

OUR BIBLICAL GPS



God's Plan for Sanctification

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Wisdom for the Journey

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The Best Road Home

Our earthly lives are a journey and God's guidance system enables us to avoid many of the detours and false turns available to us along the way. There is a "high way." It is the road God has planned for us to take during our earthly lives. Each road has been designed by God to help us accomplish his plan and purpose for our lives. All of us make wrong turns, but God is faithful to correct those choices and return us to his better path.

God is our perfect Father. He called his people to be holy because of his great love and compassion. God has always wanted his children to live with abundant blessing. Our faith relationship to God enables his blessings to flow from heaven through us to others. God has always had a road of redemption available to those who will choose to follow his perfect directions.

We are made in God's image and therefore created with a free will. Our God-given free will allows us to enter heaven simply by choosing to place our faith and hope in Jesus Christ, the One and only Son of God. That same God-given free will also impact the treasure we either use up during this life, or invest in our eternal home.

If Jesus is your Lord, you have the promise of heaven. But this "road-trip" we call life is an opportunity to arrive in heaven with joy, rewards and a crown to lay at the feet of Jesus. The purpose of this study is to teach what the Bible says about living a life God is able to bless.

When we, through the Holy Spirit, allow God's word to be our guidance system, we remain on *the best road home*. This life is meant to be a joy-filled journey, even when we pass through the deserts, climb a hill or realize we have taken a wrong turn.

God didn't promise us each mile would be easy, but He did promise his Presence would support and guide us along the way. The point of any journey is its destination. We are going home!

Pray each week for God's wisdom as you study. Ask the Holy Spirit to apply each lesson to your own life and then ask him how to use what you have learned to help others. The goal of each week is to help us learn how to remain on *the best road home* because one day we complete our journey and reach eternity. On that day, we all want to hear our "Abba" greet us and say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Lesson 1

Biblical truth: Our spiritual software

Psalm 119

Computer software is the set of instructions and information that control the computer's systems. The Bible provides the set of instructions, or *spiritual software*, that enables people to know God and understand how to live a *God-controlled* life. Abraham Lincoln, speaking about the Bible said, "But for this book we could not know right from wrong." St. Augustine described God's word as "letters from home." God has always provided a way for his people to know him and to know his perfect will for their lives. But the Bible was not given simply to supply information. The Bible has the power to transform the lives of those who honor and obey God's word as truth and therefore receive his blessings.

Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm and the longest chapter in the Bible. The Psalm is a celebration of God's word as his holy revelation to mankind.

1. From verses 1-3, what is the purpose of God's word?
2. Psalm 119 was probably written or compiled by a Jewish priest. What is the struggle that he and all God's people have with Scripture? (vv. 4-8)
3. What is the definition of a *precept*? How can a person lead a pure life? (vv. 9-16)
4. If we consider Scripture to be truth and pattern our lives accordingly, what should we expect from those who do not? (vv. 17-24) See also 1 Corinthians 1:18.
5. How does Scripture impact a person's life? (vv. 25-32)
6. How does Scripture protect the person who obeys its teachings? (vv. 33-40)

7. How does the Psalmist feel about God's word? How do his words stir or convict your own heart? (vv. 41-48)

8. Why is it important to consider the priority of Scripture to our spiritual and personal lives? (vv. 49-56) What are the dangers of not treating God's word as truth?

9. How has the Psalmist found peace and contentment in his life? (vv. 57-64)

10. What did the Psalmist learn through the trials in his life? (vv. 65-80)

11. Why will God's child never be completely content with an earthly life? (vv. 81-96)

12. Why is loving God's word essential to our spiritual health? (vv. 97-112)

13. Finish reading the Psalm but focus on verses 135-142. What does the Psalmist teach us to consider about those who do not believe the Bible to be truth?

*"I wait for your salvation, Lord, and I follow your commands."
Psalm 119:166*

Lesson 2

Sanctification: God's road of blessing

1 Peter 1

The Apostle Peter, probably with the help of Silas, composed the letter of 1 Peter around A.D. 60. The letter was sent to Jewish and Gentile Christians living in the region we would know as modern day Turkey. The Christian population grew quickly after the ascension of Christ and became an annoyance to Rome's emperor, Nero. Peter learned of the suffering Paul faced, as well as the persecution that was being experienced by the Church. 1 Peter is a letter of encouragement to the people to continue to grow in their faith and knowledge of God's word. John Owen, an English theologian, compared the process of sanctification to a growing tree. He said, "The growth of trees and plants takes place so slowly that it is not easily seen. Daily we notice little change. But, in course of time, we see that a great change has taken place. So it is with grace. Sanctification is a progressive, lifelong work. It is an amazing work of God's grace and it is a work to be prayed for." Peter wrote his letter to encourage the early believers to continue to allow their lives to be sanctified by Christ and, therefore, choose the road of blessing.

1. The letter is addressed to the region Paul would have visited on his second missionary journey, approximately ten years earlier. The region was an important trade center for the Roman Empire and a favorite vacation spot for wealthy Roman officials. Who was the letter addressed to and what does Peter want them to understand about themselves and their presence in this area? (1 Peter 1-2)

2. Describe the hope that Peter is offering these Christian believers. (vv. 3-5)

3. Why did God allow the trials in the lives of these early followers? (vv. 6-8)

4. What assurance does Peter give these believers? (v. 9) What does this passage teach about going through difficult times, or helping others during theirs?

5. The Old Testament prophets wrote about the coming Messiah, while inspired by the Spirit. Their words had application and meaning to the people of their time, but also revealed truth about the days to come. What did the prophets long to understand that was revealed to the first century Christians? How had those Christians come to understand? (vv. 10-12) How does Peter's statement about the angels indicate the value of that knowledge?

6. How does Peter want the early Christians to "*therefore*" embrace their salvation? (v. 13)

7. How does Peter define the process of sanctification? (vv. 14-16)

8. Look carefully at verse 17. Who is Peter addressing this statement to and therefore describes those who will stand before God in judgment? How should Christians view and live their earthly lives? (v. 17)

9. How might you use verses 18-21 to teach someone what it means to be redeemed or assure a person of their salvation?

10. What should characterize a person who pursues sanctification? (v. 22)

11. When does the process of sanctification end? What endures forever? (vv. 23-25)

Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. Matthew 10:39

Lesson 3

Avoiding detours and distractions

James 1

The book of James was written to the Jewish Christians who had been “scattered” throughout the nations, probably after the stoning of Stephen. The author is widely considered to be the brother of Jesus, who became the leader of the church in Jerusalem after Peter. The purpose of the letter was to teach and encourage those early Christians to continue living as they had been taught. These Christians had lost almost everything because of their faith in Christ. James’ letter teaches the importance of pursuing a godly life and remaining on God’s chosen path, while avoiding the inevitable detours and distractions that will always be part of the journey.

