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I am indebted to the Rev. Dr. William Sloat, II for his valuable input on the lesson on Feet-Washing.

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Running to Win is a four-part series to help you become more like Jesus. The books are *Starting Fast*, *Clearing Hurdles*, *Stretching Your Stride*, and *Handing Off*. You'll reap the greatest spiritual harvest if you study them in that order.

Throughout this series you've been reading the New Testament and writing spiritual insights in the devotional journal located in Appendix A of *Starting Fast*. The goal has been to finish reading the New Testament by the time you complete the fourth book in the series. Journaling has helped you obtain maximum benefit from your reading because application is critical to life-change. Of all the things you've read, you remember best the things you've written.

You've also been memorizing Scripture related to each lesson. Perhaps you've had more difficulty with this discipline than any other. Don't let this area slide. If you memorize these verses and review them frequently, they'll become yours and you more fully His.

In *Stretching Your Stride* we will establish a foundation to build several significant relationships. A fulfilling life is a jumble of cables representing healthy interconnectedness with others. Becoming more like Jesus requires developing our relationships with God, his Church, his Word, and his lost sheep. We stretch our spiritual stride by improving how we relate to each of these.

During the third quarter of a long race, motivation often wanes. Weariness causes us to lose sight of the goal of winning. At the 2000 PIAA track and field championships, a runner from Bedford County, Pennsylvania, fell behind early in an eight-lap race. With four laps remaining, he wasn't thinking about winning—just finishing. He finished, but it wasn't pretty! He was lapped by practically the entire field of runners and finished long after everyone

else. No medal was waiting for him at the finish line.

Maybe you feel like you've been running for a long time already, and the race is only half finished. Resist the temptation to shorten your stride and coast, especially with respect to your New Testament reading and Scripture memory.

Stretch your stride! You're running to win!

Meditation



Share your progress carrying out your “Enslaving Habits” action plan.

Share one God-message from your devotional time since we last met.

Stop...Look...Listen

Too often we read the Bible like an ambulance races toward the scene of an accident—zooming past potentially life-changing verses like guard rails at 100 mph. We shape the words with our tongues, but don’t allow them to shape us.

We read about peace in John 14:27 and love in 1 Corinthians 13, but don’t slow down enough to be fully possessed by either. A thunderstorm dumps an inch of rain in ten minutes. Most of it runs off. Slow, steady rain is much more beneficial. Likewise, God’s Word needs time to soak into the soil of our soul. Stop...Look...Listen!

Many of us consistently avoid the hard work of thinking. We trek the habit-worn trails of yesterday, so we don’t have to think today. We can’t afford a “no-brainer” approach to the Word of God.

Meditation is a deliberate pondering of our ways and God’s. It is reflective thinking about Scripture with the intent of applying it to daily living. The goal is intimacy with God and conformity to His ways.

Meditation isn’t a natural desire for most of us. We’d rather vegetate than meditate! That’s why TV is appealing. God gives the grace needed to pursue and persist if we pray for it.

The psalmist in Psalm 119 thinks hard about God’s p _____, w _____, (v. 15); d _____ (v. 16); n _____ (v. 55); l _____ (v. 97); s _____ (v. 99); p _____ (v.148); w _____ and m _____ d _____ (Psalm 77:12). He also meditates on his own w _____ (Psalm 119: 59).

Where?

To meditate, seek a quiet place where you can be alone to focus your whole being on your loving Creator, Lord, and Redeemer. If it provides an inspiring view of God’s marvelous creation, all the better.

Why?

Studying and meditating on the Scriptures is useful for t _____, r _____, c _____ and t _____ in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). God’s word was written to t _____ us, so that through perseverance and the e _____ of the Scriptures we might have hope (Romans 15:4). Meditating on God’s word makes me w _____ than my enemies (Psalm 119:98). In Joshua 1:8 God promises that those who meditate on and obey his word will be spiritually _____ and _____.

How?

One way of meditating on Scripture is to visualize the Gospel stories. Hear the wind whistling during a storm, see the whitecaps, smell the storm-tossed sea, taste the bread and fish, and touch the splintered cross.

Dr. Waylon B. Moore suggests a five-step approach to meditation.¹

1. Understand the *perimeter* of the verse.
2. *Paraphrase* the verse.
3. *Pulverize* the verse.
4. *Personalize* the verse.
5. *Pray* the verse into your life.

The perimeter of the verse is its context. A verse’s meaning is colored by its neighborhood. To understand how the stomach works, we need to examine the other organs attached to it—its neighborhood. To understand 1 Peter 5:7, read verses 1-14. Suppose we don’t cast all our burdens on the Lord (v. 7). Who will be the main course on the

devil's dinner plate _____ (v. 8)?

Paraphrasing a verse helps us think hard about its meaning. When we put the verse in our own words, it often sparkles with new light. That's because we're paying closer attention to what the Scriptures are actually saying. Make your paraphrase about the same length as the verse. Paraphrase 1 Peter 5:7 _____

Pulverizing the verse means looking at the individual words and combinations of words that compose it. Read the verse repeatedly emphasizing a different word each time. Let's practice with 1 Peter 5:7: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." Read the verse eleven times first emphasizing "cast" then "all", etc. Which word is most meaningful to you? Why?

Ask who, what, when, where, why and how of 1 Peter 5:7.

- Who? _____
- What? _____
- When? _____
- Where? _____
- Why? _____
- How? _____

Make the verse personal. Antibiotics in a bottle won't help us. How does the promise of 1 Peter 5:7 apply to a specific problem or person you are struggling with right now?

Praying the verse into your life means including your name and circumstances in a personalized version of the verse. For example: "Lord, you know how much I fear sharing my faith with others. I worry too much about what they might think and not enough about what you think. I know you care for me despite my "lockjaw." I'm rolling my fears and anxieties onto you right

now. I don't want them back. Fill me with courage. I ask this in Jesus name. Amen."

Personalize 1 Peter 5:7:

The Benefits of Meditation

God's word is a guide to a successful, victorious, fulfilled life. His best for us is a life saturated with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23), no matter what the circumstances.

Through meditation we pull from the garden of our lives the choking weeds of worldly ways of thinking and acting. When the author first trusted in Christ, getting was more important than giving, speaking than listening, being served than serving. He thought these traits were adorable yellow flowers, but God's Word identified them as *dandelions* to be removed!

Meditation drills wells that release the healing waters of God's Word in our hurting places. In it, for example, we find forgiveness and purification for our s _ _ _ (1 John 1:9); comfort in our t _ _ _ _ _ (2 Corinthians 1:4); inward renewal despite outward w _ _ _ _ _ a _ _ _ (2 Corinthians 4:16); and God's power made perfect in our w _ _ _ _ _ (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Learning God's Ways

1. What rewards come from meditating on God and His game plan for life? (Psalm 1:3)? _____

2. Describe an unforgettable meal you've eaten in the last year. What did you have? How satisfied was your stomach afterwards?

3. What kind of satisfaction does the psalmist describe (Psalm 63:5-6)? _____

4. How does he achieve it? _____

5. We think about what we love. What was the psalmist’s defining passion (Psalm 1:2)?

6. The psalmist asks that his words and meditations be pleasing to God (Psalm 19:14). Make plans to meditate on God’s Word. Include where, when, and for how long each week:



What’s God’s message to you in this lesson?

What underlying attitudes/thought patterns do you need to change?



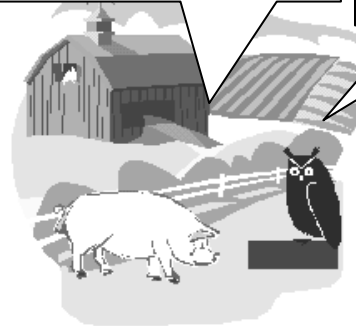
Write your action plan to make those changes:

Scripture Memory

Psalm 119:15-16 – I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

Yesterday I meditated intensely on NOTHING, and my imagination developed a “Charlie-horse!”

Try thinking about how God’s Word applies to your to your life!



Notes

1. Waylon B. Moore, *Living God’s Word*, (Nashville, Tennessee: LifeWay,1997), 40.

Ten Words from Our Sponsor



Share your progress carrying out your “Meditation” action plan.

Share one God-message from your devotional time since we last met.

The Christian faith is all about **relationships**. Exploring the Ten Commandments will help us build healthier relationships with God and others. A spoilsport God didn't invent ten rotten regulations to spoil our fun. These “Ten Words from our Sponsor” define the essence of a fulfilling life.

You shall have no other _____ before me (Exodus 20:3).

How do you show God that you're serious about your relationship with him?

What could others learn about him by watching you? _____

Check (x) the influences in your life that can be God's rivals:

- Superstitions
- Popularity
- Horoscopes/astrology.
- A sports star
- A television personality
- A movie star
- A rock star
- Self-centered living
- Feeling good
- Physical / emotional security
- Financial security
- Being happy
- Addiction
- Personal appearance
- Desire for material things
- Status

- Power
- Work
- Sexual pleasure
- Recreation

You shall not make for yourself an i _ _ _ (Exodus 20:4).

Exodus 20:4 prohibits making any likeness of *God* because any visible object of worship misrepresents him. He is a _ _ _ _ _ (John 4:24).

