

Monday: Ecclesiastes 10:10

Key Idea: Wisdom teaches that preparation makes our work easier and more effective.

Questions for Family Growth: What happens if the woodcutter is so busy chopping wood that he doesn't take the time to sharpen his ax? What does this verse say wisdom does? How does this verse apply to our work as Christians?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 6:20-29.**

Tuesday: Ephesians 4:11-16

Key Idea: To serve Christ and others as we should, we must be “equipped” for service.

Questions for Family Growth: According to v.12, for what purpose are the saints to be “equipped”? What then is to be the outcome or result of the “work of ministry”? What are some ways we can better equip ourselves?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 6:30-35.

Wednesday: Colossians 1:9-12

Key Idea: We can't be fruitful in good works if we don't grow in our knowledge of God's word.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.9, what did Paul pray for his brethren? For what practical purpose did they need these things, according to v.10? Why are knowledge and wisdom so important in our spiritual preparation?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 7:1-5.

Thursday: 2 Timothy 2:20,21

Key Idea: To be useful for the Master, we must be prepared to engage in good works.

Questions for Family Growth: In regard to the Lord's work, why do we need to “cleanse” ourselves? What does it mean when Paul says that we should be “sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work” (v.21 NKJV)?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 7:6-27.

Friday: 2 Timothy 2:15

Key Idea: We should diligently work at becoming more effective servants of Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What must be done if we expect to present ourselves approved to God as workers who don't need to be ashamed? What are some practical ways we can be more diligent in our work in Christ?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 8:1-11.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

One of life's most basic questions is whether to put our trust in God

No one is completely independent. It is almost impossible for a human being to keep from trusting something. It just seems to be a part of our nature to seek something outside of ourselves to trust, so the only question is what we're going to choose as the object of our trust. We're surrounded by many things and many people who compete for our trust. As we live from day to day, our most important challenge is to make a wise choice as to the source of our security. *One of life's most basic questions is whether to put our trust in God.*

Most of us at some time or another have experienced the disappointment of misplaced trust. We've put our confidence in something or someone and later found out that that source of security was not as dependable as we thought. One of the most important truths we can learn about God is that He is different in this respect. He will never let us down. Our faith in Him will never be disappointed. We can not only trust Him, but we can put our complete and total faith in Him — without the slightest fear that we will ever be disappointed. God is not only a perfect source of security; He is the only source of such security that is available to us in this world. We are foolish if we don't avail ourselves of His dependability.

To say that we trust God, however, means more than simply having a warm, secure feeling when we think about God. Putting our confidence in God means trusting Him in our actions as well as our thoughts. The person who actually trusts God will do things differently than the person who doesn't. Faith will make a difference in our obedience to God. And if our faith doesn't show up in action, then we really don't have the thing that the Bible calls "faith." For example, **Hebrews 11** is a chapter full of examples of people who actually did things based on the fact that they trusted God. And James reminds us, "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead" (**Jas. 2:26**).

So the question is simply this: do we trust God or not? How we answer that question is one of the most important things about us. Whether to make God the source of our ultimate security is simply the biggest issue we'll ever face.

Monday: Psalm 36:5,6

Key Idea: Faithfulness is a part of God's own character.

Questions for Family Growth: What do we mean when we say that God is "faithful"? Does God expect us to trust Him blindly without any evidence of His trustworthiness? To what does David compare God's faithfulness? What other attributes of God are mentioned?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 8:12-36.**

Tuesday: Psalm 31:23,24

Key Idea: We should be faithful to God, because He has been faithful to us.

Questions for Family Growth: In this passage, who are the “faithful” whom the Lord “preserves”? What are the faithful encouraged to do in **v.24**? What does it mean to “hope in the Lord” (**v.24 NKJV**)? How can we increase the quality of our faithfulness to God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 9:1-6**.

Wednesday: Psalm 20:6-8

Key Idea: God is the only source of perfect security that is available to us.

Questions for Family Growth: What does David mean when he says that “some trust in chariots and some in horses”? If we need strength or protection, what is our only real hope? What does **1 Pt. 2:6** teach us?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 9:7-9**.

Thursday: Psalm 37:3-9

Key Idea: We ought to put our complete trust and confidence in God.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.3**, what admonition is given? What are we encouraged to do in **v.5**? What about **v.7**? It’s easy to say that we trust God, but in practical everyday terms, how can we tell whether we’ve really put our trust in Him?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 9:10-12**.

Friday: Psalm 34:8-10

Key Idea: We gain greater trust in God by making real commitments to Him.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.8**, how do we learn of God’s goodness and trustworthiness? In practical terms, how do we do that? In **v.9**, what does it mean to “fear the Lord”? In **v.10**, who are those who “lack no good thing”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 9:13-18**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Jesus voluntarily gave His life to save us from our sins

The problem of sin is the worst problem we can imagine, there being no more horrible thought than that of being alienated from our Creator. Yet the problem is as universal as it is horrible; every accountable person who has ever lived has committed sin and suffered its penalty of death. Only those too young yet to understand the difference between right and wrong are innocent. All the rest of us bear the guilt of having sinned against our Creator.

The problem of sin is indeed our problem, but God was not willing simply to leave it there. In His immeasurable love, He purposed to save us from the death that we had brought upon ourselves. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16). And “in this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn. 4:10).

Yet it was not just the Father’s love that made our salvation possible; the Son Himself also loved us. *Jesus voluntarily gave His life to save us from our sins.* It was not that He was required to do so against His will, but rather He went to the Cross because He chose to do so. With our very limited concept of love, it is hard for us to imagine a love that would make such a sacrifice.

In dying for our sins, Jesus showed what true obedience to the Father is all about. “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered” (Hb. 5:7,8). If we only obey God when it is easy, we are living far below the level of obedience that Jesus demonstrated — and in these days of ease and convenience, we desperately need Jesus’ example.

But not only does Jesus teach us obedience; He also teaches us a love that is unselfish. By choosing to humble Himself and be our Servant, He showed us that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Let’s think about that this week. Let’s be reminded that love lifts us out of the small, selfish concerns of our own needs and encourages us to serve the needs of those around us.

Monday: Romans 6:20-23

Key Idea: In sin, we are dead and without any means of saving ourselves.

Questions for Family Growth: What are “wages”? What does it mean that death is the wages of sin? Is there anyone who is not involved in the problem of sin? What does Rom. 3:23 say? Is there anyone who is dead who can raise himself back to life?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 10:1.

Tuesday: Romans 5:6-8

Key Idea: When we were helpless, Jesus gave His life to save us.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this passage, what is so amazing about the fact that Jesus died for us? What did God demonstrate when He gave His Son to die for us? What does this evidence teach us about character of God?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 10:2,3](#).

Wednesday: John 10:17,18

Key Idea: Jesus died for us because He loved us, not because He had to do so.

Questions for Family Growth: Concerning his life, what did Jesus mean when He said, “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (NKJV)? What did Paul say about the “love of Christ” in [2 Cor. 5:14,15](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 10:4,5](#).

Thursday: Hebrews 5:7-10

Key Idea: In dying for us, Jesus chose to obey the Father’s will.

Questions for Family Growth: For what reason did Jesus offer up “prayers and supplications”? What does it mean that Jesus “learned obedience” by the things He suffered? To whom is He now the “source of eternal salvation”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 10:6](#).

Friday: Philippians 2:5-8

Key Idea: In dying for us, Jesus humbled Himself to be our Servant.

Questions for Family Growth: In what sense does Paul use the word “mind” in [v.5](#)? What “mind” did Jesus Christ have? What does it mean that He “humbled himself” ([v.8](#))? How should that be an example to us? Consider [vv.3,4](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 10:7](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

By dying in our stead, Jesus defeated the power of death

Death, the penalty of sin, is a thing that holds us in bondage. Whether we think about it much from day to day, all of us recognize that life in this world is clouded by the fear of death. The Hebrew writer tells us the Son of God took upon Himself mortal flesh and blood that “through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (**Hb. 2:14,15**). *By dying in our stead, Jesus defeated the power of death.*

Jesus Christ came into the world to deal with the problem of sin and death. He said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (**Jn. 10:10**). Strange though it may seem, Jesus did this by dying. By dying a death He did not deserve — taking upon Himself a punishment that should have been ours — He made it possible for God to forgive our sins, remove the punishment of death from us, and give us everlasting life. Jesus conquered our death by dying in our stead, and in doing so He solved a problem we could never have solved on our own.

One thing we need to ponder frequently is that Jesus did not sacrifice His life simply to avert our punishment. The “life” He came to provide is not simply life as we have always lived it, only without the punishment. No, Jesus died to make possible for us a life that consists of living for Him! Paul pointed out that “the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (**2 Cor. 5:14,15**). So the death of Christ for us gives us a whole new reason for living. In Christ, we live for Him — and in living for Him we live a life that is qualitatively different than any other life we could live.

The proper response when we recognize that we owe our life to Christ’s death, is to dedicate to His glory the very life He has given us. A familiar old hymn says it this way: “Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small; love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.” As those who have been rescued from death and blessed with eternal life, let’s devote this week to life in Him. Let’s live for Jesus.

Monday: John 12:27-33

Key Idea: Jesus came into the world to die for our sins.

Questions for Family Growth: For what “purpose” did Jesus say “I have come to this hour”? What did Jesus mean when He talked about being “lifted up from the earth”? In **Mt. 20:28**, why did Jesus say He came? Consider **Gal. 3:13**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:8**.

Tuesday: Hebrews 2:14,15

Key Idea: Through His death Jesus destroyed him who had the power of death, the devil.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “power of death” and how did Jesus “destroy” him who had that power? According to **v.15**, what did Jesus “deliver” us from? What is said about death in **1 Cor. 15:24-26**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:9.**

Wednesday: 1 Peter 3:18

Key Idea: Jesus died for our sins that He might bring us to God.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did we need someone to “bring us to God”? How did Jesus do that by dying for our sins? What does **Hb. 2:9,10** say about how Jesus became the “author” (NKJV) of our salvation?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:10.**

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 5:14,15

Key Idea: Jesus died for us that we might live for Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that “one has died for all, therefore all have died”? What does it mean that we should no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died for us? What does **2 Tim. 1:8-10** say about “death” and “life”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:11.**

Friday: Romans 6:1-4

Key Idea: To be saved from sin, we must die and be raised with Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that “all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death”? What is the “newness of life” that we should walk in? Consider **Gal. 2:20** and **Col. 2:12.**

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:12.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

By the blood of Christ we have access to God's presence

Under the Law of Moses, the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year. That was on the Day of Atonement when he brought the blood of a bull, slain as a sin offering, behind the veil to sprinkle it upon the Ark of the Covenant (**Lev. 16**). The veil that separated the Most Holy from the Holy Place symbolized the barrier that kept sinful man from coming before God. Without blood, the atonement for sin, man could not approach the holiness of God's presence.

The blood of sacrificial animals under the Old Covenant did not atone for sins, however. It only foreshadowed the shedding of the blood of God's own Son, the atoning sacrifice by which the forgiveness of sins would truly be made possible. In Hebrews we read: "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come . . . he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance . . ." (**Hb. 9:11-15**).

Through the blood of Christ, therefore, the way to God's presence is now open to all people. Speaking of both Jews and Gentiles, Paul wrote: "For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father" (**Eph. 2:18**). If we are genuinely sorry for our sins and seek God's forgiveness, we may come to God through Christ, no matter who we are. All are welcome. And we need not fear that God will reproach us or treat us harshly. To the contrary, we can know that our Father waits for us at His throne with lovingkindness. Because Jesus Christ shed His blood for us, we do not have to fear the wrath of God's justice; we may rest our hearts in the confidence of His mercy. By the blood of Christ, we may "receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (**Hb. 4:16**). Throughout this week, may we remind ourselves of the blessing of Christ's sacrifice: *by the blood of Christ we have access to God's presence.*

Monday: Hebrews 10:19-22

Key Idea: By His blood, Christ made it possible for us to draw near to God.

Questions for Family Growth: What does the writer say we have "boldness" (NKJV) to enter by the blood of Christ? How did the Old Testament foreshadow what is now possible in Christ? What is the "pure water" spoken of in **v.22**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:13.**

Tuesday: Revelation 1:5

Key Idea: Christ washed us from our sins in His own blood because He loved us.

Questions for Family Growth: How is Jesus Christ described in this verse? What does it mean that He “washed us from our sins in His own blood” (NKJV)? Consider the “washing” mentioned in [Eph. 5:25-27](#). What did love have to do with this?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 10:14](#).

Wednesday: Acts 20:28

Key Idea: The church consists of those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul instruct the elders from Ephesus to do? In what sense did Jesus “purchase” (NKJV) the church with His own blood? Should knowing this make a difference in our attitude toward the church?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 10:15](#).

Thursday: Revelation 7:13-17

Key Idea: Heaven will be for those who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What scene is described by John in this passage? What do the white robes represent? How did these robes get to be white? What assurances are given to the Lord’s people in these verses?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 10:16](#).

Friday: 1 Corinthians 6:19,20

Key Idea: We ought to live as people whose salvation was bought by the blood of Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: How should we live if we truly understand that our bodies are the temple of God’s Spirit? What does Paul mean that we “were bought with a price”? How do we “glorify God” in our bodies?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 10:17](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

God's love for us demonstrated at the cross moves us to love Him

There are different reasons for which a person might seek to do God's will. It is a healthy thing to fear the punishment of our sins, and that is one reason to do what is right. Better than that, though, is the desire to enjoy the blessings of righteousness. Wanting to go to heaven is a higher reason for doing right than merely wanting to avoid hell. An even higher reason for living according to God's will, however, is the love of God. When this is our motivation, we do what God wills simply because we love Him, and we find delight in pleasing Him. Paul wrote, "So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him" (2 Cor. 5:9).

If it is important to love God, then we should think about how we can love Him more than we do right now. What is it that can cause us to grow in our love for God? Perhaps there are many things that could move us in this direction, but the greatest of all is the simple fact that God loves us. We love God because He has loved us first. Especially in the giving of His Son for our sins God has shown a love that draws us toward Him. This week, let's think about the fact that ***God's love for us demonstrated at the cross moves us to love Him.***

When we lack sufficient motivation to do what is right, it is often helpful to look at the quality of our motives. If we can do what we do for higher reasons, we will be more powerfully encouraged to do it. And surely, the highest possible motive would be the pure, sincere love of our Heavenly Father. If this is what motivates us, we will find great delight in doing God's will.

The love of God in Christ is a force that constrains or compels us to return our own love to Him. Having given us free wills, God will not force us to love Him. We are not robots, but persons with the power of choice. Consequently, God deals with us so as to call forth a love we freely choose to give Him. In showing His love for us, God is inviting us to enter into a relationship with Him based on love freely given. As Paul put it, "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor. 5:14,15). Knowing what we know about the cross, how can we but love, trust, and obey God?

Monday: John 3:14-17

Key Idea: It was love that moved God to give His son for us.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the comparison between Moses "lifting up" the serpent in the wilderness and Christ being "lifted up" for us? Why did God do what He did at the cross? Did God send His Son to condemn the world?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 10:18.

Tuesday: Romans 5:6-11

Key Idea: God demonstrated His love in giving His Son for us while we were still sinners.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that God “demonstrates” (NKJV) His love for us? Why did we not deserve what God did for us? What does it mean that Christ died for us “while we were still weak” (ESV)?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:19-21.**

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 5:14,15

Key Idea: If Christ died for us, we should live for Him.

Questions for Family Growth: Why should Christ’s death for us make us thankful? Why should it make us humble? What kind of life should our thankfulness and humility cause us to lead? What does **1 Jn. 3:18** say about our love?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:22.**

Thursday: 1 John 4:17-19

Key Idea: We ought to love God because He first loved us.

Questions for Family Growth: How is it that we may have “confidence for the day of judgment”? What does it mean that “there is no fear in love”? How should we show our love for God? Consider **1 Jn. 4:10,11.**

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:23-25.**

Friday: Romans 8:31-39

Key Idea: Nothing in the world can separate us against our will from God’s love.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the meaning of the question, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” According to this passage, how do we know that God is “for us”? What confidence should the love of God impart to us?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:26.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Christ's church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets

Foundations are important, as any builder knows. And so it is an extremely important fact that **Christ's church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**. So said Paul in **Eph. 2:19-22**: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

Christ said that He was going to build His church, and that it would be founded on a "rock" (**Mt. 16:18**). The rock upon which the church rests is the rock-solid truth about Christ and His will. This truth was what Christ revealed to the apostles, individuals designated by Christ Himself to serve as His authoritative spokesmen and representatives. When the apostles preached the gospel, they did so as Christ's "ambassadors" (**2 Cor. 5:18-20**). And Christ gave these men the power to perform miracles to guarantee the authenticity of what they preached. Paul referred to these miracles as the "signs of a true apostle" (**2 Cor. 12:12**). In the first century, there were perhaps many who falsely claimed to be apostles, but back then, as now, it takes more to make an apostle than someone's claim to be one. Those who were truly endowed with Christ's authority were given objective means by which their authority could be verified.