1. What is the perspective James gives to those who were experiencing the trials and temptations of this life? (vv. 1-3)
2. Why does God allow his children to experience the trials of life? (v. 4) See also Luke 22:28.
3. Who receives wisdom from God? (vv. 5-8)
4. Many of the early Christians lost everything to remain faithful. What does James say to those early Christians about their loss? (9-11) How do these verses apply to Christians today?
5. What is the blessing of remaining faithful, even in the most difficult situations of life? (v. 12)
6. What does James want people to understand about temptation and sin? (vv.13-15)

7. The Mosaic law required that the “firstfruits” of the harvest and the flocks be given to God. God created all that is, therefore the best of all creation belonged to him “first.” What does James want the persecuted, exiled Jewish Christians to understand about their situation? (vv. 16-18)

8. What does James teach is crucial for the Christian to understand? (vv. 19-21)

9. Look again at verse 21. How do we “get rid of” the sin in our lives?

10. These verses describe the common mistake God’s people often make when it comes to sin. What caution does James give in these verses? (vv. 22-25)

11. How do Christians “deceive themselves” and what is the solution? (vv. 26-27)

In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

1 John 5:3-4

Lesson 4

God's preferred route

Jeremiah 29

Jeremiah was a prophet to Judah and Jerusalem during the reigns of the final five kings. Jeremiah struggled to preach God's word to people who chose to continue in the same sins that had brought God's judgment to Israel, the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom. Jeremiah knew that God's plan for the world would require him to judge the nations, but he loved the Jewish people and continued to preach. His messages are often about the personal, individual responsibility of each person to remain faithful to God. God had a preferred plan for the nation of Israel that the people had chosen to disregard. Jeremiah preached that God provides a way for individuals to choose a route that would redeem their life and return them to a position of blessing.

1. Most of chapter 29 is the text of a letter written by the prophet Jeremiah. Who is the letter written to and what are their circumstances? (vv. 1-3)
2. Read Jeremiah 25:8-14, then 29:4-7. What does Jeremiah instruct the exiles to do while in captivity and why? (vv. 4-7) What lesson is there for the *desert times* in our own lives?
3. What messages will they need to ignore to follow God's will? How is this a message to God's people today? (vv. 8-9)
4. What is God's plan for the exiles? (vv. 10-11)
5. What is God's plan for the people? Describe the relationship God wants to have with each of us? (vv. 12-14)
6. Babylon was the political center of this day. What does Jeremiah say to the exiles about the false hope they were harboring? What does the future hold for the Jewish people and why? (vv. 15-19)

7. Where are Christians tempted to place their hope that is not a promise of God? Read Romans 5:1-5. Where should Christians place their “hopes and dreams?”

8. Who were the people of Jerusalem and Judah listening to and why was that a mistake? What might tempt people to listen to and be influenced by wrong teaching? (vv. 20-23)

9. Shemaiah was angry because Jeremiah had encouraged the people to build houses and establish lives in captivity. What did Shemaiah tell the priest in Jerusalem to do to Jeremiah? (vv. 24-28)

10. What would be the consequence to the false prophet Shemaiah? (vv. 29-32)

11. God has a plan for our lives “to prosper us and not harm us.” The consequences of our sin can remove us from that “preferred” route of blessing. What have you learned from Jeremiah about accepting the consequences of sin and pursuing the true hope God provides?

“Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”

Romans 4:7-8

Lesson 5

Joy in the journey

Philippians 4

The apostle Paul probably wrote the book of Philippians while imprisoned in Rome. Paul wanted to thank the people of Philippi for the help they had sent him and encourage them to stand firm in their faith. Paul was confident in his calling and believed the Lord had brought him to Rome for a Kingdom purpose. But Paul continued to care about and minister to the various churches that his ministry had help to establish. The city of Philippi was a prosperous Roman colony and heavily populated with Roman officials. The early Christians in the Philippian church had an uphill battle if they were going to influence their culture. Paul's letter expresses his understanding of their mission, but encourages them to find joy in their circumstances because God would honor and bless their ministry.

1. Read Philippians 3:17-21. What is Paul referring to when he begins Chapter 4 with “therefore” and how does it explain his encouragement to “stand firm?” (v. 1)
2. Euodia and Syntyche are two women who might have belonged to the original group of converts in Philippi. Apparently, a personal rift has developed between these two women and it is impacting the fellowship of the church. What does Paul ask his “true companion” to do for these women and why? (vv. 2-3)
3. What does Paul enthusiastically urge the Christians in this key city to do? (vs. 4) Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Why would Paul make this request?
4. Philippians 4:6-7 are often quoted but rarely accomplished. What does Paul teach the Philippians and do you think of his words as a worthy goal or as a spiritual possibility?
5. What does Paul tell the Philippians to “think about?” (v. 8) What would you need to do if you wanted to accomplish this in today's culture?

6. Read 2 Corinthians 10:5. How can we discipline our thoughts and therefore our focus?

7. What is necessary if we are to have the peace of God in our lives? (v. 9)

8. Why is Paul able to be content, even though imprisoned in Rome? (vv. 10-13) What hinders us from making contentment a spiritual goal in our lives today?

9. How has the church in Philippi been a blessing to Paul and what does Paul say will be their blessing? (14-20)

10. Paul encourages the church to value joy, peace, purity and contentment as key to having a strong Christian witness. If you were to examine your witness in the world, what changes would Paul most emphasize to you? Who, besides yourself, would be most impacted or benefitted by those changes?

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
Matthew 5:16*

Lesson 6

Rest stops required

Hebrews 4

The book of Hebrews was probably written shortly before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, which occurred in 70 AD. The author of the book is unknown, although theologians believe it could have been Barnabas or Apollos. It is clear the Jewish recipients of the letter knew the author and the author was well informed about the needs of the early Christians. The lives of first century Jews were dramatically changed when they chose to follow Christ. Many of the first generation Christians were aging or dying by the time Hebrews was written. There was a movement in the Church, especially when Jerusalem was in peril, to return to their Jewish faith and support their families, friends and nation. The letter of Hebrews was written to encourage the Jewish Christians to remain true to their faith and the gospel message. The book of Hebrews teaches that spiritual rest was the result of a right relationship with God, through salvation in Christ and the leadership of his Holy Spirit.

