

## **ADVICE FOR SPIRIT-LED LIVING**

(WHAT JESUS' FOLLOWERS SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT DO)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The New Testament contains many instructions about a Spirit-led life. Unfortunately, however, not many people are reading their Bibles today.

Some people seem to think that what the New Testament says is not important, or that it is not applicable. That is sad. My own experience is that when I have ignored any of the instructions in the New Testament, it has come back to haunt me. For that reason, I point to the instructions in the New Testament with the hope that others will avoid some of the mistakes that I have made.

### **HOW I SELECTED THE VERSES FOR THIS STUDY**

First, I read through the New Testament to identify verses that tell people what to do and what not to do. When I came across a verse that fit that category, I underlined it. (I did not restrict myself to the explicit commands and prohibitions, rather I took everything that stated, or implied, what a person should or should not do.) Then, I wrote out each verse on a slip of paper and sorted the slips into various stacks according to topics. After that, I made lists of the verses under each of the topics. Bruce Gilstrap, my grandson-in-law, put the verses on to a computer for me. I want to thank my wife's cousin, Harold Higginbottom, for providing me with a reliable computer.

Whenever I have had an opportunity to lead a discussion in a home

Bible study, I have used one of these topics as the basis for the discussion. Just in case anyone should like to use these topics as a basis for Bible study, he will find thought questions at the end of each topic.

Here is a table that shows how many instructions I found in each of the books of the New Testament.

THE NUMBER OF INSTRUCTIONS IN EACH OF THE BOOKS OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT

|                 | THINGS<br>TO<br>DO | THINGS<br>NOT<br>TO DO | TOTAL        |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Matthew         | 58                 | 32                     | 90           |
| Mark            | 28                 | 5                      | 33           |
| Luke            | 64                 | 29                     | 93           |
| John            | 70                 | 10                     | 80           |
| Acts            | 23                 | 1                      | 24           |
| Romans          | 68                 | 35                     | 103          |
| 1 Corinthians   | 97                 | 52                     | 148          |
| 2 Corinthians   | 17                 | 6                      | 23           |
| Galatians       | 20                 | 8                      | 28           |
| Ephesians       | 67                 | 29                     | 96           |
| Philippians     | 61                 | 11                     | 72           |
| Colossians      | 52                 | 24                     | 76           |
| 1 Thessalonians | 37                 | 7                      | 44           |
| 2 Thessalonians | 11                 | 6                      | 17           |
| 1 Timothy       | 99                 | 22                     | 121          |
| 2 Timothy       | 48                 | 3                      | 51           |
| Titus           | 61                 | 11                     | 72           |
| Philemon        | --                 | --                     | ---          |
| Hebrews         | 65                 | 12                     | 77           |
| James           | 53                 | 19                     | 72           |
| 1 Peter         | 97                 | 14                     | 111          |
| 2 Peter         | 23                 | 5                      | 28           |
| 1 John          | 41                 | 13                     | 54           |
| 2 John          | 4                  | 1                      | 5            |
| 3 John          | 3                  | 1                      | 4            |
| Jude            | 11                 | --                     | 11           |
| Revelation      | 41                 | 4                      | 45           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>    | <b>1,219</b>       | <b>360</b>             | <b>1,579</b> |

## **OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE TABLE**

As I went through the New Testament, I found that a person is instructed to do something (or not to do something) 1,579 times. This is not to imply that there are 1,579 different things in the New Testament that a person is told to do (or not to do), for some of the instructions are repeated. Although I generally tried not to list a verse under more than one topic, I did list a few of them more than once where it seemed appropriate.

Rather than compiling an exhaustive list of all of the verses related to any specific topic, I was more interested in presenting a representative sampling of the instructions in the New Testament. I wanted to show how full and how varied the instructions in the New Testament are, in hope that people would take the New Testament to hand and find for themselves God's directions. The topics that do appear here were chosen at random. The fact that a certain topic appears in the list that follows does not mean that it is more important than other topics that do not appear.