Today, we dare not reject the word of Christ revealed authoritatively through His apostles. To do so would be to forfeit the very salvation that is available in Christ. The Hebrew writer asked, "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (**Hb. 2:3,4**).

Throughout the coming week, let's consider the importance of what Christ did through His apostles. And let's have respect for the complete written record of apostolic teaching that we have in the New Testament.

Monday: Luke 6:12-16

Key Idea: The apostles were selected to be such by the Lord Himself.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus do before selecting His apostles? What is the difference between a "disciple" and an "apostle"? In the New Testament, how did one get to be an apostle? Consider **Jn. 6:70**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10-27-29**.

Tuesday: Acts 1:8; 2:32

Key Idea: The apostles were witnesses of the resurrected Lord.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus say the apostles would do? What was the obvious requirement for this work? Consider **Ac. 1:21-26**. Why was this work so important in the beginning period of the church?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:30**.

Wednesday: Galatians 1:11,12

Key Idea: The apostles received their message directly from God by inspiration.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul mean when he said the gospel he preached was “not according to man” (NKJV)? What is meant by the statement that he had received it “through a revelation of Jesus Christ”? Consider **1 Cor. 2:13**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:31**.

Thursday: Matthew 16:18,19

Key Idea: The apostles could speak the word of Christ with the authority of Christ Himself.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” that Jesus spoke of? What promise was made in **Jn. 16:12-15**? What authority did the apostles have to “command” certain things? Consider **2 Pt. 3:1,2**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:32**.

Friday: 2 Corinthians 12:12

Key Idea: God confirmed the authority of the apostles with miracles.

Questions for Family Growth: What were the “signs of a true apostle” that Paul spoke of? What is said in **Hb. 2:1-4** about the confirmation of the gospel of Christ? Why should we not “neglect such a great salvation”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:1**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

At the judgment, eternal life will be given to those who have been faithful to God

The thought of our final judgment before God is disconcerting to many people. But in reality, the Christian who walks with God each day ought to anticipate the judgment with great love and hope. **At the judgment, eternal life will be given to those who have been faithful to God.** For this reason, we ought to contemplate the judgment day with faith, hope, and love — rather than fear. On that day, we will be united with the Lord who died to save us.

John wrote of the difference love should make in our anticipation of the judgment: “By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love” (1 Jn. 4:17,18). To the extent that we lovingly long to be with God, we will not dread the thought of judgment.

Judgment will be the realization of the reward that Christians have worked for. It is possible for us to think of that day as Paul did: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7,8). Judgment will hold no terror for those who have “loved his appearing.” That day will be a day of great reward for the faithful, and there is no reason why any of us can’t be in that number.

Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but to save it. Those who will be lost are those who have refused God’s offer of salvation. To those who have faithfully and obediently accepted the gospel, however, the judgment will mean salvation in its final sense. “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Hb. 9:27,28). This week, let’s eagerly wait for the judgment of Christ, who will appear for our salvation on that day. With Paul (1 Cor. 16:22 NKJV), may we gladly say, “O Lord, come!” And with Peter (2 Pt. 3:12), may we “hasten” the coming of the day of God!

Monday: 2 Corinthians 5:9,10

Key Idea: We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul say his “aim” was? Is there anyone who will not appear before the judgment seat of Christ? What are we to “receive” at the judgment? What does Hb. 9:27,28 say?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:2.

Tuesday: Galatians 6:7-9

Key Idea: On the judgment day, we will reap what we have sown.

Questions for Family Growth: What should we not be “deceived” about? What is the basic lie with which the devil tries to deceive us? On this point, consider **Gen. 3:1-4**. What will be reaped by those who have sown to the flesh? What about those who have sown to the Spirit?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:3**.

Wednesday: Psalm 139:23,24

Key Idea: We ought to want to see ourselves right now as God sees us.

Questions for Family Growth: What request did David make of God in this psalm? How is this thought similar to the thought in **Psa. 19:12-14**? What should we do when we become aware of faults in our lives?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:4**.

Thursday: 1 Peter 1:17

Key Idea: Knowing that we will be judged causes us to live reverently before God.

Questions for Family Growth: How are we helped by knowing that God is our Father? How are we helped by knowing that He is also our Judge? Consider **Rom. 11:22**. What is the “fear” spoken of in **1 Pt. 1:17**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:5**.

Friday: 2 Timothy 4:7,8

Key Idea: If we are faithful to Christ, we can look forward to the judgment.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.7**, what did Paul say he had done during the years of his life as a Christian? What did he say was laid up for him? When would he receive it? Who else will receive this thing that Paul hoped for?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:6**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We ought to hold on to what we know God has revealed

Open-mindedness is a good quality. But good qualities do not operate in isolation. They must be applied wisely and balanced with other equally important principles. When it comes to open-mindedness, someone has cleverly said that our minds are like our mouths: we open them in order to close them on something solid. There comes a time when, having open-mindedly sought the truth, we ought to hold on to the truth we have gained. Especially in matters of religion, it is important that we not let settled truths get away from us. ***We ought to hold on to what we know God has revealed.***

In both the Old and the New Testaments, we are warned that we must neither add to nor take away from God's word (**Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18,19**; etc.). Holding on to what God has revealed, just as He has given it to us, requires both courage and humility. If our courage fails us, we may not do all that God has said. We may fear that some of God's instructions will bring about undesirable consequences, so we leave off the parts we deem inexpedient or inconvenient. On the other hand, however, if our humility fails us, we may go beyond what God has said, supplementing what we know He has revealed with additional "truths" of our own discovery.

A common plea of those who have done either less or more than God said is that there were "extenuating circumstances." "I had no choice but to do as I did" is frequently heard, as well as "I was deceived." The thought that runs through almost every rationalization is that our intent was to do things God's way eventually, but following a different path was "necessary" in the short run. We "had" to bend the rules to get through the present emergency.

Nevertheless, the firm foundation of what God has once and for all revealed stands in contrast to all the opinions of human wisdom about what is "necessary." As for our own judgment, we should have a healthy skepticism about how reliable it is. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart," Solomon said, "and do not lean on your own understanding" (**Prov. 3:5**). So are we content to hold on to the truths that God has given us? We certainly should be. Throughout the coming week, let's "buy truth, and do not sell it" (**Prov. 23:23**).

Monday: Genesis 3:1-7

Key Idea: By deceit, Satan will attempt to break our confidence in what God has said.

Questions for Family Growth: Think carefully: in order to persuade Eve to disobey God, what was the basic lie about God that Satan had to get her to believe? What concern for his brethren did Paul express in **2 Cor. 11:3**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:7,8.**

Tuesday: 2 Samuel 6:5-7

Key Idea: Disobedience shows a lack of confidence that God's way will work.

Questions for Family Growth: How might Uzzah have rationalized or explained his disobedience? What was the mistake in his thinking? Do we ever have to disobey God? Consider **1 Cor. 10:13**. How are trust and obedience connected?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:9**.

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 13:8-15; 15:1-23

Key Idea: It takes both courage and humility to obey God's instructions.

Questions for Family Growth: What principle is taught in **Deut. 4:2**; **Rev. 22:18,19**; etc.? Why is taking away from God's word a failure of courage? Why is adding to God's word a failure of humility?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:10,11**.

Thursday: 1 Kings 13:11-19

Key Idea: We should measure alleged new revelations by what we know God has already revealed.

Questions for Family Growth: Why should the young prophet not have believed what the old prophet said? What were the Bereans commended for doing in **Ac. 17:11**? Is there any way to avoid the hard work of testing for truth?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:12**.

Friday: 2 Thessalonians 2:15

Key Idea: We ought never to give up truths that have been revealed by God.

Questions for Family Growth: In religion, is the word "tradition" always a bad word? What are the traditions we are told to hold on to and never give up? What does Paul say in **Gal. 1:6-9**? What mark of maturity is in **Eph. 4:14-16**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:13**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

The gospel of Jesus Christ produces peace

The Hebrew word for “peace,” *shalom*, is a word with a beautiful connotation. It means not only the absence of strife, but the positive enjoyment of all that is truly good in life. It is the word used in the priestly blessing upon Israel: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace” (**Num. 6:24-26**). The God who is described in this blessing is the Giver of “peace.” Not only is peace one of His highest gifts, but the Beatitudes teach that the “peacemakers” will be called “sons of God” (**Mt. 5:9**). Surely, we cannot claim to worship God and not value peace.

The peaceful fellowship for which man was made would never have been broken if sin had not entered the world. It is the selfishly demanding nature of sin that causes discord, strife, and even violence. If it is sin that destroys peace, then it is obvious that sin must be dealt with if peace is to be reestablished. This is exactly what the gospel of Christ does. It makes all other kinds of peace possible by restoring peace between man and God. In **Rom. 5:1**, Paul wrote “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This week, let’s meditate on this great fact: *the gospel of Jesus Christ produces peace.*

The peace with God, and consequently the peace within ourselves, that comes from the gospel ought to show up in more peaceful relationships with those around us. Paul taught, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (**Rom. 12:18**). And not only should our own relationships be more peaceful, but we have the opportunity as Christians to help bring peace to the relationships of our friends and neighbors who are at enmity.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are to exert a beneficial influence on those we come in contact with. One of the very best ways we can influence others for good is to be peacemakers — using our influence constructively in establishing better relations among those whose lives we touch. Throughout the coming week, let’s think of ways we can be agents of God’s peace in the world. This is not easy work. Indeed, working constructively toward peace challenges both our wisdom and our courage. It calls for the highest and best that is within us. So may we be people whose work results in a greater degree of harmony, based upon the truth of God’s word.

Monday: James 3:13-18

Key Idea: It is sinful self-will that produces strife.

Questions for Family Growth: What two different kinds of “wisdom” does James discuss in this passage? What results from each? In **4:1**, where does James say “quarrels” and “fights” come from? What does James mean by his statement in **3:18**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:14.**

Tuesday: Isaiah 9:6,7

Key Idea: Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace.

Questions for Family Growth: In what sense can it be said that Jesus is the “Prince of Peace”? In [Mt. 10:34-36](#), Jesus said that He came to bring a “sword.” Why is this statement not in conflict with the statement that He is the Prince of Peace?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 11:15](#).

Wednesday: Ephesians 6:15

Key Idea: The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of peace.

Questions for Family Growth: Why is the gospel described as the “gospel of peace”? What did the angels say in [Lk. 2:14](#)? Considering the amount of strife in the world, has the gospel failed to bring the peace that was promised?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 11:16-21](#).

Thursday: Romans 5:1,2; Philippians 4:6,7

Key Idea: In Christ, we can have peace with God and peace within ourselves.

Questions for Family Growth: How did Christ’s death make possible peace between man and God? How can we obtain that peace and keep it? What is the “peace of God” that can guard our “hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (NKJV)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 11:22](#).

Friday: Romans 12:18

Key Idea: We ought to pursue peace with those around us.

Questions for Family Growth: In practical terms, what does this passage require us to do? Why is it sometimes not possible to enjoy peace with particular individuals? What should we do when faced with that kind of situation?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 11:23](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

God has made possible our reconciliation to Himself

One of the most touching word pictures in the Bible is the story of the return of the Prodigal Son. When the lost son came to his senses and returned home to his loving father, the scene in which they were reunited is meant to tell us what it can be like when we are forgiven of our sins and reconciled to God spiritually: “And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate” (Lk. 15:20-24). Who can read this story and not be touched by the love and grace of the father who welcomed his unworthy son home?

It is sin, of course, which has created the need for us to be reconciled to God. Having committed sin, we are in a lost condition, alienated from God and at enmity with Him. But God was not willing simply to abandon us. In love, He sacrificed His Son to atone for our sins, thus making it possible for the enmity to be removed and reconciliation to take place. “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Rom. 5:10,11).

The reconciliation to God offered to us in the gospel of Christ must be received. It is not automatically applied to every human being; it is granted only to those who will receive it on God’s terms. The gospel not only explains those terms, but it urges us to accept them. Speaking as an apostle of Christ, Paul wrote, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor. 5:10). The wonderful truth is: *God has made possible our reconciliation to Himself*. This week, may it be our aim to appreciate that grace and respond to it obediently.

Monday: Romans 5:6-11

Key Idea: We are reconciled to God through the death of His Son.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Paul mean when he says that “we were still weak”? According to v.10, what were we before being reconciled to God? What made our reconciliation to God possible?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:24-26.

Tuesday: John 3:16,17

Key Idea: By reconciling us to Himself, God demonstrates His love.

Questions for Family Growth: What did God's love move Him to do for us? What will happen to those who do not believe in God's Son? Does v.17 mean that no one will be condemned? If not, what does it mean?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:27.

Wednesday: Ephesians 3:7-13

Key Idea: By reconciling us to Himself, God demonstrates His wisdom.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.10, what is made known "through the church"? Is the church made up of those who have been reconciled to God? In v.11, what was the "eternal purpose" of God that has been realized in Christ?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:28.

Thursday: Romans 3:21-26

Key Idea: By reconciling us to Himself, God demonstrates His justice.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that God put forward His Son "to show his righteousness"? What does it mean for God to be both "just" and "the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus"?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:29.

Friday: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Key Idea: In the gospel, we are urged to accept God's reconciliation.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.18, through whom has God reconciled us to Himself? Will every person who has ever lived actually be reconciled to God? What did Paul appeal to his readers to do in v.20? How does a person do this?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:30.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Faith in the midst of suffering is a great example we can give to others

We are accustomed to thinking of the apostle Paul as a person who was willing to endure extreme hardship for Christ. He said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13 NKJV). We would do well to adopt his attitude. But Paul did not see his sufferings simply as hardships to be endured — he saw them as opportunities to honor Christ and influence others by that honor. No matter what happened, Paul was always looking for a way to exalt the Lord. To the Philippians he wrote, “I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death” (Phil. 1:19,20).

One of the very interesting examples of Christ being honored in Paul’s life is found in Ac. 16:25-34, the story of the conversion of the jailer in Philippi. Having been beaten and thrown into prison, Paul and Silas chose to maintain their faith and exhibit their gratitude, rather than feel sorry for themselves. The text says that “about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (v.25). Suddenly a great earthquake shook the prison, the doors were flung open, and all the prisoners’ chains were loosed. Assuming that his prisoners had escaped, the jailer was about to take his life, but Paul assured him that all were safe and urged him to do himself no harm. “And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’” (vv.29,30). Immediately he and his household were instructed in obedience to the gospel of Christ, and in the same hour of the night, they were baptized. The result was great joy. “And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God” (v.34). How different this story might have been had Paul and Silas not conducted themselves in prison with such courage and joy.

So we need to be reminded of this truth: *faith in the midst of suffering is a great example we can give to others*. All of us face hardships in life — let’s handle them in a way that sets a good example.

Monday: 1 Peter 4:14-16

Key Idea: It is a privilege to suffer as a Christian.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.16, what does Peter say a person should do if he “suffers as a Christian”? What was the attitude of the apostles in Ac. 5:41? What did Paul say in Phil. 1:29? What does it mean that it has been “granted” to us to suffer for the sake of Christ?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:31.

Tuesday: Colossians 1:24

Key Idea: When we suffer as Christians, we are sharing in Christ's sufferings.

Questions for Family Growth: In what did Paul say he rejoiced? What attitude on his part allowed him to do this? What did Paul mean by "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions"? For what people did Paul say he was willing to suffer affliction?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:1](#).

Wednesday: 1 Peter 2:21-23

Key Idea: When we suffer injustice, we ought to imitate the example of Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: To what were we "called"? In regard to suffering, what is the example of Christ that we should follow? When He was mistreated, to whom did Christ entrust Himself? What does it mean for us to do this?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:2](#).

Thursday: Matthew 5:10-12

Key Idea: God's blessings are upon those who suffer for the sake of righteousness.

Questions for Family Growth: What blessing is pronounced in [v.10](#)? In [v.12](#), what reason is given for us to rejoice when persecuted? When we are suffering, what is the helpful thought presented to us in [2 Cor. 4:16-18](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:3](#).

Friday: Acts 16:25-34

Key Idea: We influence others when we endure hardship with faith and joy.

Questions for Family Growth: What were Paul and Silas doing at midnight? What were the other prisoners doing? What effect on others did the behavior of Paul and Silas have? What did Paul say his "eager expectation and hope" were in [Phil. 1:20](#)? Consider [Rom. 12:12](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:4](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

God wants us to give a worthy effort to our daily work

It helps us to understand that God is concerned not only about our “religious” activities, but also about our “everyday” work. In everything we do, we ought to “give of our best to the Master,” knowing that *God wants us to give a worthy effort to our daily work.*

Most of us give thanks to God often. We know that it is God who gives us all the things we need from day to day. In many, many ways, we are indebted to God’s grace and His willingness to bless us with His goodness. But one thing we may not remember is that God’s gifts come with the responsibility to use them well, in accordance with His will (*Isa. 5:1-7*). There is no gift of God that is not to be employed in a way that honors Him. Consequently, we need to develop the daily habit of asking whether we are going about our daily work in a way that uses God’s blessings properly.