God doesn't look like a kindly grandfather with long, flowing, snow-white hair. We shouldn't picture him that way or worship any other misrepresentation. His w _ _ _ and t _ _ _ _ _ _ _ are as high above human ones as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isaiah 55:9). The only accurate representation of God is Jesus Christ who is the i _ _ _ _ of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15).

You shall not _ _ _ _ _ the name of the Lord your God (Exodus 20:7).

Using God's name lightly degrades and insults it. Frequently people use God's name to take an oath, and then lie. Many use his name carelessly as an exclamation, curse, or expression of anger.

Less obvious misuses of his name are “going through the motions” worship and self-serving or unthinking prayer. Isaiah 29:13 describes insincere worship as coming near God with one's _ _ _ _ _ and honoring him with one's _ _ _ _ _ while one's heart remains far from him. The third commandment forbids prayer that uses God's name for some selfish, worthless purpose—“Lord, help us win this game.” A memorized prayer delivered without any thought or faith before meals doesn't give God due respect.

Check (x) any of the following ways you break the third commandment:

- ___ I use exclamations like, “Oh, G_d!”
- ___ I make promises using God’s name that I don’t intend to keep.
- ___ I curse others or express anger using God’s name.
- ___ I use God’s name in songs or prayers without thinking what I’m saying.
- ___ I use prayer to try to force God to grant my selfish desires.

What specific changes do you need to make to correct your behavior?

Remember the _____ day by keeping it holy (Exodus 20:8).

The word translated Sabbath means “cease, rest.” The Jews observe it from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown as a day of rest, refreshment, and worship. The Sabbath celebrates God’s resting on the seventh day of creation and his deliverance of Israel out of _____ (Deuteronomy 5:15). Both emphasize human dependence on God and his claim on our time and loyalty.

For early Christians, Sunday, the Lord’s Day, became increasingly important. It became a day of worship because of its association with Christ’s resurrection and appearances. Ceasing from work was not transferred from the Sabbath to the Lord’s Day.¹

Jesus, the Son of Man, is _____ of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). Let him decide what is fitting for you on that day. Every day is set apart to him. He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for _____ but for him (2 Corinthians 5:15).

There is room for differing applications of the Sabbath principle. Some spend Sunday with other Christians in worship, with family, and in prayer and Bible study. They don’t work, or even think or talk about it.

Some worship regularly with other believers, but otherwise treat it as a day for chores or recreation. Setting aside a day of rest benefits body, soul, and spirit. There is no biblical reason, however, why that day *has* to be Sunday.

Notes

1. Lincoln, A.T. *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: Edited by D.A. Carson. A Biblical and Theological Perspective. Zondervan. 1982. P. 346.*

Honor your _____ and your _____ (Exodus 20:12).

Parents, especially fathers, represent God to their children. When parents teach their children how to please God and demonstrate it with their own lives, they become powerful influences for good. However, such teaching bears fruit only if children submit to it.

Honoring our parents is always right, whether our relationship has been good or strained. Honoring our father and mother means obeying their rules and submitting to their authority as long as we live in their home, given that doing so isn’t illegal or immoral. When they can’t care for themselves, we must make sure their needs for food, drink, clothing, and shelter are met.

Honoring means showing kindness and refraining from words or deeds that would embarrass our parents. Publicly ridiculing them is never appropriate.

What our peers consider “cool,” culture portrays as fashionable, or our convenience demands, probably won’t help us keep this commandment. God promises long life to all who obey this commandment.

Is honoring your father and mother easy or difficult for you? Why?

You shall not _____ (Exodus 20:13).

Not all killing is murder. Accidental or unplanned killing falls into a different category. Moreover, the sixth commandment doesn't forbid capital punishment, self-defense or war. The ban is against killing someone for personal reasons that aren't legitimate.

God, who made us in his image and gave us life, is the only one authorized to take a life. How does the commandment against murder apply to suicide?

To abortion? _____

To physician-assisted suicide for the terminally ill? _____

In Matthew 5:21-22, how does Jesus intensify the commandment against murder?

What changes do you need to make so you won't be "subject to judgment." _____

You shall not commit _____ (Exodus 20:14).

The seventh commandment prohibits sexual activity involving a married person and someone who isn't a spouse. The marriage relationship is between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24, Mark 10:7, Ephesians 5:31). Jesus expanded the definition of adultery to include the lustful l ___ (Matthew 5:28).

Adultery violates a promise to be faithful to and to love one's spouse. Love doesn't act in ways that inflict fear, pain, doubt, and insecurity. How is unfaithfulness to one's spouse like the unfaithfulness to God described in Jeremiah 5:7?

Technology enables new forms of adultery. Cyber-sex with complete strangers over the internet, pornographic websites, magazines, and movies are all common. The best way to escape such temptations is to run— as from an angry swarm of 1000 hornets. Don't look back. Your life depends on it! F ___ the evil desires of youth (2 Timothy 2:22).

The *New York Times* (June 9, 1997) reported that according to a 1994 study by Dr. Frank Pittman, adultery is the *primary* cause of divorce. It destroys trust and undermines family stability. Proverbs 6:32 says that the one who commits adultery destroys

_____.

You shall not _____ (Exodus 20: 15).

Stealing is taking what doesn't belong to us. It's motivated by the desire to use our n _____ for ourselves instead of loving him *as* ourselves (Matthew 22:39). Consequently, robbery's victims feel violated, insecure, afraid, angry, and weakened in their ability to trust others.

Some believe the eighth commandment specifically prohibits kidnapping which frequently occurred in the ancient world. Today this would apply to a parent kidnapping a child from the other parent or a parent with custody moving away from the other parent.

Knowingly buying stolen property violates this commandment. Without the market such purchasing provides, robbery would greatly decrease.

According to Deuteronomy 22:1, the right thing to do when you find something

someone has lost is to t ___ it ___ to him. Based on this principle, the right thing to do in the following situations is:

A cashier gives you \$5.00 too much change

A waitress forgets to charge you for a meal

You have pencils and pens in your house from the office that you aren't using to work at home

Someone offers you a copy of the test so you can get an easy "A" without studying

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor (Exodus 20:16).

The Lord ___ lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful (Proverbs 12:22). God isn't a man, that he should ___ (Numbers 23:19). On the other hand, the devil is a ___ and the father of ___ (John 8:44).

Testifying falsely against others causes them to be treated unjustly and might even result in their death. Even if they aren't convicted, their reputation might be permanently damaged.

God's standard is for us to deal with others as honestly as he does with us. If we don't, the termites of deceit will undermine our friendships, business, marriage and family. Truth is the binding glue of relationships. For which of the following reasons have you lied (check):

- To protect myself
- To hurt others
- To get attention
- To promote myself

Being honest means saying only what is true. How is this approach better than telling *everything* you believe to be true?

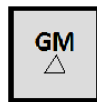
You shall not covet ... a ___ that belongs to your neighbor (Exodus 20:17).

There is nothing wrong with desiring things. Wanting motivates most behaviors. Inappropriate desires, however, master instead of serve us.

This command prohibits desiring another's wife, wealth, property, or anything else that's his. When any of these become more important to us than loving God and our neighbor, we've crossed into the forbidden territory of idolatry.

Wanting what is someone else's, demonstrates discontentment with what God has provided for us. This in turn shows a lack of trust in his love.

To want what belongs to a neighbor is the motivation of every thief. By contrast love is p ___ and k ___. It does not e ___ or b ___. It is not p ___. It isn't r ___ or s ___- ___. It isn't easily angered and keeps no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:4-5).



What's God's message to you in this lesson?

What underlying attitudes/thought patterns do you need to change?



Write your action plan to make those changes:

Scripture Memory

Matthew 22:37-39 – Jesus replied:
“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”



Worship



Share your progress carrying out your “Ten Words from Our Sponsor” action plan.

Share one God-message from your devotional time since we last met.

Beyond Music-Wars

Music-wars rage in the church. Traditionalists insist on organ and piano music while others opt for guitars, drums, electronic keyboards and a worship team. Although music is the most talked-about aspect of worship today, we’ll address a far more basic element—the nature of true worship.

True Worship

GIVE GLORY! The purpose of worship isn’t to bless, entertain, heal or make us feel good. We don’t attend a worship service to “get something.” **Worship is our whole personality giving glory to a holy God our whole life.** It doesn’t end at noon on Sunday morning. All of life is an act of worship.

Transforming Worship



Our whole personality is involved in worship. According to William Temple, worship quickens the conscience by God’s holiness, feeds the mind with his truth, cleanses the imagination by his beauty, opens the heart to his love, and devotes the will to his purpose. We can’t worship God and remain the same.

Revelation

True worship begins with revelation and proceeds on to response and witness. God reveals himself. If he didn’t, we could worship him no better than a first-grader could do advanced calculus. List at least three characteristics God reveals:

To Moses in Exodus 3: _____

To Isaiah in Isaiah 6: _____

If God’s revelation doesn’t guide our worship, what probably will (Matthew 15:9)? _____

A magician pulls a previously hidden rabbit out of a hat so the audience can see it. Through prayer, Scripture reading, drama, art, preaching, hymns, praise choruses, special music, testimonies, or other forms, we learn who the invisible God is and what he’s done. Worship begins with revelation, but doesn’t end there.