The reader will notice in the preceding chart that the largest number of instructions in any single book of the New Testament is contained in the book of 1 Corinthians, where I found 148 of them. I was not surprised to find such a large number of instructions in 1 Corinthians, because I realized that it was written to correct some of the many mistakes that the Corinthian Christians were making.

I found the second largest number of instructions in 1 Timothy, where I found 121 of them. The large number of instructions in 1 Timothy did not surprise me either, because in it the apostle Paul gave instructions to young Timothy as to how he should conduct himself.

I was surprised, however, to find that almost a third of the instructions in the New Testament deal with personal relationships. This indicates how important it is for Christians to treat others properly. The largest number of instructions dealing with personal relationships is found in 1 Peter, where there are at least 52 of them. Indeed, almost half of the instructions in First Peter are about personal relationships. The book of Ephesians contains the second largest number of instructions concerning personal relationships, with 50 of them.

I was gratified to find that there are more instructions telling people what to do than there are telling people what not to do. The proportion of positive commands to negative prohibitions is about 77.2 % to 22.8%, which means that the New Testament contains over twice as many positive commands as negative prohibitions. This fact ought to put to rest any

presupposition that the New Testament is primarily a negative book and that living by it promotes a negative attitude toward life.

I have not included in these pages any the instructions to specific individuals in the first century, which were intended for those individuals only. For example, I did not include Paul's request of Philemon to take back his slave Onesimus, who had run away. Nor did I include Paul's request of Timothy to bring the coat that he (Paul) had left at Troas.

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## **ANGRY, DON'T BE !**

### **DON'T BE ANGRY WITH YOUR BROTHER.**

It is especially bad if we get angry with people for no good cause. Unless we are forgiven, God will ask us in the judgment whether or not our anger was justified. Jesus said, **"But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment"** (Matthew 5:22).

### **DON'T LET THERE BE OUTBURSTS OF ANGER.**

The apostle Paul was planning to pay a visit to the church at Corinth, but due to the fact that there was a lot of controversy in the church in Corinth, he was apprehensive lest there be angry outbursts when he got there. So he wrote, **"I am afraid that when I come...there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder"** (2 Corinthians 12:20).

### **DON'T SIN WHEN YOU GET ANGRY.**

Nearly everyone gets angry at some time or another, and it is difficult not to sin when we get angry. We should, therefore, take our anger as a warning to be careful, for when we are angry we are in danger of doing something, or saying something, that we will later regret. The apostle Paul knew all about the problem of anger. He may have struggled with it himself. In his letter to the brethren in the city of Ephesus he quoted a well-known phrase from Psalms 4:4. The phrase may have meant a lot to him personally. It says, **"In your anger do not sin."**

The apostle Paul added to this admonition that we should try to recover from our anger as quickly as possible. He said, **"Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry"** (Ephesians 4:26). We should try to get over our anger before the sun goes down.

### **GET RID OF ANGER.**

There must be something we can do to get rid of anger, otherwise the apostle Paul would not have said, **“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice”** (Ephesians 4:31). Take notice of the bad company that anger keeps. It is associated with rage, brawling, and so forth. With God’s help, we can get rid such things. We can take them out of our lives if we desire to do so.

The apostle Paul wrote similarly to the Colossians. He said, **“But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips”** (Colossians 3:8).

### **MEN, PRAY WITHOUT ANGER OR DISPUTING.**

It does not look good when the men who stand up before the assembly of the church to pray are men who loose their temper easily and quickly. It does not look good to the congregation or to God. To Timothy the apostle Paul wrote, **“I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing”** (1 Timothy 2:8).

### **BE SLOW TO GET ANGRY.**

Some people get angry very quickly. God, however, wants us to be even tempered. James gave this advice: **“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires”** (James 1:19-20).

It is wrong for us to get angry and act like the devil. When we attempt to accomplish good things by using the devil’s methods, we usually end up causing more harm than good.