To be a “steward” is to be entrusted with the care of things that belong to someone else. Paul writes that stewards are to be “faithful” (*1 Cor. 4:2*). In our relationship to God, this means we are to be dependable in the work we do, carefully and honorably doing with God’s blessings whatever He would want us to do. One day, we will answer for how we have used all that God has given us. When that time comes, we will want to be able to look back on a lifetime of work that was trustworthy. We will not want to be workers “ashamed” of our work (*2 Tim. 2:15*).

All the things God gives us are resources. They are tools and assets meant to be used in the accomplishment of worthwhile objectives. When we are slack and slothful, one of the sins we commit is the sin of failing to use the resources God has given us. But the objective in life is not to see how well rested we can be at the end. It is to come to the finish line all “used up.” Paul wrote to his brethren, “I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls” (*2 Cor. 12:15*). Surely this principle does not just apply to our endeavors that are expressly “religious.” It applies to everything God wants us to be involved in. If a thing is worth doing at all, the Christian ought to do it with all his might, giving an effort that he would not be ashamed to offer to the Lord Himself.

This week, let’s take our responsibilities seriously. Let’s do all we do “as for the Lord” (*Col. 3:23*).

Monday: Ecclesiastes 9:10

Key Idea: Now is the time to do the work God has given us in this world.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Solomon say in *Eccl. 2:24* and *5:18* about the goodness of work? Why, in *9:10*, does he say we should do with our “might” whatever we do? Having our hearts set on heaven, are we to sit down and do nothing while we wait?

Wisdom for the Day: *Proverbs 12:5,6.*

Tuesday: Proverbs 18:9

Key Idea: Laziness is destructive.

Questions for Family Growth: In this verse, what does the word “slothful” (NKJV) mean? What does it mean that the slothful man is a “brother” to the one who destroys things? In our daily activities, can we do harm by simply doing nothing?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:7](#).

Wednesday: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

Key Idea: Laziness is a sin.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul command in regard to those in the church at Thessalonica who would not work? What advice did Solomon have for the “sluggard” in [Prov. 6:6-11](#)? Does God regard laziness as a trivial matter? How would you define laziness?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:8](#).

Thursday: 1 Peter 4:10,11

Key Idea: Each Christian is a steward of certain blessings entrusted to him by God.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Peter mean in [v.10](#) when he says we are to live as “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (NKJV)? What quality is it necessary for stewards to have, according to Paul in [1 Cor. 4:2](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:9](#).

Friday: Colossians 3:22-25

Key Idea: It is for the Lord that the Christian does everything he does.

Questions for Family Growth: How would the principle in [v.23](#) make a servant a better worker in the first century? How would this principle apply to us today? Today, does this teaching apply only to our “spiritual” work or does it concern all that we do?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:10](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Saving faith is faith in Jesus Christ

Faith means not only that we believe intellectually in the truth of some proposition, but we believe it to the extent that we're willing to place our trust in that truth and act on it. Faith involves commitment, based on our belief that certain things are true. But, as Christians, exactly what is it that we must believe?

In **Jn. 8:24**, Jesus said, "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." We must believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be: the very Son of God and the Savior of the world. *Saving faith is faith in Jesus Christ.*

It is our faith in this great truth that breaks the grip of sin upon us. "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (**Jn. 8:32**). All of the horrible consequences of sin are the result of our having been deceived by the untruth of the devil. If we are to be saved from these consequences and enjoy once again the life that God intends, we must turn to God in real trust and place our faith in His Son. We must commit ourselves to the truth that He can save us from our sins.

When we do that, all kinds of good things are made possible for us. Jesus Christ can satisfy our deepest needs and longings. He can be all that we truly need. He can save us from death and give us life. To the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, Jesus said, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water . . . Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (**Jn. 4:10,13,14**).

With such abundant life available in Jesus Christ, the pity is that we allow Him to do so little for us. He waits to bless us with the "living water" of true life, but we often content ourselves with merely dabbling in discipleship. We are content to have no more than the least of His blessings. Surely we should desire more than we have yet received.

But to receive what He has for us, of course, we must truly believe in Him. Faith is the key to real life in Christ. So this week, let's work on our faith!

Monday: John 4:10-14

Key Idea: Jesus Christ can satisfy our deepest needs and longings.

Questions for Family Growth: What do you think the "living water" is that Jesus spoke of? What did Jesus mean when He said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again" (**v.13**)? How does this make Jesus superior to any other religious teacher?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 12:11.**

Tuesday: John 4:23,24

Key Idea: Through Jesus Christ we can worship God in spirit and truth.

Questions for Family Growth: According to Jesus, how would “true worshipers” worship God? What does it mean that “God is spirit”? What are some ways we might worship God falsely? What must we do to avoid the problem of false worship?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:12-14](#).

Wednesday: John 4:39-42

Key Idea: We believe in Jesus Christ on the basis of credible testimony.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did the woman at the well believe in Jesus? According to [v.39](#), why did the villagers believe in Him? Was this a reasonable and responsible thing for them to do? After they heard Jesus personally, what did they say in [v.42](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:15,16](#).

Thursday: John 4:25,26

Key Idea: Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Messiah.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus mean in [v.26](#) when he said to the woman, “I who speak to you am he”? Is it absolutely essential that we believe all that Jesus claimed about Himself? Consider [Jn. 8:24,31,32](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:17-22](#).

Friday: John 3:16,17

Key Idea: Believing in Jesus Christ, we can have everlasting life.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did God give His Son for us? What is meant by “everlasting life” (NKJV)? According to Paul in [Rom. 5: 8](#), why did God give His Son’s life for us? What is it that we need to be “saved” from?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:23](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We should be willing to sacrifice time as well as money for the Lord's work

When it comes to money and material things, most of us understand that the Lord's work can require sacrifice. If a thing needs doing and we lack the surplus cash to make it possible, many good brethren will dig down deeper and do without some things for themselves in order to get the Lord's work done, perhaps selling off possessions to raise the necessary funds, as the early disciples did ([Ac. 4:32-37](#)). We don't always give as we should, obviously — but most of us know what the word sacrifice should mean.

This week, however, let's consider that *we should be willing to sacrifice time as well as money for the Lord's work*. Money is valuable, of course, but time is in some ways an even more precious commodity. Philanthropic organizations say that the typical American would rather write a check to support a worthy cause (and be “done with it”) than donate even a little time. In spiritual matters, we may occasionally sacrifice the having of certain things, but very few of us will let the Lord stand in the way of doing something we want to do. If the Lord's work conflicts with any of our activities (or even sometimes with rest from our activities), we will hardly consider giving up the activity as a sacrifice. Our rule seems to be that if anything has to “give,” it should be the Lord's work. Scheduling conflicts are virtually always resolved at the expense of the Lord's work. We do with our calendars and datebooks precisely what we have always said was sinful to do with our checkbooks: give the Lord nothing but what is left over. If the Lord needs an hour or two, that is fine, unless we have anything else we could be doing. It begins to look as if the Lord gets our time only when there is absolutely zero else going on.

But the real work of the Lord has always tended to encroach on busy schedules. If we do not get a fresh grip on the concept of sacrifice, we are going to lose our souls. Jesus said, “For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” ([Mt. 16:25](#)). By withholding our schedules from the Lord, are we not refusing to give up our lives for Him — one day at a time? Jesus was never involved in anything that He was not willing to lay aside in order to serve our needs ([Phil. 2:5-8](#)). We need to think as He thought.

Monday: Matthew 13:18-23

Key Idea: The cares of the world can choke God's word so that we become unfruitful.

Questions for Family Growth: How might we describe the attitude of the person represented by “what was sown among the thorns” ([v.22](#))? How can the “cares of the world” interfere with what God desires of us? How can we avoid this problem?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:24](#).

Tuesday: Malachi 1:6-8

Key Idea: The Lord is dishonored when we offer to Him that which is of no value to us.

Questions for Family Growth: How had the people of Malachi's day "despised" God's name? Did they recognize the seriousness of what they had done? How had they offered less to God than they would offer to their governor?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:25](#).

Wednesday: 2 Samuel 24:18-25

Key Idea: The Lord is honored when we offer to Him that which has "cost" us something.

Questions for Family Growth: What did David need to offer the Lord and why did he refuse the gift offered to him by Araunah? How does this principle apply to us today? How can time, as well as money and material things, be "costly" when we devote it to the Lord?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:26](#).

Thursday: Matthew 16:24-26

Key Idea: If we desire to "save" our lives, we will "lose" them.

Questions for Family Growth: What did the Lord mean by saying that we will "lose" what we "save," and that we will "find" what we "lose"? Do you agree with the statement that anything we are unwilling to give up for the Lord is an idol?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:27](#).

Friday: Luke 10:25-37

Key Idea: We should be willing to be inconvenienced for the Lord's work.

Questions for Family Growth: What might have been some of the reasons why the priest and the Levite passed by on the other side of the road rather than help the man in need? Is it likely that these men were any busier than the Samaritan who stopped to help?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 12:28](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

There must be harmony between our principles and our practice

Most people understand that human beings have both an “inner” and an “outer” life. We often describe what kind of individual a person is on the “inside,” as well as what his traits might be on the “outside.” One of the real challenges in life is to maintain wholeness and harmony between our inner and outer persons, so that we really are on the inside what we appear to be on the outside. This unity between our thinking and our actions is the basic idea behind the word “integrity” (which literally means “oneness”). Integrity means that there is a unity to our character: we live in our daily lives the principles we say we adhere to in our hearts. One popular way of describing integrity is to say that we “practice what we preach” (or we “walk our talk”). It just means that we are genuine — and we are consistent in doing what’s right, no matter what situation we may find ourselves in.

In the Book of Job, Satan was allowed to tempt Job to compromise his integrity. He brought terrible hardship upon Job in an effort to break the consistency between Job’s faith and his practice. But Job passed the test. He kept his deeds and his words consistent with his principles. And even God commended this consistency. “And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason’” (Job 2:3).

In our own lives today, *there must be harmony between our principles and our practice*. This week, let’s work on that idea. Let’s determine that we will practice our principles. Let’s honor God by following through on our commitment to obey His will, outwardly as well as in our hearts. The world “healthy” is closely related in its origin to the word “whole.” To be healthy means, basically, that our bodies enjoy a “wholeness” in which all is at peace and nothing is battling against anything else. Spiritually, that’s what health is too. It’s the condition of having our “whole” person “together” — inside and outside. This integrity between what we think and what we do is one of the highest goals of spiritual maturity. It’s a worthy project to which we can dedicate ourselves.

Monday: Matthew 23:1-4

Key Idea: God is displeased when we do not practice what we preach.

Questions for Family Growth: What advice did Jesus give His hearers in regard to the scribes and Pharisees? How did He describe their problem? What is the basic idea behind the word “integrity”? How did the Pharisees fall short in the matter of integrity?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 13:1.

Tuesday: 1 John 3:18

Key Idea: We ought to love in deed as well as word.

Questions for Family Growth: How do we show that we truly love God: in our words, our deeds, or both? What situation is described in [Ezek. 33:30-33](#)? How can we avoid the problem Jesus was dealing with in [Mt. 15:7-9](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:2,3](#).

Wednesday: James 2:14-26

Key Idea: Faith without works is dead.

Questions for Family Growth: In practical terms, what does “faith” really mean? What are some ways our faith can be inconsistent with our practice? How can we grow in our integrity so that there is consistency between our faith and our works?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:4](#).

Thursday: 2 Chronicles 25:1,2

Key Idea: God desires that we follow Him wholeheartedly.

Questions for Family Growth: Who is the king described in these verses? What good thing is said about him? What is said about his heart in the last part of [v.2](#), and what is meant by this statement? How can we avoid the problem this king had?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:5,6](#).

Friday: James 4:4

Key Idea: In order to possess integrity, we must choose to honor God rather than the world.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “adultery” spoken of in this passage? How can we tell whether our “friendship” is with God or with the world? What are the consequences of each choice? What did Paul say in [Rom. 6:16](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:7](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Jesus Christ is preeminent over all things in our relationship to God

Jesus made radical claims concerning Himself. He claimed to be equal with God (Jn. 5:17,18), and He said we can approach God only through Him: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn. 14:6). Just before His ascension, He went so far as to say, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt. 28:18). No sane and sober man has ever made such all-encompassing claims for himself.

What all of this means is that if Jesus’ claims are true, then He is the unrivaled sovereign over the entire creation. Unequaled in His authority, Jesus Christ is the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Rev. 19:16). “In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:9). This week, let’s make this wonderful and important truth our meditation. *Jesus Christ is preeminent over all things in our relationship to God.*

As God “incarnate” (which means “in the flesh”), Jesus Christ perfectly represents God to mankind. He is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). Things about God that would otherwise be incomprehensible become understandable when we see them illustrated in the human form of Jesus. The Hebrew writer said that He is “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (Hb. 1:3). The nature of God is explained to us in His Son, Jesus Christ: “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (Jn. 1:18). Jesus was not only like God, He was God!

These truths are interesting, no doubt. But when we consider the matter of our alienation from God in sin, they become not just interesting but essential to life. It is only in Jesus Christ, the preeminent One, that we can have “redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14). If we turn away from Him, there is nowhere else to go for the thing we need most of all: eternal life. The forgiveness of our sins and the restoration of our rightful relationship with God are impossible outside of Christ. So Peter’s answer was right when the Lord asked if he and the other apostles were going to leave Him like the others who had turned away: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6:67,68). Jesus is the “preeminent” source of our salvation!

Monday: Colossians 1:15-17

Key Idea: Jesus Christ is “the firstborn of all creation.”

Questions for Family Growth: Was Jesus the first thing God created? Consider Jn. 1:1-3. If not, what does it mean that He is the “firstborn of all creation”? What do you think it means that “all things were created through him and for him” (v.16)?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 13:8.

Tuesday: Colossians 1:18

Key Idea: Jesus Christ is “the head of the body, the church.”

Questions for Family Growth: Putting this passage together with [Eph. 1:22,23](#), what things do we learn about the relationship of Jesus Christ to the church? What privileges does the “head” of the body have? How much authority does Jesus have over the church?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:9](#).

Wednesday: Colossians 1:18

Key Idea: Jesus Christ is “the firstborn from the dead.”

Questions for Family Growth: What makes Jesus Christ the “firstborn” from the dead? Weren’t other people raised from the dead before Him? What does the word “preeminent” mean when it is used to describe Jesus’ resurrection?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:10](#).

Thursday: Colossians 1:19; 2:9

Key Idea: In Jesus Christ “all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.”

Questions for Family Growth: What does the word “incarnate” mean? What does [Jn. 1:14](#) teach us? Is there anything about the Godhead that does not reside in Jesus Christ? Was Jesus the Son any less “God” than God the Father?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:11](#).

Friday: Colossians 1:20

Key Idea: In Jesus Christ all things are “reconciled” to God.

Questions for Family Growth: Is it possible to be saved from our sins by means of anything outside of Jesus Christ? What do we learn from [Jn. 14:6](#) and [Ac. 4:12](#)? How would you describe that it means to be “reconciled” to God?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:12](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

To be baptized into Christ is to enjoy a “newness of life”

Who is the “new man” spoken of in the New Testament? Is this expression merely a reference to the person who has recently obeyed the gospel? No, every Christian is a “new” person, regardless of how long he or she has been in Christ. *To be baptized into Christ is to enjoy a “newness of life”* — and this new quality of life is to last as long as we live in the world.

Sometimes we may forget the importance of this new life, and we may need to be reminded. Paul wrote to the church in Rome: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3,4).

And to the Corinthians, Paul wrote: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17). The challenge for the Christian is to make sure that the old things have indeed passed away, and that he lives as a person for whom all things have become new. We are new people in Christ, and we must choose to live as such.

One of the very important aspects of the Christian’s new life is the new hope that he enjoys in Christ: the hope of heaven. Once we begin to understand the greatness of this hope, we will live, at all costs, so as not to lose that hope. We will indeed live like “new” people. After discussing the fact that we are waiting for “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pt. 3:13), Peter gives us this exhortation: “Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace” (2 Pt. 3:14).

New things are refreshing and invigorating. We can be truly thankful that, as those who have obeyed the gospel and have received the forgiveness of our sins, “all things have become new” for us. So as we go through the round of our usual activities this week, it will be good for us to keep this in mind. We are living a “new” life, one that was made possible by Christ’s own death and resurrection to life everlasting!

Monday: Colossians 3:1

Key Idea: As Christians, we seek new goals.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to be “raised with Christ”? If we have been raised with Christ, what new things should we “seek,” according to this passage? How can we learn to seek those things more fervently?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 13:13,14.

Tuesday: Colossians 3:2

Key Idea: As Christians, we think new thoughts.

Questions for Family Growth: Is it possible to determine by our own choices the way we think and the things we set our minds on? What is the difference between things “above” and things “on earth”? Are we never to think about anything that is not “religious”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:15,16](#).

Wednesday: Colossians 3:5-16

Key Idea: As Christians, we adopt new habits.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the things we are commanded to “put to death” and to “put off” or “put away”? What are those we are commanded to “put on”? Are we each responsible for the choices we make about the way we live our lives?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:17](#).

