



WordPoints
Challenging Every Person to Take God More Seriously

Daily Family Bible Studies

Biblical Themes for Families to Think About Together

Year 4

Gary Henry

January 2019

Daily Family Bible Studies: Biblical Themes for Families to Think About Together (Year 4)

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WordPoints

1310 Snake Foot Drive, Apt 104
Louisville KY 40243

502-682-2603

Website: *wordpoints.com*

Email: *garyhenry@wordpoints.com*

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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It is good to see ourselves as God sees us

God knows everything there is to know about us. He created us, and He has knowledge of everything on the inside of us as well as on the outside. As the Hebrew writer said, “No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (Hb. 4:13).

While God’s all-seeing eye may be a somewhat fearful thought, it also should be comforting and encouraging. God knows who we really are — there is no chance He will misunderstand us. Unlike even our closest friends, who can know us only imperfectly, God knows everything He needs to know to think of us exactly as we should be thought of. What God sees is the real truth about us, with all the facts taken into consideration.

We ought to want to see ourselves in this way — *it is good to see ourselves as God sees us*. When we see what God sees, we will see some things that need to be changed, of course. Making these changes may require some pain and difficulty. But even with the imperfections, what God sees about us is that we are worth saving.

Though we have fallen into sin, God knows that He created us in His love and He gave His only begotten Son to save us. He sees us as having worth and value. When we see ourselves as being valuable to God, we will think and live differently. We will lift our vision upward to the wonderful things God wants to do with us, and we will be grateful for the honor God has bestowed upon us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

In Christ, there are no inferior people. All have equal need of God’s grace, and all who have been reconciled to Him have been reconciled in the same way: by His grace. Consequently, all are immensely valuable to God Himself. “For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith . . . And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal. 3:26,29). Knowing this surely ought to make a difference in our view of ourselves. As we engage in our various activities throughout this week, it will encourage us to remember that we are privileged to be “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (1 Pt. 2:9). The fact is, we are special to God — so we need to live like the special people we are!

Monday: Genesis 1:26,27

Key Idea: Having been made in God’s image, we have inherent worth and value.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some of the things that might be involved in the statement that we are created “in God’s image”? In terms of our value and worth, how does being created in God’s image make us different from all other creatures? Consider passages like Mt. 6:26.

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 19:9.

Tuesday: 1 Peter 2:9

Key Idea: As Christians, we have a very special worth to God.

Questions for Family Growth: How should being a part of God's own special people affect our sense of personal worth? According to [Ac. 20:28](#), what price did God pay for us to have this special relationship with Him?

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

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 16:7

Key Idea: God's estimate of us takes into account what He see in our hearts.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the difference between seeing someone's outward appearance and seeing them as God sees them? Knowing this should make a difference in our judgments of other people, obviously, but what difference should it make in the way we see ourselves?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:11](#).

Thursday: Jeremiah 9:23,24

Key Idea: The Christian's self-image is based on his relationship with God, not on worldly values.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some of the things we are not to "glory" (NKJV) in? If not these things, what then should we glory in? What are some practical advantages of basing our self-worth on spiritual realities rather than carnal or worldly ones?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:12](#).

Friday: Romans 12:3

Key Idea: The Christian is able to have a healthy, realistic view of himself.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to think "with sober judgment" about ourselves? What are the dangers of thinking too highly of ourselves? What about thinking too lowly? What is the answer, from a godly perspective, to the problem of low self-esteem?

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

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God's word equips us to deal with the real problems of daily living

Sometimes we blow our problems out of proportion, and we worry about difficulties that never come to pass. Nevertheless, living in the real world does present some problems. Being a Christian does not mean a trouble-free life — it means we have God's help with whatever problems do arise. *God's word equips us to deal with the real problems of daily living.*

The Christian is not unrealistic or naive. In fact, he can afford to be more realistic than the unbeliever. Peter warned, "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Our enemy is no fairy-tale figure. He is real, and his intent is to destroy our spiritual lives. If it were not for God's help, we would have no adequate defense against his schemes. But the truth is, we do have God's help — and that makes all the difference.

However powerful the devil may be, God is always more powerful. As John wrote to his fellow Christians: "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). In the strength of God, we can have boldness and confidence in the face of life's problems. There is not a problem in this world so big that God cannot help us overcome it.

Receiving this help for daily living is one of the important reasons why we study the Scriptures. It is in God's revealed truth that we gain the understanding we need to meet our challenges. In the faithful, obedient study of the Bible, the godly person finds himself being "equipped" to deal with life in this world. As Paul put it, "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).

As we study God's word throughout the coming week, let's remember to be thankful for the help of God that comes to us through His word. God has revealed His wonderful mind to us so that we might grow in strength and freedom. In this truth there is real help for living in the real world. It is our privilege as God's people to trust and obey!

Monday: 2 Corinthians 3:4,5

Key Idea: It is God who makes us adequate to meet life's challenges.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the difference between saying "we are sufficient in ourselves" and saying "our sufficiency is from God"? Should Christians fear inferiority or inadequacy in meeting the problems of real life?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 19:14.

Tuesday: 2 Timothy 3:16,17

Key Idea: God has given us the Scriptures to equip us for every good work.

Questions for Family Growth: Why is being “equipped” necessary before we can do good works? What are some specific ways the word of God equips us? Is there ever anything we need to do that God’s word doesn’t help us be able to do?

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

Wednesday: 2 Peter 1:1-4

Key Idea: God is willing and able to supply all we need to live godly lives.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this text, what has God’s divine power given to us? As Christians, what is it that we desire to become “partakers” of? Whose power can we rely on to help us meet the challenges that come our way?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:16](#).

Thursday: Ephesians 6:10-20

Key Idea: If we are strong in the Lord, we can stand against the devil.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the “wiles” ([v.11 NKJV](#)) of the devil? How can we stand against these? What are the parts of the “armor of God” that are listed in these verses? Is there anything we will face in this world that God can’t help us with?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:17](#).

Friday: 2 Peter 1:5-11

Key Idea: Having acquired strong, godly character traits, we can keep from stumbling.

Questions for Family Growth: What are we to “make every effort” to do? Why are these character traits so important? According to [v.8](#), what results from having these attributes? Looking at [vv.10,11](#), can we be confident we will not stumble? What are we taught in [Jude 24,25](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:18](#).

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Doing what is right requires the highest kind of courage

In his wicked arsenal, the devil has a number of weapons or threats he can use to try to get us to do his will. In the past, many of God's faithful people have had to face the physical threat of hardship, persecution, or even death if they refused to do the devil's will. But these are not the only things the devil knows we fear. He knows that many who would not hesitate to die physically for what's right will buckle under his pressure if he threatens them with things like being embarrassed, being treated in an unfriendly way, or being rejected socially. He knows we're often more afraid of what others will think about us than of what they might do to us physically. And so, we must have a courage that will face any danger, whether it's a physical danger or one that is more intangible.

God's word teaches that we can find the courage we need in His strength. In fact, we can have a courage that is more than just sufficient — it can be triumphantly victorious! Our courage can be grounded in what God has done and will do. Jesus said, "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 Paul reflected this same truth when he wrote that "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" ([Rom. 8:37-39](#)).

Doing what is right requires the highest kind of courage. None of us ever have any finer moment than when we simply choose to do what is right, standing strong in the Lord and risking whatever the devil may throw at us. Integrity is a fine and noble thing indeed. It ought to be among our most valuable treasures. There is absolutely nothing the devil has that comes close to being as wonderful and joyous as the ability to pillow our head at night with a good conscience. This week, let's be brave in the realm of spiritual things. At all costs, let's do what we know is right. When we do, we'll not only please God, but by our example we'll help others to be strong. And the devil — coward that he is — will flee from us.

Monday: Hebrews 11:32-40

Key Idea: True commitment to the Lord may at times require physical courage.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some of the physical hardships and dangers that God's faithful people have had to face in the past? What should be our attitude today if we are ever faced with these kinds of dangers?

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

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 16:13

Key Idea: Even without any physical danger, commitment to the Lord still requires courage.

Questions for Family Growth: Other than physical harm, what are some things the devil can threaten us with if we don't do his will? Why is it necessary to "be brave" (NKJV) and "be strong" in the face of such threats?

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

Wednesday: Mark 8:38

Key Idea: We must never be ashamed of the Lord or deny our allegiance to Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What do you think it would mean to be "ashamed" of the Lord? If we were ashamed of the Lord, how might that show up in our outward actions? According to [Lk. 12:8,9](#), what will happen if we "deny" the Lord?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:21](#).

Thursday: Revelation 21:1-8

Key Idea: Those who overcome through Christ will be saved, but the cowardly will be lost.

Questions for Family Growth: In [v.8](#), what group heads the list of those who will be lost? What comfort and assurance are given to us in [vv.1-7](#)? What do you think is the key to having the courage to do what is right?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:22](#).

Friday: Romans 8:35-39

Key Idea: Through Christ, we are "more than conquerors."

Questions for Family Growth: According to [v.35](#), what is the devil not able to do to us? In [v.37](#), what do you think are "these things" in which we are more than conquerors? What is the basis or foundation of the Christian's courage?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:23](#).

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It is important that our basic concepts be true to the Bible

Ideas have consequences. Our external behavior grows out of our internal thinking — it is our ideas that produce our outward actions. And since that's true, it is necessary for us as Christians to examine our thinking continually. ***It is important that our basic concepts be true to the Bible.*** If our thinking slips into the realm of erroneous ideas, the problem with that is not merely that we have become believers of false doctrine. Eventually, those untrue concepts will show up in wrongful behavior. As an old-timer put it, “Whatever's down in the well is going to come up in the bucket.”

Unlike a physical building whose foundation, once laid, cannot easily be modified, our thinking can be refined as we go along. No matter how careful we've been in the past to make sure our fundamental principles are sound, we can always recheck for accuracy and improve the quality of our foundation. Paul even urged that we periodically examine whether we are “in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5). Surely that means we ought to review our most basic concepts from time to time.

The word “principle” carries with it the idea of something being “first.” An intellectual principle is an idea that is “first” in the sense that it is a basic idea out of which many other important considerations grow. The Bible, of course, is full of principles. God intends for us to learn these principles and then have them ready to apply — honestly and conscientiously — when we face specific situations where they are pertinent. Obviously, if we have incorrect principles in our heads, we are going to make many mistakes in the realm of daily living. If our mental and spiritual foundation is not in good shape, the structure of our lives is going to be shaky. But if the beginning ideas are sound, then there's a much better chance the conduct will be as it should.

Many of the divisions that exist in the world of denominational “Christianity” amount to different views as to the basic principles of the Bible. This week, let's take the time to review some of the most fundamental concepts relating to the Bible, God, salvation, and the church. We will do a much better job of dealing with the specific issues in these areas if we have grounded ourselves in sound principles in these areas. Let's always pray and study with a view to having a better, more accurate understanding of God's will for us.

Monday: 2 Peter 1:19-21

Key Idea: The Bible is God's inspired and authoritative word for us today.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that no Scripture “is of any private interpretation” (NKJV)? What “moved” the men who wrote the books of Scripture? According to **Jn. 12:48**, what will we be judged by in the end?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 19:24.**

Tuesday: Hebrews 5:9

Key Idea: By His grace, God is the Savior of all who obey the gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: To whom is Christ “the source of eternal salvation”? According to **2 Thess. 1:7,8**, what will happen to those who do not obey the gospel? What does this teach us about the character of God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 19:25**.

Wednesday: Ephesians 2:19,20

Key Idea: The gospel was revealed completely and authoritatively to the apostles in the first century.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this passage, what is the foundation upon which the church is built? In God’s plan to save us from sin, how important are the apostles? What does it mean that the faith was “once for all delivered to the saints” (**Jd. 3**)?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 19:26**.

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 4:17 and 7:17

Key Idea: The first century church, under the authority of the apostles, is our pattern to go by today.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the importance of the fact that the apostles taught the same thing “everywhere in every church”? Today, do we have to pay attention to the apostolic precedents that were set while the apostles were living? Consider **2 Thess. 2:15**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 19:27**.

Friday: Hebrews 10:24,25

Key Idea: God has designed the local congregation as an essential part of Christianity.

Questions for Family Growth: In this text, what were Christians told not to forsake or neglect? Why was this so important? What does it mean to “consider” one another? What were faithful local congregations called in **Rom. 16:16**? What does it mean for a congregation to be “of Christ”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 19:28**.

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The church in the apostolic age is a pattern for us today

So many people these days have the idea that truth can be anything we want it to be that, when it comes to religion, many of these same individuals believe that the church can be anything we want it to be. Many of the fastest growing churches in the country are those that promise, with no apology at all, to be whatever their “customers” desire them to be.

The concept that we ought to follow the New Testament as God’s authority for what He wants the church to be has come to be looked upon as quaint and old-fashioned. It is often classified as the mentality of a bygone era when people were not as spiritually enlightened as we are today. Even among those who in the past have pled for the restoration of New Testament Christianity, there are now many who question whether there is any first-century pattern that we must go by today. Advocating a “new hermeneutic,” these re-interpreters of the Scriptures argue that New Testament “truth” is a mostly subjective concept and that we are free to mold the church into whatever we think meets the needs of contemporary culture.

But if the Bible teaches anything it teaches that God’s authority must be taken seriously. It is highly presumptuous for us to think we can determine what pleases God by the use of nothing but our own reason. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8,9).

In the Old Testament, when the tabernacle was being constructed Moses was warned by God, “See that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain” (Exo. 25:40). The Hebrew writer says that these things were a “copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Hb. 8:4-7). If it was necessary to adhere to God’s pattern for the “copy and shadow,” can we afford to be any less careful with the reality and substance that these shadows were pointing to? Paul warned, “Stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter” (2 Thess. 2:15). *The church in the apostolic age is a pattern for us today.* If we want to help our local congregation to be “of Christ,” we will have to follow His instructions.

Monday: Hebrews 8:4-7

Key Idea: It is no less important now than it was in the Old Testament to follow God’s instructions.

Questions for Family Growth: What warning was Moses given about the items that were to be made for the tabernacle? If this warning applied to the “copy and shadow of the heavenly things,” what care should we exercise today in the things that these shadows were pointing to?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 19:29.

Tuesday: John 18:36

Key Idea: The church in the apostolic age was a spiritual relationship, not a temporal kingdom.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some differences between a kingdom that is “of this world” and one that is “not of this world”? Of these two kinds of kingdoms, which is the nature of the kingdom Christ established? Consider [Col. 1:13](#).

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

Wednesday: Acts 11:19-26

Key Idea: The Lord’s church is a family relationship, not a corporate institution.

Questions for Family Growth: How would you describe the nature of what came into being in this passage? Were there any of the characteristics of what we would today call an “institution”? What do we learn in texts like [1 Pt. 2:9,10](#) about what the Lord’s church was meant to be?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 20:2](#).

Thursday: Romans 16:16

Key Idea: The Lord’s church is not a denomination.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the defining characteristics of a religious “denomination”? How can there be “churches of Christ” and these congregations not be a denomination? If we use the phrase “churches of Christ” today, what should we mean by that expression?

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

Friday: John 17:17-21

Key Idea: “Restoring” the church of the apostolic age means preaching the truth the apostles taught.

Questions for Family Growth: If the church in the New Testament was neither an institution nor a denomination, how can we today “restore” what existed then? On this question, what do we learn from [Jn. 17:17-21](#)? In [Eph. 4:1-16](#), what produces the unity of the Lord’s church?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 20:4](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Each day God gives us opportunities to improve our lives

Jesus taught that we should live in “day-tight” compartments, not trying to take on all of life’s problems but rather doing each day’s simple duty as it comes. He said, “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Mt. 6:34). Most of us could stand to improve in this area. We need to learn that each day’s troubles are manageable if we will just focus on what needs to be done as each day passes.

But it is also helpful to think about something else: *each day God gives us opportunities to improve our lives*. Not only does each day have its difficulties, but each day has its hope. With the rising of the sun each morning, we are each given a fresh start, a clean slate to work with. If we look at “today” as we should, we will see many chances to make significant progress.

Many of our best opportunities are lost because of procrastination and postponement. Perhaps we assume there will be many more opportunities in the days and weeks ahead of us. But even if that’s true, we still need to take advantage of each day’s possibilities for growth and not waste these gifts from God. Time is a valuable commodity. We shouldn’t waste it.

Jesus Himself was always conscious of the importance of the present day. On one occasion, He said in regard to the work that He and His disciples were doing, “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4). Even with His omniscient understanding of the future, Jesus knew that each day’s opportunities must be taken advantage of.

This week, let’s be more mindful of what we can do each day. After all, the things that produce most of our spiritual growth are those that happen on ordinary days — not the great choices we make on momentous occasions, but the day-to-day decisions to do the good things we know to do. So let’s “seize the day” and do the little things that can move us ahead in our relationship with God. Not a day goes by that does not present us with things we can do that will help us grow. Let’s determine to look for these . . . and act on them!

Monday: Colossians 1:9,10

Key Idea: Every day we have a chance to increase our knowledge.

Questions for Family Growth: Why is knowledge so important? What does Col. 1:9,10 say about our need to increase in knowledge? What are some practical ways we can make this kind of growth a daily happening?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 20:5.

Tuesday: 2 Timothy 2:21

Key Idea: Every day we have a chance to increase our skills.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the importance of preparation? What does **2 Tim. 2:21** say about our ability to engage in good works? What kind of goals should we be setting with respect to new skills in the Lord's work?

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

Wednesday: Proverbs 17:10

Key Idea: Every day we have a chance to correct some of our mistakes.

Questions for Family Growth: What does this text teach about one of the differences between a wise person and a fool? Look also at **Prov. 26:11** and **27:22**. To avoid this characteristic of the fool, what should be our daily attitude toward the mistakes we've made?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:7.**

Thursday: Matthew 5:21-26

Key Idea: Every day we have a chance to do something about mending a broken relationship.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some reasons why it is dangerous to postpone the mending of broken relationships? What are some little things we can choose to do every day that will help bring about restoration and healing?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:8.**

Friday: 2 Peter 1:3-11

Key Idea: Every day we have a chance to make progress in acquiring better habits.

Questions for Family Growth: How would you define a "habit"? What is the relationship between our habits and our character? What does Peter say in **vv.10,11** about the importance of our character? What kind of advice would you give to someone trying to form better habits?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:9.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

As God's people, we should want to honor Him in everything we do

It is an amazing thing to contemplate, but our actions have an effect upon God, His purposes, and His work in this world. By our decisions, our deeds, and even our thoughts, we either glorify God or we dishonor Him. We either help His cause or we hurt it. We show ourselves to be either the friends of God or His enemies (**Jas. 4:4**). When we exercise the wonderful freedom of the will God has given us, great consequences hang in the balance! Our intent, of course, should be to do only that which contributes in a positive way to God's cause. ***As God's people, we should want to honor Him in everything we do.*** The very height of our ambition ought to be to do even some small thing that would give honor to God. Indeed, this is the purpose for which we were created. When our actions show forth God's goodness and His glory, we are fulfilling our destiny as His creatures. We are His vessels, and we ought to want to be ones that are worthy of His use.

Doing all that we do to God's glory (and seeking to avoid anything inconsistent with His glory), we discover a meaning to life on earth that would otherwise be impossible. Even the difficult and painful necessities of life take on a different look when we see them as opportunities to glorify God. Paul even went so far as to say that if Christ would be honored by his death, then he was ready to die: "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. 1:20**). Paul's attitude is commendable, and we ought to strive for the same way of thinking.

But when it comes to glorifying God, we need to remember this: it is not only in the grandeur of big sacrifices that we glorify God; it is also in the little day-to-day things that are done as we serve Him faithfully. Few of us will ever have the opportunity to lay down our lives for God in a public martyrdom. But what God wants from each of us is the willingness to do all that we do — both the "big" things and the "little" ones — as if we were doing them for Him personally. This, really, is what it means to live as a Christian. Paul put it this way: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" (**Col. 3:23**). And Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (**Mt. 5:16**).

Monday: Psalm 119:103-105

Key Idea: We must bring our principles and our values into line with truth.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some practical reasons why it is important to align our thinking with truth? Are all beliefs about God just a matter of personal opinion? In what direction does erroneous thinking lead us, according to **Prov. 14:12**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:10.**

Tuesday: James 4:17

Key Idea: We must maintain integrity, i.e. consistency between our principles and our practice.