Response



Worship requires a whole-person response. In Isaiah 6 the intellectual response was understanding God’s revelation. The emotional response was fear and trembling. The spiritual response was Isaiah’s recognizing himself as

_____ (v. 5). The response of his will was to say _____ (v. 8).

God’s revelation led to service—not good feelings. The good feelings result from doing God’s will. The nature of worship hasn’t changed. Revelation leads to response through prayer, song, and self-giving to God and our neighbor.

Witness

Improving our relationships with other believers is an important response to revelation. Christians who love and forgive each other witness to those who are watching.

Revelation also motivates individual witness. What we’ve seen, heard and acted upon, we declare to others.

A Scriptural Sketch of Worship

The “Other Gods” Squad

Exodus 34:14 – God prohibits worshipping any other ____.

In Romans 1:25 we learn that one temptation is to worship cr _____ things rather than the Creator. In what areas of life are you most likely to do this?

How are people today tempted to worship the work of their hands (Micah 5:13)?

A Worship-Worthy God

In Exodus 32:8 we discover that part of worship is giving God cr _d __ for what he’s done. Two more aspects of worship are (2 Kings 17:36):

How do these two apply to us today?

Another aspect of worship is to sing _____ to God (Psalm 66:4). What does 2 Chronicles 7:3 teach us about the nature of worship? _____

Why is the Lord worthy of our worship (1 Chronicles 16:23-27)?

We bow down and kneel before the Lord because he is our _____ (Psalm 95:6). We exalt and worship him because he is _____ (Psalm 99:5) and for his _____ and _____ (Psalm 138:2).

What kind of worshippers does the Father seek (John 4:23-24)?

A Worship-Worthy Savior

Jesus is worshipped by the _____ (Matthew 2:11), his d _____ (Matthew 14:33), the _____ who went to Jesus tomb (Matthew 28:9), and the eleven _____ (Matthew 28:17), the bl ___ man he healed (John 9:38), and all God’s _____ (Hebrews 1:6).

Will the True Worshipper Please Stand Up!

Not worshipping the Lord in Deuteronomy 8:19 is defined in the next verse as not _____ g him. In Daniel 3:18 worshipping other gods is associated with s ___ ing them. What do these verses teach us about true worship?

Worship Principles

Prepare

Consider the meaning behind worship rituals in your church:

Is the music in your church traditional, contemporary or a blend of both? Why?

Who usually prays during worship services? Why? _____

Who reads the Scriptures? Why? _____

Does your church sing the doxology after the tithes and offerings are lifted? Why?

What do the bread and cup of the Lord's Supper represent? _____

What is the significance of baptism?

Do you participate in footwashing? Why?

Prepare to meet the King as diligently as you would the President. If an athlete doesn't warm up his muscles before an event, he can't do his best. Warm up for worship! Think about who God is and all he's done for you and then enter into his presence with thanksgiving and praise.

Without a vital prayer life, regular time in the Scriptures, and a sincere effort to obey God outside the sanctuary, we're not equipped to worship him inside it. The worship fire burns brightest when each believer brings a torch already lit. The worship leader's task is blowing the wind of

the Spirit on existing flames, not lighting wet wood!

Keep Your Eye on the Ball

Many times while playing table tennis, the author has taken his eye off the ball and completely missed it. After doing so he usually scolded himself, "Keep your eye on the ball!" That principle also applies to worship.

Symbols or aids can be reminders of God or blinders. They can receive more honor than he does. The sanctuary is neither the church nor God's home. All believers together are *both*.

A church partially burns down. Rebuilding is impractical because of modern building codes. A large part of the congregation refuses to join the majority who vote to move and build in another location. They prefer to worship in the part of the building that remains. Why do you think they did that?

A two-church charge has a joint service once each month in one of the churches. Very few from the "away" church attend. Why do you think this is so?

A minister leaves a church to pastor another one nearby. Many from the first congregation also leave and go with him to the second. Others in the first church quit attending worship. What is the problem?

A pastor reads the New International Version of the Bible and a person in the congregation leaves the service in protest. To him the King James Version is the only

acceptable one. Is this person keeping his eye on the ball? Why?

Be Enthusiastic

Is worship-enthusiasm in your church more like a routine drive to a familiar place or like cheering a favorite sports team in the championship game?

Never be lacking in _____, but keep your spiritual _____, serving the Lord (Romans 12:11). Do you think our enthusiasm for true worship is a good indicator of our spiritual health. Why?

When we're spiritually sick, we go through worship motions out of obligation or habit. Symptoms include singing words we don't mean, praying for things we don't believe we'll receive, and expressing love for God we don't feel. The Father seeks those who worship him in _____ and in _____ (John 4:24).

How can I say thanks?

True worship requires a willingness to serve, obey, and submit to the Lord. It's motivated by love, gratitude and thanksgiving for who

God is and all he's done.

Attitude is more important than architecture. A small country church of 30 worshipping God with a deep sense of gratitude pleases God far more than 2,000 people going through the motions in a multi-million-dollar state of the art sanctuary. How is more important than where.

Celebrate

Leviticus 23:44 – Worship includes celebration and confession. Seventy percent of Israel's religious holidays were celebrations. Worship includes both joyful celebration and solemn reflection. Toward which side is the balance tipped in your life? _____

What can you do to strengthen the weaker of these two worship components?



What's God's message to you in this lesson?

What underlying attitudes/thought patterns do you need to change?



Write your action plan to make those changes:

Scripture Memory

John 4:24 – God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.



Idolatry



Share your progress carrying out your “Worship” action plan.

Share one God-message from your devotional time since we last met.

God insists on loyalty. Always has. Always will. He isn’t satisfied to be among the fabulous five or top two favorite things in our lives. He won’t share his throne with any rivals. He forbids having any other _____ before him or making an _____ in the form of any created thing (Exodus 20:3-4).

His demands shouldn’t seem strange. The author knows a man who delivered P-cola and wasn’t permitted to drink C-cola. Seeing a P-driver down an ice-cold C isn’t a good advertisement for P, is it? What kind of advertisement is it when God’s followers pay more attention to things and other people than to him? How do you think he feels?

Our “images,” purchases, and use of time reveal God’s rivals. They highlight our priorities. The images could be pictures hanging on our walls or pasted in an album. They might be coin collections, cars parked in our driveway, awards and trophies, mounted animals or fish, etc. The material things around us define what we value. The author is working on his fourth album of pictures taken during his fishing trips. His checkbook and use of time also testify that fishing is important to him. The hard question is whether it’s *too* important. Identify God’s rivals in your life based on your “images,” purchases, and use of time.

The primary suspects are _____, _____, and _____.
As you work through this lesson, you might discover you have more idols than you

thought. We can resist the attraction of idolatry by blocking its passageways into our lives.

Closing the Pleasure Passageway

God *isn’t* against fun and feeling good. He created us with the capacity to enjoy him and the things he has made. He richly provides us with _____ for our _____ (1 Timothy 6:17). If we walk the path God sets before us he will fill us with ___ and eternal _____. (Psalm 16:11). The issue isn’t whether we’ll experience pleasure or not. It’s whether we’ll walk the path God sets before us or our own. Will we trust his judgment, or live like we know better than he what will make us happy?

Idolatry strolls into our lives through the wide-open door of living for pleasure independently of God. We put “things” on the throne intended for him alone, and worship and serve them instead of him. We refuse to love the giver of every good and perfect _____ (James 1:17) with all our _____, s_____, and _____ (Matthew 22:37). We are _____ of pleasure _____ lovers of God (2 Timothy 3:4).

Many professing Christians love pleasure far more than they love God. According to the American Recreation Coalition, Americans spend 300 billion a year on *just* outdoor recreation. That is more than five times as much as they give to their churches. Do you spend more on recreation than on God? ___ yes ___no. Too much time spent pursuing pleasure competes with the time necessary to nurture one’s own spiritual life or to minister to others.

Name in any order the four things that give you the most enjoyment in life. Circle the number of each one on which you spend more time and money than you give to God.

- 1.
- 2.

- 3.
- 4.

We can overcome pleasure’s attraction through the _____ - _____ provided by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:23). We also have God’s promise that whenever we face temptation, he is faithful to provide a _____ (1 Corinthians 10:13). Expect him to give you that way of escape and *look for it*. Close the pleasure passageway to idolatry by writing and implementing a strategy to prevent each of the previously circled pleasures from becoming *too* important.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Closing the Hero Passageway

Heroes come in two categories—Faith and Brand X. Faith heroes move us toward God, whereas all others move us away from him. Hebrews 11 lists heroes who by their faith overcame life’s obstacles including _____ (v. 4), _____ (v. 5), _____ (v. 7), _____ (v. 8), _____ (v. 20), _____ (v. 21), _____ (v. 22), Moses’ _____ (v. 23), _____ (v. 24), the _____ (v. 29, 30), _____ (v. 31), G _____, B _____, _____, Jephthah, D _____, _____ and the prophets (v. 32).

Heroes have an unreal aura about them. They embody our ideals. They are *already* what we’d like to be. Hero selection changes through time depending on age and gender and reveals what matters most to us. Our heroes are our dreams with skin on them.