1. Hebrews, chapter four, begins with the word “therefore.” Look back at Chapter 3, verses 8-11. Why was God angry with the ancient ancestors of these early Christians and what was their consequence? Read 3:19 then 4:1. What is the sin the writer of Hebrews wants to warn the early Christians about?
2. The author of Hebrews contrasts the example of the Jewish ancestors who were not allowed to enter the Promised Land, to the Jewish people of that day. What is the new promise from God and who will receive it? (vv. 2-3)
3. Read Genesis 2:1-2. We often focus on the fact that God established a day of rest, but when did God “rest” and why was the rest possible? Remembering the purpose of the book of Hebrews was to convince the Jewish people to remain true to Christ, how does the Genesis passage apply to Hebrews 4:4-5?
4. “Therefore” what is the importance of “today?” (vv. 6-7)
5. “Today” refers to the word found in a Psalm of David from Chapter 3. David lived many generations after Joshua led the people into the Promised Land. What is the point the writer of Hebrews makes to the people of his day? (v. 8)

6. From verses 9 and 10, what is the “Sabbath rest” for a Christian?

7. What is the only “work” necessary for a Christian to find “rest?” (v. 11)

8. Hebrews 4:1-11 is an example of common Rabbinic teaching that marries one passage of Scripture to another to explain a spiritual truth. The writer of Hebrews emphasized that God rested when his work had been accomplished. The ancient wanderers were not able to enter God’s rest because they lacked faith in his ability to protect them in the Promised Land. Christians need only trust the sacrificial work of Christ to experience God’s rest. Why is it so difficult to continually “enter” the rest that God has provided us?

9. God’s word was truth in Genesis, in David’s psalm, and is still truth for people today. The author of Hebrews describes God’s word as a double-edged sword. The double-edged sword was the weapon used by Romans in hand to hand combat. Why is that a perfect analogy for the word of God, in the New Covenant era? (vv. 12-13)

10. What is the challenge and admonition to those early Jewish Christians so that they would continue to enjoy the “rest” God had provided? (vv. 14-16)

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Isaiah 26:3

Lesson 7

When redirection is needed

Jeremiah 31

Reread the introduction to Lesson 4 as a reminder of why the prophet Jeremiah was called to preach to the nation of Judah and Jerusalem. Jeremiah told the people to establish homes and lives because they would be held in captivity for 70 years. Chapters 30 and 31 are the prophet's message to the people about the eventual restoration of Israel. Jeremiah said, "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their ancestors to possess," says the Lord" (30:3). Jeremiah preached about the judgment the people would experience but also offered the hope of a new direction they would be offered. But not everyone experienced the restoration. God was going to establish a new covenant with his people, but not all would be willing to follow that new direction.

1. The phrase "At that time" refers to the restoration of Israel after the people are released from captivity. What does the Lord declare and promise to the Hebrew captives? (vv. 1-2)
2. Read Hebrews 4:9-10. The author redefines the Sabbath-rest. How does God ultimately fulfill his word to Israel in Jeremiah 31, verse 2?
3. Consider John 3:16. What do Jesus and Jeremiah want the people to understand about the love of God for his people? (v. 3)
4. Because of God's great love, what does He promise to do for Israel? Amos was a prophet to the ten northern tribes of Israel. That nation was taken captive and would never again be established. Read Amos 5:2. Why would Jeremiah refer to Israel as a "virgin" and ultimately, how does God fulfill his promise in Jeremiah 31:4?
5. What hope is offered to the exiles in verses 5 and 6?

6. The concept of “home” is used throughout Scripture to describe a place of peace, comfort, safety and the place where God’s people belong. Jeremiah offers the exiles the hope of going home, back to God’s Promised Land. Jesus promised his disciples that He would prepare a place for them in heaven (John 14:2). Read Philippians 3:20-21. Where will Christians be “home” and how should that knowledge redirect our hopes and our priorities today?

7. Describe the Remnant of Israel and their journey back home? (vv. 7-9)

8. Why should the exiles be confident about their future hope? What place would faith have in that confidence? (vv. 10-11)

9. Why can the Remnant look forward to redemption and what will their redemption look like for the exiles? (vv. 12-25)

10. What will redemption look like for God’s people in the future? (vv. 26-34)

11. Read verses 35-40 then read Revelation 21:1-5? How were these verses a promise to the Remnant of Israel and a promise to the Remnant today?

Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you. Isaiah 54:10

Lesson 8

Gratitude for your guide

Colossians 3

Colossae had been a leading city at one point but by the first century it was more of a market village, providing for the needs of its residents. Many theologians credit Epaphras, an early convert through Paul's ministry, for the establishment of the Christian church in Colossae. The letter to the Colossians was likely written while Paul was imprisoned in Rome, after Epaphras had come to visit. The purpose of Colossians was to address the heresy that had become popular teaching in the church. Paul's letter does that by exalting Christ as the very image of God, deity in bodily form. Paul teaches that the goal of every Christian is to allow Christ to be the guide and therefore enable us to turn away from anything which opposes God's truth. A bank employee is taught to carefully learn what an authentic bill looks like so that any counterfeit bill is recognizable. Paul taught the Christians in Colossae a similar lesson.

1. The New Testament Christian believed the heart to be the center for all spiritual, moral and physical motivation. Why should Christians focus on Christ? (vv. 1-3)
2. Read Psalm 27:5-6 and Isaiah 49:2. What did Paul mean by the phrase "hidden with Christ in God?" (v. 3)
3. How does a person enter heaven? (v. 4)
4. How should we handle the weakness of our old or human nature? (vv. 5-8)
5. Verse 9 begins, in the original Greek, with the phrase "stop lying to each other." Why is acting like our old self a lie and how do we live truthfully? (vv. 9-10)
6. Paul describes putting on the new self as if one is literally putting on a new set of clothes. The new self is an outward sign that internal transformation has occurred. How do we continue to manifest our salvation to others? (v. 10)

7. How do people tend to “judge” or evaluate other people if the new self is not apparent, or not what people are focused upon? (v. 11)

8. What should be the foundation of our self-esteem and the reason we should esteem others? (v. 12a)

9. Describe a powerful, Christ-produced Christian witness. (vv. 12b-14)

10. Why should a Christian be peaceful? (v. 15)

11. Why is the message of Christ and the motivation of Christ crucial? (vv. 16-17)

12. Who is impacted by our Christ-produced witness? (vv. 18-25)

For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness" made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Lesson 9

Our travel plans can change

Matthew 1 & 2

Matthew was a tax-collector who left his work to become a disciple of Christ. Matthew wrote his gospel to his Jewish brethren hoping to explain and convince them of the fact that Jesus Christ was their long-awaited Messiah. It had been 400 years since God had given them a prophet and the nation of Israel struggled under the control and demands of Rome. The gospel of Matthew opens with a lengthy genealogy proving that Jesus was a descendant of David, something that was necessary if He were to be the Messiah. Much of the gospel points to the Jewish prophecies that were fulfilled in the life of Christ. But Christ was not the ruler/king that the Jewish people had expected. God's plan was for the salvation of *all people* and that thought was contrary to what most Jews believed. God's Messiah would usher in the New Covenant between the Creator and his creation. Only those who were willing to accept the changes would be able to accept their Messiah.