Questions for Family Growth: What do we mean by sins of “commission” as opposed to sins of “omission”? What are some words people often use to describe the person who believes one thing but practices the opposite?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 20:11](#).

Wednesday: Luke 10:38-42

Key Idea: We must learn to put first things first, doing whatever most needs to be done.

Questions for Family Growth: Even though what she was doing was not sinful in itself, what was the mistake Martha was making, at least at that moment? What does [Lk. 10:29-37](#) teach us about putting first things first?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 20:12](#).

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 7:1

Key Idea: We must not sacrifice purity for pleasure.

Questions for Family Growth: With regard to pleasure, what is the devil always tempting us to do? Is pleasure inherently wrong? If not, when does pleasure become wrong? What is more important than pleasure?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 20:13](#).

Friday: Matthew 5:33-37

Key Idea: We must keep our commitments and follow through on our responsibilities.

Questions for Family Growth: If one is a Christian, why should an oath be unnecessary to guarantee his word? In [Eccl. 5:1-7](#), what did Solomon say about keeping our word? In regard to commitment-keeping, what is the difference between being “faithful” and being “faithless”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 20:14](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

As Christians, we should strive to develop a balanced, well-rounded character

The thing that we call “balance” is one of the hardest things in life to achieve. Compared to the ease of working on just one or two areas of our conduct, it is much more challenging to tend to our character as a whole. But we can’t afford to ignore any of the basic issues that are involved in being a Christian. ***As Christians, we should strive to develop a balanced, well-rounded character.***

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because of their lop-sided emphasis on certain aspects of God’s will and their serious neglect of other matters that were actually more important. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others” (Mt. 23:23). Notice, first of all, that Jesus clearly said that some things constituted the “weightier matters” of God’s law. But second, notice that Jesus said that the lesser things must also be taken care of: “These [the weightier matters] you ought to have done, without neglecting the others [the lesser things].” Jesus is calling us to be balanced in both our character and our conduct.

One of the ways we sometimes get unbalanced is in putting so much emphasis on external actions that we neglect to work on the inner spirit that should motivate our actions. Perhaps one reason why we pay more attention to our actions than to our heart is that externals are somewhat easier to get right. But we are taught in the Scriptures that what God primarily wants is our heart. If our inner character is not conformed to His character, then our outward actions are relatively meaningless. Jesus said, “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:23,24). Without question, the “truth” of our actions is important — but so is the “spirit.”

Let’s work on being more balanced. And this week, let’s do that by looking at five different words used to describe the Lord’s people in the Scriptures. These words look at our responsibilities from different viewpoints — and by looking at them all, we can have a more balanced understanding.

Monday: Acts 26:28

Key Idea: The word “Christian” means that we must make it our aim to be Christ-like.

Questions for Family Growth: Who is a “Christian”? How does one become a Christian? Is it right to wear the Lord’s name but not emulate His character and His way of life? What did Jesus say in Lk. 6:46-49?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 20:15.

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 1:1,2

Key Idea: The word “saint” means that we must make it our aim to be holy, sanctified to the Lord.

Questions for Family Growth: To whom was this letter by the apostle Paul addressed? Who are the Lord’s “saints”? What does the word “sanctify” mean? What do we mean by the word “holy”? What does **1 Pt. 1:13-16** say about holiness?

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

Wednesday: Acts 11:25,26

Key Idea: The word “disciple” means that we must make it our aim to follow and learn from Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What does the word “disciple” mean in the New Testament? According to **Jn. 15:8**, how do we show ourselves to be truly the Lord’s disciples? Concerning discipleship, what did Jesus say in **Jn. 8:31** and **Jn. 13:35**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:17.**

Thursday: 1 Timothy 4:12

Key Idea: The word “believer” means that we must make it our aim to live by our faith in Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What must we do to be “believers,” as the term is used in the Scriptures? Is more involved than simply accepting the fact that Jesus is the Christ? What does it mean to “walk by faith” (**2 Cor. 5:7**)? What does James say in **Jas. 2:26**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:18.**

Friday: 2 Thessalonians 1:3

Key Idea: The word “brothers” means that we must make it our aim to love those in the Lord’s family.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **1 Jn 5:1**, is it possible to love God without loving His family? What does **1 Jn. 4:20,21** say? What are some practical ways that being brothers and sisters in the Lord’s family should make a difference in our lives?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:19.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

It is difficult to do what is right if we don't see the truth about ourselves

One of the most familiar stories in the New Testament is that of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32). The story describes a young man who, having wasted his inheritance, finally made the decision to go back home and seek his father's forgiveness. He did this, the text indicates, only after he "came to himself" (Lk. 15:17). The Prodigal Son changed his course of action for the better when he changed his thinking about himself, that is, when he learned to see the truth about who he really was. A more truthful view of himself led to actions that were more beneficial.

It is difficult to do what is right if we don't see the truth about ourselves. On the one hand, if we are puffed up with pride and think too much of ourselves, we'll not find it easy to live as we should. But on the other hand, if we think of ourselves as worthless and hopeless, living as we should will not be easy either. We are powerfully affected in our outward actions by the inward concept we have of ourselves. If we are to have any hope of a quality relationship with God — and hence, a quality life — we are going to have to answer the question "Who am I?" in a way that is true to reality. In the long run, nothing good comes out of thinking that is based on falsehood.

Having been created in God's own image (Gen. 1:27), we are personal beings. And personal beings are worth more than non-personal beings. We may have squandered many of the good things God has given us, but even so, we have a value that is ours just because God made us in His image. Speaking of the birds of the air, Jesus said to His followers, "Are you not of more value than they?" (Mt. 6:26). A human being is worth more than an animal, and that applies to each of us. So we each need to see ourselves in terms of what we are worth to the God who made us. Our worth to God is "inherent" in being who we are: His creatures.

As we study and meditate this week, let's consider how important it is to see our value as persons — and then to live accordingly. If we degrade ourselves in our own thinking, we'll probably live in a way that is consistent with that thinking. But if we see ourselves as children of the King, we'll live another sort of life. God wants each of us to be all that He created us to be, and He will help us reach that goal. Are we willing to accept His help?

Monday: Genesis 1:26,27

Key Idea: The Bible teaches that we are made in God's own image.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some of the things that might be involved in the "image" of God that we bear? What are some characteristics that personal beings have that non-personal beings don't have? What do we mean when we say we have "freedom of the will"?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 20:20.

Tuesday: Ecclesiastes 12:13,14

Key Idea: A right relationship with God is what we were created to enjoy.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.13**, what does Solomon say about the importance of fearing God and keeping His commandments? What do passages like **Deut. 10:12,13** and **Mic. 6:8** say about our basic duties to God?

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

Wednesday: Matthew 6:25-34

Key Idea: As personal beings created in God's image, we have personal worth and value.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus mean in **v.26** when He said that we have more "value" than the birds of the air? Does our worth to God depend on our worldly wealth, worldly accomplishment, and such things?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:22**.

Thursday: Hebrews 4:11-13

Key Idea: We are accountable to God for how we live our lives.

Questions for Family Growth: How much does God know about us? What does it mean that we will "give account" to God? Knowing that we are accountable to God, what practical difference should that make in our lives?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:23**.

Friday: 1 Corinthians 15:58

Key Idea: The only things we do that will last are the things we do "in the Lord."

Questions for Family Growth: What is the "work of the Lord" and why should we "abound" in it? What does it mean that "in the Lord your labor is not in vain"? What does **Psa. 127:1,2** say about our efforts in life?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:24**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

God has saved us in order to show forth the riches of His grace

There is obviously a sense in which God's grace is comforting and encouraging. At times when we're in despair, we need to be strengthened by the knowledge that God is loving and merciful. It would be hard to face life's difficulties if we didn't have this comfort.

But the knowledge of God's grace is not only comforting — it is also motivating and energizing. When we come to see something of the horribleness of our own sins and then grasp the magnitude of God's grace in the forgiveness of those sins, we are moved to spend the rest of our lives in grateful service to our gracious God. Gratitude for grace is the most powerfully motivating force in the world. Far from being a mere passive feeling, gratitude for grace is an active energy.

Just as God created us to be vessels through whom He could show forth His goodness, He had a similar motive in saving us from our sins. Paul wrote that God has saved us in Christ “so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (**Eph. 2:7**). *God has saved us in order to show forth the riches of His grace.* In our redemption, just as in our creation, we are to be vessels or instruments through whom God is able to manifest His divine goodness.

But whether God's goodness is shown forth in us depends to a large extent on whether we respond to His grace as we should. If we do not respond gratefully, diligently giving ourselves in service to the One who has forgiven us, then God's grace will have been in vain, at least as far as we are concerned. So Paul encouraged the Christians in Corinth: “Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain” (**2 Cor. 6:1**). Surely, there could be nothing sadder than the prospect of wasting the love and goodness our Creator has showed us, and therefore failing to fulfill the purpose for our existence.

Throughout this week, let's renew our appreciation for the goodness of God's grace. Let's look for practical ways to demonstrate our gratitude for His mercy. The more we realize how much we've been forgiven, the deeper will be our desire to show our appreciation. Godly sorrow is painful, but it is cleansing. So let's be refreshed by a recognition of the mercy by which God has saved us.

Monday: Ephesians 2:1-3

Key Idea: Before we were in Christ, we were dead in trespasses and sins.

Questions for Family Growth: What is “sin,” and what does it mean to be spiritually “dead”? Before we began to serve Christ, whom did we serve, according to **v.2**? According to **v.3**, whose desires did we follow?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:25.**

Tuesday: Ephesians 2:4-7

Key Idea: Love and mercy moved God to save us from our sins.

Questions for Family Growth: What is “mercy”? According to **v.4**, why did God show mercy to us? With whom have we been made alive? What does **v.7** say about God’s purpose in saving us from our sins?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:26**.

Wednesday: Ephesians 2:8

Key Idea: Our salvation is the gift of God.

Questions for Family Growth: What does the statement mean “by grace you have been saved”? What does the phrase “through faith” mean? In our day-to-day living, why is it important to see our salvation as a gift from God?

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

Thursday: Ephesians 2:9

Key Idea: As the gift of God, our salvation is not of our own works, lest we should boast.

Questions for Family Growth: How is salvation by “faith” different from salvation by “works”? Consider **Phil. 3:8,9**. What is the only ground of boasting or glorying that we have in Christ? See **Gal. 6:14**. Does faith mean we don’t have to obey God? What does **Jas. 2:26** say?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:28**.

Friday: Ephesians 2:10

Key Idea: Having been saved, we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Questions for Family Growth: If our salvation did not result in good works, what would that say about our gratitude to God? What did Paul say about his own work in **1 Cor. 15:9,10**? What did he say in **Tit. 2:11-14**?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

God wants to be close to us

As we go through our activities this week, let's think about the fact that **God wants to be close to us**. It will help us to meditate on the friendship we can have with our Creator through our acceptance of His salvation.

Without the forgiveness of our sins, of course, any closeness to God would be out of the question. The wonder of God's grace is that He was not willing to leave us in our lost condition, alienated from His love and without any hope of being with Him in eternity. He did what only He could have done to bridge the gap and make possible our restoration to Him. For the time being, we cannot have the complete, perfect fellowship with God that we were created to enjoy, but the hope of the gospel is that, when He returns, an eternal fellowship with God will be granted to us.

It is truly unfortunate if our concept of God is such that we dread the thought of Him. God is surely to be revered, and there are many people who need to treat God with more respect. After all, God is God and we are His creatures. We are not to think of God in such familiar terms that we trivialize Him or trifle with His greatness. Nevertheless, this great God of heaven and earth is One who created us for communion with Him. His purpose is to have a close, loving relationship with us. In the Old Testament, the priestly blessing upon Israel said, "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**). If we can see God's intent toward us as being one of friendship rather than enmity, it will impart a warmth and happiness to our obedience that we deeply need.

What God wants is our joy — our joy in Him. The apostle John wrote about the "fellowship" we can have with God through Christ: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete" (**1 Jn. 1:3,4**). To us, even more than to Israel, God is saying, "And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people" (**Lev. 26:12**). Throughout this week, let's enjoy and give thanks for the closeness to God we can have in Jesus Christ.

Monday: John 3:16; 1 John 4:7-12

Key Idea: God loves us.

Questions for Family Growth: Does one person really love another if he does not show it in some way? How has God shown that He loves us? What does it mean that God sent His Son "that we might live through him" (**1 Jn. 4:9**)?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:30**.

Tuesday: Numbers 6:22-27

Key Idea: God wants to bless us and keep us.

Questions for Family Growth: Who was to pronounce this blessing over the people of Israel? What is a “blessing”? What do you think this means: “the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:1.**

Wednesday: Genesis 5:21-24; 6:9

Key Idea: God wants us to walk with Him.

Questions for Family Growth: Who was said to have “walked with God”? What kind of friendship does this suggest these two men had with God? What kind of thoughts do you think these men had about God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:2.**

Thursday: 1 John 1:1-4

Key Idea: God wants to have fellowship with us.

Questions for Family Growth: What does the word “fellowship” mean? What can keep us from having fellowship with God, and what has God done about that? What good things does God want to share with us?

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

Friday: James 2:21-24

Key Idea: God wants us to be His friends.

Questions for Family Growth: Who is the man who was called a “friend of God”? Why was he called that? Is there any reason that we today can’t have just as close a relationship with God as this man had? What practical things can we do that will contribute to such a relationship?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:4.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We ought to love God with all our hearts

Here is one of the most important truths in the world: *we ought to love God with all our hearts*. Jesus said that we should. When He was asked which was the greatest of the commandments God gave to Israel, He said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Mt. 22:37). Even though we are not under the Law of Moses today, it is no less important for us to love God wholeheartedly.

The world is full of activities and objects that are easy to fall in love with, many of them quite good and wholesome. The problem for the Christian is learning to keep these temporal things in their proper place. We must not allow ourselves to become so attached to them that they compete with the Lord for our true affections. It is the Creator whom we must love. As for the things of His creation, we must enjoy them, use them, and be thankful for them — but we must never let them pull us away from God Himself or compete with Him for our love.

Jesus warned that it would not be possible to serve two masters at the same time: “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Mt. 6:24). When other activities, possessions, and concerns crowd in and take the place that belongs to the Lord, then it may truly be said that we have forsaken Him. Jesus desires to receive more than just a part of our devotion. Just as husbands and wives promise to love one another exclusively, with no third-party rivals, the Lord wants an exclusive relationship with us.

It is not impossible to have the kind of complete devotion that God desires. David was a man who had it. About Solomon, David’s son, it was said that “his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father . . . Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done” (1 Kgs. 11:4,6). So David loved the Lord wholeheartedly, and there is no reason we can’t love God as he did.

So we need, in a good sense, to have a “one-track” mind — a mind that is so totally focused on the Lord and His cause that there is no room for other considerations. It takes constant adjustments to keep our hearts where they need to be. This week, let’s work on that.

Monday: Matthew 22:34-40

Key Idea: The greatest commandment is to love God.

Questions for Family Growth: What question did the Pharisees ask Jesus? How did Jesus answer them? Why would you say loving God is more important than anything else? What does it mean to love God “with all your heart”?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 21:5.

Tuesday: Exodus 20:1-7

Key Idea: We ought not to worship anything but God.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.3, what did God mean by saying, “You shall have no other gods before me”? Since we are no longer under the Law of Moses, how does this commandment apply to us today? Is idolatry no longer a problem that we have to guard against?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 21:6.

Wednesday: Matthew 6:19-24

Key Idea: We cannot serve God and something else at the same time.

Questions for Family Growth: What is “mammon” (NKJV) and what did Jesus say about it? What are some other things we might be tempted to “serve”? Where should our “treasures” always be? How do we “lay up for [ourselves] treasures in heaven”?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 21:7.

Thursday: 2 Kings 23:21-25

Key Idea: God is pleased when we follow Him wholeheartedly.

Questions for Family Growth: What things are said about Josiah in v.25? What is the difference between “wholehearted” and “halfhearted”? Is the difference just a matter of feelings and emotions or is our will also involved? How can we learn to follow God more wholeheartedly?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 21:8.

Friday: Matthew 5:8

Key Idea: God wants us to be pure in heart, not being devoted to anything but Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to be “pure in heart”? What is the opposite of being pure in heart? To whom did James say, “Purify your hearts” (Jas. 4:8)? What does it mean that the pure in heart are “blessed”?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 21:9.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We must not only seek God, but we must seek Him diligently

As Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land, Moses urged them to remain faithful to God. If they forsook Him, they would be sent away from their homeland to suffer as captives in a foreign land. But even then, if they turned back to God, they would find Him again: “And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. And there you will serve gods of wood and stone, the work of human hands, that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul” (**Deut. 4:27-29**). The people would find God, Moses said, only if they sought Him wholeheartedly. The way back “home” can always be found, but not by those who are halfhearted.

In the New Testament, we find these words: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (**Hb. 11:6 NKJV**). *We must not only seek God, but we must seek Him diligently.* Our desire for God must be fervent and our efforts to live for Him must be earnest. As Jesus Himself said, we must love God with all our heart and soul and mind (**Mt. 22:37**). God deserves nothing less than our entire devotion.

Most of us have room to grow in this matter, do we not? If we “seek” God at all, it is often quite casually and in a manner that fits comfortably and conveniently into our lifestyle. Rather than making the necessary sacrifices to fit ourselves into the scheme of God’s glory, we make our own plans and then try to fit God into our schemes. We bring God into the picture only when we think we need His help.

But God will not be found by such casual seeking as this. When the lukewarm and the lackadaisical go through the motions of “religion,” the result is always an insult to God (**Mal. 1:10,11**). If we are truly to have fellowship with God, our relationship to Him must be characterized by unselfishness, reverence, and diligence. Our God must truly be the most passionate of our loves (**Rev. 2:4**). This week, let’s meditate on that each day.

Monday: Hebrews 11:6

Key Idea: It is possible for us to please God, but we can do so only by faith.

Questions for Family Growth: Why is it important for us to understand that God can be pleased? What is “faith,” in the biblical sense of the word? How is the path of faith different from other paths by which people try to please God?

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

Tuesday: Hebrews 11:6

Key Idea: To come to God, we must believe that He is.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some questions we could ask ourselves to help determine whether we really believe God is real? What does **2 Tim. 1:12** tell us about the way in which Paul “believed” in God? Was the object of Paul’s faith a “what” or a “whom”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:11.**

Wednesday: Hebrews 11:6

Key Idea: To come to God, we must seek Him.

Questions for Family Growth: In plain, everyday language, what does it mean to “seek” God? What are some other words and expressions in the Bible that have a similar meaning? What did Jesus say about seeking in **Mt. 7:7,8**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:12.**

Thursday: Hebrews 11:6

Key Idea: To come to God, we must believe that He rewards those who seek Him.

Questions for Family Growth: Is it selfish to think in terms of “rewards” from God? How might this become selfish if we’re not careful? Who are those whom God rewards? According to **Rev. 22:1-5**, what will be the best thing about heaven?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:13.**

Friday: Hebrews 11:6

Key Idea: To come to God, we must seek Him diligently.

Questions for Family Growth: What do texts like **Psa. 42:1,2** tell about the kind of desire we should have for God? How can we help ourselves to desire God more deeply? How can we seek God more diligently?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We are accountable to God for the way we live our lives

The freedom of our will is a great and wonderful thing that God has bestowed upon us. We've been created as personal beings, able to make choices that are truly significant. But we can't afford simply to enjoy the privilege of freedom. We must also be sobered by the responsibility that goes with the privilege. ***We are accountable to God for the way we live our lives.***

The fact that God exists means that His will constitutes an absolute moral standard we must answer to. The question of "right and wrong" is not simply a matter of opinion or personal preference. God is our Creator and our King, and His will is a fixed, objective standard that we'll be measured by, regardless of our preferences.

But the fact of God's existence and His moral law ought to be more than a general truth to us; it needs to be very personal. God is not only the Judge of mankind, but He is my judge! Not only are human beings in general accountable before God, but I have a personal responsibility to the God who made me! This week, it will be good for each of us to ponder these truths.