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Will God judge us if we get angry with our brother for no good reason?  
See Matthew 5:22.
2. Is it all right for members of the church to get angry with each other and to have bitter quarrels among themselves? If not, why not? See 2 Corinthians 12:20.
3. Is it acceptable for there to be outbursts of anger in the assembly of the



church?

4. What can we do to avoid saying something hurtful to others when we get angry?
5. How can we avoid doing harm to others when we get angry?
6. What can we do to get over our anger quickly?
7. Does it look bad when angry men get up to pray before the assembly?  
See 1 Timothy 2:8.
8. What practical steps can we take to become slow to anger?

## **AFRAID, DON'T BE**

The New Testament teaches that a person ought to fear God and no one else.

### **DON'T BE AFRAID OF WHAT PEOPLE SAY.**

Jesus warned His followers that people would say bad things about them, but He told them not to be afraid. He said, **“A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household! So do not be afraid of them”** (Matthew 10:24-26).

### **FEAR GOD.**

God is the only one whom a person should fear, because He is the only one who can cast a person into hell. Jesus said, **“Don't be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell”** (Matthew 10:28). Similar words are found in Luke 12:4-5.

### **DON'T BE AFRAID.**

God is looking after His children. Jesus said, **“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all**

**numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows"** (Matthew 10:29-31). Similar words are to be found in Luke 12:6-7.

### **DON'T BE AFRAID, LITTLE FLOCK.**

The followers of Jesus should not be afraid, because God will not only look out for them but will also give them the kingdom. Jesus said, **"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom"** (Luke 12:32).

### **DON'T LET YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED.**

Jesus makes it possible for a person to have peace. He said, **"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you; I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"** (John 14:27).

### **IF YOU ARE ARROGANT, BE AFRAID.**

The possibility exists that God would break arrogant Christians out of Abraham's spiritual family, just as He did faithless Jews, if Christians become arrogant. The apostle Paul said, **"Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either"** (Romans 11:20-21).

### **IF YOU DO WRONG, BE AFRAID OF THE GOVERNMENT.**

A person should fear what his government may do to him if he does wrong. Concerning the civil ruler, the apostle Paul said, **"He is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer"** (Romans 13:4).

### **DON'T BE AFRAID OF THOSE WHO OPPOSE YOU.**

Christ's people should be brave in contending for the truth. To the Philippians, the apostle Paul wrote. **"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you"** (Philippians 1:27-28).

**LIVE IN REVERENT FEAR OF GOD.**

Not only Jesus and the apostle Paul spoke of fearing God but also the apostle Peter spoke of it as well. He said, **“Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear”** (1 Peter 1:17). Peter also said, **“Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king”** (1 Peter 2:17).

**DON’T FEAR WHAT NON-BELIEVERS FEAR.**

Christ’s followers do not have the same fears that non-believers have. They fear God more than they fear anything else. The apostle Peter said, **“Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. ‘Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened”**” (1 Peter 3:13-14). In this passage, Peter quoted from Isaiah 8:12.

**DON’T BE AFRAID OF WHAT YOU MAY HAVE TO SUFFER.**

Christ forewarned His followers in Smyrna that they were about to be called upon to suffer, but He said, **“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life”** (Revelation 2:10).

**FEAR GOD AND GIVE HIM GLORY.**

The apostle John saw, in a vision, an angel who had an urgent message for mankind. John wrote, **“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water”**” (Revelation 14:6-7).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Does it bother you if people say bad things about you that are untrue? How can a believer get over being bothered by the untrue things people say about him?
2. Are you afraid that someone may kill you? How does a believer overcome the fear of being killed?

3. How would you describe the proper fear that a person should have of God? How can a person both love God and fear Him at the same time?
4. Jesus promised, in Luke 12:32, that God would give the kingdom to His followers. When Jesus promised His followers that God would give the kingdom to them, was He referring to the church, to heaven, or to both?
5. What are some of the things that non-believers fear most? How does a Christian's attitude toward those things differ from the attitude of a non-believer?
6. The apostle Paul indicated that some of the Jews had been broken off from the family tree of Abraham because they failed to recognize that Jesus is their Messiah. See Romans 11:20. Do you suppose that the unbelieving Jews realized that they had been broken off? What about Christians, can they be broken off? See Romans 11:21. Do you suppose that Christians can be broken off without their being aware of it?
7. Should a Christian be afraid to speak the truth? Have you ever gotten into trouble for speaking the truth?
8. Have you ever had to suffer for being a Christian? If so, what was it like, and how do you feel about that experience now?