David Gallahue, a professor at Indiana University studied the heroes of kids in grades three through six. He discovered that more than 50% looked up to sports stars. Their choices reflect the desire for glory and fame. He found that 43% of girls

picked a teacher, parent or coach, whereas only 18% of boys did. Boys looked up to persons they’d never met more than their own dads who finished in fourth place. Arnold C. Cooper, a professor at Purdue University, says successful entrepreneurs like Bill Gates are the heroes of many college students who envy his riches.

The unchanging law of the soul is that we become like whatever we worship. Few of us look up to moral heroes like the apostle Paul who challenged the Philippians to put into practice what they had 1 _____ or r _____ or h _____ from or _____ in him (Philippians 4:9). Instead we select friends or family members, historical figures, sports or media stars, political leaders, or teachers and coaches who have admirable but not necessarily godly qualities. Our choices are influenced more by our sinful c _____, the lust of our _____ and the boasting of what we have and do (1 John 2:16) than a desire to _____ someone like Paul (1 Corinthians 4:16). We’d rather “be like Mike” than preach like Paul. The best defense against idolatry is to be an _____ of God (Ephesians 5:1) or to follow someone else who is following the example of _____ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Hero-worship sprays gasoline on the fires of our self-centered dreams and suggests they’re not only attainable, but also worthy of pursuit. We worship what we wish we were, with the unspoken hope that others will adore us when our dreams become reality. Like Satan, we want a portion of the glory that is God’s alone. God said that he will not _____ his glory to another or his praise to _____ (Isaiah 42:8).

Who are your heroes? What do you admire about them? _____

If you were exactly like them, would that make you happy? Why?

Closing the Earthly Goal Passageway

The author spent years throwing his time and energy toward goals in academics and athletics. He achieved many of them, but fulfillment was as fleeting as a bolt of lightning and its soon forgotten rumbling, rolling thunder. He was a slave laboring endlessly in a “goal mine.” Goals were his gods, demanding the best of his time, talents, and finances. They controlled and empowered him.

He was like a defensive football player fooled by a trap play. The offensive guard pulls from his position in the line and starts running toward the sideline. The defensive player follows him, looking for a running play to that side. Instead the tailback runs through the spot the defensive player just vacated. The defender unwittingly takes himself right out of the play. We take ourselves out of God’s game when we give our lives to earthly goals.

During his last year of college at a retreat, the author heard Leroy Eims say that the easiest way to become ineffective for God is to give your life to some earthly goal. Those words penetrated his heart. He realized that he couldn’t serve both God and earthly goals. He had to make a choice. We all do. God designed us to live for what will outlast us. Paul described this way of life as setting our h _____ and m _____ on things _____, not on _____ things (Colossians 3:1-2).

Explain how pursuing and accomplishing the following goals could interfere with seeking God’s kingdom and righteousness:

1. “My goal is to win more weekend fishing tournaments this summer than anyone else in the Sportsman’s Club.”

2. “I’m going to have the prettiest yard on the block.”

3. “I’m determined to become part of the ‘in group’ at school.”

4. “I’m committed to gathering the largest doll collection in Cumberland County.”

The pastor asked the college student, “What do you want to be?” The student replied, “I want to be an accountant.”

The pastor asked again, “You didn’t understand me. That’s what you want to do. What do you want to be?”

What are your goals? What do you want to be?

Closing the Insecurity Passageway

Idolatry enters our lives through our insecurities. The weakness of our faith gets us into trouble. Jesus said that

_____ is possible for him who _____ (Mark 9:23). Is _____ too hard for the Lord (Genesis 18:14)? The expected answer is,

“No!” God can do immeasurably more than all we ___ or _____ according to the power that is at work within us (Ephesians 3:20).

We compensate for our lack of trust in God by constructing our own “protective” walls. We might even try to seal the cracks with the mortar of superstition.

More than anything we trust money to protect us. Building contractors order a specific amount of brick to build a house. We don’t. The extent of our insecurity is revealed by ongoing dissatisfaction with the size of our accumulated financial pile, no matter what its size. Money is a wonderful servant but a terrible master. Jesus said that we can’t serve both God and _____(Matthew 6:24). Notice in the NIV the word is capitalized, just as God is!

How does the warning that we can’t *serve* both God and money (Matthew 6:24) relate to Matthew 6:19-21?

What “treasures” rival God’s place in your life?

Paul labels the greed to accumulate more and more as _____ (Colossians 3:5). If our happiness depends on continually buying new things, what are we worshipping?

Superstitions thrive in the soil of insecurity. The superstitious believe certain acts influence events without any direct connection to them. When Dion James was on a 16-game hitting streak for the Atlanta Braves, he didn’t wash his underwear! His teammates had mixed feelings when his hitting streak ended! Airlines hardly ever

have a thirteenth row. In what sense are superstitions idols?



What’s God’s message to you in this lesson?

What underlying attitudes/thought patterns do you need to change?



Write your action plan to make those changes:

Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 10:14 - Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.



Baptism



Share your progress carrying out your “Idolatry” action plan.

Share one God-message from your devotional time since we last met.

The Water That Confuses

Rev. Charles Foster of Elwood, IN, baptized many persons in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. One Sunday, his family and he traveled to a friend's home in the country. Later that afternoon while looking for his 4-year-old daughter, Susan, he found her conducting a “baptismal” service. Doing her best to imitate her father, she held a cat over a barrel of water and proclaimed: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and in the hole you go!"

Many who request baptism for themselves or their children don't understand it much better than Susan! Parents think it's insurance if their children die unexpectedly. Some denominations teach that it's essential for salvation and others that it isn't all that important. Some baptize children, whereas others baptize only professing believers. Some sprinkle, some pour, some totally immerse once, and others dunk three times. No wonder confusion reigns!

Water baptism *isn't* an indifferent matter. Is it *essential* for salvation? Why? See Luke 23:39-43.

Nevertheless, F.F. Bruce, a New Testament scholar, wrote, “The idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not entertained in the New Testament.”¹ The New Testament teaches that every Christian should be baptized.

Ceremonial Cleansing

The Jewish idea of baptism began as a way of spiritualizing the old ritualistic washings that were part of the purification laws given by Moses.² One who became ceremonially unclean was required to _____ his clothes (Leviticus 11:25). Baptism represented washing or cleansing from sin.

Unconventional Dunking

The Pharisees questioned John the Baptist because his standard baptizing procedure wasn't traditional. Typically, only non-Jews converting to Judaism were baptized. Thus, in John 1:24-26 the Pharisees inquired who had given him the authority to baptize Jews just like Gentiles since he wasn't _____, _____ or the _____ (John 1:25). John's baptism represented a cleansing from sin of all who made a public commitment to live according to God's will (Matthew 3:6).

John prophesied that one was coming who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and _____ (Matthew 3:11). On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out with tongues of fire (Acts 2:3-4). Every individual now has a choice between receiving the Spirit of Christ or burning like chaff with unquenchable _____ (Matthew 3:12).

Jesus' Example

Jesus' baptism by John was unique. He came with nothing to confess. He was without _____ or _____ (1 Peter 1:19). He said it was proper for John to baptize him to _____ (Matthew 3:15). By his baptism he

He identified with you!

identified himself with sinful people. By ours we identify ourselves with him, the Righteous One. In Acts 2:38 and

8:16 baptism is in or into _____. His

baptism was the signal that he was assuming the role of Messiah and the suffering it involved as our substitute on the cross.

Jesus' Command

Two key elements of making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20) are:

1. _____
2. _____

How long is baptism to be part of the agenda of the church (Matthew 28:20)?

Baptism in the Early Church

Every detailed conversion account in Acts includes baptism. Peter preached the need for baptism on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38). The result of repentance and baptism would be

Pentecost

receiving the gift of the _____. Can we claim that promise? Why? (Acts 2:39)?

Philip must have talked about baptism when he shared the good news about _____ (Acts 8:35) because the Ethiopian specifically asked for it. How else would he know about it?

After Peter led Cornelius, his friends and relatives into a relationship with Christ, he ordered that they be _____ (Acts 10:48).

After they were converted under Paul's ministry, _____ and those in her household were baptized (Acts 16:15) as were the Philippian _____ and his household (Acts 16:33). Baptism is God's will for every believer.

The Significance of Baptism

The Spirit's Baptism

The Scriptures promise the baptism of the S_____ (Mark 1:8, Acts 1:4-5, 11:16). Through it the benefits of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection are applied to sinful people. This baptism is the introduction of every believer into new life in Christ. In Titus 3:5 this is described as the _____ of rebirth and _____ by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit baptizes us into Christ's _____ (1 Corinthians 12:13, 27).

Identifying with Jesus

The author owns at least four Penn State hats, three sweatshirts and one pair of sweatpants. When Penn State plays football on a Saturday afternoon, no one in his family has to guess what team he wants to win! Just as the author identifies with Penn State, the believer, through baptism identifies with Jesus, his redeeming work, and his people. In baptism the Christian takes a stand with Christ and his church. Living a new life involves relating properly to Jesus and his _____ (1 Corinthians 12:12; Romans 12:4-5).

In Romans 6:3-4, we learn some of the details of the Spirit's baptism. Through it we identify with Christ's d_____, b_____, and re_____tion. When he died, *we did too*. When he was buried, *we were also*. When he rose from the dead, *so did we*. God's purpose is that we may _____ (Romans 6:4) and that we should _____ to sin (Romans 6:6). Baptism is a symbolic way of bidding farewell to individualism and self-serving to embrace new life in the community of Christ.