One of the characteristics of wickedness is that it does not take into account God's judgment, at least not with any seriousness. The fool acts as if no accounting need be made to God. The Psalmist asked in **Psa. 10:13**, "Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, 'You will not call to account?'" And again, "He says in his heart, 'God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it'" (**v.11**). But God does see. He will require an account. And only a fool would pretend otherwise. Jesus went so far as to say that "on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak" (**Mt. 12:36**).

We've been made in the image of a great God of glory and honor. It's our privilege to live under the gracious freedom of His will. But we dare not trifle with God. The Hebrew writer reminds us that "no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (**Hb. 4:13**). Accountability is a serious subject, one that should strengthen us in doing whatever is right and good.

Monday: Romans 1:18-21

Key Idea: We can know that God is real.

Questions for Family Growth: Practically speaking, how important a question is it whether God exists or not? How do we know for sure that He exists? What evidence is available to all human beings everywhere, according to **Psa. 19:1-4**.

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

Tuesday: Romans 1:28-32

Key Idea: If God exists, there must be an absolute moral standard that determines right and wrong.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.32**, what does Paul say that people “know”? If God did not exist, would there be any such thing as right and wrong? What does it mean that God’s will is an absolute moral standard?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:16**.

Wednesday: Romans 14:12

Key Idea: God has conferred accountability on us, making us responsible for our own decisions.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean for one person to be “accountable” to another person? What are some practical ways that people today deny their accountability to God? What does **Hb. 4:13** say about God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:17**.

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 5:10

Key Idea: We will one day stand before God in judgment.

Questions for Family Growth: In **1 Pt. 1:17**, what does Peter say about the difference God ought to make in our lives? In **Eccl. 12:13,14**, what did Solomon conclude about the overall meaning of life in this world? What can we do to give this more priority?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:18**.

Friday: John 3:16,17

Key Idea: God, our Judge, is also a Father who is willing and able to provide redemption for us.

Questions for Family Growth: What does **1 Jn. 4:17-19** say about the confidence we can have in God? In **2 Thess. 1:8,9**, who are those who should fear the judgment? What attitude can the faithful Christian have toward God’s judgment?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Baptism is the act in which our sins are washed away

Having been taught the gospel of Christ, the Ethiopian Eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” (Ac. 8:36). Philip told him that nothing but a confession of his faith in Jesus Christ stood between him and being baptized. So when the man immediately confessed that he did indeed believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, Philip went down into the water with him and baptized him. Then, having received the forgiveness of sins and the salvation of his soul in Christ, the Ethiopian “went on his way rejoicing” (v.39).

The Bible plainly teaches that *baptism is the act in which our sins are washed away*. Why are there so few today who will accept that? What is it about immersion in water, at the Lord’s command, that is objectionable to so many?

One thing that hinders some is the idea that if God required us to “do” anything to receive the forgiveness of sins, then the forgiveness would not be by grace. The necessity of baptism is portrayed as something that would amount to “works salvation.” But the Bible simply requires baptism as a condition of salvation, not a work that merits it.

No amount of condition-meeting would ever earn salvation. There is nothing in the world we could do that would lessen the need for God’s grace in our salvation. Nevertheless, God has stipulated that the gracious gift will only be given to those who, in the obedience of faith, are willing to fulfill certain requirements of the gospel — and baptism is the culminating requirement, the one in which our sins are actually remitted (Ac. 2:38; 1 Pt. 3:21). In the New Testament, baptism was always the point at which a person moved from being dead in sin to being alive in Christ (Ac. 22:16), so we shouldn’t shy away from seeing baptism in the same way today.

This week, let’s go back and reflect on the importance of baptism as an act of obedience to the gospel. Let’s remember that it was God’s prerogative to set whatever conditions He chose to separate the saved from the lost. The proper response on our part is humble — and grateful — acceptance of salvation on God’s terms.

Monday: Acts 22:16

Key Idea: In baptism, our sins are washed away.

Questions for Family Growth: Who was told to arise, be baptized, and wash away his sins? Had he not already believed in Christ and repented of his sins? In Eph. 5:26, how does Christ “sanctify” and “cleanse” the church?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 21:20.

Tuesday: Acts 2:38

Key Idea: In baptism, our sins are remitted.

Questions for Family Growth: Who were told to repent and be baptized? What truth had been proclaimed to them in **v.36**? What question had they asked in **v.37**? What does the word “remission” (KJV) mean in regard to our sins?

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

Wednesday: 1 Peter 3:21

Key Idea: In baptism, we are saved from sin.

Questions for Family Growth: What story in the Old Testament had Peter referred to in **v.20**? What comparison is made in **v.21**? Does this verse say that baptism saves us? In **Mk. 16:16**, who are those whom the Lord said would be saved?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:22**.

Thursday: Colossians 2:12

Key Idea: In baptism, we are buried and raised with Christ to a new life.

Questions for Family Growth: By what power are we raised with Christ in baptism? What role does faith play? If we have been raised from the deadness of our old life in baptism, in what should we “walk,” according to **Rom. 6:3,4**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:23**.

Friday: Galatians 3:27

Key Idea: In baptism, we put on Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to be baptized “into Christ”? What does it mean to “put on” Christ? What are we baptized into, according to **1 Cor. 12:13**? What are the seven “ones” that are listed in **Eph. 4:4-6**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:24**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

The Lord's work opens up to us a whole new potential for joy and fulfillment

Much of the time we make the mistake of thinking that happiness is something we can “catch” as we “pursue” it. After all, we live in a land where we are constitutionally guaranteed the right to the “pursuit of happiness.” But having pursued it, why is it that we end up with so little of it? Why are the lives of so many in our society characterized by so little joy and fulfillment?

The fact is, of course, that the harder a person tries to be happy, the less happy he is. Happiness is not found when we pursue it directly. Instead, it comes as a by-product of other, and more important, pursuits. We find ourselves contented with happiness when we have unselfishly devoted our energies to productive, worthwhile work in this world. The most joyous people are those who know they have given their best efforts to the work that was uniquely theirs to do.

But therein lies the problem. Many people, if not most, live without any real idea of their significant roles in life. They don't know what they could do to render service and make a contribution. Consequently, they live unfulfilled lives, year after year wandering from one meaningless activity to another. At the end of life, they have little confidence that they've done anything worthwhile.

Writing to his fellow Christians, Peter spoke of this meaningless way of living when he said, “you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers” (1 Pt. 1:18). Compared to the deeply meaningful way the Christian can live, life outside of Christ is relatively aimless. The point is certainly not that the non-Christian is incapable of doing anything good, but that outside of Christ — and the eternal hope that can only be found in Christ — one's work can never be of any lasting significance. Jesus put it this way: “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?” (Mt. 16:26).

But Christ has redeemed us from that way of living. In Christ, there is the Lord's work to do, and *the Lord's work opens up to us a whole new potential for joy and fulfillment in life*. This week, let's spend some time reflecting on that blessing of being a Christian. Outside of Christ, our work would be of only passing importance, but in the Lord, our work is “not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Monday: Acts 20:35

Key Idea: Our joy in life requires a sense of profitability and usefulness.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that givers are more “blessed” than receivers? Is there a principle here that defines the path to true happiness? Whom might we expect to be happier in life, the “producers” or the “consumers”?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 21:25,26.

Tuesday: 1 Peter 1:17,18

Key Idea: In comparison to our lives in Christ, our previous lives were aimless and without profit.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some other words that are similar to “aimless” (NKJV)? In what sense do these words describe a person’s life outside of Christ? What thought is contained in [Rom. 6:20-23](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 21:27](#).

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 15:58

Key Idea: When we engage in the Lord’s work, we are doing something that is not “in vain.”

Questions for Family Growth: What does the word “vain” mean? What are some reasons why the Lord’s work is more permanent and significant than any other work? What does it mean to “abound” in the Lord’s work?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 21:28](#).

Thursday: Colossians 3:17

Key Idea: As Christians, all that we do is to be done in the Lord’s name.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to do something “in the name of the Lord Jesus”? Does this give a deeper meaning and significance to our what we do? Does the principle in this verse apply only to what we do “at church” or does it apply to all our activity?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 21:29](#).

Friday: Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-25

Key Idea: As Christians, all that we do is done unto the Lord.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Paul mean when he says that we are to do everything “as for the Lord and not for men” ([Col. 3:23](#))? When we keep this principle in mind, how does it help our work? What would it mean to do our work “heartily”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 21:30](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Differences among Christians should be dealt with in a way that glorifies God

One of the marvels of God's creation is the variety that exists among human beings. We're all equally created by God in His image, and yet no two individuals are exactly alike. Each of us is a unique package of strengths, abilities, personalities, etc. — and each of us deals with life in a somewhat different way.

Whenever two or more people have the opportunity to work together, it is possible to view their differences as a part of their strength. Each person in a group brings something to the work that would be missing if that person were absent. A group can have more wisdom and power than an individual could ever have. Any yet, the challenge is for the members of the group to truly work together, making sure that their differences help the work rather than hinder it.

The strongest groups are those powered by a common goal or shared vision that is so important to the group that they subordinate their differences to the pursuit of the collective mission. It is unavoidable that people will encounter differences as they work together, but if people care enough about what they are doing together, they'll not be hindered by their differences. They'll make their different perspectives a part of their strength, rather than their weakness.

When the work happens to be the Lord's work, of course, the goal being pursued is nothing less than the glorification of God. Everything that happens must be viewed within the context of this mission, which is the most important mission anyone ever had. Whatever difficulties and differences may threaten to disrupt the work are to be subordinated to the more important goal of bringing glory to God. Paul wrote, "To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling . . . so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:11,12). Throughout the coming week, let's meditate on this great thought: *differences among Christians should be dealt with in a way that glorifies God*. As the Lord's people, we have a goal that is greater than our differences. What we are doing is too important to let anything separate us, and that means that we will deal with differences in a better way than if we were worldly people.

Monday: Deuteronomy 4:5-8

Key Idea: The highest privilege of God's people is to bring glory to Him by their obedience.

Questions for Family Growth: In this passage, what would be the result if the people of Israel were faithful in obeying God? In 1 Cor. 6:20, what are we commanded to do as individuals? How important should God's glory be to us in our decision-making?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 21:31.

Tuesday: 1 Peter 4:10,11

Key Idea: Christians should do whatever they do in a manner that glorifies God.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that we are “stewards of the manifold grace of God” (NKJV)? In **v.11**, to what end or purpose should our individual abilities be used? In the latter part of **v.11**, what do we owe to God as our Creator?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 22:1.**

Wednesday: John 15:1-8

Key Idea: We are not the disciples of Jesus Christ if we do not bear fruit that glorifies God.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some different meanings of the word “disciple”? Is everyone who claims to be a disciple really a follower of Jesus Christ? In **v.8**, what shows that we are true disciples? What is it that glorifies God?

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

Thursday: Philippians 1:27

Key Idea: Glorifying God should be more important than any differences within a congregation.

Questions for Family Growth: How can our conduct be “worthy of the gospel of Christ”? What are some suggestions that would help us do a better job of “striving side by side for the faith of the gospel”? How can we “stand firm in one spirit, with one mind”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 22:3.**

Friday: Romans 15:5-7

Key Idea: Christians should handle their differences so as not to hinder their glorification of God.

Questions for Family Growth: In practical terms, how can a congregation glorify God “together” and “with one voice”? What does it mean to “receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God” (NKJV)?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 22:4.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

To be converted to Christ is to make a commitment of faithfulness to Him

There's an old saying that "commitments lightly entered into are lightly broken." Most of us would have to admit that we've seen the truth of this principle validated in our own lives. At some point, we've frivolously "backed out" of things we impetuously "jumped into." We've learned, perhaps the hard way, that commitments should be taken seriously and that the good things in life come to those who keep their word even when doing so may be hard. The fickle and the faithless don't have anything close to the quality of life enjoyed by the trustworthy.

When Paul was writing to his young coworker Timothy, exhorting him to be strong and remain faithful to his charge as an evangelist, he said, "Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:12-14). What was Paul's point? Was it not that, in having publicly confessed his faith in Christ, Timothy had pledged himself to be faithful? "Timothy," Paul was saying, "you have publicly gone on record as promising that you'll never betray your commitment to Christ. Therefore, see that you keep your promise!"

In obeying the gospel, we make a most serious commitment to obey God — not just today, but always. In each step of obedience — our belief in Christ, our repentance from our sins, our confession of faith, and our baptism into Christ — we are promising that we will always be loyal to our new Lord. And Jesus asks nothing less than this kind of binding, permanent commitment. In fact, He went so far as to say, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62). Those are serious words indeed.

To be converted to Christ is to make a commitment of faithfulness to Him. This week, let's ponder this point and deepen the level of our commitment to live as the people of Christ. Let's be willing to make a commitment to Him — and then make it stick.

Monday: Galatians 2:20

Key Idea: Acts of obedience to the gospel mean little if no commitment to Christ is made.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul mean when he said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me"? How determined and decisive is this kind of obedience? Can we serve two masters successfully? Consider Mt. 6:24.

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 22:5.

Tuesday: James 2:19,20

Key Idea: Saving faith involves a commitment to what we believe.

Questions for Family Growth: If we aren't willing to commit to what we know is true, is our "faith" any better than that of the demons? What does it mean to say that someone has become "unfaithful"? If someone "breaks faith" with another person, what does that mean?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 22:6](#).

Wednesday: Acts 26:19,20

Key Idea: Genuine repentance involves a commitment to change our ways.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this verse, what three things are a part of obedience to the gospel? How do you think each of these is different from the others? How do they show that repentance is more than simply a passing mood?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 22:7](#).

Thursday: 1 Timothy 6:12-14

Key Idea: Honest confession involves a commitment to be true to Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What effect does making a public confession have on the keeping of our commitment to Christ? Consider Jesus' statement in [Mt. 10:32,33](#). What does [Hb. 4:14](#) say we should do with regard to our confession?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 22:8](#).

Friday: Romans 6:2-4

Key Idea: Scriptural baptism involves a commitment to walk in newness of life.

Questions for Family Growth: Would a person's baptism mean anything if he had no serious intention or determination to live for Christ from that point forward? What does it mean to obey the gospel "from the heart" ([v.17](#))?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 22:9](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

The best of this life comes to us when we make the next life our main pursuit

The “will to live” is a strong force indeed. Doctors are often amazed at how some terminal patients can hold onto life despite diseases and injuries that are seemingly insurmountable. The human heart doesn’t give up easily. And it’s not just the biological state of being alive that we cling to. We want to live in every possible way. Physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually, we have a deep desire to live and not die. When Jesus said that He came that we might have “life” and have it “abundantly” ([Jn. 10:10](#)), He touched on a subject that is very important to all of us.

But how do we get the “life” we seek? And what is “the good life” anyway, the best kind of life that can possibly be enjoyed in this world? These are questions that people have been asking since the beginning of the world. Many foolish answers have been given, of course, but it is at least significant that human beings are almost universally concerned with what “life” is, how we may get it, and how we may hold on to it.

It comes as no surprise that the Bible, God’s word, deals extensively with the subject of life. What is surprising, at least to some, is what the Bible says about the subject. A distinction is made between the life we live in this world — life “under the sun” ([Eccl. 5:18](#)) as Solomon called it — and the life the saved will enjoy in the world to come, or “eternal life” ([Tit. 3:7](#)). As Christians, we are instructed to pay primary attention to the attaining of eternal life ([2 Cor. 4:16-18](#); etc.). But the Bible does not diminish the importance of all we desire as “life” in this world. Instead, it teaches that *the best of this life comes to us when we make the next life our main pursuit.*

Often we find that seeking life requires that some choices be made. We must choose what kinds of life are the most important to us, and we must decide when to sacrifice lesser things so we can enjoy the greater. Throughout the coming week, may we be renewed in our determination to seek, above all else, that which our Creator defines as real life. In our “will to live,” let’s keep our focus on the Giver of life. Let’s have both reverence and faith in seeking the life, both now and in eternity, that He desires for us — and let’s turn away from any path that leads the other direction. No matter what our adversary may say, he only wants our death. It is God who wants us to live.

Monday: 1 Timothy 4:8

Key Idea: Godliness provides not only the life to come, but also the best of this life.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that godliness is “profitable” (NKJV) for both this life and the one to come? What advice does Peter have for those who would “love life and see good days” ([1 Pt. 3:10-12](#))?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 22:10](#).

Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Key Idea: In Christ, our “inner” person is being renewed while our “outer” person is perishing.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some of the differences between the “inner” and the “outer” person? What does Paul say will be the result of our “light momentary affliction” in this life? In [v.18](#), what are the “eternal” things?

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

Wednesday: Philippians 3:7,8

Key Idea: The “surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus” is worth the sacrifice of all else.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some of the things Paul had lost as a result of his obedience to the gospel? What was his attitude toward the things he had sacrificed? In what ways does knowing Christ surpass the worth of anything else?

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

Thursday: Matthew 16:24-28

Key Idea: To “save” our life is to “lose” it, and to “lose” our life is to “save” it.

Questions for Family Growth: In your own words, how would you describe the meaning of [v.25](#)? How is it that we can lose eternal life by holding on too tightly to life in this world? What can we learn from this passage about the meaning of “sacrifice”?

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

Friday: Mark 10:29-31

Key Idea: Many who are “first” in this life will be “last” in the next.

Questions for Family Growth: What assurance did the Lord give to those who lose things in this life in order to gain the life to come? Who are the “first” and “last” in this life? Who are the “first” and “last” in the life to come?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 22:14](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Life works as it should only when we repent of the sin of selfishness

Foundations are important, whether we're building a house or a life. If the foundation is right, it is much easier for the structure on top of the foundation to be what it needs to be, but if the foundation is designed poorly, everything built upon it will be in danger. Spiritually speaking, the foundation of our lives is made up of whatever principles and ideas we adopt as the basis of our actions. Even with the best of principles, of course, we may not always act consistently with those principles. But if our principles are not correct to start with, it will be virtually impossible for us to have a quality life. Our lives will be built on a shaky foundation.

One of the most basic decisions anybody ever has to make is whether to live on the principle of selfishness or the principle of unselfishness. Depending on where we come down on this question, our lives will be greatly affected for better or worse. At some point, everybody has to decide what life is about in its most basic sense. If we reach the conclusion that life is basically about serving others, one kind of life will result. If, on the other hand, we decide that life is about being served by others, a radically different life will be the outcome. In choosing whether our orientation will be "inward" or "outward," we determine great consequences in our lives.

The Bible takes a clear position on this issue. It teaches that love is of the very essence of God's own nature and that because we are made in His image, we can never fully enjoy our intended measure of happiness in this world unless we live, as His Son did long ago, on the basis of unselfish love. Jesus said it quite simply: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" ([Ac. 20:35](#)). This week, let's consider whether we really believe that or not.

As we live from day to day, much depends on where our "center" is. When "self" is at the center, we reap an unhappy harvest in many ways. And there is nothing any closer to the heart of what sin is all about than self-will. Self-will says, "I won't let God's way stand between me and what I want. I will do my own will." And an unhappy life is the usual result. But the foundation of genuine, unselfish love, first for God and then for others, is the basis of real life. ***Life works as it should only when we repent of the sin of selfishness.*** That is a truth well worth pondering.

Monday: Genesis 3:1-7

Key Idea: Substituting self-will for God's will is the basic attitude that results in sinful behavior.

Questions for Family Growth: In what ways did Satan have to change Eve's attitude toward God's will before he could get her to eat the forbidden fruit? What is the basic deception that we warned against in [Gal. 6:7-10](#)?

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

Tuesday: Romans 1:18-25

Key Idea: When we are self-centered, our religion toward God turns into idolatry.

Questions for Family Growth: What is idolatry? What description of mankind is given in this passage? Have we ourselves ever “worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator”? In what ways might we be guilty of doing this?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 22:16](#).

Wednesday: Acts 20:35

Key Idea: When we are self-centered, our relationships with other people are damaged.

Questions for Family Growth: What is meant by the statement that it is more “blessed to give than to receive”? What does “blessed” mean? How is this principle the key to all relationships between human beings? What is the teaching of [1 Jn. 4:7-12](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 22:17-21](#).

Thursday: Matthew 20:25-28

Key Idea: When we are self-centered, we destroy the foundation of basic respect for ourselves.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the good life primarily about: serving or being served? Can we have any real self-respect if we’re living in violation of life’s basic principle? Do you think this is a clue to why so many people are unhappy with themselves?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 22:22,23](#).