1. A young Jewish girl was betrothed to a man when she reached puberty. They were usually married a year later. During that year the young woman was to learn all that was required of her to be a good wife and eventually a good mother. What does Matthew want his Jewish readers to know about the conception of Christ? (v. 1:18)

2. What do the Jewish readers learn about Joseph? (v. 1:19)

3. Why did Joseph change his mind and choose to accept Mary as his wife? (v. 1:20)

4. According to Matthew, why was the story about the conception of Christ important for the Jewish person to understand and accept? (vv. 1:22-23)

5. Matthew is the only gospel to include the story of the Magi, a title for "wise men." While Matthew explains the men came from the East, he is not specific about a city or country. It is likely that Matthew was referring to Persia because of the Messianic prophecy of Daniel linking the existence of Jewish "wise men" to that region (Daniel 2:12-13). Why had the Magi traveled to Bethlehem? (vv. 2:1-2)

6. Who did King Herod consult with after the Magi's visit? (2:3-6) What do these verses suggest about the Jewish leaders' interest in the possibility of Jesus as their Messiah?

7. What other information does Herod want to know from the Magi and what information does he give them? (vv. 2:7-8)

8. How do the Magi complete their pilgrimage? What does Matthew want his Jewish readers to understand about the Magi's belief about the child in Bethlehem and God's involvement in the protection of Jesus? (vv. 2:9-12)

9. How did God preserve the Messiah for the nation Israel? Why is Jeremiah mentioned? (vv. 2:13-18)

10. Why was Jesus raised in Nazareth, and again, why does Matthew include this information in his gospel? (vv.2:19-23)

11. People still struggle to accept the miraculous events that surround the Christmas story. What information will you include in your "gospel" account if someone asks or if you want to help someone trust that Jesus is their Messiah?

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26

Lesson 10

For those who hope in the Lord

Psalm 33

Sanctification is the process by which a person becomes holy, more like God. The apostle Peter was quoting the Old Testament when he wrote, “But just as he who calls you is holy, be holy in all you do; for it is written: be holy, because I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16). Holiness has been God’s goal for mankind from the moment Adam and Eve left the Garden. The process of sanctification begins at salvation and is completed the moment we step into Eternity. Each day is an opportunity to grow spiritually and strengthen our love for God and others. Praise is a good place to begin. We will want to be more like God, when we remember the greatness of God. Psalm 33 is a song of praise for who God is, what God can do and why we can live each day with great hope in God’s perfect purpose for our world.

1. The Psalmist begins with a call to praise. Read verses 1-3. Who offers praise to God and how should that praise be given?
2. What does verse 3 say about the “effort” we should make when we offer our praise?
3. What are the fundamental beliefs necessary for our sanctification? (vv. 4-5)
4. What is the Psalmist’s first thought about the unique greatness of God? (vv. 6-9)
5. Consider our scientific culture. How should this Psalm impact our personal faith and witness for God today?
6. A psalm is a song of praise. A psalm should be read and studied with the knowledge that the words speak truth about what God is able to do. The words are not intended to be read as promises of what God *will do*. Instead, they are words of hope for what God is *able to do* or praise for what *God has done*. Read verses 10 and 11. How can we know that these verses are intended to be praise, rather than words of promise?

7. When is a nation, or a person, able to be blessed by God? (v. 12)

8. Why is God's blessing, as well as God's discipline and punishment, always an act of perfection? (vv. 13-15)

9. What do human beings tend to trust rather than God? (vv. 16-17)

10. Why is it insufficient to place our hope in the things of this world? (vv. 18-19)

11. The Psalm ends with the people's response to the praise that has been offered. What is the spiritual impact that praising God should have on our lives? (vv. 20-22)

For sanctification: Praise God throughout the day for what he has done and what he is doing. Trust his greatness and place your hope in his perfect love and will for the future.

*No one is like you, Lord; you are great, and your name is mighty in power.
Jeremiah 10:6*

Lesson 11

For those who serve with love

Romans 12

The book of Romans is Paul's doctrinal dissertation for the church in Rome. The book presents God's New Covenant plan of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles. One of the major themes of the book is the sanctification of those who have received salvation through Christ. Roman 12 is Paul's description of the righteousness of God, seen in those who are submitted to his sanctification process. A woman once asked her pastor, "What does it mean to be consecrated to God?" The pastor handed her a blank sheet of paper and asked her to sign her name at the bottom. When she had done that he said, "Now, allow God to fill in the rest." Sanctification requires us to be the King's servants, not because we are held captive, but because we have chosen to be held.

1. Dr. Seuss wrote, "Why fit in when you were born to stand out?" Paul begins the twelfth chapter of Romans with a perfect description of what is necessary to live a consecrated, sanctified life. What does Paul say we should know and do, if we want our witness to "stand out" for God? (vv. 1-2)
2. What will hinder and help the process of sanctification? (v. 3)
3. Why does God allow us to be very different, yet righteous? (vv. 4-8)
4. Look again at Romans 12:2 and consider the many gifts God gives. How can you be confident you are serving God's Kingdom purpose for your life?
5. Read Luke 10:27 then Romans 12:9-10. Combine those verses into a single statement about the importance of love, to the life and witness of a Christian.
6. What does verse 11 say about our priorities? What helps you to remain "fervent" about serving God?