A Serious Commitment

A notorious sinner got religion every revival meeting, and then soon fell away until the next one. After his fifth trip into the river, the preacher said, "You've been baptized so

much the fish know your name!" His name might have been entered in a church record book, but not in the Book of Life. Baptism expresses a *serious* commitment to follow Jesus. Muslim youth converting to Christianity find that their faith is tolerated until they decide to be baptized. At that point their family and friends officially cut them off.

Who Should Be Baptized?

The New Testament emphasizes that those who are baptized are responding through personal faith. There is no clear evidence that anyone other than believers were ever baptized. How does the choice the Ethiopian made in Acts 8:36-37 differ from the choice an infant can make? _____

A disciple is a learner. Only d_____ are to be baptized (Matthew 28:18-20). An infant can't yet choose to follow Jesus or identify with Christ's death, burial and resurrection. The first mention of infant baptism was around A.D.185 by Irenaeus.³ It wasn't practiced generally until the fifth century.⁴ The consistent New Testament pattern is hearing the word, believing, and *then* being baptized.

How Should Baptism Be Conducted?

Immersion, sprinkling and pouring all represent cleansing and identification with Christ, the key ideas associated with baptism. Immersion best depicts its symbolism and was the standard practice of the early church. The Greek word translated "to baptize" means "to immerse or dip." This implies that the one baptized was thrust *under* the water. A manual of Christian teaching called the *Didache* was written about 80 to 90 years after Jesus' ascension. It said that forms of baptism other than immersion should be used only when immersion wasn't possible.

The circumstances surrounding baptisms described in the New Testament suggest

immersion. John baptized in Aenon near Salim, because there was *much water* there (John 3:23). After Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:16 he went up ___ of the water. In the Ethiopian's baptism in Acts 8:38 he went _____ the water. Immersion best fits the symbolism of being buried with Christ (Romans 6:4), and is consistent with New Testament practice. Immersion was the practice in the West until the late Middle Ages and was always the practice in the East.⁵

Have you repented of your sins and trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?
___ yes ___no

If so, have you been baptized?
___ yes ___no

If not, when will you be baptized?



What's God's message to you in this lesson?

What underlying attitudes/thought patterns do you need to change?

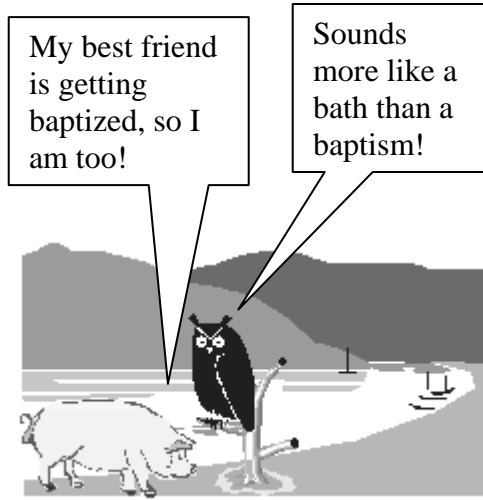


Write your action plan to make those changes:

Memory Verse

Matthew 28:19 – Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the
1

name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.



Notes

- 1 Bruce, F.F. *Commentary on the Book of Acts*. NIC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962. p. 77.
- 2 Walker, Williston. *A History of the Christian Church*. Charles Scribner's Sons. New York. 1959. P. 86.
3. Ibid, p. 87.
4. Lockyer, Herbert. *All the Doctrines of the Bible*. Zondervan. 1964. p. 259.
5. Walker, p. 88.

The Lord's Supper



Share your progress carrying out your "Baptism" action plan.

Share one God-message from your devotional time since we last met.

A potluck I once attended was a kid's dream. Meat and vegetables were scarce. Almost everyone brought *desserts*—not that I'm complaining! Church potlucks have a reputation. One church advertised in its bulletin—"Thursday night - potluck supper. Prayer and medication to follow." I know the feeling! I've been to a few dinners that required plop, plop, fizz, fizz therapy, how about you? No matter how good its potlucks, the *best* meal any church offers is the Lord's Supper.

The Incredible Edible Story

The Lord's Supper reflects the *whole* gospel. It reminds us from whence we came, how we got where we are, our unity with and call to live for Christ, our oneness with other believers, and our future destiny. All are packaged in the bread and cup we take in remembrance of Jesus.

Rescuing Prodigal Mules

We were all born in Independence—stubborn as Missouri mules, living for ourselves, actively rebelling against or passively ignoring our heavenly Father. We didn't tell him what to do—well, maybe a little— and we expected him to return the favor. We posted the door of our heart with our declaration of independence along with "No Trespassing" signs to discourage meddling deity from knocking. By all rights, God should have written us off and allowed us to reap the fruit of our

foolishness. He didn't. His _____ for us remained unailing (John 3:16).

In the Gospels we discover that Jesus doesn't reject sinners; he *eats* with them. Eating together in the New Testament carried special significance. By eating with Matthew and his sinner-guests, Jesus made them feel at home (Luke 5:27-32). How did the father of the prodigal demonstrate love for his son (Luke 15:23)?

How is the story of the prodigal son also *your* story?

The Passover Principle

The bread and cup explain how God could legally forgive rebels like us and call us out of _____ into his wonderful _____ (1 Peter 2:9). The Lord's Supper was celebrated in connection with the _____ (Matthew 26:17-18). The animal sacrificed on that day was a _____ (Exodus 12:3). John the Baptist called Jesus the _____ of God (John 1:29) who takes away the world's sin. How did individual application of the lamb's blood bring deliverance from God's judgment (Exodus 12:12-13)?

How does this "Passover Principle" apply to us today?

What did Jesus and the Passover lamb have in common (1 Corinthians 5:7)?

Unwrapping God’s Best Gift

God gives _____ and _____ gifts (James 1:17). His best gift released us from the penalty and power of sin, but it cost him dearly— his Son’s life. The bread and cup symbolize God’s commitment to us. His gracious giving merits our best gifts in return. Isaiah 53:5 clarifies the symbolism behind the breaking of the bread as

_____. The cup reminds us that God could forgive our sins through _____ (Matthew 26:28). How was the agreement (covenant) that God made with Israel sealed (Exodus 24:5-8)? _____ God sealed his salvation agreement through the _____ of the _____ (Mark 14:24).

Got Bread!

God provides in Jesus a sin sacrifice and all the resources we need to overcome the downward pull of the world, flesh, and devil. He is the _____ and _____ of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). When we ingest food and drink, they become part of us. We are what we eat! Jesus is the _____ of life (John 6:35). Through the Lord’s Supper we identify with the one who gives life and is our life (Galatians 2:20). He is the bread from heaven that provides spiritual strength to do the Father’s will.

Tombstone Territory

The Lord’s Supper reminds us that not only did Christ die on the cross, but we also were _____ with him (Galatians 2:20). God’s purpose was that we may live a _____ life and no longer be _____ to sin (Romans 6:4-6). 1 Peter 2:24 says the purpose of sharing in his death is that we would die to _____ and live for _____.

Through baptism we identified with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. We committed ourselves to live a new life

dedicated to doing his will. The Lord’s Supper is a reaffirmation of that commitment. By participating in the Lord’s Supper we reassert our unity with Christ and his purposes.

Giving Thanks

The Lord’s Supper is an opportunity to thank God. When Jesus instituted the Supper he gave thanks for both the _____ and _____ (Matthew 26:26-27). The Lord’s Supper is sometimes called the Eucharist. The name comes from “eucharisteo,” which is the Greek word in Matthew 26 translated “to give thanks.”



Participating in the Lord’s Supper reminds us of our forgiveness and renews the joy of our salvation. Meditating on what Christ has delivered us from stirs flickering coals of gratitude into flame. Some of us would be in jail or dead if Christ hadn’t rescued us. Marriages would be broken, bodies abused, relationships destroyed. When we were all wrapped up in ourselves we made very small packages. Jesus is still in the process of setting us free from all that keeps us from being just like him. Give thanks! Life has meaning now. We have a purpose. We have a hope that burns in our hearts with an eternal flame. List at least four reasons to give thanks (1 Corinthians 1:4-9):

Team Jesus

Recently while one of Jack’s brothers visited him, he suggested moving a computer to a spot at the other end of the living room .The amazing thing was that the same idea had occurred to Jack not five seconds before his brother voiced his thoughts. The relationships of Christian brothers and sisters should reflect *oneness*. We replaces I and you. We cease to live independently of

each other. Our lives intersect more than the hour we spend together in worship. 1 Timothy 3:15 says that together we are part of God's _____ .The cup of thanksgiving and bread are a _____ in the blood and body of Christ. Eating one loaf together demonstrates that we are ___ body (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). The Greek word translated "participation" means common sharing. It describes the relational epoxy that bonds believers together. We are united not only with Christ, but also with other Christians. Jesus' friends become *our best friends*. We are Jesus' *team!*

Does "oneness" accurately describe your church? __Yes __No. What can you do to improve your relational ties with other believers?