Friday: Philippians 2:1-8

Key Idea: If we wish to follow Jesus’ example, we must be motivated by love and not selfishness.

Questions for Family Growth: What qualities of character are mentioned in [vv.1-4](#)? In [vv.5-8](#), what is the “mind” that must be in us? In [Jn. 13:14,15](#), what did Jesus say His disciples should do? What did He say in [Jn. 13:34,35](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 22:24,25](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Loving what is right requires more than simply hating what is wrong

Living as we do in an age when even the most heinous sins have become so public that they no longer shock us as they once did, it is somewhat of a challenge to maintain our indignation against sin. The tendency is for us to get used to immorality and degradation, so that these things just don't seem as horrible to us anymore. If we're not careful, we'll end up like those of Jeremiah's day who had forgotten how to blush ([Jer. 6:15; 8:12](#)).

But lest we become proud of our righteousness, there is something we need to be reminded of. ***Loving what is right requires more than simply hating what is wrong.*** True goodness consists of what we're actively for and not just the things we happen to be against. The Pharisees, for example, had a long list of the sins they were against (mostly the sins other people were guilty of), but Jesus said that their righteousness was insufficient: "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" ([Mt. 5:20](#)). To be the Lord's disciples, we will have to do better than the Pharisees.

One of the most thought-provoking stories in all of Jesus' teaching is that of the Good Samaritan ([Lk. 10:25-37](#)). Both the priest and the Levite who passed by without helping the injured man would surely have condemned the sinfulness of the thugs who beat him up, robbed him, and left him for dead. They might have made some comment about how the world had gone to the dogs and how something ought to be done about the lawless folks who made it unsafe to travel on the public highways. But Jesus showed that the priest and the Levite were just as wicked as the robbers. The things they were "against" didn't qualify them as truly loving goodness if the things they were "for" didn't move them to engage in actual deeds of goodness.

So the story of the Good Samaritan illustrates the adage that "talk is cheap." What counts for goodness in God's sight is what we do about the wrong we talk against so much. At the judgment, we'll be judged not on our words or our ideals or what we knew to do. Our judgment will be based on what we actually did. "Depart from me" is what Jesus will say to many so-called "righteous" people. They knew what was right, but He will say, "You did not do it" ([Mt. 25:41-46](#)).

Monday: Obadiah 10,11

Key Idea: If we are friends of justice, we must actively stand up for what is right.

Questions for Family Growth: What sin had Edom committed against Jerusalem? Can we claim to be on the side of justice and righteousness if, when wrong is being done, we simply stand "on the other side" (NKJV) and do nothing?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 22:26,27](#).

Tuesday: Revelation 2:6

Key Idea: We ought to hate sin and refrain from doing evil.

Questions for Family Growth: In this verse, what did Christ commend the Christians in Ephesus for doing? Can we be the Lord's friends without sharing His enemies and hating the same things He hates? What does **Jd. 23** teach about our feelings toward evil?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 22:28.**

Wednesday: Luke 10:25-37

Key Idea: True goodness consists of actually doing good deeds, not just avoiding evil ones.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did the man who was "desiring to justify himself" need to hear the truth contained in the story that Jesus told? While both need to be done, which shows greater character: talking against evil or doing what is good?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 22:29.**

Thursday: James 1:26,27

Key Idea: We must pay attention not only to the negative side of religion but also the positive.

Questions for Family Growth: How is it possible for a religious person's religion to be "worthless"? In the last part of **v.27**, what is the negative side of "pure and undefiled" religion? In the first part of the verse, what examples are given of our positive responsibilities?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 23:1-3.**

Friday: Matthew 25:31-46

Key Idea: At judgment, those approved of God will be those who have actively done good.

Questions for Family Growth: For what were the "sheep" commended? For what were the "goats" condemned? In **vv.44,45**, what was the response of those condemned, and what was the Lord's answer? What is the difference between sins of "commission" and those of "omission"?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 23:4,5.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Seeking God requires courage, commitment, and confession

In the Parable of the Sower (Lk. 8:4-15), Jesus said that different people would respond to the gospel in different ways. Many will initially hear and obey the truth, but not all of these will endure the hardships of being a disciple and keep the faith throughout their lives. Some will become unfaithful and fall away. Those who “have no root,” for example, may “believe for a while,” but in time of testing and temptation they will fall away (v.13). Still others are “choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life.” Jesus said that in the case of these individuals “their fruit does not mature” (v.14). So lifelong faithfulness, and not just initial obedience, is what the Lord is looking for.

The truth of the matter is, it takes a certain quality of character to serve God faithfully, and not everyone will choose to have that type of character. The call of the gospel separates those who have a “root” in themselves from those who don’t. Knowing this ought to stimulate some serious thought concerning our own hearts. Do we personally have what it takes? Are we willing to be like those who have the strong inner character the gospel calls for? ***Seeking God requires courage, commitment, and confession.*** If we’re not willing to pay that kind of price, then Christianity is not for us.

The fact that we may not “have what it takes” doesn’t mean that we’re born one way or the other by “predestination.” To the contrary, personal character is a matter of choice, and the choice is our own. Our “heart” is determined by the many free-will decisions we make every day. Some of these are big and others are little, but together, these choices add up to the thing that we call “character” — and if our character is not what it should be, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Because our character comes from our choices, we can change from one “heart” to another. In fact, this is precisely what is involved in being “converted” to Christ. Such a “conversion” is not optional. Jesus said that we must change: “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 18:3). Whatever we’ve been in the past, are we willing to demonstrate courage today? Are we willing to make a genuine commitment to God? And will our lives be characterized by a faithful confession of our commitment as long as we live? If so, then we have the makings of true discipleship!

Monday: Luke 8:4-15

Key Idea: Not all who obey the gospel turn out to be faithful disciples.

Questions for Family Growth: In this parable, what did the rocky soil represent (v.13)? What does it mean to have “no root”? What did the thorny ground represent (v.14)? How is it possible to be “choked” by things in this life?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 23:6-8.

Tuesday: Revelation 21:8

Key Idea: Lifelong faithfulness requires courage.

Questions for Family Growth: What group of people are first on the list of those who will be lost? What are the dangers or difficulties that Christians must be willing to face courageously? Would you say that courage is a feeling (based on our emotions) or a choice (based on our will)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 23:9](#).

Wednesday: 1 Peter 4:19

Key Idea: Lifelong faithfulness requires commitment.

Questions for Family Growth: In daily life, what does it mean to make a “commitment” to someone? In this verse, what does it mean to “commit” or “entrust” our souls to God? In [2 Tim. 1:12](#), what did Paul say he had done?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 23:10,11](#).

Thursday: John 12:42,43

Key Idea: Lifelong faithfulness requires confession.

Questions for Family Growth: In this text, why would some who believed in Christ not “confess” Him? Is the confession of our faith a one-time act at our conversion or is it something we do throughout life? What did Jesus say in [Mt. 10:32,33](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 23:12-14](#).

Friday: Hebrews 4:14; 10:23

Key Idea: Being a disciple means maintaining our confession with courage and commitment.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to “hold fast our confession”? How does knowing of God’s faithfulness help us to remain faithful to Him? Should we ever back down on our confession? Consider [Rev. 2:13](#); [12:11](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 23:15,16](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Contentment is an important ingredient in the happiness of our families

Living as many of us do in a world of increasing financial prosperity, it's easy to get caught up in the assumption that more money is what we have to acquire in order to be more happy. We take it for granted that a higher standard of living will bring with it more peace of mind, greater joy, and a measure of relief from the problems that hurt our families. The only problems that money will solve, however, are money problems. And since most of our more serious problems have nothing to do with money, we should not be so foolish as to think that a higher standard of living will make us any happier. Money's promise to make us happy is a very doubtful promise.

In fact, a greater abundance of this world's goods may make our families more unhappy. Though we never seem to foresee it, more money often brings with it worse problems than we had to start with. As Solomon observed, "Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep" (**Eccl. 5:12**). The happiest families are not the wealthiest — they are the families that are grateful for whatever they have, whether it is much or little, and are able to enjoy life whether or not they ever have any more than at present. So it is not wealth itself, but having a godly attitude toward our possessions that produces peace of mind and gladness in the family. This week, let's consider this vital fact: *contentment is an important ingredient in the happiness of our families.*

Haven't we all known families that were quite poor but tremendously happy? How can they be happy? The key is obviously contentment, a peaceful satisfaction with the blessings God has already provided, regardless of what may or may not be gained in the future. Deep, rich family relationships thrive in the natural soil of contentment and gratitude, not in the hothouse of financial prosperity. And if we've not yet learned this lesson, our families are probably suffering as a result of our ignorance. Paul wrote that "godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content" (**1 Tim. 6:6-8**). If contentment is important in general, it is especially important to the family. Covetousness is a family killjoy!

Monday: Philippians 4:11-13

Key Idea: Contentment means that we do not require more to be happy than we already have.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul say that he had learned? How would you describe the difference between contentment and laziness? What do we learn from Job about what godly contentment is? See **Job 1:21** and **2:10**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 23:17,18.**

Tuesday: Hebrews 13:5,6

Key Idea: The failure to be grateful and content is a sin against God.

Questions for Family Growth: How might we define “covetousness”? What do you think are its causes? Why does the Christian not have any need to be covetous? Does covetousness affect the family? See [Prov. 15:27](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 23:19-21](#).

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 8:1,2

Key Idea: In times of need, we should remember to count all the blessings we’ve been given.

Questions for Family Growth: What commendable thing is said about the Macedonians? What is worse than poverty? See [Prov. 15:16,17](#). How is it possible to have “nothing” and yet possess “everything” ([2 Cor. 6:10](#))?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 23:22](#).

Thursday: 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Key Idea: In times of abundance, we should remain humble and reverent before God.

Questions for Family Growth: In this passage, what warnings are given to the rich? Based on what Paul says, is wealth something to be desired? See [6:9,10](#). What was the problem of the rich man described in [Lk. 12:13-21](#)?

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

Friday: 1 Timothy 6:6-8

Key Idea: Our families will profit greatly from the combination of godliness and contentment.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “great gain” that comes with godliness with contentment? How permanent is our possession of the things of this world? What assurance did the Lord give us in [Mt. 6:33,34](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 23:24,25](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

The message of the gospel is God's means of calling all people to Jesus Christ

The invitation of the gospel of Christ is to come to God and receive the forgiveness of our sins. That is a truly wonderful invitation. Jesus said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). No matter how sinful our past life has been, God calls us to be saved in His Son and to have the best possible future there could ever be.

But how is it that God calls us? Does He come to us in a vision and personally invite us? Do we hear an audible voice? Do we have subjective feelings that we interpret as God speaking to us? The New Testament does not leave us in doubt about this matter. We are clearly told that God speaks to us and calls us through the objective medium of the apostles' preaching (which preaching we today have recorded in the New Testament itself). On this point, carefully consider Hb. 2:1-4. To the Thessalonian Christians, Paul wrote, "But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:13,14). *The message of the gospel is God's means of calling all people to Jesus Christ.*

Those who obediently and faithfully respond to the call of the gospel are the "elect" or "chosen" of God. In Rev. 17:14, this statement appears: "They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful." Those who are "with" Christ, the saved, are the "called," the "chosen, and the "faithful." They have not only obeyed the initial call of the gospel, but they have remained faithful to it. The called are urged to live so as not to forfeit their salvation: "Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pt. 1:10,11). To heed the call of the gospel of Christ, then, is to enjoy the salvation that God has made possible. To live the rest of our lives in thankful, joyous faithfulness is to make our calling and election sure.

Monday: Acts 2:37-41

Key Idea: All people are called to accept God's offer of salvation.

Questions for Family Growth: What question was asked in v.37? What answer was given in v.38? According to v.39, to whom is the "promise" of God available? In vv.40,41, what was the response to the gospel on that day?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 23:26-28.

Tuesday: 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14

Key Idea: It is through the gospel of Christ that God calls us.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.13**, what had the Thessalonian Christians been chosen for? How had they been called by God, according to **v.14**? Is there anyone who is not called to obey Christ? What is said about God's patience in **2 Pt. 3:9**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 23:29-35**.

Wednesday: Revelation 17:14

Key Idea: Those who faithfully obey the gospel are God's "called," His "chosen" ones.

Questions for Family Growth: What three words are used to describe those who are with Christ? Must we be "faithful" to be among the elect of God? According to **Hb. 5:9**, who are those for whom Christ is the source of eternal salvation?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 24:1,2**.

Thursday: 1 Peter 2:9,10

Key Idea: We are called out of darkness into God's marvelous light.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the "darkness" and "light" spoken of here? In **Ac. 26:18**, what is said about darkness and light? Who are "God's people" spoken of in **1 Pt. 2:9,10**? What if we do not "walk in the light" (**1 Jn. 1:6,7**).

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 24:3,4**.

Friday: 2 Peter 1:10,11

Key Idea: We must be diligent to make our calling and election sure.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this passage, how can we make sure that we will receive the reward God has for us? What is the "eternal kingdom" Peter spoke of? In **Rev. 3:5**, who are those whose names will not be blotted out of the book of life?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 24:5,6**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We are not at liberty to pick which parts of God's will we wish to obey

Christians, as people who have obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ and now wear His name, understand that they must follow Him as their Master. We can hardly claim to be the “disciples” or “servants” of Christ if we don’t follow Him. But following Christ sometimes challenges our self-will. And when the Lord asks us to do things that we don’t wish to do, we may try to find some way to excuse ourselves from obedience. Faced with responsibilities that we find unwelcome, we may find ourselves setting aside the parts of God’s instructions that we find objectionable. But surely this approach will not work. If God is our Creator, then all of His will must be taken seriously. *We are not at liberty to pick which parts of God’s will we wish to obey.*

Jesus said, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” (Lk. 6:46). The word “lord” means “master” or “one in a position of authority.” It makes little sense to claim that Jesus is our Lord if we don’t submit to His will. And it makes little sense to say that we submit to His will if we only submit to Him when it pleases us to do so. In that case, we’re not doing His will — we’re trusting in our own understanding and doing our own will.

Noah is a good example of what real obedience means. When he was instructed to build the ark in which God would save him and his family from the flood, the command must have seemed strange to him. No such thing as the flood had ever happened before. And no doubt there were things about the design of the ark, as God commanded it to be built, that Noah would have questioned. Nevertheless, Noah carried out all of the Lord’s instructions exactly as they were given. He did so by faith, and the obedience of his faith was commended by God. “Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him” (Gen. 6:22).

We need to have the same attitude toward God that Noah had: an unqualified, no-strings-attached disposition to move at the Lord’s command, doing not only what is commanded but also all that is commanded. God is looking for those who will reverently obey His wisdom — and when obedience doesn’t come naturally or there are other things we’d rather do, that’s when we find out whether the Lord is really our Lord!

Monday: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Key Idea: Being a Christian means submitting all of our thinking to God’s wisdom.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the “weapons of our warfare” that Paul speaks of? What he mean when he said that these weapons are not “of the flesh”? What does it mean to “take every thought captive to obey Christ”?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 24:7.

Tuesday: James 2:10-12

Key Idea: We must conduct ourselves as those who are under God's law and not above it.

Questions for Family Growth: Do we have the right to set aside any of God's instructions because they are not agreeable to us or they don't seem wise? What does it mean to live as those who are to be judged under "the law of liberty"?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 24:8,9](#).

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 15:1-23

Key Idea: If we disregard some of God's instructions, then our attitude is one of rebellion.

Questions for Family Growth: Since Saul carried out most of God's instructions, what was it about his conduct that God found so stubborn and rebellious? Is God pleased when we perform acts that are outwardly obedient but on the inside our hearts are rebellious?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 24:10](#).

Thursday: Matthew 7:21-23

Key Idea: Jesus is our "lord" only if we obey His will, in deed as well as in word.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this familiar text, who are those who will actually "enter the kingdom of heaven"? How is it possible for someone to be guilty of "lawlessness" who verbally claims that Christ is their Lord?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 24:11,12](#).

Friday: Matthew 22:34-40

Key Idea: We must love God with a love that is complete.

Questions for Family Growth: Is it possible for us to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind? What is meant by wholeheartedness and how is that different from half-heartedness? Consider [1 Kgs. 18:21](#). What did James say the "double-minded" person should do in [Jas. 4:8](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 24:13,14](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Everything the Christian does is done “as to the Lord”

Every day that we live, we make hundreds of choices. From the little things to the big ones, we are constantly making decisions, choosing to do one thing and not others. On what basis do we make these choices? Whether we consciously think about it or not, every decision is made by reference to some standard. There is always some criterion by which we judge what we'll do. Together, the standards by which a person decides his conduct constitute his “value system.” That being true, a person's choice of value system is one of the most important choices in his life.

One way to look at Christianity is to look at it as a very special value system. The Christian decides his conduct — every single bit of it — by a unique standard, one that sets him apart from every person who is not a Christian. And that standard, of course, is Christ Himself. *Everything the Christian does is done “as to the Lord.”* Christ is the criterion by which the Christian makes every decision in his or her life.

Speaking to Christians in the first century, many of whom who were servants or slaves, Paul wrote, “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23,24 NKJV). The fact that the Christian always serves Christ means that he will seek to do the honorable thing in every situation. And not only will he do the right thing, he'll do it with the right attitude and in the right manner. His work will be of the highest quality that he is capable of producing — because it is to Jesus Christ that he is offering that work.

Do you wish to wear the name “Christian” (Ac. 11:26)? If so, Christ must be the standard by which you make every decision. His purpose is to reign in love and wisdom over every aspect of your life, not only on Sunday but on Monday through Saturday as well. Paul said it this way: “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col. 3:17 NKJV). If Jesus Christ is our “Lord,” that means He has the authority to govern our conduct. And what He desires is not simply some of our time and some of our actions. He desires our hearts — our whole hearts.

Monday: Acts 11:19-26

Key Idea: Christ's importance to His followers is indicated by their wearing the name “Christian.”

Questions for Family Growth: In v.21, to whom had some in Antioch “turned”? In v.24, to whom were they “added”? What are some reasons why the term “Christian” (v.26) is such an appropriate name for the disciples of Jesus?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 24:15,16.

Tuesday: Galatians 2:20

Key Idea: The life which the Christian lives is lived by faith in Jesus Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: If we are not executed or put to death physically for being a Christian, what does it mean to be “crucified with Christ”? How does Christ live “in” us? How does the Christian “live by faith”? What does it mean to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7)?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 24:17,18.

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 10:4,5

Key Idea: The Christian brings every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What would you say are some ways that “carnal” warfare and “spiritual” warfare are different? What does it mean to bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (NKJV)?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 24:19,20.

Thursday: Colossians 3:17

Key Idea: Whatever we do, we do it all “in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Questions for Family Growth: How much of the Christian’s life should be governed by the principle in Col. 3:17: just our “religious” behavior or all that we do? In practical terms, how can we determine whether or not a thing can be done “in the name of the Lord”?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 24:21,22.

Friday: Colossians 3:23,24

Key Idea: Whatever we do, we do it “as to the Lord and not to men.”

Questions for Family Growth: What would it mean for a person to do what he does “as to the Lord” (NKJV)? Would we do a better job if we knew we were doing things to the Lord Himself? What did the Lord teach in Mt. 25:31-46.

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 24:23-25.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We will be judged by God as individuals and not as congregations

We need to see the local congregation as a blessing that God has provided for our spiritual benefit. Perhaps even more important, we need to take an active part in the work that God intends the local church to do. Both the benefits and the responsibilities of local church membership require that we find a congregation that is faithful to the Lord. Being a part of a spiritually sound church is extremely important. But just because we have found a sound congregation to be identified with, that doesn't automatically mean we'll be saved. ***We will be judged by God as individuals and not as congregations.***

In **Jn. 15:1-8**, Jesus taught that His body is made up of individual persons. The illustration He used was that of a vine with its branches. He said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (**vv.1,2**). In this passage, the branches are individuals, not congregations. Whether we remain in Christ or are removed from the vine depends on our individual relationship to Him. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned" (**vv.4-6**). It is our own personal faithfulness or unfaithfulness that determines whether we remain connected to the vine or not.