## **APOSTLES, DO WHAT GOD SAID THROUGH THEM**

Jesus trained the Twelve Apostles. They received the Holy Spirit in a special way on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), and the Holy Spirit guided them into all truth (John 16:13). Therefore, what the apostles said is important.

**ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WHAT THE APOSTLE PAUL WROTE IS THE LORD'S COMMAND.**

Some of the Christians in the city of Corinth had spiritual gifts, which at times enabled them to speak for God. This did not mean, as some of them thought, that they could disregard what the apostle Paul wrote. Paul said, **“If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I [Paul] am writing to you is the Lord’s command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored”** (1 Corinthians 14:37).

### **BE OBEDIENT IN EVERY THING.**

There was a brother in the church at Corinth, who had grievously sinned. The apostle Paul wrote to the church about that man. In his second letter, Paul told them that the time had come for them to forgive that man and comfort him. Paul explained why he had written concerning that man in the first place. He said, **“The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything”** (2 Corinthians 2:9). The implication is that Christians should be obedient to what an apostle wrote.

### **DON’T BECOME WEARY IN DOING GOOD.**

The apostle Paul did not want people to despair of doing good. He wrote, **“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up”** (Galatians 6:9).

### **LIVE UP TO WHAT YOU HAVE ALREADY ATTAINED.**

The apostle Paul knew that he was not yet perfect, yet he was determined to press on toward perfection (Philippians 3:12). He felt that all mature Christians should be aware of their own imperfection and strive to improve themselves (Philippians 3:15). Paul was especially concerned that no Christian should stop at the level of maturity he had attained. He said, **“Only let us live up to what we have already attained”** (Philippians 3:16).

### **PUT INTO PRACTICE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED.**

The apostle Paul thought of himself not only as an instructor but also as an example for Christian people. He said, **“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you”** (Philippians 4:9).

### **NEVER GET TIRED OF DOING WHAT IS RIGHT.**

Some of the brethren in Thessalonika had stopped working for a living and were relying on others to take care of them. The apostle Paul said that if a brother will not work, neither should he be given anything to eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Paul wanted people to stay busy doing good deeds. He said, **“And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right”** (2 Thessalonians 3:13).

### **DO WHAT THE WORD SAYS.**

James, the author of the letter of James, knew that teaching did no good unless people put into practice what is taught. He wrote, **“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says”** (James 1:22).

### **DO WHAT “THE PERFECT LAW” SAYS.**

The New Testament contains a perfect law. In contrast to the law of the Old Testament, this perfect law brings freedom. Yet even a perfect law brings no blessing unless a person does what it says. James wrote, **“But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing--he will be blessed in what he does”** (James 1:25).

### **LET YOUR FAITH BE ACCOMPANIED BY ACTION.**

It is not enough just to believe what the apostles said. One must carry out their teaching. James said, **“In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead”** (James 2:17).

### **DON'T TRY TO BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ALONE.**

Although faith is necessary for salvation, faith does not help a person unless he translates it into action. James wrote, **“You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone”** (James 2:24).

### **OBEY THE GOSPEL OF GOD.**

The apostle Peter wrote, **“For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God”** (1 Peter 4:17)?

### **DO WHAT IS RIGHT.**

A person may think that he is righteous simply because he has faith, but this is an illusion. If a person keeps on doing what is wrong (1 John

3:6), his faith will not make him righteous. The apostle John said, **“Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he (Christ) is righteous”** (1 John 3:7).

### **DO WHAT IS RIGHT; AND LOVE YOUR BROTHER.**

The way that people act shows whose children they are. The apostle John wrote, **“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are; Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor anyone who does not love his brother”** (1 John 3:10).