7. Paul gives us a long “to-do” list for our Christian witness. His list provides direction for our witness but it is also direction for our own sanctification. List what Paul says a Christian should “do” so that we can receive blessing and be a blessing to others:

Verse 12:

Verse 13:

Verse 14:

Verse 15:

Verse 16:

Verse 17:

Verse 18:

Verse 19:

Verse 20:

Verse 21:

For sanctification: Look back at the list above and place a (+) over your strengths. Thank God for blessing you with his gifts and abilities. The rest of the list describes those areas of your life that need to be taken to the altar, and purified. Allow God to use the words of Romans 12 to “transform” you and, as a result, your life and witness.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45

Lesson 12

For those who believe in Jesus

John 14

The gospel of John is different from the other three in many ways. John wrote his gospel to a mostly Gentile audience. The apostle wanted his readers to understand the events in the life of Jesus, but was more concerned that his readers understood the deity of Christ and the need to place their faith in him as Messiah. The theme of the book is found in John 3:16 but the apostle makes it very clear why he wrote about the life of Jesus. John said, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31). Those who are being sanctified are those who have trusted Christ as their Savior. Only those who have believed in Jesus, have entered the process of being made holy.

1. Chapter 14 is considered the final teaching of Christ, in the Upper Room, before leaving for the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus knows his disciples are troubled. What comfort does Jesus offer? (vv. 1-4)
2. What might his disciples have preferred him to say? How does the encouragement Jesus offered help us know how to find comfort and how to offer comfort to others?
3. Thomas is often labeled as the disciple who “doubted.” Many theologians believe that he was the disciple who was brave enough to speak what the rest were only thinking. It is possible that Thomas was speaking for the others in verse 5. What does he want Jesus to explain?
4. How does Jesus answer Thomas’ question? (vv. 6-7)
5. How does this verse speak to the person who believes that Jesus is “one way” instead of “the way?” Is there a verse in Scripture that offers another way to heaven?
What does Philip ask of Jesus and how does he respond? (vv. 8-9)
6. How do verses 10 and 11 reveal Jesus to be fully God *and* fully man?

7. List some of the “works” that these men had seen Jesus accomplish. Then read verses 12-14. Why and when will those disciples, and disciples today, be able to accomplish great works?
8. What is always God’s highest priority for our “great works?” (v. 13)
9. John 14:15-21 is the description Jesus gave of the Holy Spirit and his work in the life of a believer. Who is the Holy Spirit and why is he responsible for the process of sanctification in your life?
10. How can you be discerning about your “love” for the Lord? (vv. 23-24)
11. What is the final encouragement Jesus gives to his disciples? How might his words have strengthened his own soul for his journey to the cross? (vv. 25-31)

For Sanctification: Who do you know struggling to believe Jesus is the *only* way to live eternally? Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to accomplish his “great works” through your life. Love Jesus and enjoy his presence and power in your life through his Holy Spirit. Allow that love to motivate your obedience and strengthen your soul.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13

Lesson 13

For those who think like Jesus

1 Corinthians 2

Corinth was a crossroads of commerce and trade. Visitors found an abundant market as well as temples to Greek gods and brothels. The city was a strategic center of politics and philosophy as well. Corinth was universally known for its rampant immorality. Paul spent almost two years in the city, working as a tentmaker and preaching the gospel of Christ. When he left to continue his mission work, others began preaching a message that was more inclusive of the cultural beliefs. As a result, the young church began to listen to false teaching, accept immoral behavior and the gospel message was threatened. Paul wrote his letter to correct the mistakes and to call the church to return to a right relationship with God.

1. Paul's letter to the Corinthians called for the church to unite under the true preaching of the Gospel. Corinth was a city filled with eloquent speakers, but Paul warned the church to listen only to godly leaders who preached truth through the power of the Holy Spirit. How does Paul describe his own preaching to the Corinthians? (vv. 1-5)
2. According to Paul, what standards should we use for our spiritual leaders?
3. Describe the "message" that Paul brought to the Church? (vv. 6-7) Who is able to discern the message as wisdom?
4. In verse 8 Paul talks about the "rulers." He is referring to the Jewish leaders of that day. He then references Old Testament prophecy, probably Isaiah. Why didn't the Jewish leadership understand the mystery of the Gospel message? Why should they have understood? (vv. 8-10)
5. Why are you able to understand God's word? (v. 10)
6. Look carefully at the verbs in verse 10. How should verses 10 and 11 impact the way we study Scripture? Pray? Worship? Teach or preach? Witness?

7. How is the Holy Spirit different from any other spirit? (v. 12)

8. What is crucial if we want to grow and mature in our knowledge of God? (v. 13)

9. Apply verses 12 and 13 to your personal efforts to share your faith with others. What is an effective witness?

10. Why is it difficult to convince people that Jesus is Lord and that the Bible is God's word of truth? (v. 14)

11. Verses 15 and 16 describe the spiritual discernment available to every Christian. According to Paul, what capability does the Holy Spirit provide to the believer?

For Sanctification: Review Romans 12:1-2. Spiritual understanding is a revelation of God through his Holy Spirit. What is necessary if we want to think like Jesus?

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:9-11

Lesson 14

For those who listen to Jesus

2 Corinthians 10

Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth did not stop the problems in the church. He was in Ephesus when he received word that false teachers continued to speak to the church, impugning Paul's character and authority. Paul chose to make a quick trip to Corinth, which did not go well. He continued to write to this congregation, hoping to convince them of the importance of unity and faithfulness to the Gospel. He urged them to continue sanctification by listening to and walking in the message of Christ.

1. Paul had been accused of being "timid" when he was physically present in Corinth, but then bold with his accusations in his letters. What does Paul attribute his apparent "weakness" to? What can the church expect from him in the future, and why? (vv. 1-2)
2. How does Paul "wage war" against the false teaching in the church? (vv. 3-4)
3. Read Ephesians 6:11-17. Why is it important to take a stand if the integrity of the Gospel is threatened or if God's servant is being impugned?
4. When is the battle finished? (vv. 5-6)
5. Look again at verse 6. Why is Paul, a man who knew the value and blessing of grace, ready and willing to "wage war?"
6. Read 1 Peter 5:8-9. Why should the church always be ready to "wage war" against those things which stand against the knowledge of God?