The fact that judgment is on an individual basis doesn't mean that congregational involvement is not important. Clearly it is. In fact, one of the things upon which we will be judged as individuals is whether we have taken seriously the collective ("together") aspect of Christianity. Neither the individual nor the collective part of our service to God can be neglected without serious consequences. But in the end, we will not be saved just because we have had our name on the membership roster of a sound church. In judgment, what will matter is whether we ourselves — personally and individually — have been sound in the faith.

Monday: 3 John 9,10

Key Idea: Sometimes congregations exclude those who should be included in their fellowship.

Questions for Family Growth: What was being done by Diotrephes? What does it mean that he was putting them "out of the church"? In **Ac. 9:26-28**, after Paul had become a Christian and returned to Jerusalem, how was he received by the church? What did Barnabas do?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 24:26.**

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

Key Idea: Sometimes congregations include those who should be excluded from their fellowship.

Questions for Family Growth: In this passage, what mistake was being made by the church in Corinth? Were they being too tolerant of sin within the congregation? What did Paul say they should do? What instructions did he give in [2 Thess. 3:6,14,15](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 24:27](#).

Wednesday: Revelation 2:12-17

Key Idea: Faithful congregations may have some members who are unfaithful to the Lord.

Questions for Family Growth: Did the Lord express approval of the church in Pergamum as a whole? In [vv.14,15](#), what “few things” did He not approve of? In [v.16](#), what did the Lord say He would do if they did not repent?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 24:28,29](#).

Thursday: Revelation 3:1-6

Key Idea: Unfaithful congregations may have some members who are faithful to the Lord.

Questions for Family Growth: What was the Lord’s description of the overall spiritual condition of the church in Sardis? But what did the Lord say in [vv.4,5](#)? What decisions do you think must be made by a faithful Christian who finds himself in an unfaithful congregation?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 24:30-34](#).

Friday: 2 Corinthians 5:10

Key Idea: Each person will be judged on the basis of what he himself has done.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this text, who must appear before the judgment seat of Christ? Upon what basis will each one be judged? Does membership in a faithful congregation guarantee that a person will be saved?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 25:1,2](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

With God's truth, we can defeat the devil's attempt to deceive us

It's hard to keep our thinking straight. There are so many ideas that come at us from every direction, it's no easy matter to sift through these and hold on to the ideas that are true. But spiritually speaking, it's very important that we make this effort. The devil does his work by deception, and if we're not careful, we'll be deceived and led astray to do his will rather than God's. This does not have to happen, however. God's truth is always available to us. And in the strength of this truth, we can overcome every evil thing that stands between us and our Heavenly Father. ***With God's truth, we can defeat the devil's attempt to deceive us.***

In the search for truth, the thing that matters most is whether we truly desire to know and do the truth. To those who were trying to figure out whether His teachings were true, Jesus said, "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority" (**Jn. 7:17**). Those who truly desire not only to know God's truth but also to obey it will be able to discern the difference between truth and error. They'll get the information they need to do what is pleasing to God. But if we don't care whether we obey God or not, the chances are that we'll not even recognize God's truth when we see it, and we'll be led further into confusion.

The devil is up to no good: his intent is to deceive us and destroy us spiritually. In **Rev. 12:9** he is described as "that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world." Since he does his work by means of falsehood, we need to be on our guard. Paul warned his Colossian brethren not to let themselves be deceived and defrauded of their salvation: "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ" (**Col. 2:8**). This week, let's be reminded of both the importance and the power of truth. Just as the devil does his work by deception, God does His work by truth. Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (**Jn. 8:32**). Are we willing to search for and hold on to truth? The wise man said, "Buy the truth, and do not sell it" (**Prov. 23:23**).

Monday: John 8:44

Key Idea: Deception is at the very core of the devil's character.

Questions for Family Growth: In this verse, what did Jesus say about the kind of being the devil is? Who are those about whom Jesus said that the devil was their "father"? What activity in regard to the "whole world" is attributed to the devil in **Rev. 12:9**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 25:3.**

Tuesday: Genesis 3:1-7

Key Idea: Deception is how the devil leads us into sin.

Questions for Family Growth: Describe the chain of events that led up to Adam and Eve's disobedience to God. What lie or lies did Eve believe that motivated her to rebel against God's will? In **2 Cor. 11:3**, what fear did Paul express concerning his brethren in Corinth?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 25:4,5**.

Wednesday: Colossians 2:4,8

Key Idea: We should beware of being lied to and cheated out of our salvation.

Questions for Family Growth: In general, what does it mean to "cheat" or "defraud" someone? In **v.4**, what does Paul say it is possible for us to be deceived by? Consider **Eph. 4:14**. How can we keep from being tricked by the devil's deception?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 25:6,7**.

Thursday: 2 Timothy 2:24-26

Key Idea: Repentance means that we "come to our senses" and return to the truth.

Questions for Family Growth: In **vv.25,26**, what has the devil succeeded in doing to some individuals? In the case of such individuals, what needs to happen? Why do we need to be gentle and patient with those who have been "captured"?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 25:8-10**.

Friday: John 8:31,32

Key Idea: It is by truth that God sets us free from the deceptiveness of sin.

Questions for Family Growth: In the war between good and evil, how can the devil's captives be set free? What kind of "weapons" are to be used by the "soldiers" of Christ? What did Paul say in **2 Cor. 10:3-5**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 25:11,12**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

When we choose to obey God, we choose life over death

As our Creator and our King, God obviously has the right to determine the conditions upon which we can be saved from our sins. But having endowed us with a free will (the ability either accept or reject His love), God has also made our eternal destiny dependent on our choice in the matter. According to **Rom. 6:23**, death is “the wages of sin” and eternal life is the “free gift of God.” Thus the choice whether to obey the gospel and faithfully accept God’s gift is a choice of great consequence. **When we choose to obey God, we choose life over death.** In passages like **Rom. 2:5-11**, these two alternatives are made very clear.

Do we realize the greatness of the choice that lies before us? All too often, we live as if other issues were more important. Yet what subject could have more momentous consequences than the question of our decision about God?

If we refuse what God has made possible for us in Christ, no one will suffer grief more than God Himself. It is not God’s desire that we perish, but rather that we live. To ancient Israel, God said, “For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live” (**Ezek. 18:32**). And to Christians, the apostle Peter wrote, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (**2 Pt. 3:9**). Now is the time to choose to submit ourselves reverently and lovingly to our Heavenly Father. Eventually, the time for decision will end, and then eternity will begin, in which we will either enjoy the life in God that we have chosen or suffer forever the consequences of the only other choice possible, the choice to reject Him.

Several thousand years ago, Moses knew that after his death, the people of Israel would be tempted to forsake God. So toward the end of his life, he stood before the people and declared, “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live” (**Deut. 30:19**). So what will be our choice today? Throughout the coming week, let’s think about the importance of this, the greatest choice any of us will ever make.

Monday: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Key Idea: The choice to obey God or not is the choice between spiritual life and death.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.16**, what did Moses say the people should do to “live”? In their case, what kind of “life” was Moses talking about? In **vv.17,18**, what actions would cause them to “perish”? For us today, what clear alternative is presented in **Rom. 2:5-11**?

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

Tuesday: Romans 5:12; 6:23

Key Idea: Death is the consequence of sin, which is the violation of God's law.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **Rom. 5:12**, how did "death" come into the world? In **6:23**, what are the "wages" of sin? What is the "free gift of God"? Where can this gift be enjoyed, according to this verse?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 25:14**.

Wednesday: John 3:16,17

Key Idea: God, at great cost, has made it possible for us to be forgiven of our sins and to live.

Questions for Family Growth: What did God's love move Him to do for the world? What will happen eternally to those who do not receive "eternal life" in Jesus Christ? Jesus came into the world for what purpose, according to **Jn. 10:10**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 25:15**.

Thursday: Revelation 22:17

Key Idea: The life that God offers in Jesus Christ must be chosen.

Questions for Family Growth: What invitation is offered by "the Spirit and the Bride"? Who are those who have the opportunity to "take of the water of life without price"? What did Jesus say concerning our relationship to God in **Mt. 7:7,8**?

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

Friday: Ezekiel 18:30-32

Key Idea: It is not God's desire that we die, but rather that we choose life.

Questions for Family Growth: What did God call upon the people of Israel to do, according to **vv.30,31**? What important point did God make concerning Himself in **v.32**? What did Peter say about God in **2 Pt. 3:9**? What is Jesus' invitation in **Mt. 11:28-30**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 25:17**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Each local church should communicate the gospel to as many people as possible

To the apostles, Jesus said, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mk. 16:15). “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Ac. 8:4 NKJV). Having read these and other similar texts many times, most of us realize that we have a responsibility to help spread the gospel. Unfortunately, most of us also have a past that leaves much room for improvement in our fulfillment of this responsibility. And this is not only a work for individuals; it is also a part of the congregational (or “together”) aspect of Christianity. In fact, there is no greater work that a congregation can do than the work of evangelism. *Each local church should communicate the gospel to as many people as possible.*

Doing the Lord’s will in carrying the gospel to the world requires both motivation (the “why” of evangelism) and method (the “how” of evangelism). Obviously, we are to do the Lord’s work in the Lord’s way, and that means we must study and learn and work to develop the skills necessary to get the job done. But we’ll hardly acquire those skills if we don’t have the necessary motivation. If there is not within us the desire to reach the lost, we won’t carry out the Great Commission. Since the work is hard, we need to be highly motivated.

When we find ourselves discouraged or apathetic, we should remember that desire is something that can be developed. We can encourage one another. We can spend time thinking about what our priorities ought to be as Christians. We can consider the example of brethren in other congregations. We can sing songs about the work of evangelism. We can think about what it cost the Lord to make the gospel a reality. And we can study our Bibles and pray that the Lord will help us to desire His work in a greater way. These are but a few of the things we can do to strengthen our motivation as evangelists, and it would only take a moment to think of other ideas as well.

In everything that relates to the gospel, it always helps to count our blessings. In the final analysis, there’s simply no greater motivation than gratitude for God’s grace. If we’re grateful for the blessings that we ourselves enjoy in Christ, the first thing we’ll want to do is share those blessings with other people. Let’s be grateful evangelists!

Monday: Mark 16:15,16

Key Idea: Christ commanded His disciples to spread the gospel throughout the world.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “gospel”? Why is it important for the gospel to be preached to “the whole creation”? If the goal is to preach the gospel to the world, how far does our personal responsibility extend?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 25:18.

Tuesday: Ezekiel 33:1-9

Key Idea: It is a serious failure when spiritual disaster is coming and we don't warn others.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the duty of a "watchman"? What does he have control over, and what does he not have control over? How is this passage sobering to us in the matter of evangelism? How is it encouraging to us?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 25:19](#).

Wednesday: Acts 8:1-4

Key Idea: The early Christians preached the gospel wherever they went.

Questions for Family Growth: Did persecution stop the early Christians from talking to others about Christ? Why not? When difficulties arise, are we excused from our responsibilities as evangelists? In [1 Cor. 16:8,9](#), why did Paul say he was going to remain in Ephesus?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 25:20](#).

Thursday: 1 Thessalonians 1:8

Key Idea: Each congregation of Christians should "sound forth" the gospel.

Questions for Family Growth: Should we aspire to be known as the Thessalonians were known by their brethren in other places? What are some practical ways that a congregation can "sound forth" the word of the Lord? What should be our motivation in this work?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 25:21,22](#).

Friday: 3 John 5-8

Key Idea: It is a privilege and a joy to be "fellow workers for the truth."

Questions for Family Growth: In [vv.5-7](#), what did John encourage his brethren to do? In [v.8](#), how did he say they could be "fellow workers for the truth"? In [Phil. 1:3-5](#), what did Paul say the Philippians had done?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 25:23](#).

Gary Henry — [WordPoints.com](#)

Choosing to attend every assembly of the church is an important choice

We live in a day when perhaps more emphasis is put on the “individual” aspect of life than the “together” part. People nowadays tend to see themselves more as individuals, living their own independent lives, rather than as a part of a larger network of relationships. Maybe this is because of the changes in society that have scattered our families so widely. No longer do many of us live in close proximity to our extended family. The result is that we tend to live isolated lives, just taking care of ourselves and not having much to do with those around us. Sometimes we don’t even know our next-door-neighbors.

But in some ways, we need, as Christians, to resist this tendency toward radical individualism. God has designed the plan of salvation such that there is not only an individual part but also a together part. Granted, we’re not saved on the “group plan,” but it’s still a fact that God has set up the local church to be an important part of that which aids and helps us on our way to heaven. We can’t neglect the together part of Christianity without some serious negative consequences.

It is God’s will that the local church meet together on a regular basis ([Ac. 2:42-47](#); [11:25,26](#); [20:7](#); etc.). One thing that takes place in such assemblies, obviously, is the worship and glorification of God. That should be our highest priority. But in God’s plan for our assemblies, there is something else that should happen: we are to edify one another when we gather together as the church. The Hebrew writer said, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” ([Hb. 10:24,25](#)).

Choosing to attend every assembly of the church is an important choice. No doubt there’ll be times when circumstances beyond our control keep us from being a part of the assembly. But the truth is, many Christians who absent themselves from the assembly do so by choice — they simply decide to do other things. But when we’re choosing between our priorities, there ought not to be anything that takes precedence over being with the Lord’s people when they meet. In this matter of choice, let’s work on making better choices, those that most greatly honor the Lord.

Monday: 1 John 4:20-5:2

Key Idea: If we love Christ, we must be concerned about the spiritual needs of His people.

Questions for Family Growth: Can we love the Father and not love our brothers and sisters in the family? According to this passage, how is it easier to love our fellow Christians than to love God? What are some ways we show that we love our brethren?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 25:24](#).

Tuesday: Colossians 3:15-17

Key Idea: Mutual edification is an important part of our discipleship and service to Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this passage, what is one very important purpose served by the singing of spiritual songs in our assemblies? Consider also **Eph. 5:19**. Can we fulfill this purpose if we are willfully absent?

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

Wednesday: Matthew 18:20

Key Idea: Christ is with His people when they assemble in His name.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to do something in the “name” of Christ? Do you think Christ’s presence with His people should be a part of the reason we look forward to gathering together as the church?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 25:26**.

Thursday: Acts 2:40-47

Key Idea: The early church assembled eagerly and frequently.

Questions for Family Growth: What indications do you see in this passage of joy and gladness among the Christians in Jerusalem? Does it seem that they had to be persuaded or coerced to gather together with the church?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 25:27**.

Friday: Hebrews 10:23-25

Key Idea: We must not neglect the opportunity to assemble and edify one another.

Questions for Family Growth: In this text, what are we told to “consider”? What are we urged not to “forsake” or “neglect”? What are some steps we can take if we don’t find the assemblies of the church edifying?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 25:28**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

On the Lord's Day, we are to provide for the financial needs of the Lord's work

There is simply no way around the fact that it takes a certain amount of money to carry out the work Christ has assigned the local church. Even when we limit the work of the church to that which Christ has authorized and we use our best judgment in being as economical as possible, it still takes some financial resources to implement the Lord's commands. And it is the Lord's people, the Christians who make up a local congregation, who are to furnish the funds that are needed. No one can fulfill this obligation for us. ***On the Lord's Day, we are to provide for the financial needs of the Lord's work.***

Do we give this important matter the priority it deserves? When we're allocating the financial resources available to our families, do we first determine what we're going to give to the Lord's work and then budget the remainder for our own personal needs? Paul spoke of cheerfully "purposing" or "deciding" what we will do to help out with the financial needs of the Lord's work: "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6,7).

Financial giving is not the only measure of our devotion to God, of course, but it is certainly one measure. The decision we make in this matter will surely reflect something about where our heart is and the degree to which our approach to life is either self-centered or God-centered. If we've read our Bibles, one thing ought to be clear: sacrificial giving will never impoverish us. In fact, God's promise is that those who loosen their grip on the things of this life and give unselfishly of their means will find themselves being enriched in more important ways. Solomon observed, "One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered" (Prov. 11:24,25). And Jesus said simply, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Mt. 6:33). This week, let's consider what improvements we can make in our giving on the Lord's Day.

Monday: Acts 4:32-5:11

Key Idea: In the New Testament, Christians pooled their resources for the needs of the Lord's work.

Questions for Family Growth: In this passage, what aspect of the Lord's work required financial giving by the members of the Jerusalem church? How generously did they respond to the need? What is the meaning of the expression "at the apostles' feet" (5:2)?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 26:1.

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Key Idea: Our financial contribution to the Lord's work is to be made on the first day of the week.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.2**, what language is used to indicate the time when the brethren were to make their contribution? Among Christians, what else would be taking place on that day each week? See **Ac. 20:7**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 26:2**.

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Key Idea: The giving of our means should be an outgrowth of the giving of ourselves to God.

Questions for Family Growth: What things does Paul say about the Macedonian Christians that reflects their attitude toward the Lord's work? Were they rich or poor people? Did they see their giving as an obligation, a privilege, or both?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 26:3-12**.

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 8:10-12; 9:1-7

Key Idea: Our giving is to be planned and purposed.

Questions for Family Growth: What exhortation did Paul give the Corinthians in **8:10-12**? What does it mean that a Christian should give "as he purposes in his heart" (**9:7 NKJV**)? How high a priority should our giving be?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 26:13-16**.

Friday: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Key Idea: We should give generously and cheerfully.

Questions for Family Growth: What basic principle is contained in **v.6**, and how does this relate to our financial giving to the Lord's work? What would be some of the characteristics of a "cheerful giver" (**v.7**)? How can we learn to be more cheerful in our giving?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 26:17**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Gaining a more truthful perspective on ourselves ought to be a priority

As important as it is to be objective in our thinking, most of us find it hard to do. It's difficult to look at things with straightforward honesty and to keep learning until we have a well-rounded perspective on the subjects we deal with. And the one thing we find it hardest to be objective about is ourselves. But since most of the truly good things in life require self-honesty, *gaining a more truthful perspective on ourselves ought to be a priority.*

The tendency is for us to go to extremes in our thinking about ourselves, either under-estimating or over-estimating the truth. In the body of Christ, for example, we may think too little of ourselves: "If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body" (1 Cor. 12:15,16). Or we go to the opposite extreme and think too much of ourselves: "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Cor. 12:21).

What we need to do, of course, is to think "with sober judgment" (Rom. 12:3) about ourselves. That means to have a level-headed seriousness in our thinking, viewing ourselves in a balanced, truthful way. Ultimately, of course, sober thinking about ourselves involves learning to look at ourselves as God sees us. We can't have His perfect, infallible understanding of ourselves, but we can grow in the accuracy of our understanding. We can strive to see more of what God sees about us. When we do, we'll be helped in many ways.

Truth is always important, regardless of the subject. We can't be saved by the gospel if our hearts are closed to the truth. Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (Jn. 8:32). A part of the truth that we must be willing to accept is the truth about ourselves. It is not just dangerous to be deluded about ourselves; it is eternally dangerous. This week, let's aim to have a more accurate and complete understanding of ourselves. Let's pray that God will aid us in seeing all that He wants us to see about ourselves as His created children. The more truth we have in our hearts, the closer we'll be to God.

Monday: Genesis 1:26-28

Key Idea: We should try to see our created nature as God sees it.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.27, what is the "image of God" in which we are created? How does this make our nature different from that of the lower creatures that God made? What is said about mankind in Psa. 8:5-8?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 26:18,19.

Tuesday: Psalm 139:1,23,24

Key Idea: We should try to see our sins as God sees them.

Questions for Family Growth: Why is it so difficult to see our own sins as objectively as we see the sins of other people? What is the prayer of David in this Psalm? Can we repent of our sins if we don't see them as they really are?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 26:20-22](#).

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Key Idea: We should try to see our strengths and weaknesses as God sees them.

Questions for Family Growth: How does a shallow or superficial view of our weaknesses hurt us? What about our view of our strengths? What are some things that can help us see our own strengths and weaknesses more truthfully?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 26:23](#).

Thursday: Matthew 6:26; 10:29-31

Key Idea: We should try to see our worth as God sees it.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus teach in these texts about our “worth” or “value”? Why is it so important not to underestimate how much we are worth in God's eyes? What can help us to have a better appreciation of our true worth?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 26:24-26](#).