God's Flight Plan

The Lord's Supper has past, present and future aspects. It reminds us of Christ's sacrifice for our sins, our present communion with him, and his future return. Our new life in him is like an airline flight. Jesus shed his blood on the cross to purchase our ticket. He is the Lamb of God (John 1:29), without _____ or _____ (1 Peter 1:19), who removes the world's sin. The ticket is so expensive *no one* can afford it, but *anyone* can receive it as a gift. Once inside the plane, we discover that our pilot bought our ticket. Although we can't see him, his still small voice comforts us, especially in the midst of turbulence. He's flying us toward a perfect landing in eternity. On the way we befriend other passengers who are sharing the ride. The plane is so huge, we can't possibly know everyone, but we can love those who sit closest to us. Upon arrival, we'll see our pilot face to face and be his guests at the biggest celebration dinner ever. Those who are invited to the wedding supper of the

Lamb are b _____ (Revelation 19:9). The bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper are reminders of the *price of our ticket*, the *presence* of our pilot and fellow passengers during the flight, and the *celebration yet to be*.

In Remembrance of Me

Based on what you have learned in this study, what is appropriate "to remember" about each of the following?

1. Shared Savior

2. Shared Spirit

3. Shared body

4. Shared death to sins

5. Shared spiritual healing

6. Shared eternity

7. Shared sufferings

Self-Examination

Part of the gospel is the need to confess and repent of our sins to receive God's _____ and cleansing (1 John 1:9). The Lord's Supper provides an opportunity.

What unconfessed sins disqualify us from participation in the church and thus in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,11; Titus 3:10; Romans 16:17)?

What preparation does 1 Corinthians 11:28 suggest? _____
What needs to be examined?

What behavior is to be avoided (1 Corinthians 11:27-31)? Why?

Who May Participate?

To whom did Jesus give the bread and cup (Matthew 26:26-27)?

Who participated in the breaking of bread (Acts 2:41-47)?

Who came together to break bread (Acts 20:7)? _____

Based on the above verses, to participate in the Lord's Supper one must be: (Circle the best answer)

- a. A believer in Jesus Christ
- b. Twelve or older
- c. A church member
- d. Hungry

Application

How many times each year is the Lord's Supper celebrated in your church? ____
Health permitting, how many times will you participate during the next twelve months? _____

Jesus became broken bread and poured out wine in the sense that he sacrificed his life for ours. Read Luke 9:23-24. In what specific ways are you pouring out your life to make more and better disciples?

What has following Christ cost you in recognition, praise, esteem, respect, comfort and financial rewards you might otherwise have achieved? _____



What's God's message to you in this lesson?

What underlying attitudes/thought patterns do you need to change?



Write your action plan to make those changes:

Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 11:26 – For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.



Feet-Washing



Share your progress carrying out your “The Lord’s Supper” action plan.

Share one God-message from your devotional time since we last met.

In Remembrance of Sacrifice

Pastor Bill Sloat’s parents raised him and his brother to have a greater appreciation for Memorial Day than Independence Day. His father explained that Americans should be thankful for the freedom they enjoy. Each year he took his sons to their town’s cemetery, showed them the decorated graves of veterans and taught them to respect the people who loved this country and its people enough to sacrifice for it. As a child he learned that it was important to understand and appreciate the sacrifice that thousands of men and women made for his freedom. Many years later he realized that he had not learned his father’s lesson completely: We should not only appreciate those who sacrificed for us, but should also be willing to serve others.

A Lesson in Sacrifice

Pastor Sloat’s father’s annual lesson on citizenship echoes the message Jesus proclaimed when He washed His first disciples’ feet and commanded us to wash each other’s feet. Our spiritual freedom is built on the foundation of His sacrifice. He challenges us to follow His example of service.

Upside-Down Values

Jesus’ first disciples followed Him in the hope that through Him they’d one day rule over others. As Jesus approached the end of His

ministry, He explained that the disciple who wants to be truly great must become a _____ (Mark 10:43) and that whoever wants to be ranked first among His followers must be a _____ to all (Mark 10:44).

Freed to Serve

The last evening Jesus spent with the disciples was the night that the Jews celebrated Passover. Passover is similar to Independence Day. During Passover the Jews ate a special meal and recalled the night that God gave their ancestors freedom from slavery in Egypt during the days of Moses over 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus.

It was during this celebration of freedom that Jesus assumed the function of a low-ranking servant and “got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and _____ a towel around his waist. After that, he poured _____ into a basin and began to _____ his disciples’ _____ ...” (John 13:4-5).

A Hard Lesson to Learn

Peter protested when Jesus approached. He was so upset by what Jesus was doing that he announced, “you shall _____ wash my feet” (John 13:8).

What did Peter know about Jesus that made him uncomfortable?

Matthew 8:26 _____

Matthew 16:15-16 _____

Matthew 17:2 _____

Luke 17:7-10 _____

A person once said that having *her* feet washed was more difficult than washing someone else’s feet. Can you understand why she would say that?

Do you agree? Why?

How would having *your* feet washed by Jesus Himself make you feel?

Called to Be Served

Jesus explained that washing Peter’s feet wasn’t an option if he wanted to be one of His disciples, saying, “Unless I _____ you, you have no _____ with me” (John 13:8).

Jesus isn’t literally present to wash our feet with his nail-scarred hands. That doesn’t mean He has *no* hands to do the job. In what way(s) must we allow Him to wash our feet (serve us) if we are to be His disciples?

Called to Serve

When Jesus finished washing the disciples’ feet he returned to His position at the table. He knew that the disciples were struggling to grasp what He’d just done. He addressed their confusion in John 13:12 by asking, “Do you _____ what I have done for you?”

He reminded them that they thought of Him as their Teacher and Lord, and they were right. Then He challenged them, saying, “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, _____ also should _____

one another’s feet” (John 13:14). And, “I have set you an _____ that you should _____ as I have done for you” (John 13:15).

What Could He Have Been Thinking?

John, through the inspiration of God, gives us a rare glimpse into Jesus’ thoughts immediately prior to washing His disciples’ feet. John 13:3 informs us, “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had _____ from God and was returning to God.”

Read Philippians 2:5-8

Who was Jesus by nature before He became human (v. 6)?

For Jesus, the act of becoming human was an act of _____hood (v. 7).

How did Jesus humble Himself even further (v. 8)?

Match the following acts of Jesus that night with the acts of humiliation they might have symbolized:

- ___ Getting up from the meal
- ___ Taking off his outer clothing
- ___ Wrapping a towel around His waist
- ___ Pouring water into a basin
- ___ Washing & drying the disciples’ feet

- a. Wrapped his divine nature with human nature
- b. Laid aside his divine privileges
- c. Born of water and the Spirit
- d. Interrupted his life in heaven
- e. Became a servant

Following the Example

When does your congregation observe Feet Washing services?

Have you ever participated? _____

If not, ask two persons who have, "What makes feet-washing special to you?" and record their responses:

1. _____

2. _____

If you have participated, what impressed you most? _____

How did it make you feel about Jesus?

How did it make you feel about yourself?

How did it make you feel about the one washing your feet? _____

Besides participating in a feet-washing service, list five ways you can follow Jesus' example of servanthood?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



What's God's message to you in this lesson?

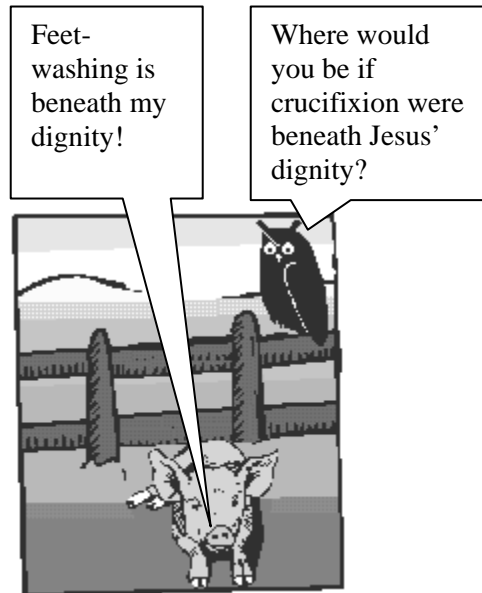
What underlying attitudes/thought patterns do you need to change?



Write your action plan to make those changes:

Memory Verse

John 13:14 - Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.



Church Membership



Share your progress carrying out your “Feetwashing” action plan.

Share one God-message from your devotional time since we last met.

The Importance of Membership

Many professing Christians in the United States are more like tennis than football players, treating Christianity as an individual rather than a team “sport.” One lady I know once said, “I don’t have to go to church to be a Christian.” I handed her a Bible and asked, “Could you show me where the Bible says that?” She couldn’t. She would never have said, “My son doesn’t have to be on a team to be a football player.” She knew better. For the obedient Christian, church attendance isn’t optional; neither is church membership. That one can be a Christian apart from belonging to a church team is a Satan-inspired lie.

The players on a winning football team are interdependent. Every successful play requires each player’s knowing what ten other persons on the field are doing. The running back knows what the blockers are doing. The receiver knows where and when the quarterback is going to throw. The person returning kickoffs understands where his teammates expect him to run. *Average* players working together can be a *good* team. There’s a lesson there for the church.

Without the kind of team commitment reflected by joining the church, believers are like a wall of bricks that temporarily forms every Sunday, and then, less than two hours later, disassembles for another seven days or more. What happened to the team?