Thursday: Colossians 3:17

Key Idea: As Christians, we respect a new authority.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to do something “in the name of the Lord Jesus”? How much of what we do on a daily basis is to be done in the Lord’s name? What does the very last part of this verse tell us to do?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:18](#).

Friday: Colossians 3:3,4

Key Idea: As Christians, our new life is based on a new hope.

Questions for Family Growth: In what sense is it true that, as Christians, we have “died”? How is our life “hidden with Christ in God”? What does Paul mean when he says that Christ “is your life”? What will happen when Christ appears, according to this passage?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:19](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Giving honor to God is the highest and best activity in life

Few people would question that it is right to reverence God. But there is also a great deal of peace and strength in realizing that **giving honor to God is the highest and best activity in life**. When we show the proper respect for God, we are doing the very thing we were created for. We find our destiny and our fulfillment in the glory of God.

Solomon made this observation: “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil” (**Eccl. 12:13,14**). The reverent, obedient seeking of God’s honor is the very essence of what it means to be a being created in the image of God. This is what we were made for, and when we do this we are experiencing the very goal of our existence. Nothing we can do has any higher purpose than the glorification of God.

To fail to glorify God is a most serious sin. Nothing we can do is more wrong than to show disrespect to our Creator. And if we’re not careful, we can dishonor God even when we say we are worshiping Him. Jesus rebuked certain ones of His day in these words, which had been spoken centuries before to the people of Israel in Isaiah’s day: “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (**Mt. 15:8,9**). It is not our prerogative to envision God as we prefer Him to be and then worship Him according to our wishes. God has the right to set the terms of our relationship with Him, and we ought to determine to honor God according to His will and not our own. And there is also this to remember: we know nothing of God’s will except what we read of it in His revealed word.

Giving God the reverence and honor that are due Him is a very practical matter. It has to do with the choices we make every day about our thoughts and words and deeds. It has to do with ordinary things, as well as the things that are “religious.” Paul wrote, “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (**Col. 3:17**). This week, let’s make it our aim to seek God’s glory in every one of our actions. To do this is the highest and best way to live life. Truly, it doesn’t get any better than this.

Monday: Romans 1:20,21

Key Idea: The very essence of sin is the refusal to glorify God.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to “honor” or “glorify” God? How is it possible to “know” God but not glorify Him or be thankful? Which problem do you think is more widespread in our society: disbelief in God or disobedience by those who do believe?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 13:20.**

Tuesday: Proverbs 9:10

Key Idea: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Questions for Family Growth: What kind of “fear” does Solomon refer to in this passage? What are some words that would describe the opposite of this fear? How is the fear of God the “beginning of wisdom”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:21](#).

Wednesday: Hebrews 12:28,29

Key Idea: We should serve God with reverence and godly fear.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “kingdom” of which the writer speaks? Why are reverence and godly fear (or “awe”) so important in offering to God “acceptable worship”? Is it possible to serve God unacceptably? What would be some examples? Consider [Mal. 1:9-11](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:22](#).

Thursday: Ecclesiastes 12:13,14

Key Idea: We were created to find our fulfillment in God’s glory.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “matter” of which the writer speaks when he says, “the end of the matter”? Can you think of other texts in the Bible which speak of the ultimate purpose or meaning of our lives? What did Jesus say about our lives in [Mt. 16:26](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:23](#).

Friday: Malachi 3:16-18

Key Idea: Reverence for God will lead us to God’s glory in eternity.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “book of remembrance” written of those who feared the Lord and esteemed His name? What is said in [v.17](#) about those who have shown true reverence to God? What promise is given in [4:2](#) to those who “fear my name”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 13:24](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

God requires spouses to honor their marriage commitment to one another

The Bible teaches that the marriage covenant involves a deep commitment, and **God requires spouses to honor their marriage commitment to one another**. Short of the decision to become a Christian, no promise we make in life is more serious than the one we make when we get married. It's a promise that God expects us to keep, even when the promise turns out to be harder to keep than we thought it would be.

The faithless men of Israel were rebuked by Malachi with these strong words: "The LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant" (**Mal. 2:14**). These men had callously discarded their Israelite wives and entered into marriages with the idolatrous women of the land. Marrying outside Israel, of course, was forbidden in the Law of Moses (**Exo. 34:11-16; Deut. 7:1-5**; etc.). But that problem only compounded the sin these men had committed in the first place when they divorced their original Israelite wives without God's approval. To these men, the prophet said, "You have dealt treacherously" (NKJV).

Marriage is a relationship based on trust and confidence. The promise of an unconditional love that will last as long as both parties are alive is a safety net under the marriage. Both partners can take comfort in the knowledge that no matter what troubles may test the relationship, the other has promised that divorce will not be an option. Each places faith in the promise made by the other never to betray the marriage. When a person is unfaithful to the promises that were made, either by committing adultery or by leaving the relationship without God's approval, God does not look upon that breach of trust lightly. There is no greater betrayal a person can suffer than to be victimized by the treachery of a mate. Such treachery is a violation of the deepest trust agreement that two human beings can enter into.

God is pleased with those who keep their word. This week, let's consider the honor and the trust that enable a marriage to be what God would want it to be. In the real world, the marriage covenant may not always be easy to keep, but keeping our promise will be well worth the effort.

Monday: Malachi 2:16

Key Idea: God hates divorce.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the possible meanings of the word "hate" (NKJV) as it describes God's view of divorce? What is meant by the statement that divorce "covers [one's] garment with violence"? Why are we told to "take heed" (NKJV) or "guard yourselves" (ESV)?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 13:25.**

Tuesday: Matthew 19:1-12

Key Idea: God's law permits only one cause for divorce.

Questions for Family Growth: In **vv.1-3**, what question had Jesus been asked? In **vv.4-6**, what was His answer? What, in **v.7**, was the next question He was asked? In response, what did Jesus say concerning divorce in **vv.8,9**? Is Jesus' teaching hard to understand?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:1**.

Wednesday: Malachi 2:13

Key Idea: God does not accept the worship of those who are violating the marriage covenant.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Malachi mean when he said, "You cover the LORD's altar with tears"? Why would God not "regard" or "accept" their offerings anymore? What does Peter say about our prayers in **1 Pt. 3:7**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:2**.

Thursday: Malachi 2:14

Key Idea: God is a party to the covenant between husbands and wives.

Questions for Family Growth: What is a "covenant"? How does the word apply to marriage? Consider **Prov. 2:16,17**. What would it mean to act treacherously or faithlessly against one's marriage partner? What is God's view of such a betrayal?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:3**.

Friday: Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

Key Idea: It is better not to make commitments than to break those we have made.

Questions for Family Growth: How are the words "vow," "promise," and "covenant" similar? What are the basic points the writer makes about commitments in these verses? How does the instruction in **v. 7** to "fear" God apply to the subject of commitment-keeping?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:4**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We should learn to distinguish between good and evil as God does

In the days when Malachi was a prophet, the people of Israel had gotten to the point where they thought it didn't make much difference whether a person tried to do right or not. They were saying such things as these: "It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evil-doers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape" (**Mal. 3:14,15**). This moral indifference was all the more shocking because those who were thinking that way were not pagan idolaters but members of a nation that had a special relationship with God.

But God rebuked this cynical disregard for right and wrong, and He said a time was coming when "once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him" (**Mal. 3:18**). Both in the short term and the long, it does make a difference whether we follow God's will or not. And like those to whom Malachi preached, ***we should learn to distinguish between good and evil as God does***. If we don't, we will gradually lose touch with God Himself, and eventually get to the point where we have trouble identifying even the simplest truths about right and wrong.

Paul described the immoral mind of the ancient world in which the Ephesian Christians had lived before they obeyed the gospel: "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity" (**Eph. 4:17-19**). The God-given ability to tell right from wrong is a gift to be used properly. As with many other good gifts, we will either use it wisely or lose it.

If we don't try to distinguish between right and wrong, a progressive darkening of our understanding will take place. God will allow us to become deluded, and we may have a hard time recognizing even basic moral distinctions (**Eph. 4:18,19; 2 Thess. 2:11,12; Hb. 5:14**). So let's determine to make this week one of positive growth in our discernment between good and evil.

Monday: John 7:24

Key Idea: In matters of judgment, we need to judge with righteous judgment.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to "judge" something? What is the difference between "right" or "righteous" judgment and any other kind? What did Jesus mean by saying that we should not "judge by appearances"?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:5**.

Tuesday: Psalm 58:10,11

Key Idea: God will punish the wicked and reward the righteous.

Questions for Family Growth: In this life, why might we be tempted to doubt or wonder whether “there is a reward for the righteous”? Can we truly have faith in God and doubt what He says about His eventual judging of good and evil?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:6-8](#).

Wednesday: Galatians 6:7,8

Key Idea: We mock God if we say that He will not do as He has promised about good and evil.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to “mock” someone? What is the lie that we are told not to let ourselves be “deceived” by? In the long run, what difference will it make whether we have lived righteously or not?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:9](#).

Thursday: Isaiah 5:20

Key Idea: Those who substitute evil for good will suffer serious consequences.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some practical ways we may “call evil good and good evil”? Is there any definite, objective standard by which right and wrong can be distinguished? How can we be sure that this standard is trustworthy?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:10](#).

Friday: Hebrews 5:14

Key Idea: We need to grow in our ability to discern between good and evil.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “solid food” spoken of here? What does it mean to “distinguish good from evil”? What does it mean that some “by constant practice” have their “powers of discernment trained” to do this?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:11](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Jesus Christ improves our lives by improving our thinking

Most folks want better lives. The self-help section at the bookstore is one of the busiest departments because people are constantly looking for ways to cope with their problems and increase the quality of their lives. But the amazing thing is the variety of ways that we go about the process of improving our lives. Hardly any two people agree on the approach one should take if he or she wants to get a better life.

The Bible addresses this issue straightforwardly. It teaches that we are spiritual beings — made in God’s image — and that we have an inner, personal character that is at the center of everything we do. Our outward actions and their attendant consequences flow naturally from this inward character. The nature of these external actions is determined by what is going on inside of us, just as surely as a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bad fruit (**Mt. 7:17,18**).

Quality of life is the consequence of our words and deeds. If we change our words and deeds, we will get different consequences. But to change our words and deeds, we must change our inner person: the “tree” that produces those “fruits.” And to do that, our thinking must be changed. That is precisely what happens in Christ: ***Jesus Christ improves our lives by improving our thinking.***

Jesus said it simply: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (**Jn. 8:32**). There is not a single consequence of sin that is not the result (or “fruit”) of erroneous thinking somewhere back up the line. These consequences can be undone only by replacing the untruth that produced them with the truth that can liberate us. There is no effective shortcut, although many people try to find one. We can’t patch our problems by the application of some trick or technique. Real quality-of-life improvement comes from change in our hearts and minds.

Paul wrote, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (**Rom. 12:2**). Our lives can be transformed when our minds have been renewed. It’s a simple principle, but one that is extremely important. Throughout the coming week, let’s devote some time to “thinking” about that.

Monday: Ephesians 3:16

Key Idea: True strength and effectiveness are qualities of inward character.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Paul mean when he speaks of being strengthened “in your inner being”? From what source does this kind of strength come? Why is spiritual strength more important than any other kind?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:12.**

Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 5:16

Key Idea: As Christians, we are able to view everything from a spiritual viewpoint.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Paul mean when he says that he previously regarded Christ “according to the flesh”? What does he mean when he says, “From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:13.**

Wednesday: Romans 12:1,2

Key Idea: As Christians, our lives are “transformed” as our thinking is “renewed.”

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “renewal” of our minds spoken of here? Consider **Eph. 4:20-24**. What does it mean for us to be “transformed”? What produces this transformation? What is said in this text about the will of God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:14.**

Thursday: Philippians 2:5

Key Idea: We must learn in every situation to think as Christ would think.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “mind” that is to be characteristic of us? How can we acquire this mind? To what extent are we in control of the way we think? Can we choose to think as Christ would think?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:15-19.**

Friday: John 8:31,32

Key Idea: It is God’s truth that can set us free from the problems caused by sin.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some of the consequences of sin that we need to be “set free” from? How is it that the truth can liberate us from these things? How much difference can be made in our lives by changing our thinking?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:20,21.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We ought to trust that God's will is the best path to follow

Most of us have a little stubborn streak somewhere in our character. That is not all bad, because there are certainly times when we need to think for ourselves and stand our ground. And yet when we're deciding what is the right thing to do in spiritual matters, there is an opposite problem we need to avoid, and that is the problem of subjecting what God has said to our own sense of what seems right. If we're so headstrong that we will not listen to God and let His wisdom guide our path, then we're in serious trouble.

"Faith" is a thing that is important in many ways. Obviously, faith in the truth of God's word is essential if we are to be saved from our sins. But also, faith in God Himself is vital. We have to trust not only what God says but the character of God as a Person. We have to believe that He is dependable and will never lead us astray. That is hard to do when what God says runs contrary to our opinion of what should be done. When such a conflict arises, we ought to have faith. ***We ought to trust that God's will is the best path to follow.*** This week, let's make that our theme.

Many Bible texts speak of the need to trust God's wisdom rather than our own. **Proverbs 3:5,6** is one such passage: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." Listen to these verses in the Contemporary English Version: "With all your heart you must trust the Lord and not your own judgment. Always let him lead you, and he will clear the road for you to follow."

One reason we study the Bible is to seek God's "advice" on the questions that confront us from day to day. We are not merely looking in the Scriptures for interesting information; we are asking for God's help in our decision making. In effect, we are saying to God, "I need help with these decisions. What does Your wisdom indicate is the best way for me to go?"

The mark of a truly humble person is not just that he has a moderate view of his own abilities, but also a moderate view of his own wisdom. If we trust God and are willing to rely on His higher wisdom, we will grow in true wisdom. God knows best. Let's have the faith to follow His lead.

Monday: Jeremiah 10:23

Key Idea: We do not have the ability to know what is best in every situation.

Questions for Family Growth: What is meant by the expression "the way of man"? Why is that "way" not in man himself? If the way of man is not in himself, where is it? What was Jeremiah's request in **v.24**? When the Lord corrects our faulty wisdom, what should be our attitude?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:22.**

Tuesday: Proverbs 16:25

Key Idea: What seems to be the right thing to us may, in fact, be the wrong thing.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the problem this passage is dealing with? Should we never pay any attention to our own instincts or intuition? How can we avoid the problems that are inherent in human reasoning?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:23](#).

Wednesday: Isaiah 55:8,9

Key Idea: God's wisdom and understanding are much higher than ours.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some ways that God's thinking is different from ours and therefore better? Does this mean that God's will is illogical or contrary to reason? In practical terms, what does it mean that God's thoughts are "higher" than ours?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:24](#).

Thursday: Proverbs 3:5-8

Key Idea: God is perfectly able to direct our paths.

Questions for Family Growth: Why should we not "lean" on our own understanding? How do we "acknowledge" God in our various daily activities? In practical terms, what does it mean that God will "make straight your paths"?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:25](#).

Friday: Psalm 37:5,6

Key Idea: We should entrust ourselves to God and His will for us.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to "commit" our way to the Lord, and why is that a difficult thing for us to do? What promise is made to those who commit their way to the Lord? In regard to following God's path, what can we learn from [Jer. 9:23,24](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:26,27](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Only God can loose the bond made by the marriage covenant

Few would disagree that when a husband or a wife dies, the other is free to remarry. Paul clearly teaches this in **Rom. 7:2**. It is important, however, to understand that it is God who grants this freedom. **Only God can loose the bond made by the marriage covenant.** In any situation where God does not loose, husbands and wives remain bound to their obligations to one another.

Today, we need to understand the authority of God over our marriages and our homes. Just as we would do in any other matter, we need to submit every decision about marriage to God. Whatever He does not approve by His divine authority is unlawful and constitutes sin. The promises and commitments that marriage is built upon may not simply be laid aside when human beings decide to do so. Only in circumstances where God releases the bond is anyone free from those commitments, and the simple truth is that there are only two such occasions when God looses the bond of the marriage covenant. One is when a spouse dies, as indicated above. The other is given in **Mt. 19:8,9**. Here Jesus granted the right of divorce to one whose mate has committed adultery. Even here, it should be noted, God looses only the one doing the putting away, and then only when the cause is fornication.

God envisioned the marriage relationship as a permanent one. Because the relationship is one instituted by Him, marriage is governed by God's will. It is His prerogative to determine its principles and its rules; and it is His authority that will ultimately punish disregard for His law. Jesus put the matter very simply and clearly when He said, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (**Mt. 19:6**).

In the world around us, people sever themselves from their marriage partners for many reasons. Often the reasoning is that they will separate but not divorce, or they will divorce but not remarry. In either case, there is a setting aside of what God has said about the permanency of marriage. Marriage involves a covenant to which God Himself is a party. We cannot back out of that covenant without showing ourselves faithless before God and treacherous to our mates. Whatever God has bound simply must not be loosed by us, in the absence of His revealed approval.