Friday: Revelation 3:8

Key Idea: We should try to see our potential and our opportunities as God sees them.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus say He had set before the church in Philadelphia? Do you think He does the same thing for individuals? In [1 Cor. 16:8,9](#), what often accompanies our opportunities?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Godly lives don't develop unless we make careful decisions

Carpenters give this good advice: measure twice, cut once. It's far better to make sure we're right, even if it takes extra time, than to hastily "cut" something and then see that we cut in the wrong place. Carefulness is important, whether we're a carpenter building a house or a Christian trying to live a godly life.

We might think it would be nice if we could make a few big decisions about following Christ and then put our lives on "autopilot" and never have to worry about our actions ever again. But that's not the way life goes. We have to make careful decisions every day. ***Godly lives don't develop unless we make careful decisions.***

In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul spoke of the need for careful thinking and living. He said, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (**Eph. 5:15-17 NKJV**). The English word "circumspect" means "heedful of circumstances and potential consequences; prudent" (*American Heritage Dictionary*). To live circumspectly means that we live with deliberate caution and carefulness. We must do this, Paul says, because "the days are evil." Since we are surrounded by so many evil influences, we need to be all the more careful in the choices we make.

Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, is reported to have said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." He was right. If we just go with the flow, living haphazardly and not thinking about how we ought to live, the kind of life that results from that approach is not really worth living. As Christians, we have the benefit of God's truth to help us understand what the truly good life would be. But we have to pay attention and be careful. We have to examine our lives often and make the decisions that are required to get on the right path and stay there. We cannot afford to drift along, living by default. We must live our lives on purpose.

So let's give some thought to "careful" living. God deserves no less than the best we can give.

Monday: Ephesians 5:15-17

Key Idea: In the New Testament, we are exhorted to live "circumspectly" or "carefully."

Questions for Family Growth: What reason is given in this passage for our need to live carefully? What kind of life results from carelessness? In combating the devil, is there any kind of mental preparation that is necessary? See **1 Pt. 5:8,9**.

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 26:28**.

Tuesday: Acts 17:16-34

Key Idea: We need to consider very carefully the claims of the gospel of Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: What kind of city was ancient Athens? How much consideration was given there to Paul's preaching? In **Ac. 17:11**, how carefully did the Bereans consider the gospel when they heard it?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:1.**

Wednesday: Revelation 2:1-7

Key Idea: When we choose a local congregation, we need to choose carefully.

Questions for Family Growth: What assessment did Christ give of the spiritual condition of the church in Ephesus? If a congregation had, in fact, had its "lampstand" (**v.5**) removed by Christ, would we want to worship there?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:2.**

Thursday: 1 Peter 1:13-16

Key Idea: We need to carefully decide what manner of life we're going to lead.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to be "sober-minded" in our thinking? What are we to rest our hope "fully" upon? In **vv.14-16**, what kind of life are we to lead? Is this done accidentally or by conscious choice?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:3.**

Friday: 2 Timothy 2:15

Key Idea: Serving God faithfully requires constant carefulness and diligence.

Questions for Family Growth: What has to take place in our lives if we are to be found workers who don't need to be ashamed? Do we ever get to the point where we no longer have to give much thought to our lives?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

The authority of Christ's word is the basis for unity among His followers

One of the most obvious things in the New Testament is that Jesus desired that those who profess to be His followers should be unified in their faith and practice (Jn. 17:20,21). But it is equally obvious that the world of so-called “Christendom” is not unified today. There are literally hundreds of different groups of congregations, each with distinctive doctrines that set them apart from all others. These disagreements over even the fundamentals of the faith cannot be pleasing to Jesus Christ. But what can be done about it? What kind of unity would the Lord have us pursue?

Some try to achieve unity by simply saying that the differences are not important. This approach basically says that there is room in the Lord's church for people to believe whatever they feel like believing, even on the most important subjects. But while “agreeing to disagree” produces union, it does not produce the kind of unity that the Lord desires. Truth is not simply anything we want it to be. It makes a significant difference what we believe and practice (1 Tim. 4:1,2; 2 Tim. 4:3,4; etc.), and the differences that divide “Christendom” cannot be ignored.

In Jesus' prayer for His disciples, He prayed that they might be “sanctified,” or “made distinctive,” by the truth: “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17). This is the only worthy way to gather the Lord's people together and make them distinctive. ***The authority of Christ's word is the basis for unity among His followers.*** We need to diligently and reverently submit all of our differences to Christ's teaching and seek to reach a common understanding of what His will is. This is hard, time-consuming work, but the results are worth it.

If we individually grow closer to God, based upon the truth of His word, we will obviously be growing closer to one another in the process. Among human beings, it doesn't matter so much who is right — it only matters what is right. Whatever the differences may be, the main thing that we must decide is what the Lord's will is. When we discover His will and do it, we will enjoy among ourselves the kind of unity that Jesus prayed for. Throughout the coming week, therefore, let's consider the importance of growing in unity by growing in the truth. In all things, our goal should be to grow toward “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13).

Monday: Romans 16:16

Key Idea: In the New Testament, congregations were simply the “churches of Christ.”

Questions for Family Growth: What things would have to be true in order for a congregation to be “of Christ”? In the New Testament, were there any denominational groups that held to different doctrines and practices?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 27:5.

Tuesday: 1 Timothy 4:1,2

Key Idea: It was predicted in the New Testament that some would depart from the faith.

Questions for Family Growth: What is “the faith” that is spoken of in this text? What does it mean to “depart” from the faith? If an individual departs from the faith, is he still “of Christ”? What about a congregation? What did Jesus say to the church in Ephesus in [Rev. 2:5](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 27:6](#).

Wednesday: John 17:20,21

Key Idea: Jesus prayed for unity among those who would profess to be His followers.

Questions for Family Growth: According to [v.21](#), what is one important reason why Jesus desired unity among His followers? Back in [v.17](#), what did Jesus pray that His followers might be “sanctified” in? In this context, what does it mean to be “sanctified”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 27:7](#).

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 1:10

Key Idea: We ought to seek agreement and strive for a unity that is based upon God’s truth.

Questions for Family Growth: What apparently was the situation in the church in Corinth? Consider [vv.11-13](#). What is the appeal that Paul made to the members of the congregation in [v.10](#)? In our congregations today, how can we “be united in the same mind and the same judgment”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 27:8](#).

Friday: Colossians 3:17

Key Idea: Our aim ought to be that we will do everything by the Lord’s authority.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to do something “in the name of the Lord Jesus”? If we strive to do everything in the Lord’s name, how does that produce unity among Christians? What is said about unity in [Eph. 4:1-6](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 27:9](#).

Gary Henry — [WordPoints.com](#)

We must learn to subordinate our impulses to our principles

In order to do what is right, our conscience and our will sometimes have to overrule the desires of the moment. Moses, according **Hb. 11:24-26**, had more character than to let his life be driven by impulsive desires. In his choices, he elevated principle over impulse. Here was a man of integrity, willing to suffer affliction for a long-term good rather than indulge in the passing pleasures of sin. Because he “was looking to the reward,” momentary desires didn’t distract him.

There is much to be said for patiently learning the life-disciplines of godliness. If we’ve trained and exercised ourselves in these (**1 Tim. 4:7,8**), we’ll find that God’s commandments are “not burdensome” (**1 Jn. 5:3**). But no matter how strong we’ve grown, there will always be at least a few “hard moments.” These are those moments when the right thing and the easy thing are not the same thing. At such times, a choice must be made. We must firmly and decisively subordinate an impulse to a principle. If we aren’t willing to do this, then our character doesn’t have the thing that we call “integrity.” We aren’t true to our principles.

No one could have been more prepared for the ordeal of Gethsemane than Jesus was. Yet it would be an insult to suggest that His choice to do the right thing was easy. The decision was an “agony” in the most literal sense of the term (**Lk. 22:39-46**). We are told that He “offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears” and that He “learned obedience through what he suffered” (**Hb. 5:7,8**). Whatever may have been the desires and impulses of those difficult moments, He chose to base His actions on the principle of love for the Father’s will. And this is the very essence of both obedience and character.

When we find ourselves having the desire or impulse to do something that’s wrong, we must say “no” to that impulse. ***We must learn to subordinate our impulses to our principles.*** Like Jesus, we must be willing to say to our Heavenly Father, “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” Real character consists of doing the right thing, both when it’s easy and when it’s not. Throughout the coming week, let’s work on clarifying our principles and then building up our commitment to those principles. Let’s do what’s right, regardless of anything else.

Monday: Genesis 25:29-34

Key Idea: We must keep in mind that which is most important to us, even if it is “far off.”

Questions for Family Growth: What are some reasons why Esau’s decision to give up his birthright was foolish? Why do our fleshly desires seem to have a stronger pull on us than our principles do? What does **Hb. 12:16,17** say about Esau?

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

Tuesday: Genesis 39:7-10

Key Idea: We can make the choice to refuse temptation and do what is right before God.

Questions for Family Growth: How did Joseph answer the powerful seduction of Potiphar's wife? What did he recognize as the bottom line, the single most important reason of all to refuse sin? What does **1 Cor. 10:13** say about temptation?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:11.**

Wednesday: Hebrews 11:24-26

Key Idea: We can look beyond the pleasures of sin to the greater reward that God has for us.

Questions for Family Growth: In this passage, what two things did Moses have to choose between? On the basis of what principle(s) did he make his choice? What is faith, according to **Hb. 11:1**? What difference should faith make in the way we make our decisions?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:12.**

Thursday: Galatians 5:16-24

Key Idea: We can choose to be led by the Spirit rather than be governed by the flesh.

Questions for Family Growth: Who determines whether we will be led by the Spirit or by the flesh? Do we have a will that is truly free? According to **vv.22,23**, what good things result from deciding to be led by the Spirit?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:13.**

Friday: Hebrews 12:1,2

Key Idea: Like Jesus, we can endure any "cross" if we keep our hearts set on the joy beyond.

Questions for Family Growth: Was Jesus' obedience automatic and easy, or did He have to make the choice to obey? What does **Hb. 5:7-9** say about His obedience? What, according to **Hb. 12:1,2**, is the key to being steadfast and faithful?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:14.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Self-honesty is one of the most important character traits we can have

There was an inscription on the temple to Apollo in ancient Delphi which said simply “Know Thyself.” This brief advice is obviously important, but it is very difficult to follow. Most of us have trouble seeing ourselves as we really are. But considering the spiritual consequences of our actions, we very much need to see ourselves honestly and truthfully. ***Self-honesty is one of the most valuable character traits we can have.***

The gospel of Christ requires, among other things, that we repent of our sins. But nobody repents of sin until he has enough honesty to admit the sins that he has committed. For this reason, repentance requires an honest self-examination. We have to have the courage to face the facts and try to see our actions as they appear to God.

We must not only love the truth in a general or abstract way, but we must be willing to deal specifically with the truth about ourselves. If we run away from the truth about ourselves because it is unpleasant to deal with, then we miss the opportunity to correct our faults. And if we aren't willing to correct our faults, then those faults will be our destruction.

So how honest are we about ourselves? The following are some questions that can test our self-honesty. Do we pray for help in seeing ourselves as God sees us? Do we pray for friends who love our souls more than they love our friendship, friends who will not let us excuse or ignore our sins? Do we pray to be set in the midst of circumstances that will make us see our true character? Do we pray for our secrets to be exposed, if that's what it takes to make us deal with our sins? Do we pray for help in accepting even the most painful truth, so that we can change our ways?

This week, let's make it our goal to be more honest about our personal shortcomings. Honesty takes humility, of course, but if we're not willing to be humble, we can't grow. If we won't admit where we are right now, then we'll never advance beyond our present state. Growth may be uncomfortable, but it's the healthiest thing in the world. So may we commit ourselves to an honesty that will accept the truth, whatever it is — even the truth that requires some change on our part.

Monday: 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

Key Idea: Our salvation depends upon our response to the truth.

Questions for Family Growth: Is it possible for the devil to deceive people? Who, according to **v.10**, are those who will be deceived? In **vv.11,12**, what will happen to those who did not deal honestly with the truth?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:15,16.**

Tuesday: 1 John 1:8-10

Key Idea: We must be willing to accept the truth about our own sins.

Questions for Family Growth: According to v.8, if we fail to see our own sins, who is it that has been deceived? Why do you think it is so difficult to see the truth about our own sins? What are we urged to do concerning our sins in v.9?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 27:17.

Wednesday: Galatians 4:16

Key Idea: We should appreciate those who help us see the truth about our own sins.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul hope he had not become by telling the Galatians the truth? When those who love us point out our sins, what should we do: repent or retaliate? In 2 Cor. 7:8,9, what did Paul say he was glad about?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 27:18.

Thursday: Acts 7:54-60

Key Idea: When the truth pricks our conscience, we should not react defensively.

Questions for Family Growth: Why is it that some people get angry when their sins are exposed? When Stephen pointed out the sins that his audience had committed, what did they do? What should they have done instead?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 27:19.

Friday: Acts 2:36-41

Key Idea: We must be willing to repent of the sins that are brought to our attention.

Questions for Family Growth: How did the audience on Pentecost react to Peter's condemnation of their sin? What kind of character did this show on their part? Can we be saved if we refuse to repent? See Lk. 13:1-5.

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 27:20.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Our characters are the accumulation of the decisions we make

When we're dissatisfied with what's going on in our lives, we're tempted to blame circumstances that are beyond our control. We tend to think we'd be better off if life had "dealt us a better hand." Yet in all the most important ways, we are each the product of decisions we have made in the freedom of our wills. We certainly do have circumstances that we have to deal with, but the quality of our lives is determined primarily by our character, not our circumstances — and our character is something that is within our control.

Our characters are the accumulation of the decisions we make. Whether we realize it or not, each time we make a choice, we add a little bit to our character. Depending on whether we make a good choice or a bad one, we either add something good to our character or we add something bad to it. Either way, our characters are constantly growing and changing.

The Bible teaches that there are only two directions in which our characters can grow: we either grow in the direction of righteousness or the direction of wickedness (**Rom. 2:6-11**). And ultimately, our eternal destiny will be the completion of whichever path of growth we're choosing right now, whether good or bad. Heaven and hell will simply be the end of the road we're traveling by the decisions we're presently making. Our "destiny" can't be anything other than the "destination" that we have traveled toward.

One reason why our moment-by-moment choices are so important is that these make it either easier or more difficult for us to do what is right in the future. If I take the easy way out and make a bad choice right now, I change my character just a little bit, and I will find it that much harder to do what is right the next time. Late in life, I will find it either very easy to live a godly life (because I've been making many choices in that direction) or I will find it very difficult.

It's wise to be careful with our decisions. They all count, every single one of them. They all go into making our character. And our character is what God will judge on the last day. Right now is the time to build a godly character. Eventually, we will reap whatever choices we have sown.

Monday: Romans 2:6-11; 6:16

Key Idea: Our character is growing either in a good direction or a bad one.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the only two alternatives presented in this passage? In **2:6**, what is God's judgment of us based upon? If people don't start out wicked, how do they get to be that way when they are grown?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 27:21.**

Tuesday: John 8:42-47

Key Idea: With every choice we make, we are becoming more like God or more like the devil.

Questions for Family Growth: In regard to spiritual matters, what choice do we have as to who will be our “father”? In v.44, whose “desires” did Jesus say these people wanted to do? What point did He make in v.47?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 27:22.

Wednesday: Ephesians 5:15-17

Key Idea: Life is serious business — it pays to live carefully.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to live “circumspectly” (NKJV)? Why are the decisions we make each day so important? Are there any unimportant choices or decisions? What did Jesus say in Mt. 12:36 and Lk. 16:10?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 27:23-27.

Thursday: Galatians 6:7,8

Key Idea: In eternity we will “reap” whatever we’ve “sown” by the decisions we’ve made.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the two things we can “sow” to? What are the only two kinds of “reaping” that are possible? What determines our inner character as individual human beings? Who chooses what our eternal destiny will be?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 28:1.

Friday: 1 Corinthians 15:9,10

Key Idea: We can begin to make better choices and grow in the direction of a better character.

Questions for Family Growth: As a young man among the Jews, what kind of choices did Paul make? What did he do when he realized he was headed in the wrong direction? Why should Paul’s example be encouraging to us?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 28:2.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

As Christians, we are being drawn toward heaven by the gospel of Christ

Just as it is important for us to see ourselves as having come from God, it is even more important to see ourselves as going toward Him. God created us in His own image (**Gen. 1:27**), and His desire is to redeem us from our sins so that we can be with Him throughout eternity (**Hb. 2:10**). That reality should be the major part of our self-concept or self-image. If we are in Christ, we are heaven-bound people.

If we take the Bible seriously, the truths we find there will obviously make for a better quality life in this world. But Christianity is about something much more important than that. *As Christians, we are being drawn toward heaven by the gospel of Christ.* Heaven is what the gospel is primarily about, and we need to keep that fact in the center of our spiritual focus.

Christianity is about heaven simply because it is about God. Heaven is where God is, awaiting the arrival of all His redeemed people throughout the ages, and eternal life has to do, first and foremost, with God Himself. To have eternal life is to “know” God. Jesus said, “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (**Jn. 17:3**). This is what heaven is about. It’s why we want to go there. In heaven, our knowledge of God and our fellowship with Him will be complete.

We could not have the hope of heaven, of course, if God had not made it possible. Since we could not have saved ourselves from our sins, God had to make the necessary atonement. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (**Jn. 3:16,17**). It is only by the grace of God Himself that we can say that we are, as His forgiven people, bound for heaven.

This week, let’s grow in our appreciation of the eternal life that is available in Christ. To be bound for heaven gives us a meaning and an importance to life that we could not have by any other means. This is a treasure not to be taken lightly.

Monday: 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Key Idea: The gospel of Christ is primarily about the life to come, not life in this present world.

Questions for Family Growth: If there is in fact no resurrection, what must be said about the gospel of Christ? Does this mean that Christianity is not concerned with this life at all? As Christians, how should we think about life in the present world?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:3.**

Tuesday: Hebrews 2:10

Key Idea: The thing we should desire most about heaven is the glory of being where God is.

Questions for Family Growth: To what is God bringing us, according to this text? What does “glory” mean? What does Paul say about our glory in **2 Cor. 3:18** and **4:16-18**? How is “eternal life” defined in **Jn. 17:3**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:4.**

Wednesday: Hebrews 12:1,2

Key Idea: Heaven will be only for those who have chosen to go there.

Questions for Family Growth: What are we encouraged to do in this passage? What will happen if we do not do these things? In **1 Cor. 9:27**, what did Paul say he had to do in order to maintain his hope of heaven?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:5.**

Thursday: 2 Peter 1:2-4

Key Idea: Heaven will be the end of a process of growing in the character traits of godliness.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this text, what has God’s divine power given to us? Through these things, what are we becoming “partakers” of, according to **v.4**? In **vv.5-11**, what must be done if we expect to go to heaven?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:6.**

Friday: 2 Corinthians 5:14,15

Key Idea: The love of Christ motivates us to live for Him so that we can have the hope of heaven.

Questions for Family Growth: In this passage, in what way does the love of Christ “control” (constrain or compel) us? What does this teach us concerning what our motives should be in serving God? Do we serve God primarily for our sake or for His?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:7.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

True faith means more than mental agreement with the facts of the gospel

Most of us have trouble maintaining balance in our thinking and conduct. We tend to go to extremes. If we are deficient in one area of responsibility, we often correct that imbalance by putting such an extreme emphasis on the thing we lack that we end up neglecting something else in the process.

In regard to the gospel of Christ, it's important that we not emphasize one aspect of salvation at the expense of another. For example, the Bible clearly teaches that faith is important in a very basic sense. And if we've not been giving enough emphasis to faith, we need to be reminded how crucial faith is in God's plan of salvation. But in supplying this deficiency, we need to be careful. We need to make sure that we don't leave the impression that simply believing in Christ is all that is required for our salvation.

True faith means more than mental agreement with the facts of the gospel. As important as it is, faith must never be thought of as simply believing that Jesus is the Son of God. It is certainly a fact that we must believe this truth and be willing to confess it publicly. If we don't, we'll be lost. 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" ([Jn. 8:24](#)). But the faith we must have in order to be saved involves much more than mental assent to Jesus' deity. It means trusting Him enough to obey Him, and it is this combination of trust and obedience that pleases God ([Hb. 11:5-7](#)).