7. One of the accusations made against Paul was that he was not a true apostle, and his authority was questionable. Why is Paul confident about his authority to teach this congregation? (vv. 7-8)

8. What does Paul want the church to understand about his words, whether they are spoken in person, or written in a letter? (vv. 9-11)

9. Reread verse 5. Why can Paul ask them to trust his consistency?

10. Paul's words of defense are also a warning about the false teachers in the church. Why should the church refuse to listen to their accusations? (v. 12)

11. Why is Paul able to "boast" about the effectiveness of his ministry? (vv. 13-14)

12. When are Christians able to "boast" about their church or ministry? (vv. 15-18)

For Sanctification: Just as Paul taught that sin should be "demolished" in the church, so should it be demolished in the Church, the body of Christ. Satan will always attack and ask us to accept ideas about God or his word that "stand against the knowledge of Christ" and therefore hinder people from accepting the truth of the Gospel message. Pray, study and come to agreement with the direction of God's Spirit through his word.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. John 16:13

Lesson 15

For those who choose godliness

1 Timothy 6

Paul called Timothy his “true son in the faith.” Timothy joined Paul on his second missionary journey and accompanied him for most of the years of his ministry. When Paul left for his fourth journey, he left Timothy behind to continue the preaching ministry in Ephesus, a growing, strategic congregation. The letter of 1 Timothy is written to his protégé, but it is also written to the church. God’s people are often the first introduction the world receives to the Gospel. Paul wanted Timothy and those in the church to lead godly lives and thereby preach the Gospel to those they met.

1. About half the population in the Roman Empire in the first century were slaves. Both slaves and slave owners were coming to faith in Christ. This passage is not *prescribing* slavery, it is *describing* a situation that existed in the culture. The book of Philemon addresses this subject as well. Paul’s words are important today because in every society there are Christians in positions of power and authority, and those who are not. What is the shared priority for all Christians, as seen in verses 1 and 2?
2. Verses 3-5 could be written to every Christian congregation, in every culture, at any time. These verses are a list of the sins of the human nature and how they can infect or weaken a congregation. What issues were the “problem people” bringing into the church?
3. What is Paul’s answer to the problems? (vv. 6-7)
4. What motivates so much of the sin in our lives and in our churches? (vv. 8-10)
5. It is important to keep a close watch on our personal goals and be careful with the goals we set for our children. How is “godliness with contentment” possible for the slave and the master?

6. What is the Christian called to pursue in this life? (vv. 11-12)

7. Describe the “good fight.” When is it over? (vv. 13-14)

8. What is God’s unique role in the second coming of Christ? (vv. 15-16)

9. What is the best use of our time while here on earth? Why? (vv. 17-19)

10. Who has God entrusted you to disciple? How do Paul’s closing words to Timothy instruct you? (vv. 20-21)

For Sanctification: Consider your life, not compared to the culture, but compared to the standards that Paul has described. What do you tend to “pursue?” Do words like “content” and “godly” fit your patterns and goals?

I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

Lesson 16

For those who refuse evil and accept grace

Romans 7 & 8

Rome may have had as many as five or six Christian churches in the city. While the church was predominantly Gentile, many Jewish Christians were members as well. The Jewish Christians were not inclined to give up many of their life-long customs. The holidays, dietary restrictions and other customs were a part of their culture as well as their religion. One of the major themes in the book of Romans was the New Covenant grace provided through Christ. That grace meant that strict obedience to the Old Covenant Law was no longer the requirement for righteousness. But that grace was not permission for sin. Paul taught the path to righteousness and blessing was the result of living each day in the power and guidance of God's Holy Spirit.

1. How long does a "law" have authority in a person's life? How did the New Covenant alter God's plan for righteousness? (vv. 7:1-6)
2. Why should the Law, the Torah, remain important knowledge? Why should obedience to the Law no longer be considered the path to heaven? (vv. 7:7-14)
3. How does Paul describe our human, or sin nature? How does his description reveal the purpose of the New Covenant? (vv. 7:14-20)
4. Paul had given his life to the study of God's word, and then to the Gospel mission of Christ. What does Paul say about his personal struggle for righteousness and why should each of us expect to experience that struggle as well? (vv. 7:21-25)
5. One of the earliest struggles in the early church related to the heretical teaching of the Gnostics. Gnosticism taught the mind was separate from the body, therefore it was possible to be right with God through your thinking. The Gnostics taught that what a person did with their body was irrelevant because of grace. How is that heresy still seen in the church and our culture today?
6. What is the righteous requirement of the Law? How is that requirement fulfilled today? (vv. 8:1-4)

7. How is our mind “governed” by God’s Holy Spirit? What is the result? (vv. 8:5-8)

8. What is the essential Christian doctrine Paul is teaching in verse 9?

9. What is our daily assurance of our eternal life in heaven? (vv. 8:10-11)

10. What is our Christian obligation? (vv. 8:12-13)

11. What is the testimony of the Holy Spirit? (vv. 8:14-17)

12. Why can Christians live with hope? (vv. 8:18-30)

13. Why should Christians see themselves as conquerors, or overcomers? (vv. 8:31-39)

For Sanctification: We all have weaknesses and sins we tend to repeat. Make a list of the things that are separating you from the blessings of God. Pray, repent and allow God to redeem even those things for his greater good.

*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out,
that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. Acts 3:19*

Lesson 17

For those who refuse to compromise the truth

Daniel 1

The New Covenant provides salvation to God's people but the Old Covenant still describes what salvation should look like in our lives. Daniel was among the first captives taken by King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. Daniel's character and intelligence were noticed by the king and he quickly rose to a position of favor and influence. Daniel's life is a testimony to the blessings found in a life that is devoted to God. The theme of the book of Daniel is the sovereignty of the Most High God. Daniel refused to compromise his faith in God's word, regardless of the cost, and as a result, was greatly blessed.

1. What happened during the siege of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. (vv. 1-2)
2. Describe the young men that were the first captives. Why were they taken? (vv. 3-5)
3. What was involved in the assimilation training for these young men? Why did Daniel not agree to accept their training? (vv. 5-10)
4. Read James 1:2-4. The blessing of God does not mean the absence of trials. What is the point of obedience to God's word, even if it means personal hardship for ourselves or others?
5. Describe the "deal" Daniel works out with the guard? What risk are both he and the guard assuming? (vv. 11-14)
6. Why should Daniel's choice not be considered a decision to test God, but instead a choice to obey God?

7. What was the result of Daniel's dietary choice? What impact did the choice have on his relationship to the guard, and eventually the king? (vv. 15-16)

8. Read Romans 14:13-21. What is the New Covenant obedience to God's dietary laws? How does our obedience impact those around us?

9. Look again at Daniel chapter 1. From verse 17, how did God bless Daniel's obedience?

10. How did Daniel's obedience impact his future? Why is obedience to God important for each day of our lives? (vv. 18-21)

11. Read Galatians 1:6-10. What does Paul say about the importance of maintaining our faithful obedience to God's word?

For Sanctification: Allow the Lord to bring up any area of spiritual compromise in your life. Allow Daniel and Paul to be more than an example; allow their words to lead. Is there a step towards God the Holy Spirit is urging you to take?