### **DO WHAT IS GOOD, NOT WHAT IS EVIL.**

The apostle John wrote, **“Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God”** (3 John 11).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. If anyone today thinks that he is a “prophet” or is “spiritually gifted,” does that mean that he does not need to obey what the apostle Paul wrote?
2. Are churches of today under obligation to do what the apostles wrote? Should they be obedient to the writings of the apostles, as Paul said, “in everything?” Please elaborate.
3. Do you think that some of the Christians today are giving up on doing what the apostles wrote? Why do you think they are giving up? Do you see a remedy?
4. In your judgment, what is a “mature Christian?” Should mature Christians think they are perfect?
5. Is it possible for mature Christians to slip back into a sinful life and stop living, as they should? If so, what can they do to avoid slipping back?
6. Do you see any personal attributes in the apostle Paul that could be put into practice today? What do you think about the other apostles?

7. The apostle Paul said that God of peace would be with people who put into practice what he had taught and exemplified (Philippians 4:9). Do you see any evidence that this is true? If so, what?
8. How can a person avoid getting tired in doing what is right? Look at Hebrews 12:3
9. Why do you suppose the apostle Paul wanted Christians to keep busy?
10. If a Christian is dead to the law of the Old Testament (Romans 7:4), does that mean that he is under no law at all? See 1 Corinthians 9:21 and James 1:25.
11. James spoke of a “dead” faith (James 2:17). In your judgment what is dead faith? How can a dead faith be revived?
12. Does the Bible teach that a person can be justified by “faith alone?” See James 2:24.
13. Does a person need to “obey the gospel of God” (1 Peter 4:17)? If he does, how does he do it? Does he do it by merely believing that Jesus is his personal savior? Or is there more that is required? What do you think about repentance, confession of faith in Jesus, and baptism? Are they required?

## **ATTITUDE, HAVE A GOOD !**

Here are some of the instructions in the New Testament about the attitude that Christian people should have.

### **BE ZEALOUS.**

Some people think it is bad style to be zealous for anything, particularly for the Lord. The Lord, however, wants us to be zealous for Him. The apostle Paul was one of the most zealous men who ever lived. Here is what he wrote about zeal, **“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer”** (Romans 12:11-12).



**BE BOTH WISE AND INNOCENT.**

Some people are wise but not innocent. Others are innocent but not wise. These attributes, however, are not mutually exclusive. The apostle Paul wanted the church in Thessalonika to have both attributes. He wrote to the Thessalonians, **“Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil”**(Romans 16:19).

**DON'T BE ENGROSSED WITH THE WORLD.**

There is a great danger that we get so wrapped up in temporal affairs that we forget about eternal affairs. This danger has always existed. It existed in the days of the apostle Paul. Paul was concerned lest the Corinthians overlook what is eternal and concentrate on what is temporal. He wrote, **“What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away”** (1 Corinthians 7:29-31).

**STOP THINKING LIKE CHILDREN.**

God wants us to grow up so we can think like adults. He said, **“Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults”** (1 Corinthians 14:20).

Even though many of God's people lead a simple life, they should not be simple in their thinking. God expects His people to be wise. The apostle Paul admonishes, **“Be very careful, then, how you live---not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is”** (Ephesians 5:15-17).

We should take a mature view of things. Paul wrote, **“All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you”** (Philippians 3:15).

**STAND FIRM.**

There are enough weak and unsteady Christians in the world. Let us not add to the number. The apostle Paul admonished: **“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves**

**fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain”** (1 Corinthians 15:58).

It takes courage to be a Christian. It is a lot like being a soldier. A Christian must be on guard constantly not to do evil. He must always be ready to suffer for the cause of Christ. The apostle Paul had this attitude, and he encouraged others to have it too. He wrote, **“Be on guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong”** (1 Corinthians 16:13).

As good soldiers, we should be ready for service. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled”** (1 Peter 1:13).