Faith is the best foundation for obedience that we could ever have. If we genuinely trust God, we'll be eager to do whatever He instructs us to do. We'll do it wholeheartedly, without complaint or questioning. And we'll do it abundantly, giving full measure, rather than seeking to do a bare minimum. Real faith will motivate us and move us. It will be an active force in our daily lives. Throughout the coming week, let's make it our aim to grow in faith. Let's show our faith by our obedience, and let's make sure that our obedience is based on faith. This "obedience of faith" ([Rom. 1:5](#)) is what God is looking for in our lives. When we grow in both faith and obedience, we are growing in God's direction.

Monday: Romans 1:16,17

Key Idea: Faith is the key element in the gospel plan of salvation.

Questions for Family Growth: In this text, why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel? Who are those saved by the power of the gospel? What is revealed in the gospel? What does it mean, "The righteous shall live by faith"?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 28:8](#).

Tuesday: James 2:14-26

Key Idea: Saving faith involves far more than “faith only.”

Questions for Family Growth: In **vv.15-17**, what example is given of the ineffectiveness of faith without works? In **vv.21-24**, who is given as an example of obedient faith? What does **v.26** say about “faith without works”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:9.**

Wednesday: Romans 1:5; 16:25-27

Key Idea: Obedience to the gospel is the “obedience of faith.”

Questions for Family Growth: What is meant by the expression “obedience to the faith” (NKJV) or the “obedience of faith” (ESV)? Can faith without obedience save us? What about obedience without faith? How do faith and obedience help each other?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:10.**

Thursday: Hebrews 11:1-7

Key Idea: True faith will cause us to actively and diligently seek God.

Questions for Family Growth: How is “faith” defined in **v.1**? According to **v.5**, is it possible for us to “please” God? In **v.6**, what is the key to pleasing God? What are some things that a person will do if he or she seeks God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:11.**

Friday: Galatians 2:20

Key Idea: As Christians, we live on the basis of faith in Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: How is it possible for a person today to be “crucified with Christ”? How is it possible for Christ to live “in” us? What kind of life will we live if we live “by faith” in Christ?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:12.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

The willingness to be warned is a valuable character trait

When God providentially brings warnings into our lives, it is a great mistake to ignore them. When, for example, Paul preached the gospel to Felix, the Roman governor, the text says: “And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, ‘Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you’” (Ac. 24:25). Paul’s warning about “the coming judgment” was enough to make Felix “alarmed,” but Felix did nothing about the warning. Like so many who procrastinate and fail to do anything about the warnings that come to them, this man postponed taking any action with regard to his soul’s salvation. For all we know, he never got around to obeying the gospel.

The willingness to be warned is a valuable character trait. It is, in fact, one of the major attributes that distinguish a wise person from a foolish one. Solomon said, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice” (Prov. 12:15). Learning from our mistakes, listening to others’ advice, and paying attention to our conscience seem like simple things. Yet we often fail to do them. And when we fail to let ourselves be warned, we lose much of the benefit of wisdom. We are doomed to repeat our mistakes and to suffer their consequences over and over again. If we’re unwilling to be warned, for whatever reason, we will lead a life that is much harder and more unpleasant than it has to be. “Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof leads others astray” (Prov. 10:17).

It is not fun to be warned. There are more pleasant things that we’d rather hear. But we need to be warned, and God loves us too much not to warn us. He has provided for our salvation in His Son, but that salvation is only for those willing to be warned about their sins. If it is the gospel of Christ that we wish to hear, then we must be prepared to hear its warnings. Concerning Christ, Paul said, “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Col. 1:28). Do we wish to be “mature in Christ”? Then we must welcome the warnings of His word. This week, let’s open up our hearts, our minds, and our attitudes to the benefit of God’s warnings to us.

Monday: Psalm 19:7-11

Key Idea: From time to time, every person needs to be warned.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.11, what good purpose does David say is served in our lives by the teachings of God’s word? Why do we all need to be warned occasionally? Why should we appreciate warnings?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 28:13.

Tuesday: Luke 15:11-20

Key Idea: Difficult circumstances are one means through which we are warned.

Questions for Family Growth: Briefly describe the foolish thing this young man did? What happened that finally woke him up and made him realize how foolish he had been? Is “pain” always a bad thing?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 28:14](#).

Wednesday: Proverbs 10:17; 12:15; 17:10

Key Idea: We should be willing for others to warn us by their counsel.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the basic point made in all three of these proverbs? What does it mean to “heed” instruction or advice? Why is it so difficult for us to do this? Who are those whose counsel we should seek?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 28:15](#).

Thursday: Genesis 39:7-10

Key Idea: We should listen to the warnings of our own conscience.

Questions for Family Growth: Other things may have been involved, but what was the basic reason Joseph refused the temptation of Potiphar’s wife? Should we always follow our conscience? Why is this a wise practice?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 28:16](#).

Friday: Colossians 1:28

Key Idea: If we wish to be mature spiritually, we must take heed when God warns us.

Questions for Family Growth: As he preached Christ, what two things did Paul say he did? Can we become complete and mature in Christ without these two things? In [Acts 20:31](#), what did Paul say he had done while he was in Ephesus?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 28:17](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We are to be good stewards of the blessings God gives us

One of the challenges we face as Christians is to be as thankful as we ought to be for God's blessings. It is a pleasant challenge, of course, but it is still a challenge. We must not take our blessings for granted. As richly blessed as we are, we need to be more grateful for God's goodness.

But gratitude is not enough. *We are to be good stewards of the blessings God gives us.* There is nothing we have that did not come from God, and He gave us these things for more than just our personal enjoyment — they are to be used as resources in His work. When we look at our blessings in that way, it is obvious that we should be careful how we use them.

If our blessings are entrusted to us as resources, there are some questions it would be good to ask. How can we use them most efficiently, with a minimum of waste? How can we get the most use out of them in the time that is allotted to us? What would the Lord want us to be doing with these things? Out of all the things we could do with these blessings, what would bring the most glory to God? And how can we use them so as not to be “ashamed” (2 Tim. 2:15) at the judgment?

These days most of us are very busy. And the busier we are, the harder it is to keep from developing “tunnel vision.” We become so absorbed in our own activities that we become oblivious to anything outside of our own needs. We may regularly thank God for supplying our needs, but rarely do we think of anything beyond the boundaries of those needs. But in the Lord, we are a part of a work much bigger than any of us individually, and we are to keep the Lord's work at the forefront of our minds in every decision we make. Life is not just about personal pleasure — it's about glorifying God by participating in His work.

At judgment, we will have to account for our use of all that God blessed us with. For those who have lived selfishly and used their blessings simply to enhance their own lifestyle, that judgment will be a time of tremendous regret. This week, let's think about our stewardship in God's work. He blesses us abundantly, and with that abundance we can do great things in His name. Before the time of accounting comes, let's decide to use every one of His blessings to the best of our ability.

Monday: James 1:17

Key Idea: We are richly blessed by our Heavenly Father.

Questions for Family Growth: According to James, where does “every good gift and every perfect gift” come from? What does Paul say in Eph. 3:20,21 about how “abundantly” God is able to bless His people? At the end of Col. 3:17, what are we commanded to do?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 28:18.

Tuesday: Matthew 25:14-30

Key Idea: Our blessings come with responsibilities, and we are accountable for their use.

Questions for Family Growth: What did the servant do who was described in **v.18**? What kind of servant did the master say he was in **v.26**? What description of this servant was given in **v.30**? As servants of the Lord, how can we avoid being “ashamed,” according to **Tim. 2:15**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:19.**

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 4:1,2

Key Idea: We must be good stewards of the things that we are blessed with.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to be a “steward”? In **v.2**, what character trait must a steward have? In the Lord’s work today, what are some practical ways that we can be better stewards of the blessings the Lord has given us?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:20.**

Thursday: James 4:1-3

Key Idea: Our blessings must be used not just for ourselves but for the good of those around us.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.3**, why did some not receive their requests from God? What does it mean to “spend it on your passions”? In **1 Cor. 12:7**, what did Paul mean when he said that certain gifts were given to the church “for the common good”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:21.**

Friday: 2 Corinthians 12:15

Key Idea: In the Lord’s work, we must be willing to spend our blessings and be spent.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul mean when he said, “I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls”? With regard to God’s blessings, at the end of our lives shouldn’t we want to have used up and “spent” every resource the Lord provided to us while we lived?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:22.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

God's love for us is steadfast

God not only wants us to be faithful to Him, but He wants us to know that He is faithful to us. In our relationship with God, there should be a mutual trust — He should be able to count on our faithfulness, and we should know that we can count on His. There is, of course, no doubt as to whether He will keep His end of the commitment, but we need to be more confident of His faithfulness. We need to meditate on it, cherish it, and give thanks for it. When we do that, we will be motivated to be more faithful to Him.

God's love for us is steadfast. It does not waver. Unlike the love that we sometimes show to our fellow human beings, God's love does not depend on the likableness of the other person. He loves us because we are His creatures, endowed with an inherent worth that comes from being made in His image. He gave us a free will, and if we use that freedom to reject Him, He will have to send us away from His presence in eternity. But as long as our lives last in this world, He will never stop loving us. Even when we stray from Him, He continues to work to win us back. When we say no to God, no one is more brokenhearted about that than God Himself.

We desperately need to know the steadfastness of God's love. When we lose sight of His faithfulness, we are in grave danger spiritually. Satan can tempt us to do all sorts of things that we would never do if we kept in mind the steadfastness of God's love for us. And not only that, but meditating on God's dependability is the only way for us to keep from being discouraged in this difficult world. How could we possibly keep going if we doubted that God was going to help us?

In **Phil. 2:12,13**, Paul wrote that we are to “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling.” We certainly need to have a strong sense of responsibility concerning our obedience. If we don't, we will be lost. But Paul also wanted us to realize that “it is God who works in [us], both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” God is to be taken with utter seriousness, but it must also be a part of our concept of God that He will help us do whatever is pleasing to Him. He loves us more than we know, and we will never be in any situation where His help is not available to us. However daunting our responsibilities may seem at times, we can be confident that God is at our side. With Paul, our attitude should be: “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (**Phil. 4:13**).

Monday: Hebrews 13:5,6

Key Idea: Knowing that God will never forsake us, our present circumstances need not worry us.

Questions for Family Growth: What are we told to keep our lives free from? In this passage, what is the key to contentment? What is the main point of the quotation from **Psa. 118:6**? What does it mean that we can “confidently” say what this text affirms?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 28:23**.

Tuesday: Hebrews 10:23

Key Idea: The promises of God can be counted on dependably.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to “hold fast the confession of our hope”? What would it mean to “waver” in our faith? At the end of this verse, what reason is given for us to hold fast in our faith? What are some of the promises of God that we need to put our trust in?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 28:24](#).

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 10:13

Key Idea: God is faithful to help us resist temptation.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that temptation is “common to man”? In this text, what limitations does God place on the temptations we face? When we are tempted, what will God always provide?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 28:25](#).

Thursday: 1 John 1:9

Key Idea: God is faithful to forgive us when we stumble.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this text, what must we be willing to do about our sins? When we do this, what can we count on God doing? In what way does this show God’s faithfulness to us? What additional point is made in [v.10](#)?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 28:26](#).

Friday: 1 Peter 4:19

Key Idea: Because God is faithful, we can entrust ourselves to Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to “suffer according to God’s will”? In practical terms, how do we “entrust our souls” to God? How can we be sure that God is a “faithful Creator”? As we trust God, what should we be doing, according to the last part of this verse?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 28:27](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Like Joshua and Caleb, we must rely on the Lord fully

One of the most encouraging stories in the Old Testament is the story of Joshua and Caleb. As the nation of Israel neared the land of Canaan, after the Lord had delivered them from Egypt and led them through the wilderness, a group of men were sent into the land to gather information about it. When these men returned, only Joshua and Caleb said that Israel should enter the land and take it. All of the others said the task was impossible — the cities were too strongly fortified. “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we” ([Num. 13:31](#)).

Years later, Moses remembered those events. “And the LORD’s anger was kindled on that day, and he swore, saying, ‘Surely none of the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not wholly followed me, none except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the LORD’” ([Num. 32:10-12](#)).

Like Joshua and Caleb, we must rely on the Lord fully. If the Lord has commanded something to be done, He has also promised to provide the means necessary for its accomplishment. Faith means that we follow the Lord’s instructions completely, trusting that He will make it possible for His purposes to be fulfilled. Like Joshua and Caleb, we may not be able to see how God is going to do this, but we trust that He will keep His promises. In the meantime, we will obey His word.

If we only follow the Lord in situations where it looks safe from our perspective, then we have little faith. In fact, if we act only on the basis of our own foresight and common sense, that is not faith in the Lord at all — it is faith in our own wisdom.

This week, let’s go back and study the story of Joshua and Caleb. It has many good things to teach us about the way faith and obedience work together. This story has a number of clear applications to our lives today. We may not easily relate to the task of the men who were sent to spy out Canaan, but we have some daunting responsibilities of our own. May we learn to trust the Lord as Joshua and Caleb did, both when it is “safe” to do so and when it is not.

Monday: Numbers 14:24; 32:10-12

Key Idea: We must be willing to trust the Lord completely.

Questions for Family Growth: In what way did Caleb (and also Joshua) have a “different spirit” than the other men who were sent to spy out the land? What does it mean that “[he] has followed me fully”? Compare this to the statement “they have wholly followed the Lord” in [32:12](#).

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

Tuesday: Numbers 13:21-30

Key Idea: We must be willing to do things that involve some risk.

Questions for Family Growth: What risks would have been involved in the mission to spy out the land? Why was it risky for Joshua and Caleb to disagree with the report of the other spies? How would it have been risky for Israel to try to take the land of Canaan?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 29:1](#).

Wednesday: Numbers 13:1-20; 14:6-8

Key Idea: We must be willing to be in a small minority.

Questions for Family Growth: How many men were originally sent to spy out Canaan? What percentage of them advised that Israel should go ahead and do what the Lord had commanded? Why is it so hard for us to stand up for what is right when the majority is going the other way?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 29:2](#).

Thursday: Numbers 13:30-33; 14:5-10

Key Idea: We must be willing to incur criticism for doing what is right.

Questions for Family Growth: In [13:30](#), what advice did Caleb give to the people? In [13:31](#), what answer was given by the other men? In [14:10](#), what did the congregation say? How should we react when we try to do what is right and others become angry at us?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 29:3](#).

Friday: Joshua 14:6-9

Key Idea: We must never discourage others from carrying out the Lord's instructions.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean in [v.8](#) that the other men "made the heart of the people melt"? When we fail to do what is right ourselves, why is it even worse when we discourage others? What are some situations today where we need to set an example of courage?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 29:4](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

It is refreshing to worship with the Lord's people

These days, life is tiring, to say the least. With multiple priorities to take care of, we use up our energies and feel exhausted. But if this is true of our lives in general, it is even more true in the Lord's work. If we care enough about the Lord's work to invest ourselves in it seriously, we find ourselves being depleted and drained. We need to be refreshed.

Fortunately, the Lord has made provision for us to be refreshed, and one of these provisions is the assembly of Christians together. In Jerusalem, the congregation of those who first obeyed the gospel met together frequently, and even daily ([Ac. 2:42-47](#)). They obviously enjoyed being in the presence of one another, and this was typical of Christians in the New Testament. We hear Paul, for example, asking the Roman brethren to pray for him, "so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company" ([Rom. 15:32](#)).

Of course, our assemblies will not be refreshing to us if we do not make them as the Lord would have them to be. Paul rebuked the Corinthians because, as he said, "in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse" ([1 Cor. 11:17](#)). He urged them to make the necessary changes so that their assemblies would be spiritually beneficial: "Let all things be done for building up" ([1 Cor. 14:26](#)).

We ought not to see it as a chore to assemble with our fellow Christians. It is not a dreary duty but a great opportunity. When we are thinking as we should, we will see it as a "want to" rather than a "have to." And what is more, we will put the emphasis on "giving" rather than "getting." It is in the act of encouraging others that we find ourselves being encouraged.

It is refreshing to worship with the Lord's people. This week, let's look at our assemblies from the standpoint of gratitude. It's a privilege to have the relationship that we do in Christ, and there ought not to be any greater joy in this life than being in the company of our brothers and sisters in Christ. So when we are tired, let's eagerly look forward to being together. It may take extra effort to get there, but when we make the effort, we find that there is no better refreshment in the world.

Monday: 1 Corinthians 11:17

Key Idea: When we come together, it ought to be for the better and not for the worse.

Questions for Family Growth: In this passage, what were the Corinthians doing that made their assemblies a negative experience? What can we learn in this text about the qualities and characteristics our assemblies should have? How can we make our assemblies more edifying?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 29:5](#).

Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 12:14,15

Key Idea: If we're willing to "spend and be spent," we will exhaust our energies in the Lord's work.

Questions for Family Growth: What do you think Paul meant by being willing to "spend and be spent"? What is the literal meaning of "exhausted"? What are some of the provisions the Lord has made for us to be refilled or replenished when we have depleted our energies?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 29:6](#).

Wednesday: Romans 1:8-12

Key Idea: We ought to long for our brethren and the strength that we receive from them.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did Paul long to see the Christians in Rome? What did he desire to receive from them? Given the demands of the life he lived, do you think Paul would have had a special appreciation for the times when he could worship with his brethren?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 29:7](#).

Thursday: Romans 15:30-33

Key Idea: We ought to have a refreshing effect on one another.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some different ways that you think Paul might have been "refreshed" by his fellow Christians? On being "refreshing" to our fellow Christians, see also [1 Cor. 16:17,18](#); [2 Cor. 7:13](#); [2 Tim. 1:16](#); [Philem. 7,20](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 29:8](#).

Friday: Hebrews 10:24,25

Key Idea: When we come together to worship, we have a very special opportunity to be refreshed.

Questions for Family Growth: In this text, what are Christians urged not to do? In [Ac. 20:7-12](#), how long did the assembly last? Judging from [Ac. 2:42-47](#), does it appear that the earliest Christians found it encouraging to be together?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 29:9](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Times of difficulty can be times of spiritual growth

No one likes to experience hardship or deprivation. When given a choice, we usually avoid hardship. But in our relationship with God, difficult things are not always to be avoided. *Times of difficulty can be times of spiritual growth.*

Of course, what we are to be grateful for is not the difficulty itself but the result that difficulty can have if we respond to it with the right attitude. As James wrote, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” (Jas. 1:2,3). In the real world, there is no way to learn steadfastness except through hardship, so if we avoid hardship we won’t ever acquire the steadfastness or endurance we need.

The point is not that we should unnecessarily throw ourselves into hard or dangerous situations. Doing so is not a sign of true courage; it is only a show of foolhardiness. But when doing what is right involves hardship, as it often does, then we should meet the hardship courageously.

Most of us can look back and see that the periods of our greatest spiritual growth were times of significant testing and difficulty. Whatever the challenges may have been, we grew stronger as we faced those challenges faithfully and learned to rely on the Lord’s strength.

As we see in the history of Israel, times of ease are often times of spiritual decline. It doesn’t have to be that way, perhaps, but in the case of most people, we grow lax and ungrateful when all of our needs have been met and we suffer no deprivation. Few of us are exceptions to this rule.

So the Lord, in His fatherly love, allows us to experience seasons of trial and testing. As James said, we should find joy in this experience, knowing that we will be stronger when it is over. But this will not be the result if we don’t think of hardship as we should: “But let this power have its full effect, so that you may be made complete, needing nothing” (Jas. 1:4 BBE). We must make the choice to yield to the disciplining effect of difficulty. Throughout the coming week, we will be considering this principle. May we learn how to grow in the midst of hardship.

Monday: Deuteronomy 8:1-5

Key Idea: Through deprivation, the people of Israel should have learned to rely on the Lord.

Questions for Family Growth: According to v.2, what effect should the forty years of wilderness wandering have had on the people of Israel? What does v.3 say God did, and why did He do this? What is said in v.5 about “discipline” or “chastening”?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 29:10.

Tuesday: 2 Peter 3:18

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

Questions for Family Growth: In your own words, what does it mean to grow in the “grace and knowledge” of Jesus Christ? What are some specific steps we can take to experience this growth? How might hardship help us in this process?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:11.**

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

Key Idea: When we are delivered from desperate circumstances, we learn to love the Lord more.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul say he had experienced in Asia? What did he mean when he said “we were . . . burdened beyond our strength”? In **vv.9-11**, what were some of the things that resulted from Paul’s enduring of this ordeal?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:12.**

Thursday: James 1:2-4

Key Idea: We can be grateful that the testing of our faith produces steadfastness.