The bricks in many churches are self-ruling and mostly uncommitted to one another. They attend team meetings, but skip the practices and games. They never learn to “play together.” The Bible knows nothing about Christianity practiced in isolation from other believers.

Many refuse to join a church because they think it would unnecessarily complicate their lives. By attending sporadically, remaining spectators, melting into a large church where no one will notice them, or by church hopping, they avoid the need to commit their time, talents and treasures. They have a warped view of freedom.

Biblical freedom is never a license to do what we want. It’s the power to obey as we ought. Free-floating Christians are unChristians because they’re unconnected, undisciplined, unaccountable and unfruitful.

A computer connected to the internet is potentially far more powerful than one that isn’t. So is a Christian who is connected to a local church.

The Benefits of Membership

A Supporting Family

My father and I were lost in Ottawa, Canada (again!). We had wandered far from the right road and had no idea how to find it. We stopped at a store and purchased a city map. We discovered where we were and how to get back on the correct road again. That map restored our hope. Church members have others in the membership to restore them when they get off the right track spiritually. If someone is caught in a sin those who are spiritual are to restore him _____ (Galatians 6:1). We fulfill the law of Christ by carrying each other’s _____ (Galatians 6:2). We also help one another attain spiritual maturity. From Christ the whole body, joined and held

together by every _____ ligament grows and builds itself up in _____, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:16).

Ministry Opportunities

Every believer receives the manifestation of the _____ for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). That’s another way of saying God gives us all at least one spiritual gift to be used to build up the church. Pastoral ministry helped me explore my spiritual gifts. Because my ministry duties included preaching, teaching, counseling, visiting, leading, serving, administration, evangelizing, discipling, etc, I had many opportunities to test my passion and gifts. I found I was gifted in several but not all of these areas. A few unexpected gifts emerged through this “learning by doing” discovery process. One of the best spiritual gifts tests is to try various ministries for which you have a passion, and see which are most fulfilling and fruitful.

When we join the church, we enter an environment where we can experiment with various ministries to determine where we can serve most effectively. In most churches, some ministry opportunities are reserved for those who are church members. To fully unwrap our spiritual gifts, we need to be members of the church.

A Worshiping Family

Anyone can come to a worship service. Membership isn’t required. But those who voluntarily commit themselves to membership are the pumping heart of the worshiping family of our church. Others can come and go as they please, but by joining the church we commit ourselves to worship God in a specific place together with others who have made a similar commitment. Further, we commit ourselves to increase the number of his committed worshipers in that place. We aren’t satisfied with filling a building once a week, but are looking for those who will worship God

24/7 by being light and salt in our community and mutually supportive of each other. God has given us one another. All the believers were together and had everything in _____. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had _____ (Acts 2:44-45).

Accountability

Some nonmembers flit, like honeybees, from one church flower to the next, concerned only with meeting their own needs. They never get involved, and never become accountable to meet someone else’s needs. Is someone in your church holding you accountable to grow as a believer and reach out to others? Yes No If so, who? _____ Most don’t progress very far spiritually after receiving Jesus as Savior and Lord because few in the church really expect them to.

Accountability helps us become more like the Savior. Dr. Thom Rainer found that members of effective evangelistic churches hold one another accountable for evangelism. Church membership should be the entrance into a relationship of accountability.

When we join a Church of God, we commit ourselves to attend worship, participate in the ordinances of Holy Communion and feet-washing, support educational programs the church offers, become involved in ministry, and support the church financially. In addition we promise to live in Christian peace and love, to obey the teachings of Scripture and to submit to the church’s rules of order and its leaders. God takes our vows *very* seriously. We are commanded not to be _____ to pay our vow, for the Lord will certainly _____ it (Deuteronomy 23:21).

Being accountable to one another now prepares us for our “final exam.” According to Romans 3:19, the whole _____ is accountable to God. We have _____ excuse for our sin (John 15:22). We’re responsible for the person we become and what we do. I’ve asked several guys in my

church to hold me responsible to have devotions with my family and to pray with my wife regularly, two areas of struggle. Because I have to give an account to them every time we meet, I'm better prepared to give an account to God.

Conflict Resolution

Becoming a church member provides a practical way to resolve conflicts with other believers. If you fish, your line at times develops knots no Boy Scout could identify. Conflict in relationships is what line tangles are to fishermen—inevitable. Matthew 18:15-18 describes a three-step process to resolve such conflict:

- 1) Go to the offending person privately and show him his _____. If he listens, the conflict is over.
- 2) If he doesn't listen, take ___ or ___ other Christians with you and repeat step one. If he listens, the conflict is resolved.
- 3) If he still doesn't listen, take the matter to the _____.

A Spiritual Shepherd

In the November 2000 issue of *Reader's Digest*, Sharon Forgue described her 20th anniversary celebration in Hawaii with her husband. After an hour of swimming, everyone reentered the boat except Sharon and a handsome young man. The man followed her everywhere as she snorkeled for another 40 minutes. When she climbed back into the boat, so did he. She felt flattered and asked him why he stayed in the water so long. He told her, "I'm the lifeguard. I couldn't get out of the water until you did."

Church members are blessed with spiritual lifeguards—pastors and church leaders who watch over their souls, shepherd and give direction. These leaders are to be obeyed because they _____ watch as those who

must give an account (Hebrews 13:17). We must respect them because they work _____ among us and must hold them in the highest _____ (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). Church members have "spiritual parents," whereas, nonmembers are spiritual orphans.

The Responsibilities of Membership

Six terms highlight the responsibilities of church members: believer, brother, saint, disciple-maker, citizen, and promoter.

1. Believer

What set apart those who were added to the early church (Acts 5:14)?

What responsibility does this term suggest for church members? _____

Describe several times in your life when believing in the Lord made a difference:

- a.
- b.
- c.

2. Brother

Brother is a relationship-rich term. Joining the church ushers us into a whole new world of responsibilities to other members. Brothers...

- a. have _____ with other believers (1 John 1:3,7).
- b. are all part of one _____ (Colossians 1:18).
- c. _____ one another deeply from the heart (1 Peter 1:22).
- d. _____ others up (Ephesians 4:29).
- e. _____ one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24).
- f. _____ and admonish one another (Colossians 3:16).

g. _____ each other’s burdens (Galatians 6:2).

h. _____ each other (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

i. _____ each other (Ephesians 4:32).

j. _____ as one man for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27).

k. Faithfully _____ (Romans 12:12).

l. _____ one another in love (Galatians 5:13).

m. _____ the needy (1 Timothy 5:16).

Choose three of these “brother” responsibilities that you need to give more attention:

Specifically, how can you become a better “brother” in each of these three areas?

3. Saint

A saint is holy, set apart, and consecrated to God, sharing in his purity and separated from evil and its defilement. God’s arm, (Isaiah 52:10), words (Jeremiah 23:9), promises (Psalm 105:42), name (Leviticus 20:3), and Spirit (Psalm 51:11) are all

_____. The one who called us is _____, so we need to be _____ in all we do (1 Peter 1:15).

Read Colossians 3:5, 8-9. Identify two aspects of your earthly nature that still have a grip on you? _____

How can you put these two to death?

4. Disciple-Maker

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to _____ everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus’ disciples accept and practice his teachings. They walk in his steps. Disciple-makers seek to extend to every part of the earth and every people group Jesus’ influence on and reign over individuals.

How can God use you to make disciples in your circle of influence?

5. Citizen

Church members are citizens of the kingdom with responsibilities to:

a.b_____ and I _____ (Matthew 16:19).

b.assemble and _____ one another (Hebrews 10:25).

c. t _____ to the Lord (Leviticus 27:30).

d. _____ their leaders and _____ to their authority (Hebrews 13:17).

e. give to believers who have_____ (Acts 2:45).

f. support financially those who _____ the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14).

g. give _____ (2 Corinthians 9:6) and _____ fully(2 Corinthians 9:7).

h. provide _____ and daily _____ for needy brothers and sisters (Jas. 2:15-16).

6. Promoter

How is the servant's assignment in Luke 14:23 also ours?

What key to the unity in the church is described in Romans 15:6 -7?

How would you grade your promotion of your church during the last year?

__ A __ B __ C __ D __ F

How could you improve?

How would you grade your acceptance of others in the church during the last year?

__ A __ B __ C __ D __ F

How could you improve?



What's God's message to you in this lesson?

What underlying attitudes/thought patterns do you need to change?



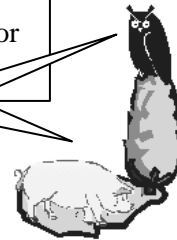
Write your action plan to make those changes:

Memory Verse

John 15:8 – This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Should I go to First Church, Second Coming Community, or Third Baptist next Sunday?

I don't know. I joined First Church 12 years ago, and haven't had your problem since then.



Appendix A – Answer Key

Meditation

Stop...Look...Listen

- precepts
- ways
- decrees
- name
- law
- statutes
- promises
- works
- mighty deeds
- ways

Why?

- teaching
- rebuking
- correcting
- training
- teach
- encouragement
- wiser
- prosperous
- successful

How?