### **BE MADE NEW IN THE ATTITUDE OF YOUR MINDS.**

We should work on our attitude and try to get it right. We should also pray for a good attitude. The apostle Paul wrote, **“You were taught...to be made new in the attitude of your minds”** (Ephesians 4:22-23).

### **HAVE THE SAME ATTITUDE THAT CHRIST HAD.**

The apostle Paul was asking a lot of us when he said that we should have Christ’s attitude in our hearts. Nevertheless, he knew that if we did not have Christ’s attitude, we would not be His true disciples. Paul challenged us with the following admonition: **“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 2:5).

When Christ was on earth He knew that He would be asked to suffer, yet He did not shun the thought of suffering. Rather, He embraced it, just as His apostles later did. The apostle Peter said, **“Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin”** (1 Peter 4:1).

### **BE AT PEACE.**

God intends for us to have peace in our hearts and in our lives. If we decide to follow Christ no matter what the cost, and if we have His love in our hearts, we, as individuals, will be at peace and the church will be at peace as well. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful”** (Colossians 3:15).

### **YOU RICH, TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR LOW POSITION.**

It is very important for rich people to think humbly about themselves; otherwise fellowship in the church will not be possible. No true fellowship can exist where rich people think they are better than poor people. James wrote, **“The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower”** (James 1:9-10).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. If we are zealous for the Lord, how will our zeal show itself?
2. Is it possible to be both wise and innocent?
3. What is the danger to us if we become engrossed with the world? How can we avoid being engrossed with the world?
4. How does the way children think differ from the way adults think? In what way should Christians think as children and as adults?
5. What does it mean that we as Christians should stand firm? Regarding what should we stand firm?
6. Can we do anything to change the attitude we have toward sin? Do you have any suggestions about how to appreciate holiness more?
7. Can you give a brief description of Christ’s attitude toward others? See Philippians 2:4-6. What can we do to have the same attitude that Christ had?
8. What does it mean to have peace in our hearts? Do you feel that you have peace in your heart? Do you have any suggestions for becoming more peaceful?
9. Should a poor brother take pride in his high position in Christ? What is the harm if he does take pride in his high position?
10. Should a rich brother take pride in his low position? If so, why? What is the harm if he do not take pride in his low position?

## **AVOID EVERY KIND OF EVIL !**

The New Testament says that there are certain things that people should avoid.

### **AVOID EATING CERTAIN FOODS.**

It was sometimes difficult for believers with a Jewish background to associate with Gentile believers. This was partly because Gentile believers sometimes ate foods that the Jews had been taught to consider unclean. Therefore, it was difficult for Jewish believers in Christ to eat with their Gentile brethren. In order to make fellowship between the two groups possible, the apostles and elders in Jerusalem composed a circular letter that said, **“You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality [fornication]. You will do well to avoid these things”** (Acts 15:29). There appears to be some variance, however, in the degree of stringency attached to the keeping of these requirements: Fornication is always wrong (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5); and blood has never been considered a food (Genesis 9:4); yet eating food which has been sacrificed to idols may be permissible under certain circumstances. See 1 Corinthians 10:27-28.

### **DON'T COMMIT FORNICATION.**

God expects us to lead holy lives, for we belong to the Lord and not to ourselves (1 Corinthians 6:20). Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who lives in us (1 Corinthians 6:19). Our bodies are members of Christ Himself. See 1 Corinthians 6:15-16.

Here is what the apostle Paul wrote about avoiding fornication: **“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality”** (1 Thessalonians 4:3). The Greek word that is here translated as “sexual immorality” means fornication.

### **AVOID EVERY KIND OF EVIL.**

All the major categories of sins are mentioned in the Bible, yet some specific sins may not be mentioned there by name. If we know, however, that something is bad, we should avoid it. The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, saying, **“Avoid every kind of evil”** (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

### **HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH EVIL PEOPLE.**

As time goes on, it will become more and more difficult for people to be Christians. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, **“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them”** (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We should avoid close association with people who lead sinful lives. If we do not avoid associating too closely with them, there is a possibility that we may learn their sinful ways. See 2 Corinthians 6:14-16.