Monday: Proverbs 2:17

Key Idea: God is a party to the marriage covenant between husband and wife.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the "covenant of her God" spoken of in this passage? How can God be involved in an agreement between two human beings? Consider **1 Sam. 20:8** and **23:18**. What points are made in **Mal. 2:13-16**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:28**.

Tuesday: Romans 7:2,3

Key Idea: When one marriage partner dies, God releases the other partner from the covenant.

Questions for Family Growth: When one spouse dies, why is the other spouse free to remarry? Other than death, what is the only other circumstance in which God releases someone from the marriage covenant? See [Mt. 19:8,9](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:29](#).

Wednesday: Matthew 19:3-6

Key Idea: It is sinful to separate what God has joined together.

Questions for Family Growth: What question was Jesus asked by the Pharisees? Was the question about divorce and remarriage, or simply about divorce? What was Jesus' answer to the Pharisees? Is Jesus' answer binding for us today?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:30](#).

Thursday: Mark 6:17,18

Key Idea: It is sinful to be married to one person while bound to another.

Questions for Family Growth: To whom was Herod married? Why was it sinful for him to be married to this person? Look again at [Romans 7:2,3](#). What is the difference between being "married" and being "bound"?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:31](#).

Friday: Psalm 15:4

Key Idea: We ought to keep our promises even when keeping them turns out to be difficult.

Questions for Family Growth: What does this text mean when it speaks of swearing "to his own hurt"? What does it mean that the godly person "does not change" after making a promise? What would be the only conditions under which we might change what we've promised?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:32](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Our goal ought to be to present the gospel to as many people as possible

In Christ, there is work to do. The life of the Christian is not just something to “be” — it is also something to “do.” As a familiar spiritual song says, “God has no hands but our hands to do His work today.” God’s work, which centers on the task of evangelism, is done by God’s people, people who show their love for God by communicating the gospel to others. This work is something we ought to want to do as much of as we can. ***Our goal ought to be to present the gospel to as many people as possible.***

Our theme this week emphasizes that God expects us to fulfill the work He has assigned to us: the work of evangelism. But it is important to recognize a distinction between what God Himself does and what He expects us to do. Compared in several passages to “seed” that must be sown, God’s word must be distributed to those who are lost. Our work is that of exposing as many people as possible to the gospel’s truth. What happens beyond that falls within the realm of God’s responsibility, not ours. Paul illustrated it by saying that the human part of the work is “planting” and “watering,” but it is God who “gives the increase” (**1 Cor. 3:6,7 NKJV**).

When we keep focused on what God wants us to do, He will surely help us with that work. In **2 Cor. 9:8-11**, Paul wrote: “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, ‘He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.’ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.”

When it comes to sowing the seed of God’s kingdom, we ought to work at sowing that seed as generously and enthusiastically as we can. Surely there isn’t a more worthy work that we could do in this world, and if doing that work is our honest goal, God will see that we have the opportunity to be involved in it. All of us can do something to get God’s word into the hands of others. May we make this week one of growth in our desire to spread God’s word.

Monday: Luke 8:11-15

Key Idea: God’s word may be compared to “seed.”

Questions for Family Growth: Can you think of at least three ways that God’s word is comparable to seed? What different kinds of “soil” does the gospel fall into? What is our individual responsibility with respect to the seed?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:33.**

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 3:6,7

Key Idea: Our work is planting and watering — it is God who gives the increase.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some practical, everyday ways we can “plant” and “water”? What happens when we quit doing our part of the work and start taking responsibility for God’s part? How might we measure the amount of “seed” we are sowing in our communities?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:34](#).

Wednesday: Acts 8:4

Key Idea: Christians in the New Testament took the gospel with them wherever they went.

Questions for Family Growth: In this passage, why had Christians been forced to leave Jerusalem? Under such circumstances, why might they have decided to keep quiet about the gospel? What, in fact, did they do?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:35](#).

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 15:58

Key Idea: We should abound in the Lord’s work.

Questions for Family Growth: In everyday, practical terms, what does the expression “the work of the Lord” mean? Is it just preachers who are involved in the work of the Lord? What are some of the characteristics of the person who “abounds” in this work?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:1,2](#).

Friday: 2 Corinthians 3:4,5

Key Idea: The “sufficiency” to do God’s work comes from God.

Questions for Family Growth: Why do we never have to fear that we will be unable to do what God requires of us? If a person complained of being inadequate, what problems might there be in his thinking or in his life?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:3](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

It is wise to accept whatever hardships our salvation may require

When fixing a problem involves pain, sometimes we postpone fixing it. Not many people enjoy a visit to the dentist, for example, and that's why many people will tolerate a toothache longer than they should. But if we would elevate our perspective a bit and take a longer range view of things, it would be obvious that it is almost always easier to fix problems than to live with the consequences of not fixing them. Certainly that is so with regard to the problem of sin.

God wants to repair the damage sin has done to our character, and the repair often involves some pain at the hands of the Great Physician, at least in the short term. Among other things, there is God's chastening, the discomfort of breaking old habits, the continuing pain of the consequences of sins committed in the past, and perhaps even persecution because we are trying to do what is right. These and many other things may make it look like staying in sin would be easier. But that would be a foolish, nearsighted view. The truth is, even in the here and now, "the way of transgressors is hard" (**Prov. 13:15 KJV**). And eternally, of course, hell will be considerably more difficult than any discomfort we might have had to endure in going to heaven. Wherever sin is involved, what seems easy right now will turn out to be the hardest way of all.

The good things in life usually come with a price, and salvation from sin is no different. Because of the price, many people turn away. Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (**Mt. 7:13,14**).

God sometimes asks us to do things that are outside of our "comfort zone." He never promised that doing His will would be easy, but He did promise it would be worth it. Throughout this week, let's meditate on the fact that ***it is wise to accept whatever hardships our salvation may require.*** And in our acceptance of these things, may we not have a grudging or complaining spirit. Instead, let's understand that it is a privilege to be delivered from our sins. Whatever difficulties may be involved, those are a small price to pay for the freedom and joy that await us at the end of the journey. Our afflictions are nothing more than "light momentary affliction" (**2 Cor. 4:17**).

Monday: Exodus 5:20,21; 6:9

Key Idea: The people of Israel resisted being rescued from their Egyptian bondage.

Questions for Family Growth: Back in **Exo. 4:1**, what problem had Moses anticipated? Why might Israel have been reluctant to leave Egypt? What should have been Moses' attitude about Israel's resistance to be rescued?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:4.**

Tuesday: Hebrews 3:16-4:13

Key Idea: Israel's bondage in Egypt represents our servitude to sin.

Questions for Family Growth: In what ways does Israel's journey to Canaan parallel our journey to heaven? What can we learn from Israel's mistakes at the start and then as the journey progressed? How can we keep our hearts and minds focused on the "Promised Land"?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:5](#).

Wednesday: Matthew 7:13,14

Key Idea: Being delivered from sin involves difficulty.

Questions for Family Growth: In what ways might salvation from sin prove to be difficult? What does it mean to "count the cost" of following Christ? What did Jesus say in [Lk. 14:25-33](#)? What are some of the costs of following Christ? What about the costs of not following Him?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:6](#).

Thursday: Exodus 14:10-12

Key Idea: If we're not thinking clearly, we may insist on being let alone in sin.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did the people of Israel become afraid, and what did they say to Moses in [v.12](#)? What is the application of this passage to us today? What are some situations in which we might say, "Leave us alone"?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:7](#).

Friday: 1 Peter 4:16-19

Key Idea: Deliverance from sin is worth whatever difficulty it may require.

Questions for Family Growth: What do we mean when we say, "The Lord never promised that following Him would be easy; He only promised it would be worth it"? In practical terms, how do we "commit" or "entrust" ourselves to God?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:8,9](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We sound forth God's word publicly by our congregational worship and Bible study

From time to time a congregation of Christians will plan a special series of services that are intended especially to communicate the gospel to those outside the church. An out-of-town speaker is invited, topics are selected that will be of some interest to non-Christians, and the members of the congregation are urged to invite as many as possible to come and hear what is taught. In all of these efforts, it is hoped that visitors will come and that those who do come will be positively influenced in the direction of obeying the gospel. In special services like these, we are very conscious of the need to conduct ourselves in the best way possible, so that the visitor will be drawn toward Christ rather than driven away.

But really, all of our services should be conducted in such a way as to be understandable to any outsider who may be present. Paul had some rather strong words on this point in **1 Corinthians 14**, where he addressed the problems in the assembly of the Corinthian Christians and warned the brethren not to do anything that would not edify the unbelievers in their midst. The assembly was primarily for the edification of the members of that congregation, but they needed to do what they did in such a way that it would not be a hindrance to any outsiders who might be present.

Certainly, it is true that we influence others privately when we live our individual lives as we should, but it is also true that ***we sound forth God's word publicly by our congregational worship and Bible study.*** We ought not to underestimate the importance or the power of our congregational assemblies to spread the gospel.

Sometimes people argue that unbelievers can no longer be converted to Christ by hearing the gospel preached publicly. It is doubtful, however, that there will ever come a time when we will not need to do what our brethren in the New Testament did. Private, personal teaching may be very important, but we still need to emulate the example of Paul, a teacher who could say, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house" (**Ac. 20:20**). We must not neglect either means of teaching. It's not either/or, but both/and. Both publicly and from house to house!

Monday: Acts 26:29

Key Idea: We should be able to invite others to do as we do.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul say he wished for Agrippa? Did Paul's statement mean that he had a problem with pride or self-righteousness? If not, what did he mean? What is the best recommendation of Christianity we can give?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:10.**

Tuesday: Philippians 1:27

Key Idea: In the New Testament, Christians worked together for the faith of the gospel.

Questions for Family Growth: How can Christians “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (NKJV)? More specifically, what does it mean to strive “together” for the gospel? How do we sometimes fall short of that goal?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:11](#).

Wednesday: 1 Thessalonians 1:8

Key Idea: In the New Testament, Christians “sounded forth” the word of God.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some practical ways the Thessalonians may have “sounded forth” the word of the Lord? In [Mt. 5:13-16](#), what did Jesus say should be true of us? What are some things that hinder us from sounding forth God’s word?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:12](#).

Thursday: Acts 20:20

Key Idea: In the New Testament, Christians studied God’s word publicly as well as privately.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul say he had not neglected to do while in Ephesus? In what two ways had he taught them? See also [Ac. 2:46,47](#) and [19:9,10](#). What are some of the special values or advantages of publicly teaching God’s word?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:13](#).

Friday: 1 Corinthians 14:13-19,23-25

Key Idea: The Christian assembly is to be edifying to outsiders who may be present.

Questions for Family Growth: Why was it important for the outsider to be able to say “Amen” to what is done in the Christian assembly? In [vv.24,25](#), what do we hope the unbeliever’s reaction will be to what he experiences in the assembly?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:14](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We can do whatever we should do concerning God's will

The age in which we live is an age of responsibility-dodging. We see it everywhere we look, don't we? In nearly every circumstance where wrong has been done, somebody will be heard to say that the person who did the deed is not responsible for it. Blame will be placed on the person's environment, his genetic inheritance, his childhood upbringing, his emotional disturbances, his learning disabilities, his addictions, or whatever else comes to mind as a scapegoat. Society itself is even held to be responsible for the misdeeds of certain people. Society doesn't seem to get the credit when someone does good, but it often gets the blame when someone does evil.

Those who know the Bible ought to know better than to make excuses for sin. God has given each of us a mind and a moral faculty. We are not animals, governed totally by instincts and hormones. We are free moral agents, blessed with the gift of discernment between good and evil — and we will be held accountable for how we use that gift.

The judgment day that is coming will be an accounting of how each person has used his free will, either to lovingly obey God or rebelliously reject Him. Having been endowed with the ability to choose our response to external events, God will hold us responsible for the choices we have made. No excuses will be allowed for instances in which we have consciously done something other than what our conscience told us we ought to do. If we stand before God in a lost condition, we will be “without excuse” (**Rom. 1:20; 2:1**).

Throughout this week, it will be helpful for us to consider this truth: *we can do whatever we should do concerning God's will*. Our Creator does not require of us deeds that are beyond our reach. Instead, He commands us to make choices that are within the realm of possibility, always providing a “way of escape” from any temptation (**1 Cor. 10:13**). And when God's will involves choices that are difficult for us, He generously supplies the help that we need to follow His lead. When we might make excuses and quibble about what we can't do, God simply asks that we trust His assurance that whatever needs to be done can be done through Christ, the One who has promised to strengthen us (**Phil. 4:13**). That thought will be our meditation this week.

Monday: 1 Corinthians 10:13

Key Idea: Obedience to God is a matter of choice.

Questions for Family Growth: What does “free will” mean? What do “responsibility” and “accountability” mean? Is it ever true to say that we had no choice but to sin? What does **1 Cor. 10:13** teach us about temptation and our response to it?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:15**.

Tuesday: 2 Timothy 2:15

Key Idea: We can be workers whose work the Lord is pleased with.

Questions for Family Growth: Is it really possible for a human being to present himself “approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed” (NKJV)? What other translations can you find for the expression “be diligent” (NKJV)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:16,17](#).

Wednesday: Romans 14:10-12

Key Idea: We must accept responsibility for our own actions.

Questions for Family Growth: What do we mean when we speak of a person being “accountable” before God? On the judgment day, will God accept any excuses for our sins? With regard to eternity, do we choose our own destiny or is it chosen for us?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:18](#).

Thursday: Philippians 4:13

Key Idea: God will help us do whatever it is His will for us to do.

Questions for Family Growth: What kind of God would require something of His creatures that was impossible for them to accomplish? Is there anything God wills for us to do that Christ would not help us do? If we believe in the reality of Christ’s help, how will that affect our praying?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:19](#).

Friday: Philippians 2:12,13

Key Idea: We must exert our will to obey God.

Questions for Family Growth: How might we describe the attitude of “fear and trembling” that we should have? What does it mean to “work out [our] own salvation”? Does it take will power to go to heaven? See [1 Cor. 9:27](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:20](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We ought to work hard to present ourselves approved to God

It is an obvious fact that we cannot earn our salvation with works of righteousness. Our salvation is the great gift of God's grace. Even so, the Bible teaches that we must work hard in God's service. We are to exert our best effort in whatever pertains to God, for He certainly deserves the highest and best that we can give to Him. The Hebrew writer said that pleasing God requires that we "believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (**Hb. 11:6 NKJV**). God must not only be sought, but He must be sought diligently.

Those who diligently seek God will find Him. In his old age, David charged his son Solomon with these words: "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever" (**1 Chron. 28:9**). If we seek God fervently and faithfully, we will find Him.

Pleasing God ought to be the highest thing we ever aspire to, and it ought to be something we willingly devote ourselves to every day. Paul wrote, "We make it our aim to please him" (**2 Cor. 5:9**). To have served in such a way that we receive God's favor, standing before Him "approved" and with "no need to be ashamed" (**2 Tim. 2:15**), will be a joyous privilege worth far more than anything we may have to sacrifice to receive it. Whatever duties may be involved in our relationship to God, these are joyfully accepted as a privilege rather than a burden. Our love for God makes all the difference between a heavy burden and a "light" one (**Mt. 11:30**).

But now is the time to work hard in God's service. Solomon observed, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going" (**Eccl. 9:10**). As the old saying goes, anything worth doing is worth doing right — and anything worth doing right is worth doing right now. The day of judgment when we will account for our work hastens on. ***We ought to work hard to present ourselves approved to God.*** This week, let's devote some time and attention to that priority. Nothing in life comes close to being as important.

Monday: Ecclesiastes 9:10

Key Idea: In whatever good work we are engaged, we ought to be diligent.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to do something with all our "might"? What does this verse say about the grave ("Sheol")? What are the rewards of working hard? What are the consequences of not doing so?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:21.**

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 4:2

Key Idea: As “stewards” in the Lord’s work, we need to be “faithful.”

Questions for Family Growth: What is a steward, and why is faithfulness so important in the work of a steward? What are some of the consequences, both now and later, when we show ourselves to be undependable in the Lord’s work?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:22](#).

Wednesday: Hebrews 5:11-14

Key Idea: We ought to become “skilled” in the word of righteousness.

Questions for Family Growth: What is “skill” and how is it acquired? What would it mean to be skilled in the word of righteousness? According to [v.14](#), what are the spiritually mature able to do as a result of “constant practice”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:23](#).

Thursday: Colossians 3:22-24

Key Idea: Whatever we do “as for the Lord,” we ought to do it heartily.

Questions for Family Growth: In this passage, what is the immediate application of Paul’s words to servants? Is there a principle here that applies to all of us today? What is the difference between being “people-pleasers” and working to please God?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:24](#).

Friday: 2 Timothy 2:15

Key Idea: We ought to do our work in the Lord so that we have no need to be ashamed.