When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. Proverbs 16:7

Lesson 18

The ultimate destination: heaven

2 Corinthians 4 and 5

The church in Corinth struggled to live in a decadent culture and not allow the standards of the culture to become the standards of the church. Paul spent a lot of time talking to the Corinthians about the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. In chapters 4 and 5 Paul talks about the paradox of our temporal human bodies and the eternal nature of everything heavenly. Paul's perspective is still crucial for the believer today. Our earthly blessing will result from a focus on the "matters that matter most."

1. What are the spiritual responsibilities of a Christian? What are we *not* responsible for? (2 Cor. 4:1-6)
2. Why do Christians suffer the same struggles, illnesses and aging as non-Christians? How do these verses help explain why God allows bad things to happen to good people? (2 Cor. 4:7-12)
3. Read Genesis 3:21-24. Why do we live in "jars of clay?" What is the treasure stored inside? (vv. 13-14)
4. How can our steadfast faith impact the world? (v. 15)
5. What does our steadfast faith produce in our own lives? (vv. 16-18)
6. How is aging a blessing in our lives? (vv. 5:1-5)
7. What important perspective does Paul provide in verses 6-8? What makes that perspective difficult for our American culture?

Lesson 19

Who is blessed?

Matthew 5:1-12

The Sermon on the Mount has been called King Jesus' inaugural address. The theme of this sermon is the Kingdom of God. In Matthew, Chapters 5-7, Jesus explains God's new covenant expectations for those who want to serve the King. The Beatitudes, Matthew 5:1-12, are not presented as a new "Law" requiring obedience, but instead are given so that our lives might demonstrate *obedience* to God's laws. The Sermon on the Mount stresses character, rather than works. Jesus taught that perfection is not found in leading a sinless life, but by allowing our lives to be controlled by God's Holy Spirit.

1. Jesus preached his "Sermon on the Mount" at the beginning of his second year of public ministry. By this time, Jesus had developed a strong reputation in the region of Galilee and the Jewish people had a developing interest in him as the One who would be their Messiah. Many came wanting to know more *about* Jesus, but Jesus preached knowing they would soon need to make a greater commitment to him as their Messiah. What did Jesus do that alerted the crowd it was time for them to listen? (vv. 5:1-2)
2. The Greek word for "blessed" refers to a person who has been uniquely favored by God and therefore feels abundant joy. As you consider your own life, when have you felt "blessed" in this way?
3. The "poor in spirit" refers to those who understand how much they need God. Why are these people blessed? (v. 3)
4. Verse 4 is often misunderstood. Jesus is referring to those who mourn their sin. Why would that grief result in blessing?
5. The "meek" refers to those who allow God to be in control. How are the meek blessed? (v. 5)
6. Who is filled with the presence of God? (v. 6)

7. Mercy is to be given to those who are guilty and those who have great need. Why should Christians show mercy? (v. 7)

8. “Pure in heart” means internal purity and external piety. Why are the pure in heart blessed? (v. 8)

9. Isaiah said the Messiah would be called “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6-7). Ultimately, a peacemaker would be the person who helps others find peace with God. What is the blessing given to those who serve God in this way? (v. 9)

10. “Peacemaking” has always led to persecution. What does the Beatitude promise the “persecuted peacemaker?” (v. 10)

11. Verses 11 and 12 explain the probable persecution in verse 10. Why should God’s people expect to be slandered for sharing their faith with non-believers?

Reread each Beatitude. How is your life abundantly blessed and how is it lacking the joy that God intends for you? Has persecution strengthened or limited your desire to evangelize your circle of influence? Then, think about this statement from the introduction: The Beatitudes were “not presented as a new Law requiring obedience, but instead are given so that our lives might demonstrate *obedience* to God’s laws.” Your life is the loudest sermon you will preach. Take some time this week to notice who is “listening” to the message you preach.

Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before.
1 Thessalonians 4:11

Lesson 20

Why does God want to bless you?

Matthew 5:13-20

Jesus preached his “inaugural sermon” to his followers, his disciples. He began his sermon by teaching what it meant to live a life God would be able to bless. Next, Jesus taught them about the power of a life lived in service to the King of Kings. He continues his theme about the Kingdom of God by teaching his disciples about the witness a blessed life would be to others. Jesus begins with the words, “You are.” In the original language the words meant, “You exclusively are” or “only you are.” Jesus wanted his followers to know how a servant of the King was uniquely able to be a blessing to others.

1. Salt was the typical way a person in the first century preserved meat. With that in mind, what is Jesus teaching his followers in verse 13?
2. Consider the ways you serve the Lord with your life. When are you most likely to be “salty?”
3. Read verse 14 from a first century, pre-electricity, point of view. What was Jesus teaching about the life of a disciple?
4. Consider the places you go, the rooms you enter, the situations you serve. Then read verses 15-16. What is the power of the life of a disciple?
5. Consider the small clay vessel filled with oil that was the first century lamp. Why are these verses also a lesson in humility?

6. The original “hearers” of the Sermon on the Mount were Jewish. They had come to listen to Jesus because of his reputation as a teacher and because they believed he might be their promised Messiah. What does Jesus want them to understand about his purpose and his message? (v. 17)

7. When does the Old Testament Scripture become “irrelevant?” Why was this important for the original crowd and for us today? (v. 18) See also Rev. 22:18.

8. Jesus will teach about some of the same topics found in the original Mosaic Law. What does he emphasize to his disciples about the message he is teaching? (v. 19)

9. Read Matthew 23. How does this chapter explain Jesus’ statement in verse 20?

10. Read Titus 3:3-8. Why would a follower of Christ be considered “more righteous” than a Pharisee?

Humans always have, and always will want to “prove” themselves righteous. Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount so that people would understand that God is their King. Why is that relationship with God crucial for anyone who wants to live a righteous, blessed life? Are there areas of your life where you have chosen to “reign in power” yourself? What needs to be done to restore God’s position as King in your life?

Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. 1 Chronicles 29:11

Lesson 21

What hinders his blessing?

Matthew 5:21-6:4

Jesus told the crowd listening to his Sermon on the Mount how to live a life God would be able to bless. He then taught the crowd the impact a blessed life could have on the world. Jesus told the disciples that he had not come to abolish the Law but to “fulfill” the Law and the Prophets. Jesus uses the next portion of his sermon to correct some misunderstandings that had developed concerning obedience to the Law. Jesus wanted his followers to understand God’s intentions in giving the Law. The purpose of the Law was to inform God’s people about righteousness and the godly attitudes and actions that enabled his blessing.