### **KEEP AWAY FROM BROTHERS WHO WILL NOT WORK.**

The apostle Paul wrote, **“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us”** (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Notice that we should not only keep away from brethren who will not work but also from those who do not live according to the teaching of the New Testament.

### **AVOID GODLESS CHATTER.**

We are sometimes tempted to ingratiate ourselves with worldly people by using filthy language and telling smutty jokes like they do, but we should not do that. Worldly people will not think better of us if we speak like they do. Contrariwise, they will despise us for it, because they know that we are not living up to our own high ideals.

There is the additional danger that, if we use wicked speech, we ourselves might become ungodly. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy as follows: **“Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly”**(2 Timothy 2:16).

### **DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH FOOLISH AND STUPID ARGUMENTS.**

**“Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel”** (2 Timothy 2:23-24).

### **AVOID FOOLISH CONTROVERSIES.**

Some people enjoy getting into a good argument, but the apostle Paul advised against it. He wrote, **“But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless”** (Titus 3:9).

The apostle Paul also said that we should have nothing to do with a person who causes division in the church. He wrote, **“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him”** (Titus 3:10).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Should Christians in some circumstances avoid certain foods? See Acts 15:29. What are those foods, and what are the circumstances?
2. Is it wrong to commit fornication? See 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Why is it wrong? See 1 Corinthians 6:15-16. Does fornication have bad consequences? See 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.
3. Should we avoid everything that we know to be evil? See 1 Thessalonians 5:22. Are there some forms of evil in which a Christian may participate?
4. Why should we avoid godless chatter?
5. Since we cannot avoid sinful people entirely, else we would have to leave the world, what advice would you give?
6. What do you think about a Christian marrying a person who commits fornication?
7. What do you think about a Christian going into a business partnership with a person who will cheat and lie?
8. Should we enter into hot debates with people over religion? See Titus 3:9.
9. Suppose there is a person in the church who always stirs up trouble, should he be tolerated endlessly? See Titus 3:10.

**BAPTIZED, REPENT AND BE !**

There are instructions in the New Testament concerning baptism (immersion). Here are some of them:

### **BELIEVE AND BE BAPTIZED.**

Baptism was important to Jesus. He went to John the Baptist and asked to be baptized (Matthew 3:13-16). He wanted to be baptized because it was the right thing to do (Matthew 3:15).

After Jesus' resurrection, He appeared to His disciples while they sitting at table, presumably in Jerusalem. He told them to go everywhere and preach the "gospel" (good news) to everyone. The good news that they were to preach is that Jesus died for mankind's sins and that He arose from the grave (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This is good news because it means that everyone can be forgiven of his sins and can look forward to being raised from the dead. Jesus said, **"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned"** (Mark 16:15-16).

Notice that a person has to believe the good news before it will help him. Once a person believes, however, his belief should lead him to baptism. This is what Jesus intended. Jesus connected both belief and baptism to salvation. Notice also that in Mark 16:15-16 baptism stands between belief and salvation.

There has been much discussion about Mark 16:15-16. Some people think these verses to not belong in the Bible. Others concede that they belong in the Bible but they reject what the verses say about baptism. These people are quick to point out that Jesus did not explicitly say that if a person were not baptized, he would be condemned. Perhaps, it was not necessary for Jesus to say that, for if a person does not believe, he would hardly bother to be baptized. Also, there would have been no point in Jesus' discussing how a person's disobedience regarding baptism would affect his being saved, if that person were already condemned for not believing (John 3:18,36).

### **MAKE DISCIPLES AND BAPTIZE THEM.**

Jesus also appeared to His apostles in Galilee, where He again instructed them to go and make disciples of all the nations. Jesus said: **"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"** (Matthew 28:19).

Jesus' apostles were supposed to make disciples and they were to baptize them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Jesus also told His apostles to instruct others to do what He had taught them to do (Matthew 28:20).