Questions for Family Growth: Why is diligence required in order to be acceptable workers for the Lord? Is it really possible to live and work so as to be “approved” to God. What do we learn from [Hb. 11:5,6](#) about pleasing God?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:25](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Our fellowship with God depends upon our living in His truth

God created us in His own image. One thing this means is that we are “persons,” and we are able to have a “personal” relationship with Him. Another thing it means is that we are able to have personal relationships with our fellow human beings. When through the gospel we are forgiven of our sins and restored to a right relationship with God, we are able to live with God in what is called “fellowship” (1 Jn. 1:3), and we are also able to have fellowship with other faithful Christians. Peter wrote to those “who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pt. 1:1). The fellowship that Christians have among themselves is possible only because of the fellowship that each has individually with God.

There is no fellowship with God, even after we obey the gospel of Christ, if we do not live, or “walk,” according to God’s will. John said, “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (1 Jn. 1:6). ***Our fellowship with God depends upon our living in His truth.*** Jesus prayed to God on behalf of His disciples, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17). It is only on the basis of this truth that the unity is possible for which Jesus prayed: “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn. 17:21).

The basis of our fellowship in the local congregation is that each member individually is in fellowship with God. When any member severs his fellowship with God by walking “disorderly” (2 Thess. 3:6 NKJV) or “in darkness” (1 Jn. 1:6), and if he refuses to repent and return to the Lord, then we have no choice but terminate our fellowship with that person. We cannot have fellowship with one who is not in fellowship with God (Rev. 2:14-16; etc.).

Our intent ought to be to receive all those who have fellowship with God, and reject those who do not. Care must be exercised, of course, but while the judgment must be made carefully, we cannot avoid the responsibility of making it. To the best of our ability — and with the utmost reverence and humility — we must seek fellowship with those who are in a right relationship with God. It matters greatly who has fellowship with God and who does not.

Monday: 1 John 1:1-4

Key Idea: Faithful Christians have fellowship both with God and with one another.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.3, with whom did John say he had fellowship? In vv.1,2, what was the basis of that fellowship? When the gospel was declared to others, what other fellowship was possible, according to v.3?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 15:26.

Tuesday: Ephesians 4:15,16

Key Idea: Our relationship with other Christians grows out of our relationship to Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: Who is the head of the body? In **v.15**, what is our goal with respect to the head? What is said about the body in **v.16**? If he or she is not connected to the head, can any member be connected to other members?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:27**.

Wednesday: 3 John 9,10

Key Idea: It is wrong to exclude from our fellowship those who are in fellowship with God.

Questions for Family Growth: What did John say Diotrephes had done? Was what he had done right and acceptable to God? In correcting this kind of problem, should we just accept anyone who claims to be in fellowship with God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:28**.

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Key Idea: It is wrong to include in our fellowship those who are not in fellowship with God.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul say the church should do about the man he spoke of? What was said about “judging” a brother in **vv.12,13**? Why does this not conflict with what Jesus said about judging in **Mt. 7:1-5**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:29**.

Friday: Romans 14:12

Key Idea: Each of us must give account of himself individually to God.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that we will give “account” of ourselves to God? Can one person do this for another? Does this mean we should not make any distinction between those who are faithful to the Lord and those who are not? Consider **Mal. 3:18**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:30**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We are wise if we seriously consider the end of life

Most people have heard about Jesus' story of the wise man and the foolish man in [Mt. 7:24-27](#). The wise man looked ahead and made preparation for his future needs, while the foolish man assumed that things would never change and he could get by doing very little about the future. Having built his house on a solid foundation, the wise man was ready when the storm broke. "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock" ([Mt. 7:25](#)). The wise man's wisdom lay in his looking forward. He based his actions today on what his needs would be tomorrow.

Most of us understand that we are going to face a great test in the future: we are going to die and stand before God in judgment ([Hb. 9:27](#)). We know that those events are going to happen, but like the foolish man, we often fail to make preparation. We glide through daily life as if things were always going to continue as they have in the past, and we forget what we know about the end of life. Moses prayed for the people of Israel, "Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" ([Deut. 32:29 NKJV](#)). *We are wise if we seriously consider the end of life.* Quality lives do not happen by chance — they are the result of a definite choice to pursue a worthy goal.

It is possible to live in such a relationship with God that we are ready to die. When we obey the gospel of Christ and live in daily fellowship with our Heavenly Father, we do not have to dread the prospect of judgment. John wrote, "And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming" ([1 Jn. 2:28](#)).

Throughout the coming week, let's make it our goal to think more seriously about death and judgment. If we avoid doing that "today," then "tomorrow" will be a terrible prospect: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" ([Hb. 10:31](#)). But if we wisely live in preparation for the end of life, then we "may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world" ([1 Jn. 4:17](#)). If we want the end, or goal, of life to be a joyful outcome, today is the day to do something about that.

Monday: Hebrews 9:27

Key Idea: It is certain that we will die and stand before God in judgment.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that we are "appointed" to die? What is the "judgment" that is said to come after death? What difference should it make in our lives if we know these things? See [1 Jn. 4:17](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 15:31-33](#).

Tuesday: Revelation 20:12

Key Idea: Judgment will be according to our deeds while we lived.

Questions for Family Growth: Describe what John saw in this verse. What are the “books” that were opened? What are the “works” according to which the dead were judged? In **2 Cor. 5:10**, what did Paul say we will receive?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:1.**

Wednesday: 2 Kings 20:1

Key Idea: While we have opportunity, we ought to “set our house in order.”

Questions for Family Growth: What happened to Hezekiah the king, and what message was sent to him? What are some things a person might do to set his “house” in order? How should we prepare for our death?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:2.**

Thursday: Hebrews 2:14,15

Key Idea: In Christ, we are released from the fear of death.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “fear of death” that we are released from in Christ? Compared to the worldly person’s attitude toward death, what should the faithful Christian’s attitude be? Consider **Phil. 1:21-24** and **1 Jn. 2:28**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:3.**

Friday: Matthew 6:19-21

Key Idea: We ought to spend our lives laying up “treasures in heaven.”

Questions for Family Growth: What are the “treasures on earth” Jesus spoke about? In contrast, what are “treasures in heaven”? What did Jesus say about our hearts? How should we be “wise” according to **Deut. 32:29**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:4.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

In all that we do, we ought to glorify God and give Him thanks

In **Psa. 14:1**, David said, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” Obviously, it is a foolish thing to disbelieve in God. To adopt the philosophy that God does not exist is to ignore the plain testimony that the universe itself bears to its Maker. But David’s statement probably envisions a kind of foolishness that goes beyond the bold denial of the atheist. The fool in this psalm is anyone who lives as if God does not have to be taken into account, whether he denies there is a God or he simply ignores God in the practical affairs of daily life. It is a most serious thing to live as if God were not going to require an accounting for our lives. ***In all that we do, we ought to glorify God and give Him thanks.*** We ought to gladly assume our proper relationship to the God who made us, paying true reverence to Him not only in our words but also in our deeds.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul identified the root problem from which sin grows: “For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (**Rom. 1:20,21**). Sin comes from (a) not honoring God as God, and (b) not being thankful to Him as our Creator.

So our real problem in regard to God is not that we do not know He exists, but that we refuse to acknowledge Him as we should. Like those in ancient times who “did not see fit to acknowledge God” (**Rom. 1:28**), we often push out of our minds that which we know is true about God. But ignoring the truth does not make it go away. Facts are still facts, and the question of whether we are going to honor God is a question that has to be dealt with.

Let’s work on the concept of “reverence” this week. God is our Maker. We owe Him honor and thankfulness for the dignity He has bestowed upon us. That honor and thankfulness are to be lived out in the practical deeds of everyday life. There is no greater foolishness than to ignore God — and no greater wisdom than to properly worship Him. We are glorious creatures made in the very image of God. Let’s not only recognize that fact but be exceedingly thankful for it.

Monday: Psalm 8:3-8

Key Idea: Our glory is in our dignity as creatures of God.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the thing that the psalmist found surprising? What does it mean that God has crowned man with “glory and honor”? How should we recognize and appreciate that glory?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:5.**

Tuesday: Psalm 14:1

Key Idea: It is foolish to leave God out of our reckoning.

Questions for Family Growth: Who is the “fool” in this psalm: the person who absolutely does not believe there is a God or the one who simply ignores God? What are some practical ways that we may leave God out of our thinking?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:6.**

Wednesday: James 4:13-17

Key Idea: It is boastfully arrogant to leave God out of our reckoning.

Questions for Family Growth: Why is it boastful to make our plans for life without regard to God? What is the example that James gives of this kind of boastfulness? What is the proper attitude that we should have?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:7.**

Thursday: Romans 14:10-12

Key Idea: On the judgment day, there will be no one who does not acknowledge God’s honor.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that “each of us will give account of himself to God”? Why will there be no atheists at the judgment? On that day, will there be any place to hide from the truth about God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:8.**

Friday: Romans 1:18-23

Key Idea: We always ought to honor God as our Creator and live thankfully.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the problem Paul discusses in **v.21**? As Christians, how should we “glorify” God day to day? How should we show that we are “thankful”? What does true “reverence” require of us?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:9.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Confidence in the reliability of the Scriptures leads us to have faith in God Himself

Many people find it interesting to study the Bible. However, we do not study the Bible just because it is interesting. We study it as God's word in order to find eternal life in God. Jesus said to the Jews, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (Jn. 5:39). Those to whom Jesus spoke did not find the life they were looking for because their hearts were hardened by a disobedient, irreverent attitude. Nevertheless, they were correct in their assumption that the way to life could be found in God's word. It is in the words of God's truth that we find the path that leads to God.

In praying to God, Jesus said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn. 17:1-3). Eternal life consists of knowing God — personal knowledge of the eternal Father who created us.

The knowledge of God comes through the truth about Himself that God has revealed in the Scriptures. There is no knowing God, and hence no eternal life, without taking into our hearts the words of the Scriptures. To know God, we must learn what the Scriptures say about Him.

So if we wish to have a stronger faith in God, it is important to strengthen our faith in the Scriptures themselves. Questions about the inspiration, authority, and historical accuracy of the biblical documents are exceedingly important. **Confidence in the reliability of the Scriptures leads us to have faith in God Himself.** Whatever increases our trust in the Bible helps us in that it strengthens our resolve to seek God through the words found in the Bible.

Throughout the coming week, it will be good for us to go back and strengthen the foundations of our faith in the reliability of the Scriptures. The words of Scripture are "breathed out by God" and they are "profitable." Through them we may become "complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Let's study and think and meditate like those who really believe that.

Monday: John 17:1-3

Key Idea: We cannot enjoy eternal life without coming to know God.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus mean by the expression "eternal life"? What are some things that might be involved in "knowing" God? Is there a difference between knowing God and knowing about God?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 16:10-15.

Tuesday: 2 Timothy 3:14,15

Key Idea: It is through the Scriptures that we come to have a saving knowledge of God.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul say Timothy should “continue” in? From whom had Timothy learned the Scriptures? See **2 Tim. 1:5**. What does it mean that the Scriptures are able to make us “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:16**.

Wednesday: John 20:30,31

Key Idea: The truth contained in the Scriptures is the foundation of our faith in God.

Questions for Family Growth: Why, according to John, were the “signs” of Jesus written down? How can the words of a written document cause us to have faith in a living Person? Do we have any other way of gaining information about Jesus?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:17**.

Thursday: Romans 15:4-6

Key Idea: The truth contained in the Scriptures gives us patience, comfort, and hope in God.

Questions for Family Growth: Why were the things “written in former days” recorded for us? If they were written for our benefit, should we not study them diligently? What is the difference between patience, comfort, and hope?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:18,19**.

Friday: 2 Timothy 3:16,17

Key Idea: It is through the Scriptures that we learn how God wants us to live.

Questions for Family Growth: What is meant by the word “inspiration” (NKJV)? Consider the ESV translation “breathed out by God.” What does it mean that the Scriptures are “profitable”? For what things are they profitable? What is the end result of our learning from the Scriptures?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:20**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

The church is a place where we should be challenged to grow

When each of us obeyed the gospel of Christ, we were added to His body, the church, in its universal sense (all of the saved, throughout all places and times). But if we are fortunate to live where there are other faithful Christians, we also have the privilege of participating in a local congregation (an assembly of Christians in a particular place). We need to appreciate the local church for the blessing it is, but we also need to understand the purpose it was meant to serve.

At present, we have not have reached full maturity in our spiritual growth. We are striving for “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13), but we are not there yet. Obviously, there are things we need to be doing in our private lives to help ourselves grow. But we also need to be helping one another to grow. So Christ designed the local church to be a relationship in which each of us can contribute to the growth of one another. Whatever secondary benefits there may be to membership in a local congregation, this is the primary one. And this is the main question we need to be asking ourselves: are we helping one another to grow toward maturity in Christ? If not, some adjustments need to be made as soon as possible.

It’s hard to imagine how a person could get along without the spiritual help that is provided by the congregation. It’s a hard world, and we’re all tempted to become unfaithful to the Lord. We need the support and exhortation of our brothers and sisters to remain steadfast and keep growing.

We have a responsibility to help one another in this way, but we should be glad to fulfill this responsibility. If we love one another, this will be our desire. Love is always concerned for the greatest good of the other person, and if love would serve another person in lesser ways, it would certainly want to serve them in spiritual matters. We never have a greater opportunity than when we have a chance to help a fellow Christian grow stronger in the faith.

The local congregation provides many blessings to us, for which are thankful. But while we’re giving thanks for the fact that our brethren comfort us and soothe us, let’s also be grateful that they exhort us. *The church is a place where we should be challenged to grow.* That is its purpose.

Monday: Ephesians 4:11-14

Key Idea: In His body, the church, Christ has made provision for our spiritual growth.

Questions for Family Growth: According to v.12, what is the purpose for which the saints must be “equipped”? In v.13, describe the end result of the process that was outlined in v.12. Will this goal be reached perfectly in this life? Does that mean we should not pursue it diligently?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 16:21.

Tuesday: Ephesians 4:15,16

Key Idea: The church grows toward maturity when each part of the body does its part.

Questions for Family Growth: How is the truth to be spoken? In **v.15**, what is the goal of our spiritual growth? What do we learn in **v.16** about the importance of each part of the body? What are some things each of us can do to encourage our brothers and sisters to grow in Christ?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:22**.

Wednesday: Philippians 2:1-4

Key Idea: If we're concerned about one another, we'll serve each other's spiritual interests.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.3**, what does it mean to "count others more significant than yourselves"? What are some of the "interests" that Paul might have in mind in **v.4**? Can you think of an example of someone sacrificing to serve the spiritual interests of a fellow Christian?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:23**.

Thursday: Hebrews 10:23-25

Key Idea: In the assemblies of the church, we are to exhort one another.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.24**, what are we to "consider"? What does it mean to "stir up" another person? What are the two things that Christians are to stir up in one another? What opportunities do we have in the assemblies of the church to encourage each other's growth?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:24**.

Friday: 2 Peter 3:17,18

Key Idea: We are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What would it mean to grow in "grace"? What about "knowledge"? What steps can we take to grow in these two things? If a brother or sister is not growing in these areas, what responsibilities do we have toward them, both individually and as a church?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:25**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

As Christians, we are God's own special people

When God had delivered the nation of Israel from their bondage in Egypt, He led them to the foot of Mount Sinai. There He entered into a covenant with them: “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel” (**Exo. 19:5,6**). Similar words were spoken on other occasions. In **Lev. 26:12**, for instance, God said, “I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” Clearly, it was God’s will for the nation of Israel to enjoy a unique relationship with Him.

But as special as the relationship was that God entered into with the physical nation of Israel, that relationship was only meant to foreshadow and prepare for the even more special union between God and spiritual Israel, which is the church of Jesus Christ. Today, those who are in Christ through obedience to the gospel are “God’s people” (**1 Pt. 2:10**). Peter says to us, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (**1 Pt. 2:9**). In Jesus Christ, we are the unique possession of God.

It is impressive to see that the blessings we enjoy as Christians (blessings we sometimes take for granted) are the very blessings that God promised as far back as Abraham (**Gen. 12:1-3; 22:18**; etc.). We are the heirs of everything God was working toward in the Old Testament, the recipients of the grace that was the culmination of God’s eternal purpose. Speaking of the great people of faith in the Old Testament, the Hebrew writer says, “All these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (**Hb. 11:39,40**). For the theme of our study this week, let’s consider the idea that *as Christians, we are God’s own special people*. With the blood of His dear Son, God has purchased us to be His possession (**Ac. 20:28**). As God’s people, we ought to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [we] have been called” (**Eph. 4:1**).

Monday: Genesis 22:15-18

Key Idea: God promised that He would bless all nations in the “seed” of Abraham.

Questions for Family Growth: How had Abraham’s faith been tested in this chapter? What did God mean by saying that in Abraham’s “seed” (NKJV) He would bless all the nations of the earth? What do we learn in **Gal. 3:15-18** about God’s promise to Abraham?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:26**.

Tuesday: Galatians 3:7-9,25-29

Key Idea: Christians are the recipients of the blessings of God's promise to Abraham.