Questions for Family Growth: How does James’ exhortation to “count it all joy” go against conventional wisdom? Do you think there is a distinction between “joy” and “happiness”? In **v.4**, what decision must we make when we are experiencing hardships?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:13.**

Friday: Hebrews 12:3-11

Key Idea: Just as a father disciplines his children, God loves us and uses hardship to train us.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.7**, for what purpose do we have to endure? What is said in **v. 10** about God’s purpose in disciplining us? What are some ways that God might discipline us? According to **v.11**, what fruit is produced by discipline?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:14.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Patience is one of the most powerful of the Christian virtues

In the Scriptures, to be “patient” means to “endure.” The patient person is one who can hold up under a heavy load of hardship and still keep moving forward, making the choice to continue rather than give up. In a world where our goals are not always easy to reach, the quality of patience is obviously important. But in our spiritual lives, it is even more important. Without patience, we will not make it to heaven. “And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Hb. 6:11,12).

In the Old Testament, Job is probably the individual who comes to mind when we think of patience. He steadfastly endured more suffering than most of us will ever experience, and his faith in God never faltered. James mentions Job as an example of patience when he says, “As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful” (Jas. 5:10,11).

In a sense, patience is the most important of the virtues because if we give up, nothing else will have mattered. This week, let’s think about the fact that *patience is one of the most powerful of the Christian virtues*. Being able to endure is not only a virtuous thing to do; it is an extremely high-leverage trait. In other words, it is a trait that energizes us and imparts a strength that empowers all the other characteristics we are to add to our faith. Consider love, for example. Is not love a more powerful thing if it is steadfast, having the strength of endurance and patience?

Like all the other virtues, however, patience is a choice. We can grow in our patience — and that will be the point of our lessons this week — but we will never get to the point where patience is automatic. As long as we live, we will have to make the decision every day to keep going. This life is not a short-distance sprint; it is a long-distance marathon. So we must not only know how to run, but we must decide to keep running, even when it would be tempting to quit.

Monday: Acts 14:21,22

Key Idea: In our journey toward heaven, there will be some serious difficulties to be dealt with.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul know these recent converts needed to understand about life in Christ? In their specific case, what sort of “tribulations” might Paul have had in mind? What other kinds of difficulty might we face in this life?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 29:15.

Tuesday: Hebrews 10:35-39

Key Idea: In the Scriptures, we are urged to keep going and not give up in the face of hardship.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean in **v.35** that we should not “throw away [our] confidence”? According to **v.36**, when may we expect to receive that which God has promised to us? In **vv.38,39**, what is said about those who “shrink back”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:16.**

Wednesday: James 1:2-4

Key Idea: We can rejoice when hardship produces within us a greater endurance.

Questions for Family Growth: What are “trials,” and how are they different from “temptations”? What does it mean for our faith to be “tested”? In **v.4**, what are we urged to do? Will hardships make our faith stronger if we don’t have this attitude toward our difficulties?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:17.**

Thursday: Luke 21:19

Key Idea: It is only by patience and endurance that we will gain our lives.

Questions for Family Growth: What different translations of this passage can you find? What do you think is the main idea of Jesus’ statement? Why is patience (or endurance) such a crucial quality? If we don’t hold out until the end, will any of our other character traits be of any use?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:18.**

Friday: Revelation 2:10

Key Idea: A crown of life awaits us if we make the choice to endure hardship steadfastly.

Questions for Family Growth: What did the Lord say was going to happen to the saints in Smyrna? What assurance did He give them? In **3:11**, what did He exhort the saints in Philadelphia to do? What does it mean to “conquer” or “overcome” (**2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21**).

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:19.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

It is in God's reign that our hopes must rest

It goes without saying that our world is disturbing. The daily news often fills us with concern for ourselves and our children. But if our response to these distressing events is fear, that may be an indication that we've placed too much trust in the ability of this world to solve its problems. The fact is, this world is not a dependable source of trust. In the long term, it will always disappoint us. So we must look for a more stable source of confidence and hope.

That source, of course, is God. He made the world, and He is fully aware of all its problems. Despite the difficulties, God is still on His throne governing as He always has. His management of the universe is undiminished, and *it is in God's reign that our hopes must rest.*

One of the most important concepts in the Scriptures is the idea of the "kingdom" of God. Though men have often rebelled against His rule, God is still the King. And in His Son, Jesus Christ, God has established a kingdom that is the fulfillment of what was spoken in **Dan. 2:44**: "The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever." If we have obeyed the gospel and are living our lives in Jesus Christ, this is the kingdom we are a part of. The One who sits on the throne of this kingdom should be our primary concern, regardless of what is happening in the kingdoms of men, all of which will eventually pass away.

We sometimes sing the song by Maltbie D. Babcock called "This Is My Father's World." One of the verses of that song says, "Oh, let me ne'er forget that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet." Putting our trust in God who is "the ruler yet" is not naive; it is based on the record of many, many events in the story of mankind where God has demonstrated that He keeps His promise. Not only is He trustworthy, but He is the only completely and perfectly trustworthy source of help that is available to us.

God being the Ruler of the world, we can be confident that His purposes will come to pass. We need have no doubt about that. And until God brings the history of this world to a conclusion and His victory celebration begins, we just need to keep working faithfully and fervently. "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (**Gal. 6:9**).

Monday: Daniel 2:31-45

Key Idea: Through the prophets, God promised to set up an indestructible kingdom.

Questions for Family Growth: In **vv.31-35**, what did the king see in his dream? In **vv.36-43**, what was the interpretation of the dream? What prophecy was made in **v.44**? What does it mean that this kingdom would "break in pieces" all the other kingdoms and bring them to an end?

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

Tuesday: Revelation 19:11-16

Key Idea: God's kingdom has been established, and no foe is capable of overthrowing it.

Questions for Family Growth: Assuming that John's vision was a description of Jesus Christ in His role as King, what characteristics of Christ can we learn from this passage? What does it mean in **v.15** that He will "strike down the nations" and "rule them with a rod of iron"?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:21.**

Wednesday: Proverbs 19:21

Key Idea: The plans of men may fail, but God's purposes will always be accomplished.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that "many are the plans in the mind of a man"? What does it mean that "the purpose of the Lord that will stand"? What advice does James give us in **Jas. 4:13-16**? When we leave God out of our calculations, how is that "boasting"?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:22.**

Thursday: John 16:33

Key Idea: Since Jesus, our Lord, has overcome the world, we need not fear what the world can do.

Questions for Family Growth: What kinds of difficulties would Jesus' disciples be facing after He left them to go back to heaven? Why would it be comforting for them to know that He had overcome the world? Do we ever need to worry that the forces of evil might be stronger than God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:23.**

Friday: 1 Peter 4:12-19

Key Idea: We can entrust our souls to God knowing that He will never fail to be what we need.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.13**, in what are we to rejoice? What does it mean in **v.16** to "suffer as a Christian" and in **v.19** to "suffer according to God's will"? In practical terms what does it mean to "entrust [our] souls to a faithful Creator while doing good" (**v.19**)?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:24.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We should long fervently for the day of Christ's return

The Scriptures teach that Christ is going to return, destroy this world, and take those who have accepted the gospel to be with Him forever. The question is: what should be our attitude about that? All things considered, that hope should mean more to us than anything in this present world.

Granted, we sometimes find it hard to balance our responsibilities (as well as our joys) in this world with our desire to be with the Lord in heaven. There are times when we need to stop thinking about heaven and get busy with the work that is right in front of us. But there are other times when we need to pause in our worldly activities and think about going to be with our Lord. The here-and-now has such a powerful pull on us, however, it is probably safe to say that most of us think too rarely about Christ's return rather than too often.

As the old hymn says, "There's a great day coming." In the Scriptures, the "day of the Lord" was often used as a description of God's judgment being brought upon a particular nation at some point in the history of the world. But eventually there is going to come a "day of the Lord" that will eclipse every other such day. When that day comes, the whole world will be destroyed and God's faithful people will be taken to live with Him in the place where He is.

If we love our Lord, how can we not be filled with joy at the thought of His return? After Paul had spoken to the Thessalonians about the return of Christ, he said, "Therefore encourage one another with these words" (1 **Thess. 4:18**). In a world as difficult as ours, what more comforting words could there be than these? The prospect of seeing our Lord face to face energizes us with hope.

We are taught that *we should long fervently for the day of Christ's return*. Peter, toward the end of his life, wrote, "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 **Pt. 3:11-13**). This week, let's consider the greatness of this coming day.

Monday: John 14:1-4

Key Idea: Jesus promised to come back and take His faithful people to be with Him in eternity.

Questions for Family Growth: Why might the disciples have been troubled? What did Jesus say about the place He was going to prepare for them? In **v.3**, what promise did He make? Why should this promise make such a difference in our attitude and outlook on life?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 29:25**.

Tuesday: Hebrews 9:27,28

Key Idea: We are to wait eagerly for the return of our Lord.

Questions for Family Growth: If we are presently “saved” in Christ, what does it mean that He is going to appear “to save those who are eagerly waiting for him”? In [Phil. 3:20,21](#), what does Paul say about heaven? At Christ’s return, what will happen to our “lowly body” ([v.21](#))?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 29:26](#).

Wednesday: 2 Peter 3:8-13

Key Idea: Looking forward to the day of the Lord, we are waiting for a new heavens and earth.

Questions for Family Growth: What should be our attitude toward the long delay since the Lord promised that He would return? What does Peter say will happen to the present heavens and earth? What does it mean that we should be “waiting for and hastening” the day of the Lord?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 29:27](#).

Thursday: Philippians 1:21-23

Key Idea: To depart and be with Christ is far better than any other circumstance.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that “to live is Christ, and to die is gain”? What were the two alternatives that faced Paul, and why did he say that to depart and be with Christ would “far better”? Should this be our attitude in our own lives today?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 30:1-4](#).

Friday: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Key Idea: What God has told us about the return of the Lord should be comforting to us.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the reasons why the return of Christ might be feared by some? In contrast to this, what should be our attitude? According to [Rev. 22:1-5](#), what do we have to look forward to? What is it in this description that we look forward to the most?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 30:5,6](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Being a part of the Lord's people and the Lord's work is a joy

Being a Christian is not always easy, but *being a part of the Lord's people and the Lord's work is a joy*. Whatever difficulties or frustrations may be involved, the joy outweighs the sorrow.

Our joy in Christ is rooted in Christ Himself. Both individually and congregationally, we rejoice because we are in fellowship with Christ and we live in the hope of sharing life with Him in eternity. Our connection to Christ causes us to relate to one another in a way that would be impossible if it were not for Christ. Because we love Him, we love His people and we love His work.

Some who would say the Lord's people and the Lord's work bring them joy are those who happen to be surrounded by Christians they especially like or they happen to live in a place where they find the congregation uniquely appealing. But if it is truly the Lord whom we love, we will love His people wherever they are (even those who are not so likable) and be enthusiastic about His work wherever it may be occurring (even when it is not our preferred locality). After all, if we only enjoy work when it is "enjoyable," we are doing no more than worldly people do.

In Paul's life, it is remarkable how much he loved his fellow Christians in various places. They were truly his "glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:20). With the Thessalonians, what is amazing is that he had only about three weeks to learn to love them before he had to leave because of persecution (Ac. 17:1-9). But as with the Romans, all Paul needed to know about people was that they were brethren. That caused him to think of them as "loved by God and called to be saints" (Rom. 1:7). To love them and work with them, it was enough to know that they were in Christ.

Today, we need to be more mature about the joy of the Lord's work and His people. That joy needs to supersede all the sources of joy that people outside of Christ believe are so important. In Christ, there is work to do that is the most important work in the world — and when we have the privilege of doing it together with others who are in fellowship with Christ, that makes it even more special. Throughout the coming week, let's give thanks for our brothers and sisters in Christ whoever they may be. And let's appreciate the value of the work we are privileged to participate in.

Monday: Acts 8:4-8

Key Idea: The coming of the gospel to a community brings joy to that place.

Questions for Family Growth: What does this text say about how the gospel came to Samaria? What does v.8 say the result was? Does the joy of the gospel mean that Christians have no difficulties or sorrows in their lives? What are some things that cause Christians to rejoice?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 30:7-9.

Tuesday: Philippians 4:1

Key Idea: Our brothers and sisters in Christ bring us joy.

Questions for Family Growth: Although Paul was separated from the Philippians at the time of this writing, what was his attitude toward them? What is meant by the term “beloved”? What was Paul’s attitude toward the Thessalonians in **1 Thess. 2:17-20** and **3:6-10**?

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

Wednesday: Philippians 2:25-30

Key Idea: It is a joy to participate together in the Lord’s work.

Questions for Family Growth: What was the working relationship described in this text between Paul, the Philippians, and Epaphroditus? In **v.29**, what should be our attitude toward those who do the Lord’s work faithfully? What does the word “partnership” mean in **Phil. 1:5** and **4:15**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 30:11-14.**

Thursday: Ephesians 4:11-16

Key Idea: When we serve one another with our various abilities, we grow to maturity in Christ.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **v.12**, for what purpose did Christ provide all the various works that can be done by His people? In **v.13**, what is the goal being sought by Christians in their work? In **v.16**, what happens when each member of the body does its part?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 30:15,16.**

Friday: 1 Corinthians 15:58

Key Idea: When we abound in the Lord’s work, our work is not in vain.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “work of the Lord” that Paul speaks of? Is it just gospel preachers who do this work? How is it encouraging to know that when we work together in the Lord our work is “not in vain”? How does this work contribute to our joy?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 30:17.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Life in Christ in this world is a great adventure

There are times when we need to find out all we can about the possible outcomes of our decisions. Looking ahead prudently is one of the main aspects of wisdom (**Prov. 22:3**). Despite our best efforts, however, we can't know very much about what is going to happen. Even when we gather all the information we can, things often turn out to be very different than we thought they would. James put it very simply: "You do not know what tomorrow will bring" (**Jas. 4:14**).

Yet there is a sense in which our ignorance of the future makes life more exciting. Certainly this is true for the Christian. If we have obeyed the gospel and are living as faithful followers of the Lord, our trust is that He will guide us and help us, whatever may happen. We do not control the future, but He does — and it is exciting to see what He will bring to pass.

Life in Christ in this world is a great adventure. Indeed, it is the greatest of all adventures. To embark on the life of a disciple is to enter a realm where any number of thrilling things may happen. We do not know what might happen next, but we know that it is going to be something through which God will be glorified. It is our privilege to be a part of God's plans for the triumph of His eternal purposes. What could be more exciting?

In many ways, our lives in this world are like a journey. We are "here" today, and in the future we will be "there." We are on our way from one "place" to another. But we can't see very far down the road. God only asks that we take the steps that are immediately in front of us, always faithfully doing what our conscience tells us is right. We don't need to know what lies around the next bend. We just need to take the steps that are in front of us. Our future steps will reveal themselves in God's good time, and it will be a thrill to see what those turn out to be.

On earthly journeys, we like to have a map or an itinerary. But on our spiritual journey, no such map is given to us. We only know that God is waiting for us at the end. He has not told us everything we will see or do along the way. That remains to be seen. But like Abraham, we journey in faith, knowing the destination will be worth it. It's exhilarating, to say the least.

Monday: Hebrews 11:8-10

Key Idea: Abraham did not know where he was going when, in faith, he left his home.

Questions for Family Growth: What do we learn about faith from this example in Abraham's life? Before we act, must we always know what lies ahead for us in this life? According to **v.10**, what was more important to Abraham than any particular set of circumstances in this life?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 30:18,19.**

Tuesday: Mark 1:16-20

Key Idea: The disciples of Jesus followed Him not knowing what their work would require.

Questions for Family Growth: When Jesus said “Follow me,” did these men get any explanation of what their discipleship was going to require? How was their discipleship different from ours today? What is an “adventure,” and how does following the Lord fit that definition?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 30:20](#).

Wednesday: Acts 20:22-24

Key Idea: Not knowing what awaited him in Jerusalem, Paul’s only desire was to glorify God.

Questions for Family Growth: For what purpose was Paul going to Jerusalem? If it was likely that the Jews would arrest him, and even put him to death, why did that not make any difference to Paul? According to [v.24](#), what objective was greater than any other desire of Paul?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 30:21-23](#).

Thursday: James 4:13-16

Key Idea: We may make plans for the future, but only God knows what will actually happen.

Questions for Family Growth: In your own words, what is the warning that James gives us in this passage? What are some ways in which our lives are like a “mist” or “vapor”? In [v.15](#), what thought ought to be involved in all of our plans and projections about the future?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 30:24-28](#).

Friday: 1 Peter 4:19

Key Idea: Not knowing the future, we entrust our souls to a God who is always faithful to us.

Questions for Family Growth: What was the situation of Peter’s readers as he wrote to them? In view of their uncertainties, what was to be their attitude? How does knowing of God’s faithfulness help us to be faithful to Him? What does it mean to “entrust” our souls to God?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 30:29-31](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We should look backward with gratitude and forward with hope

Only human beings have the ability to contemplate both the past and the future. None of the lower creatures in the world can do this. But although being able to reflect on the past and anticipate the future is a great gift, it is one that must be used wisely. If we are Christians, we must not only think about these things; we must do so in ways that glorify God and help us in His work. Both our memory and our imagination must be governed by God's will.

Perhaps many other things could be said about our attitude toward time, but for our study this week, let's meditate on this: ***we should look backward with gratitude and forward with hope.*** Whatever is behind us, our main perspective should be that of gratitude, and as far as the future is concerned, we should be motivated by hope, even when there are difficult things to be dealt with.

All of us have things in our past that we regret. Very often, however, those regretful things helped to produce the better person that we are today. At the very least, we can be grateful for the grace and patience with which God has preserved us until today. We should give thanks for the opportunity we have today to learn from the past and begin making better decisions.

But what about the future? With all that is going on in the world, it is hard to think of the future without having grave concerns for our children's and grandchildren's lives. But as with the past, we can be grateful for the good things that will come from meeting hardships in the future. And not only that, but we live each day trusting that God, who created the world, will guide it eventually to a conclusion that will glorify Him. For those found in Christ on that great day, an eternity in God's presence is waiting. There should not be a day when our eternal hope does not move us to keep obeying the Lord and waiting for the joyous day when we will see His face.

This week, at the end of this year, let's look backward, and then let's look forward. Let's be thankful for every expression of God's grace in our past (and there have been many), and let's determine that we will hold on to our hope in Christ, no matter what happens. Gratitude and hope. These two ways of thinking will keep us faithful — and they will see through the darkest days ahead.

Monday: Colossians 3:17

Key Idea: If we are the Lord's people, thankfulness will be a part of everything we do in Him.

Questions for Family Growth: In the first part of this verse, what is the principle that should guide our conduct? In the last part, what are we encouraged to do? For those who are following the Lord and doing His work, why is thankfulness in all things so important?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 30:32,33](#).

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

Key Idea: We should be thankful for our own blessings and also for the blessings of others.

Questions for Family Growth: In view of the many problems in the church at Corinth, how could Paul still give thanks for the grace that God had shown them? Are there any members of the Lord's body for whom we cannot give thanks in some way?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 31:1-3.**

Wednesday: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Key Idea: We can be grateful that God has been patient in bringing us to the present moment.

Questions for Family Growth: In **vv.12,13**, what was Paul thankful that God had done? What point did Paul make in **v.16**? When we have failed to do what was right or we have suffered some kind of hardship, what are some of the things in those situations that we can be thankful for?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 31:4-7.**

Thursday: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Key Idea: In Christ, we are born again to a living hope — the hope of an eternal inheritance.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.3**, through what has our hope in Christ been made possible? How does Peter describe our inheritance in **v.4**? In **vv.6,7**, what is said about the Christian's ability to rejoice? According to **v.9**, what is the main goal or outcome of our faith?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 31:8,9.**

Friday: Romans 13:11,12

Key Idea: With each day that passes, salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed.

Questions for Family Growth: If we have already been saved, what is the point of saying that salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed? What are some of the things that can discourage us? How does it help to know that we are drawing nearer to our eternal home?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com