- I will
- Roll all your worries onto his shoulders because he loves you.
- Personal
- Who? – I
What? – Cast my anxieties on the Lord
When? – Whenever I'm anxious
Where? – Wherever I am
Why? – Because he cares for me
How? – By letting go of them and giving them to the Lord.
- Personal
- Personal

The Benefits of Meditation

- sins
- troubles
- wasting away
- weakness

Learning God's Ways

1. I will prosper and be spiritually fruitful
2. Personal
3. Spiritual satisfaction
4. By praising and thinking about the Lord
5. The law of the Lord
6. Personal

Ten Words from Our Sponsor

- gods
- personal
- personal
- personal
- idol
- spirit

- ways
- thoughts
- image
- misuse
- mouth
- lips
- Personal
- Personal
- Sabbath
- Egypt
- Lord
- themselves
- father
- mother
- Personal
- murder
- God gave us life and we have no right to end it intentionally.
- God gives life to the child developing within the womb, and we have no right to take it.
- God alone is authorized to end our life.
- Anyone who is angry with his brother and calls him a fool is in danger of the fire of hell.
- Personal
- adultery
- look
- both include forsaking an individual and turning to substitutes
- Flee
- himself
- steal
- neighbor
- take
- back
- give it back
- bring it to her attention
- take them back to the office
- Refuse it
- false testimony
- detests
- lie
- liar
- lies
- Personal
- Telling all I believe to be true could injure others unnecessarily
- anything
- patient
- kind
- envy
- boast
- proud
- rude
- self-seeking

Worship**Revelation**

- He speaks. He is holy. He's the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is concerned about the suffering of his people. Hears the cries of his people. Rescues his people
- He sits on a throne, high and exalted. The train of his robe fills the temple. He is holy. The whole earth is full of his glory.
- Rules taught by men

Response

- A man of unclean lips
- "Here am I. Send me!"

The "Other Gods" Squad

- god
- created
- Personal
- They are tempted to worship their house, car, "toys," church bethel, etc that have been purchased by the work of their hands.

A Worship-Worthy God

- credit
- To bow down to God. To offer him sacrifices.
- praise
- Part of worship is giving thanks to God.
- The Lord made the heavens. He is surrounded by splendor, majesty, strength and joy.
- Maker
- holy
- love
- faithfulness
- Those who worship him in spirit and in truth.

A Worship-Worthy Savior

- Magi
- disciples
- women
- disciples
- blind
- angels

Will the True Worshipper Please Stand Up!

- obeying
- serving
- True worship requires obeying and serving the one we say we worship.

Prepare

- Personal
- Personal
- Personal
- Personal

- The body and blood of Jesus Christ
- Through it we identify with Christ and his church.
- Personal

Keep Your Eye on the Ball

- Their allegiance to the building and its location was stronger than their commitment to the people who composed the church.
- They think if there are no services in "their building," then there are no services.
- Their commitment to the shepherd was far stronger than their commitment to the other people in the church.
- No. The Word of God is getting more emphasis than the God of the Word.

Be Zealous

- Personal
- zeal
- fervor
- Yes. People who are playing with sin aren't anxious to be in God's presence. The spiritually healthy love to brag on him.
- spirit
- truth

Celebrate

- Personal
- Personal

Idolatry

- gods
- idol
- God is sad and jealous when our ultimate allegiance is to someone or something other than him.
- Personal

Closing the Pleasure Passageway

- everything
- enjoyment
- joy
- pleasures
- gift
- heart
- soul
- mind
- lovers
- rather than
- Personal
- Personal
- self-control
- way out
- Personal

Closing the Hero Passageway

- Abel
- Enoch
- Noah

- Abraham
- Isaac
- Jacob
- Joseph
- Parents
- Moses
- people
- Rahab
- Gideon
- Barak
- Samson
- David
- Samuel
- learned
- received
- heard
- seen
- cravings
- eyes
- imitate
- imitator
- Christ
- give
- idols
- Personal
- Personal

Closing the Earthly Goal Passageway

- hearts
- minds
- above
- earthly
- Fishing tournaments are usually held on weekends. This goal competes with regularly assembling with other believers to encourage them.
- The amount of time and energy required to have the prettiest yard could be better spent ministering to the needs of others.
- The ‘in group’ in most schools gets involved in parties and other activities that will bring strong temptation to sin just to fit in.
- How does this glorify God? This goal will interfere with giving my life to that which will outlast it—the Word of God and people.

- Personal

Closing the Insecurity Passageway

- everything
- believes
- anything
- ask
- imagine
- Money
- Our heart is where our treasure is. If money is our treasure, that’s where our heart will be.

- Personal
- idolatry
- things instead of God
- They become substitutes for trust in God

Baptism

- The criminal on the cross was saved apart from baptism

Ceremonial Cleansing

- Wash

Unconventional Dunking

- Christ
- Elijah
- Prophet
- fire
- fire

Jesus’ Example

- blemish
- defect
- fulfill all righteousness
- Jesus Christ

Jesus’ Command

- baptizing
- teaching
- to the very end of the age

Baptism in the Early Church

- Holy Spirit
- The promise is for all the Lord calls
- Jesus
- baptized
- Lydia
- Jailer

The Spirit’s Baptism

- Spirit
- washing
- renewal
- body

Identifying with Jesus

- body
- death
- burial
- resurrection
- live a new life
- no longer be slaves

Who Should Be Baptized?

- The Ethiopian chose to be baptized, infants can’t make that choice.
- disciples

How Should Baptism Be Conducted?

- out
- into
- Personal
- Personal
- Personal

The Lord’s Supper

Rescuing Prodigal Mules

- love

- When his son returned, the Father celebrated with a feast
- When I came to my senses and came to God, heaven celebrated.

The Passover Principle

- darkness
- light
- Passover
- lamb
- Lamb
- The Lord passed over those who applied the lamb's blood to their houses.
- When we apply Jesus' blood to our sins through faith, the Lord's condemnation passes over us.
- Both were sacrificed.

Unwrapping God's Best Gift

- good
- perfect
- the bruising, crushing, and wounding of Jesus for our sins
- the blood of the covenant
- with blood
- blood
- covenant

Got Bread!

- power
- wisdom
- bread

Tombstone Territory

- crucified
- new
- slaves
- sins
- righteousness

Giving Thanks

- bread
- cup
- For the grace I've received in Jesus Christ; For being enriched by him in my speaking and knowledge; For the spiritual gifts he has given; He will keep my strong to the end; God has called me into fellowship with his Son; God is faithful

Team Jesus

- household
- participation
- one
- Personal
- Personal

God's Flight Plan

- blemish
- defect
- blessed

In Remembrance of Me

- Believers have trusting in Jesus as their Savior in common

- Believers share the same Holy Spirit as their power source
- Believers together are part of the church, the body of which Christ is the head.
- Believers die to living for self in order to live for Jesus
- Believers receive new life and spiritual wholeness through their trust in Christ
- Believers share the same destiny of living with and worshiping God forever
- Believers share together in suffering for Christ this side of eternity

Self-Examination

- forgiveness
- sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, slander, drunkenness, swindling, idleness, disobedience, divisiveness
- self-examination
- We need to examine ourselves for unconfessed sin
- Eating the bread or drinking the cup in an unworthy manner because this brings God's judgment upon us.

Who May Participate?

- His disciples
- All the believers
- The believers
 - a. A believer in Jesus Christ

Application

- Personal
- Personal
- Personal
- Personal

Feet-Washing**Upside-Down Values**

- servant
- slave

Freed to Serve

- wrapped
- water
- wash
- feet

A Hard Lesson to Learn

- never
- He knew that the wind and waves obeyed Jesus
- He recognized Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
- He witnessed Jesus' transfiguration and saw his glory
- Peter felt like he was an unworthy servant who didn't deserve to have his feet washed by his master

- Personal
- Personal
- Personal

Called to Be Served

- wash
- part
- He washes our feet and serves us through the hands of other believers

Called to Serve

- understand
- you
- wash
- example
- do

What Could He Have Been Thinking?

- come
- He was God
- servanthood
- He humbled himself to the point of being willing to die on a cross
- d
- b
- a
- c
- e

Following the Example

- Personal
- Personal
- Personal
- Personal
- Personal
- Personal
- Personal
- Personal

Church Membership

A Supporting Family

- gently
- burdens
- supporting
- love

Ministry Opportunities

- Spirit

A Worshiping Family

- common
- need

Accountability

- Personal
- Personal
- slow
- demand
- world
- no

Conflict Resolution

- fault
- one
- two
- church

A Spiritual Shepherd

- keep
- hard
- regard

The Responsibilities of Membership

1. Believer

- They trusted or believed in the Lord
- They need to trust Jesus in all the circumstances of life
- Personal

2. Brother

- a. fellowship
- b. body
- c. love
- d. build
- e. spur
- f. teach
- g. carry
- h. encourage
- i. forgive
- j. contend
- k. pray
- l. serve
- m. help
- Personal
- Personal

3. Saint

- holy
- holy
- holy
- Personal
- Personal

4. Disciple-Maker

- Obey
- Personal

5. Citizen

- a. bind and loose
- b. encourage
- c. tithe
- d. obey , submit
- e. need
- f. preach
- g. generously, cheerfully
- h. clothes, food

6. Promoter

- Like his, our job is to fill the Father's house (our church)
- Accepting others as Christ accepted me
- Personal
- Personal
- Personal
- Personal