1. The people Jesus was speaking to had come to believe the command, “You shall not murder” meant the taking of a life and the necessary punishment for that crime. Jesus said, “But I tell you” indicating the true intent of the Law. How does Jesus explain the intent of the Law and the higher standard God has for his people? (vv. 5:21-22)
2. The followers had been taught to present an offering at the altar when they needed forgiveness. How does Jesus correct that understanding and raise the standard for his disciples? (vv. 5:23-26)
3. What is God’s definition of sexual purity and how important is that standard to our personal life and the lives of those around us? (vv. 5:27-30)
4. The people of Jesus’ day had come to believe that God allowed a man to simply repeat the phrase, “I divorce you” three times and the marriage could be legally ended. What does Jesus say about divorce so that men would consider it an abuse of God’s will? (vv. 5:31-32)
5. Jesus addresses the misunderstandings that had sprung up among God’s people about the Law. Read Deuteronomy 30:16. Why did God give the Law?

6. Consider Jesus' teaching about murder, adultery, and divorce. How did God intend for his people to treat one another and why should his teaching be a powerful message to his disciples today?

7. Why should we soberly consider our ability to keep a promise, before making it? What does this verse say about good "intentions" and "casual" or irreverent speech? (vv. 5:33-36)

8. What is God's standard for "revenge?" (vv. 5:38-42)

9. Why would He offer this impossible standard? (vv. 5:43-47)

10. Now that Jesus has explained what it truly means to be righteous, He issues an important warning to his disciples. Reread Matthew 5:20. Describe the caution Jesus gives. What is essential to any disciple if they want to receive God's blessing? (vv. 6:1-4)

Think about the various activities that consume your life. Which activities produce God's blessing and which tend to remove it? Jesus preached his Sermon on the Mount to help us "edit" the choices we make to include an activity or the choices we make while involved in that activity. Prayerfully apply his teaching to your life, your calendar and your character.

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

Lesson 22

A sanctified life

Matthew 6:5-34

The Jewish leaders had developed 613 laws to “explain” or expand on the written Law of Moses. In addition, an Oral Law consisting of rabbinic teaching passed down from one generation to the next was also taught as “law.” The Jewish people were expected to know and obey each of these laws and commandments to be considered “righteous.” Jesus said He had not come to abolish the law, but instead his life and his teaching would fulfill that law. Jesus’ teaching would reveal God’s intention for the Law and Jesus’ sacrifice would fulfill the requirements of the Law for all who received him as their Messiah. The Sermon on the Mount continues with Jesus’ explanation of the life that has been sanctified, or made holy.

1. The word “hypocrite” literally meant an actor to Jesus’ first century audience. What is a hypocritical prayer and its Kingdom result? (6:5)
2. Describe the prayer conversation that God wants to have with you? (vv. 6-8)
3. Where and when are you most likely to have these kind of conversations with God?
4. The “fatherhood” of God was not an Old Testament theme. When God is spoken of as a father, it is usually an analogy rather than an address. Jesus was revolutionary in that he taught his disciples to think of God as “Abba.” In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught his followers how to pray. How did Jesus teach his disciples to “approach” God in prayer? (v. 9)
5. What is the “goal” of every prayer we offer? (v. 10)
6. What does Jesus teach us to ask for? (v. 11)
7. There may be a caution in Jesus’ teaching about prayer. Why should we pray about our needs rather than our “greeds?”

8. Jesus taught that we should pray for forgiveness. The word “debt” means “sin.” Why does sin create a debt relationship between a person and God? What attitude makes a prayer for God’s forgiveness genuine? (v. 12)

9. The word deliver in verse 13 can mean either “spare us” or deliver us out of.” What is the other important request we need to make of God? (v. 13)

10. What kind of community does God want for his people, and ask us to pray for? (vv. 14-15)

11. Why should much of our relationship with God and our service to him be experienced in private? (vv. 16-21)

12. What should be the focus of our life if we want God’s sanctification? (vv. 22-24)

13. What do we tend to worry about and what is the solution for worry? (vv. 25-34)

14. Why is worry a natural, but unacceptable part of the Christian life? When we worry, what are we saying about God to ourselves and other people?

Jesus taught his followers to desire God’s sanctification. Use the model prayer to help you pray for your witness, your worries and your relationships with others. Receive God’s response and allow him to sanctify you and enable you to grow in his grace.

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Lesson 23

The highway of holiness

Isaiah 35

Very few people in Scripture “saw” God like Isaiah had envisioned him. The prophet described him as “high and lifted up” and that encounter with the holy God changed his life. Isaiah was called to preach to God’s people and help others know God like he knew him. The prophet knew that God was going to judge the Jewish people for failing to live as they had been commanded. But, the prophet also knew that God would provide a road of redemption that would lead the people out of the desert and back to his land of blessing. Isaiah 35 describes that road, and who will take it. Isaiah wrote about the path the exiles would use to return to the Holy Land, but he also prophesied about the path God would provide one day through the Messiah.

1. The journey “home” occurs in the spring months. How does nature reflect the mood of the people who are returning to the Promised Land? (vv. 1-2)
2. Describe the people on the journey. How does God provide? (vv. 3-4)
3. How are the people transformed? (vv. 5-6a)
4. How is nature transformed? (vv. 6b-7)
5. Reread verses 4-7 as prophecy referring to the coming Messiah. How did Jesus ultimately provide “the way home?”
6. The exiles were returning to Zion, the holy hill of Jerusalem. Israel’s roads were built for holy pilgrimage. The destination was the temple in Jerusalem and the Holy of Holies, or the earthly seat of God. What does Isaiah call the road and why? (v. 8)
7. Read John 14:6. How did Jesus identify the “Way of Holiness?” Who will walk on that road?

8. How will God protect the people on this road? (v. 9)?

9. Describe the moment the exiles return to Zion? (v. 10)

10. Read Revelation 21. Describe our return to “Zion.”

This concludes the study, but not the journey. Each of us has the personal responsibility to walk on the way of *holiness*. That road brings us to those gates of pearl and into the Eternal City. Jesus will return for each of us one day. Until then, our calling is to walk through this life with his guidance, for his glory.

As you reflect on the study, how has his word impacted your journey? What roads have you left to walk on his way of *holiness*? Who have you helped find that road for the first time? The caution for each of us who study God’s word is the caution given by James in his letter to the church. James wrote: “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22). May each of us choose *the best road home*.

“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.” Revelation 22:14