Questions for Family Growth: Who are those identified as the "sons" of Abraham and "heirs according to promise"? In **vv. 7,9**, what does it mean to be "of faith"? According to **v.27**, what does baptism have to do with being "in Christ"?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:27-30.**

Wednesday: Hebrews 11:39,40

Key Idea: We today can enjoy the fulfillment of all that God did in past ages.

Questions for Family Growth: What is meant by the statement that God "provided something better for us"? Who are "they," and how is it that "apart from us they should not be made perfect"? In **Hb. 12:1**, how can their faithfulness be an encouragement to us?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:31.**

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Key Idea: Physical Israel foreshadowed the relationship of God to His people in Christ today.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the basic instruction that Christians are given in this passage? How does Paul use quotations concerning Old Testament Israel to support his exhortation to New Testament Christians?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:32.**

Friday: 1 Peter 2:9,10

Key Idea: Christians are "the people of God."

Questions for Family Growth: In what sense are Christians "a chosen race"? A "royal priesthood"? A "holy nation" and a "people for his own possession"? As the people of God, what are we to "proclaim"?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 16:33.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We ought to pursue the things that make for true happiness

We should be thankful that we live in a nation where the “pursuit of happiness” is considered an unalienable right. That privilege is a blessing. Not only that, but we also can be grateful that our civil government does not define happiness for us and require us to pursue it in any particular way. Each citizen is free to have his own idea of happiness and pursue it according to his own values, as long as he does not infringe on the equal rights of others.

The evidence suggests that we as Americans take the pursuit of happiness as a very serious business. We spend more time and money on “pleasure” activities than we spend on anything else in our culture. Unfortunately, however, we often do not give adequate thought to what we are trying to accomplish, and we spend great portions of our lives chasing things that, in the end, do not really make us as happy as we thought they would.

What really are the components of genuine happiness? If we’re serious about answering that question, the account in **Genesis 2** of Adam and Eve’s happiness in the Garden of Eden will be of more than passing interest to us. In that wonderful place, before sin entered the world, the first man and woman enjoyed a perfect environment, supplied with everything the Creator knew they would need to enjoy everything they were created to enjoy: (1) fellowship with God Himself, (2) fellowship with one another, (3) contact with the natural world of God’s creation, (4) productive work, and (5) the goodness of God’s law.

What do we think today about these components of true happiness? Can we deny that we need each of them? Surely not, but if we recognize their importance, why do we neglect them as we often do? Why is it that we spend 90% of our time on things that are only 10% important? How can we expect to experience fulfillment and joy if we spend our lives “majoring in minors”?

This week, let’s look at the way we spend our time. ***We ought to pursue the things that make for true happiness.*** If we are spending too much time on relatively unimportant pursuits to the neglect of the things that we really do need, let’s adjust our priorities and correct the balance.

Monday: 1 John 1:1-4

Key Idea: Fellowship with God is the most important requirement for our happiness.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this passage, on what basis may we have fellowship with God? What does the word “fellowship” mean? Why is fellowship with God necessary for us to have true joy? What point is made in **Eccl. 12:13,14**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 17:1.**

Tuesday: Genesis 2:18

Key Idea: Fellowship with other human beings is also a part of our happiness.

Questions for Family Growth: Does the statement that it was not good for man to be “alone” apply only to the husband-wife relationship or do you think the principle can apply to other relationships also? Why do we need relationships with others?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:2](#).

Wednesday: Psalm 111:2

Key Idea: Contact with the physical world of God’s creation contributes to our happiness.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to “study” the works of God? What are the benefits to be gained from spending more time with things of God’s creation and less time with those of man’s creation? What do we learn from enjoying God’s world?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:3](#).

Thursday: Genesis 2:15

Key Idea: Good, productive work contributes to our happiness.

Questions for Family Growth: Did work come into the world as a part of the curse for sin, or was it in the Garden of Eden before sin? What did God put Adam in the Garden to do? What makes the difference between work that gives us joy and work that does not?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:4](#).

Friday: Psalm 19:7-11

Key Idea: Our happiness requires the commandments of God’s law.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the different things David says about God’s law and its goodness? Why are God’s commandments necessary for our happiness and joy? How can we develop a more positive attitude toward God’s law?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:5](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

In Christ, we are growing toward God's perfect holiness and glory

If growth is important to us physically, it is even more important spiritually. As those who have obeyed the gospel of Christ and been brought into a forgiven relationship with God, we are still a long way from where we need to be in our thoughts, emotions, and decisions. What God wants is for us to “grow up” in our likeness to His character. And in Christ He has provided all that we need to experience this growth. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

It would be a mistake for us to think that this growth is optional. Certainly, we are saved by God's grace, and no amount of good works on our part could ever merit the forgiveness He has extended to us. Nevertheless, He expects us to grow to maturity in Christ, and this requires a decision on our part to cooperate with His plan for our perfection. If we're negligent or lazy, we can't depend on grace to get us to heaven (Hb. 6:11,12).

But think about what heaven will mean for those who have yielded to God's plan. *In Christ, we are growing toward God's perfect holiness and glory.* Even in this life, our highest goal ought to be maturity in Christ (at least as much maturity as is possible for us to reach in this world). But in heaven, we will have reached not just partial maturity; we will have become exactly what God always wanted us to be — and that will be nothing less than creatures who completely share in His own glory. We will be perfect representations of the glory of the God who created us.

This week, let's ponder the greatness of the goal set before us in Jesus Christ. Making no excuses and sparing no effort, let's press toward that goal. There is much work yet to be done to eliminate the remainders of our carnal attitudes, ungodly habits, and sinful actions. God has provided everything we need to become more like Him in our thinking and acting. We can improve every day in our resemblance to Christ, our elder brother. “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29). If, in fact, we are works in progress, then we need to be making progress!

Monday: 2 Peter 1:3,4

Key Idea: It is God's will for us, as His children, to become partakers of His divine nature.

Questions for Family Growth: Having been forgiven of our past sins, what are some ways we need to begin growing in godly character? According to vv.3 in this reading, what resources are available to us to help accomplish this growth? In Eph. 4:13,16, what is our main goal in this life?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:6.

Tuesday: 2 Peter 1:5-11

Key Idea: Beginning at the point of our initial obedience to the gospel, we are to grow in godliness.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the things Peter says we must add to our faith? Why does it take “diligence” (NKJV) on our part to acquire these things? In v.8, what will happen if we do not grow in these ways? What does Peter exhort us to do in vv.10,11?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:7.

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 3:18

Key Idea: As we grow in Christ, we are transformed into higher and higher degrees of glory.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Paul mean that we behold “as in a mirror the glory of the Lord” (NKJV)? What does he mean that we “are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (ESV)? What should be our attitude toward this process?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:8.

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Key Idea: Our hardships in this world are a part of the process of our growth toward God’s glory.

Questions for Family Growth: Although our “outer self” is perishing, what is happening to our “inner self”? How is it that Paul can say our troubles in this world are no more than “light momentary affliction”? What is the “eternal weight of glory” that he speaks of in this passage?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:9.

Friday: Revelation 22:3-5

Key Idea: At the end of our growth process, we will see our Father’s face.

Questions for Family Growth: If our inner character has grown in its likeness to our Father’s character, how much should it mean to us to know that we will one day be with Him in heaven? Why is it so hard for us to long for this glory as much as we should?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:10.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Truly trusting God means letting go of other sources of security

Most people are familiar with at least some of the Bible passages that teach us to trust in God. We understand this to be such an important principle that, as a nation, we have inscribed it on our money: “In God We Trust.” If there is anything that is universally agreed upon as important, it is faith — or confidence in God.

But there is another side to faith. *Truly trusting God means letting go of other sources of security.* And here is where many people back away from the biblical presentation of faith. It is one thing to say that we have put our confidence in God, but it is another to let go of all the other props and supports that we have come to depend on. It’s fine, we think, to have faith in the invisible God, but we’d like to hedge our bets with a little visible insurance.

When the nation of Israel faced various military threats — enemies such as the Babylonians, who came to fight against them with fearful force — God instructed His people not only to rely on His deliverance but also not to try to support themselves with military alliances with other nations. Through Isaiah, for example, God said, “Ah, stubborn children . . . who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!” (Isa. 30:1,2).

The people of Israel would have said, if anybody asked them, that they trusted God’s wisdom and His protection, but they also took it as a matter of common sense that whatever means of worldly support were available, it would be foolish not to take advantage of these.

Just as Israel was tempted to rely on other help other than what God provided, so we may fail to place our total confidence in Him. We may “supplement” our faith in God with a variety of earthly confidences: worldly wealth, wisdom, and power. But all these are doomed to failure. This week, let us renew our faith in the complete sufficiency of God’s help — and resist the temptation to give a part of our heart to the world.

Monday: 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Key Idea: We ought to trust in God rather than in temporal riches.

Questions for Family Growth: What are those “rich in this present age” commanded to do? In what ways might we show, despite our words to the contrary, that we trust in riches? What does **Prov. 11:28** say about trusting in riches?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 17:11.**

Tuesday: Philippians 3:3-11

Key Idea: We ought to trust in God rather than in fleshly accomplishments.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul mean when he said had “no confidence in the flesh”? What were the “fleshly” things he might have put his trust in? Why is it foolish to derive our security from such things?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:12](#).

Wednesday: Proverbs 3:5,6

Key Idea: We ought to trust in God rather than in our own wisdom and understanding.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to trust in the Lord with “all [our] heart”? What are we told not to “lean” on? What should we do when God’s word conflicts with what seems best to us?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:13](#).

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

Key Idea: We ought to trust in God rather than in ourselves.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul say about the ordeal he had endured in Asia? What did this experience teach him? What did Moses say about God to Israel in [Deut. 8:3](#)? What should Israel have learned by the manner in which God provided their food?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:14](#).

Friday: Jeremiah 17:5-8

Key Idea: Real security comes from trusting in God.

Questions for Family Growth: What picture is given of the person who “makes flesh his strength”? What picture is given of the one who “trusts in the LORD”? In practical terms, how do we show that we trust God?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:15](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Prayer is something we should constantly strive to learn more about

It must have been a wonderful experience for Jesus' disciples to hear Him pray. Given the close relationship between Jesus and the Father, it must have been a moving experience actually to hear the words with which He spoke to God. It is no surprise that, having heard the Lord pray, the disciples wanted Him to teach them more about prayer: "Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples'" (Lk. 11:1).

Prayer is something we should constantly strive to learn more about. As the years go by, we tend to settle into certain routines in our praying, and we need to make the effort throughout life to grow deeper and deeper in the knowledge of what prayer should be. Indeed, there is more to learn about communicating with God than we could learn in a long lifetime. The challenge is to keep learning and growing.

You may not have thought about it, but prayer is one of the principal means of coming to know God more fully. We study the Scriptures to gain truth about God, of course. Indeed, the Scriptures are our primary source of information about God. But we come to a richer understanding of what we know about God as we communicate back to Him in prayer. God having spoken to us in the Scriptures, we gain insight into His character as we pray to Him. It is a good idea for us to talk to God in prayer about what we have learned about Him in the Scriptures.

Think of it this way: in prayer, we must speak with God in the context of our own experience. In using our own words to talk to God — based on what we know of Him through the Scriptures — we apply our knowledge of Him to the real-life activities that we have been through. In talking through these things with God, we come to understand the truth of God's truth. We learn the real significance of the truths and principles that we have learned in the Bible. Prayer, then, does not allow God to know more about us — it allows us to know more about God. Throughout the coming week, then, let's pray more sincerely, and in doing so let's learn more what God intends prayer to be. We are never praying better than when our prayers are helping us to understand God.

Monday: Matthew 6:5-8

Key Idea: We ought to pray sincerely unto God, and not for worldly reasons.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.5, how did Jesus say the "hypocrites" prayed? What was wrong with the praying of the "Gentiles" in v.7? What did Jesus teach about the way His disciples should pray?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:16.

Tuesday: Matthew 6:9,10

Key Idea: We ought to pray in a way that shows true reverence for God.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the manner in which Jesus said we should pray? Is it significant that this prayer begins as it does? What does it mean to “hallow” God’s name? What should we pray concerning God’s kingdom and His will?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:17](#).

Wednesday: Matthew 6:11

Key Idea: We ought to pray that God will provide for our daily needs.

Questions for Family Growth: What kinds of things might be included in the expression “daily bread”? If God already knows what we need ([v.8](#)), why should we ask Him for our needs? What does it mean to ask for the things we need “this day”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:18](#).

Thursday: Matthew 6:12

Key Idea: We ought to pray for God’s forgiveness of our sins.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the “debts” mentioned here? Why is it so important that we forgive those who have sinned against us? Consider [vv.14,15](#). With what attitude of heart should we pray for forgiveness?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:19](#).

Friday: Matthew 6:13

Key Idea: We ought to pray that God will help us to be strong spiritually.

Questions for Family Growth: What is “temptation,” and what should be our prayer concerning that experience? What should we pray concerning “evil” (ESV) or the “evil one” (NKJV)? With what words did Jesus conclude this great prayer?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:20](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Like Noah, we ought to have an obedient trust in God

Faith — the confidence we can have in realities that are unseen — is a powerful force. Even in the secular affairs of life, it is confidence in truths that are unseen that motivates most of the great work that is done in the world. But the faith that accomplishes such great things is far different from what many people think of when they think of faith.

In spiritual matters, the Bible teaches that genuine faith moves us to obey God, to do the things that He has commanded. Without such obedience, faith is dead ([Jas. 2:26](#)). Faith is not merely a passive feeling that we have about God; it is an energetic willingness (based on trust and confidence in God Himself) to do His will in our daily lives.

There is no better example of faith than Noah. “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” ([Hb. 11:7](#)). Noah’s confidence in the reality of God and in the certainty of anything that God promised moved him to build the ark, a project that surely would have looked foolish to anyone of less faith. Whatever his skeptical neighbors might have thought, Noah obeyed God because He trusted God. His inward confidence in the reliability of God made a difference in his outward deeds.

Like Noah, we ought to have an obedient trust in God. It is not enough for us to say that we “believe” in God if we don’t trust Him enough to do what He commands. “Faith” that balks at obeying God is not really faith because it does not trust God where trust really counts: in our actions. As the saying goes, “talk is cheap.” Anyone can claim to have faith, but the ultimate test is in the way we make our decisions and conduct our lives.

Throughout the coming week, let’s devote some time to thinking about the quality of our faith. In areas where we may not understand the rationale for what God commands, let’s trust that God knows what He is doing. Because we have faith that God is wise and that He will never lead us astray, let’s obey whatever God’s will is.

Monday: Hebrews 11:1

Key Idea: Faith is the assurance that certain things are real even if we can’t see them physically.

Questions for Family Growth: What is meant by “the assurance of things hoped for”? What is “the conviction of things not seen”? Does faith mean believing things just because we want to believe them? Has God ever asked us to have faith without sufficient evidence or reasons?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:21](#).

Tuesday: Hebrews 11:7

Key Idea: It was faith that moved Noah to build the ark.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this verse, what had God told Noah was going to happen? What was it about building the ark that required faith on Noah's part? By his faithful act, how did Noah "condemn the world"? What is "the righteousness that comes by faith"?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:22](#).

Wednesday: Genesis 6:11-22

Key Idea: Because of his faith, Noah carried out God's instructions exactly.

Questions for Family Growth: Why had God decided to destroy mankind? What did God command Noah to do? What instructions about this did God give Noah? What does [v.22](#) say about Noah's obedience? Without this obedience, would Noah have been saved from the flood?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:23](#).

Thursday: 2 Peter 3:1-7

Key Idea: Faith enables us to have confidence in some things that are hard to believe.

Questions for Family Growth: Concerning the return of Christ, what did Peter say some scoffers would argue? What mistake would these scoffers be making if they thought this way? What parallel does Peter make between this situation and that of Noah's day?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:24](#).

Friday: 1 Peter 3:20,21

Key Idea: For us, baptism is an act of faith similar to the faith of Noah.

Questions for Family Growth: In Noah's day, what enabled eight people to be "brought safely through the water"? How, according to [v.21](#), is baptism parallel to the saving of Noah's family from the flood? By building the ark, did Noah earn his "salvation"? If not, was building the ark optional?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:25](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Our confidence in the gospel rests on a solid foundation

The apostle John wrote that it is possible for us to know that we have eternal life: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 Jn. 5:13). We do not need to be in doubt about whether we are in a right relationship with God. We can know that we are saved and find peace in our relationship with God.

Knowing that we are saved, however, depends on our having responded rightly to God’s will as it pertains to our salvation — and all we can know of God’s will is what is revealed to us in the gospel records, that is, the writings that tell us what the apostles heard and saw of Jesus. Our confidence in our salvation, therefore, rests upon our certainty that apostles’ testimony is true. For this reason, it is important for us to be sure that what Christ originally taught is true and that the apostles’ written records are reliable. Fortunately, the trustworthiness of the gospel is something we can be sure about. *Our confidence in the gospel rests on a solid foundation.*

As he introduced his careful account of the Lord’s ministry, Luke stated: “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (Lk. 1:1-4). By thoughtful consideration of the gospel account, we can know the truth about what really happened during Jesus’ life and ministry.

If we do not pay careful attention to the truth of the gospel throughout our lives, however, we may lose our grip on that truth. The Hebrew writer cautioned: “We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.” (Hb. 2:1). We will be saved “if indeed [we] continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that [we] heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven” (Col. 1:23). This week, let’s be reminded not only of the trustworthiness of the gospel, but also of our need to give “earnest heed” to it. Let’s renew our commitment to be faithful to the truth of the gospel.

Monday: Luke 1:1-4

Key Idea: It is possible to be sure about the truth of the gospel of our salvation.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Luke say it seemed good to him to write? According to v.4, what should be the result of our having the kind of information contained in Luke’s gospel? Consider also Jn. 20:30,31.

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:26.

Tuesday: Hebrews 2:2-4

Key Idea: The gospel was announced by the Lord Himself.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.3**, what happened “at first”? Consider also **Hb. 1:1-4**. How could the Lord have proclaimed the gospel if His kingdom was not established until after His ascension? According to **Mt. 4:17**, what did Jesus preach about the kingdom?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 17:27,28**.

Wednesday: Hebrews 2:2-4

Key Idea: The gospel was confirmed by eyewitnesses of the Lord.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.3**, after the Lord’s announcement of the gospel, what did those do “who heard” what Jesus taught? Consider also **1 Jn. 1:1-4**. Many others heard and saw Jesus, but what was special about the testimony of the twelve apostles?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:1**.

Thursday: Hebrews 2:2-4

Key Idea: The gospel was further confirmed by God with miracles.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **v.4**, how did God “bear witness” to the truth of the gospel? Consider also **Mk. 16:19,20**. Why do we not need the gospel to continue to be confirmed with miracles like those that took place in the first century?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:2**.

Friday: Hebrews 2:1

Key Idea: Lest we drift away, we must pay careful attention to the gospel.

Questions for Family Growth: Just because we once were saved, does that mean it is impossible for us to be lost? What would it mean to “drift away” from the gospel? How can this be prevented? Consider also **Col. 1:21-23**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:3**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Jesus Christ came to set us free from the bondage of sin

Jesus often spoke about liberty and freedom. For instance, He said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (Jn. 8:32) and “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (Jn 8:36). There are many different vantage points from which we can look at the work of Christ for us, but this week, let’s look at that work in terms of the freedom He made possible for us. ***Jesus Christ came to set us free from the bondage of sin.***

The gospel of Christ is essentially a message of deliverance and rescue. On one occasion in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus quoted from the prophecy of Isaiah and applied the passage to Himself. Listen to these verses and think about what they mean: “And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’” (Lk. 4:17-21). According to this text, then, why did Jesus come to earth? To proclaim liberty to the captives.

Like many of the Jews to whom Jesus proclaimed the liberty of His gospel (Jn. 8:31-38), we often do not see how desperately we need to be set free. We are willfully ignorant of how tightly the chains of Satan are wrapped around us. But Jesus would say the same thing to us that He said to them: “Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin” (Jn. 8:34). Only when we have been set free in Christ can we look back and see what slaves we used to be.

As we study and pray this week, let’s be reminded of the price that had to be paid for us to be “set free . . . and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). It is a glorious freedom that we experience, and it is right for us to enjoy it — but each Lord’s Day when we remember our Savior’s death on the cross, let’s be humbled by the reminder that our freedom was purchased at a high price, paid by our Father.

Monday: Acts 26:15-18

Key Idea: Through Christ, we are delivered from the dominion of Satan.

Questions for Family Growth: In proclaiming the gospel of Christ, Paul would be turning people away from what? To what would they then be turned? According to Col. 1:13, what have we been delivered from?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 18:4.

Tuesday: Acts 2:37-39

Key Idea: Through Christ, we are set free from the guilt of our past sins.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that these people were “cut to the heart”? What were they seeking when they asked, “What shall we do?” What were they told to do in order to receive the forgiveness of their sins?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 18:5](#).

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 10:12,13

Key Idea: Through Christ, we are given the strength to resist temptation.

Questions for Family Growth: In [v.13](#), what can we be sure of based on the fact that “God is faithful”? When we are tempted, what does God always make possible for us? Is it ever true to say that we had no choice but to sin?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 18:6-8](#).

Thursday: 1 John 5:18

Key Idea: Through Christ, we are liberated from the habitual practice of sin.

Questions for Family Growth: What is meant when this verse tells us that the child of God “does not sin” (NKJV)? Consider [1 Jn. 2:1,2](#). According to [Tit. 2:14](#), what did Christ die to redeem us from? Should we sin more infrequently as time goes along?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 18:9](#).

Friday: Hebrews 2:14,15

Key Idea: Through Christ, we are released from the fear of death.

Questions for Family Growth: Whom did Christ destroy by His own death? According to [v.15](#), what is the result of what Christ has done for us? What is the victory Paul speaks of in [1 Cor. 15:56,57](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 18:10,11](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

God gave us the Lord's Supper to remind us of His Son's death for our sins

The words that describe the institution of the Lord's Supper ([Lk. 22:14-23](#); etc) ought to be familiar, but they ought not to be merely commonplace. It's not likely that we will love the Lord as we ought to if we get to the point where the remembrance of His death has become monotonous. We need to work diligently at keeping that remembrance fresh.

God gave us the Lord's Supper to remind us of His Son's death for our sins. That memorial is to be observed every first day of the week ([Ac. 20:7](#)). And we are given instruction in the New Testament concerning the manner of its observance: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself" ([1 Cor. 11:27-29](#)). The Lord's Supper will only benefit us as it should if we follow the Lord's instructions.

It is, therefore, a matter of spiritual life and death whether we "discern" the Lord's body when we partake of the Lord's Supper. To partake discerningly means to do so with conscious thoughtfulness of its meaning — and to have the proper attitude toward its meaning. Doing this is relatively easy just after we have been baptized into Christ, but as the years go by, it takes conscious effort to keep this special event from becoming simply a habit.

Let's make this week a time to think of ways we can help ourselves remember the Lord's death as we should. Whether as families or as individuals, let's think of and discuss things we can do to concentrate our attention on our Lord's death. Let's see what we can do to more thoughtfully "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" ([1 Cor. 11:26](#)).

The Lord's Supper is a gift given to us by our Heavenly Father. He knew we would need a regular means of remembering the sacrifice that made our forgiveness possible, and He has graciously provided this means in the bread and fruit of the vine that we partake of each Lord's Day. May we never forget what it is that we are to remember in this great act.

Monday: 1 Corinthians 11:23,24

Key Idea: The Lord's Supper is a commemoration.

Questions for Family Growth: What do we mean by the word "memorial"? Concerning the Lord's Supper, what did Jesus mean when He said, "Do this in remembrance of me?" Why is this remembrance so important to us as followers of Christ?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 18:12](#).

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 10:16,17

Key Idea: The Lord's Supper is a communion.

Questions for Family Growth: In what sense do we “commune” with Christ in the Lord's Supper? Do we also “commune” with one another as fellow Christians? How should the Lord's Supper help us to be unified as a congregation?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:13.**

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 11:26

Key Idea: The Lord's Supper is a proclamation.

Questions for Family Growth: What is it that we “proclaim” when we partake of the Lord's Supper? How long did Paul say we are to continue doing this? If this is to be an effective proclamation, in what manner and with what attitude should we participate in it?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:14.**

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 11:25

Key Idea: The Lord's Supper is a dedication.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did Jesus have to shed His blood to make “the new covenant” possible? Consider also **Hb. 9:15-22**. What should be our attitude toward this covenant as we partake of the Lord's Supper? What point is made in **Hb. 10:28,29**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:15.**

Friday: 2 Peter 3:10-13

Key Idea: The Lord's Supper is an anticipation.

Questions for Family Growth: What should be our attitude about the return of Christ? If we think this way about Christ's return, what kind of lives will we lead, according to **v.11**? In the Lord's Supper, what are we to continue doing “until he comes” (**1 Cor. 11:26**)?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:16.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Jesus Christ teaches us words of life

One of the most penetrating things Jesus ever said was spoken on the day following His feeding of the five thousand. When the multitude returned, eagerly seeking Him, He said: “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves” (Jn. 6:26). It is not enough to “seek” Jesus. Our motives must be right, and we must seek the higher things that Jesus is able to provide. From time to time, Jesus will provide “loaves and fishes,” but He desires to help us with problems much greater than physical hunger.

Because God is the Giver of every good thing in the physical world, it is tempting to seek Him primarily for those things. We may outwardly appear to be interested in spiritual things, but often our real interest is in what we want to enjoy in this life. The truth of this is seen in the fact that so many people quit serving God at the first sign that serving Him may not bring them a “happy” life in the here and now. There are very few people who will do what Job did: go on seeking and serving God even when it does not pay to do so in terms of temporal happiness (Job 1:1-2:10). The devil was wrong in his insinuation that Job did not “fear God for nothing” (Job 1:9 NKJV). But would he be right if he made the same charge against us?

We do, in fact, need certain things to live in the world. We ought to pray for our daily bread and be thankful for it (Mt. 6:11). God can providentially provide many things, some of which we need because God Himself created the need. We must understand, however, that we need God Himself much more than we need any physical blessing that He can give. Without God, we “die” — no matter how happily we “live” in this world.

Jesus did not come to make this world a happier place. He came to give us life in the world to come. Often, of course, eternal life makes for a happier life right now. But that should not be why we seek God. Seeking God is just that: seeking God, with or without the “food which perishes.” Peter, whose acceptance of life in Christ involved him in much hardship and eventual martyrdom, was thinking clearly when he said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6:68). *Jesus Christ teaches us words of life.* Throughout the coming week, let’s consider that, if need be, eternal life is worth the giving up of this life.

Monday: John 6:25-27

Key Idea: We need spiritual nourishment even more than physical food.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus say the people were seeking? What should they have been seeking, according to v.27? Consider what Jesus said about His own “food” in Jn. 4:34. What did Jesus say, in Mt. 4:3,4, when tempted by the devil? Also consider 1 Tim. 4:7,8.

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 18:17.

Tuesday: John 10:10

Key Idea: Jesus came into the world in order that we might have life.

Questions for Family Growth: What kind of “life” did Jesus make possible for us? What did Jesus mean when He spoke of our having life “abundantly”? What does **1 Tim. 6:17-19** say about laying hold on “that which is truly life”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:18.**

Wednesday: John 6:63

Key Idea: The words of Jesus are words of life.

Questions for Family Growth: What contrast is made between the “Spirit” and the “flesh”? What does the statement mean that Jesus’ words are “spirit and life”? What is the meaning of Jesus’ statement in **Jn. 5:24-26**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:19.**

Thursday: John 6:30-35

Key Idea: Jesus Himself is the Bread of Life.

Questions for Family Growth: What contrast is made between the manna Israel received in the wilderness and “the true bread from heaven” which we are able to receive? How is it possible for us to “not hunger” and “never thirst”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:20.**

Friday: John 6:66-69

Key Idea: It is Jesus — and Jesus alone — who has the words of eternal life.

Questions for Family Growth: What decision did many of the disciples make, and what seems to be the reason they made this choice? What did Jesus ask the twelve apostles? What is the meaning of Peter’s response in **vv.68,69**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:21.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

It is important to hear God's word reverently and obediently

Words are powerful things. Because words convey ideas and ideas influence our thinking, words can move us toward being what God wants us to be, or they can pull us away from that. For better or worse, our basic character right now is mainly the result of all the words that have influenced us over our lifetime.

Satan does his deadly work, of course, by means of deceitful words. His lies lead us to disobey God, and when we follow that lead, we die spiritually and are lost. Untruth is at the bottom of all that the devil does. Words that come from him are malicious and destructive in their falsehood. Concerning the devil, Jesus said, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" ([Jn. 8:44](#)).

In bold contrast, God's words are infallibly true — they give light and life. The writer of Hebrews went so far as to say, "it is impossible for God to lie" ([Hb. 6:18](#)). The power of God to salvation from sin is in the totally truthful gospel of Christ ([Rom. 1:16](#)). Jesus said it plainly: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" ([Jn. 8:32](#)). It is by words of truth that God breaks the power of the devil's deceit.

We need to have a deep, abiding respect for God's truth. No matter how powerful it is, the truth will not do us any good if we do not receive it properly. Since Jesus is "the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him" ([Hb. 5:9](#)), we must choose to listen and respond to God's word in an honest manner. And not only must we hear honestly, but we must be "doers of the word" ([Jas. 1:22](#)). As Jesus said, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand" ([Mt. 7:26](#)).

It is important to hear God's word reverently and obediently. It will be good if we make the coming week a week of growth in the quality of our hearing. Jesus warned, "Take care then how you hear" ([Lk. 8:18](#)), and that's a warning we need to pay frequent attention to.

Monday: Romans 1:16,17

Key Idea: The word of the gospel is God's power to salvation.

Questions for Family Growth: Of what did Paul say he was not ashamed? Why was he not ashamed of it? In what ways might we sometimes show that we have little faith in the power of God's word? According to [v.17](#), what is revealed in the gospel?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 18:22](#).

Tuesday: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Key Idea: God's word is able to make us "wise for salvation."

Questions for Family Growth: What was Timothy told to continue in? What did Paul say Timothy had known since childhood? What does "wise for salvation" mean? How do the Scriptures produce "faith in Christ Jesus"?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:23.**

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Key Idea: The power and wisdom of God's word may seem weak and foolish to the world.

Questions for Family Growth: Why do "those who are perishing" hear something different in the gospel than those "who are being saved"? How does God save us "through the foolishness of the message preached" (NKJV)?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:24.**

Thursday: James 1:19-25

Key Idea: God's word will save us only if we obey it.

Questions for Family Growth: How do we "receive with meekness the implanted word"? In **v.22**, what are we commanded to do? What does **Hb. 5:9** say about the source of our salvation? Are we saved by faith only?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 19:1.**

Friday: Luke 8:18

Key Idea: We need to take heed how we hear God's word.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean when we say that different people "hear" God's word differently? Can a person be lost for not hearing God's word accurately? What does it mean to "take heed" or "take care" how we hear?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 19:2.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Thinking correctly about the past helps us serve God more faithfully in the present

Past, present, future. Having a good perspective on these three concepts is important if we are to be the people God wants us to be. In particular, we need to make sure our attitude toward the past is one that does not hinder us in the Lord's work. Foolish thoughts about the past are counterproductive, but thinking rightly about it is a great benefit. ***Thinking correctly about the past helps us serve God more faithfully in the present.***

All of us have made mistakes that are painful to remember. Looking back, we see things that we wish were not a part of our personal history. The good news, however, is that adopting a proper perspective on these things can be a tremendous motivation to leading a godly life.

The apostle Paul's life illustrates how this process can work. Before obeying the gospel, Paul had been such an adversary of the truth that he had actively persecuted the Lord's church. He seems to indicate that he had been a party to the execution of some of the earliest Christians (**Ac. 26:10,11**). No doubt this activity caused Paul great shame and remorse when he looked back on what he had done. But not all kinds of shame are the same. The emotion Paul felt did not cause him to wallow in self-pity or negative guilt. Instead, the "good" shame that he felt moved him to be genuinely humble and thankful for the Lord's forgiveness. And his humility and gratitude moved him in the positive direction of useful service to Christ.

Listen to Paul in **1 Cor. 15:9,10**: "I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me." These are the sentiments of a person with a good perspective on the past — and also the present and the future.

This week, let's concentrate on developing the same perspective that Paul had. Whatever regrets we may have — and all of us have some — let's choose to look at those things in such a way that we will be more greatly motivated to serve God faithful and gratefully the rest of our lives.

Monday: Ecclesiastes 7:10

Key Idea: It is foolish to inquire why the past was better than the present.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some ways we often think the "former days" were better than the present? What is the attitude about the past that we are warned against in this passage? How should we think about the past?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 19:3.**

Tuesday: Psalm 32:1-11

Key Idea: When past sins have been forgiven, we can experience joy and gladness in the present.

Questions for Family Growth: What description is given of the person whose sins have not been forgiven by the Lord? What difference is made in our lives by the experience of forgiveness? How should we think about our past sins?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:4](#).

Wednesday: Hebrews 6:10-12

Key Idea: Work done for the Lord in the past is not sufficient for the present.

Questions for Family Growth: What does this passage say God does not overlook or forget? In [v.11](#), what “earnestness” or “diligence” are we instructed to have? In [v.12](#), who are those who “inherit the promises”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:5](#).

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 15:9,10

Key Idea: Thinking correctly about the past makes us more diligent servants of Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What had Paul done in the past that was sinful? Do you think the memories that Paul had were painful when he thought about them? How did Paul choose to think about his past? What did gratitude for the grace of God cause him to do?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:6,7](#).

Friday: Ephesians 5:15-17

Key Idea: We ought to use each day wisely, redeeming the time.

Questions for Family Growth: In what sense is it true that “the days are evil”? What does it mean to “redeem the time” (NKJV)? Why is it important to use wisdom in the way we live our lives in the present?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:8](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com