### **BE BORN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT.**

Jesus spoke to a man named Nicodemus and told him that a person must be born again before he can see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). This statement puzzled Nicodemus. Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he is old" (John 3:4)? Jesus responded by saying, "**I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit**"(John 3:5).

With this answer Jesus alluded to two aspects of baptism. There is a physical aspect (water) and a spiritual aspect: The physical act of being baptized in water is necessary because Jesus commanded it. As for the spiritual aspect, a person needs to be baptized in order to have his sins washed away (Acts 22:16). He also needs to be baptized so that he can receive the Holy Spirit and become a candidate for being resurrected to eternal life (Romans 6:4-5).

### **REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED.**

Not only should faith precede baptism but also repentance should precede it as well. This was pointed out by the apostle Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, who said "**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins**" (Acts 2:38).

Unless a person repents of his sins and leaves them, baptism will do him no good. If a person continues in sin after he is baptized, he is just as lost after baptism as he was before.

### **BE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST.**

After the apostle Peter had preached the gospel to Cornelius and his household in Caesarea (Acts 10:24-43), the Holy Spirit came on all those who heard Peter's message (Acts 10:44). This was a sign to Peter that also Gentiles could be baptized into Christ. "**So he [Peter] ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ**"(Acts 10:48).

To say that people should be baptized in the "name of the Lord Jesus Christ" tells people why they should allow themselves to be baptized. That is, they should do it in recognition of Jesus' authority. This statement is not



in conflict with the instructions that Jesus gave to His disciples when He said that they should baptize people in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). The first statement relates to a person's motivation for being baptized, while the second relates to the ceremony of baptism.

### **WASH YOUR SINS AWAY.**

After Saul of Tarsus saw a great light on the road to Damascus, and heard Jesus speak to him, he became blind and was led into the city of Damascus. There, he spent three days fasting. Finally a disciple named Ananias came to him and told him what to do. Ananias said, **“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name”** (Acts 22:16).

Saul had encountered Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus and believed on Him. His subsequent actions indicate that he repented of his having persecuted the church, as well as of his other sins. Therefore, Saul was a proper candidate for baptism, in view of the fact that he believed in Jesus and had repented of his sins.

The apostle Peter referred to the fact that there is a “washing” that leads to a rebirth. Peter wrote, “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:4-6). The washing that leads to a rebirth is baptism.

### **HAVE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS, AND PUT HIM ON IN BAPTISM!**

Faith and baptism go together. Baptism follows naturally upon faith. If we do not have faith, baptism will not do us any good. God wants us to be clothed with Christ, but we are not fully clothed with Him until we have been baptized into Him. The apostle Paul wrote, **“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ”** (Galatians 3:26-27). If we refuse to get baptized, there is considerable doubt about the genuineness of our faith.

### **DRAW NEAR TO GOD WITH A CLEANSED HEART AND A WASHED BODY.**

The book of Hebrews says, **“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water”**(Hebrews 10:22).

We cannot draw near to God until our hearts have been cleansed of a guilty conscience. How can hearts be cleansed? They can be cleansed (made holy) by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus (1 Peter 1:2). This is figurative language, of course. The sprinkling of the blood of Jesus takes place when our bodies are washed (baptized) in water. By being baptized we make an appeal to God for a clean conscience (1 Peter 3:21).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Should people be taught before they are baptized? See Matthew 28:19. What should they be taught?
2. How is baptism to be carried out? Is baptism supposed to be done by immersion?
3. Is it necessary for people to believe before they are baptized? See Mark 16:15-16. Would baptism without belief (faith) save a person? Can a baby believe?
4. Is it necessary for a person to repent before he is baptized? See Acts 2:8. Why is it necessary to repent before baptism? Can babies repent? Should babies be baptized?
5. What does it mean to be “clothed” with Christ? How can a person be clothed with Christ? See Galatians 3:27.
6. When does the “sprinkling” (Hebrews 10:22) of our hearts with the blood of Christ take place? Please explain.
7. Can it be said that baptism saves? See 1 Peter 3:20. What is it about baptism that saves people? Is there a request involved in baptism? What is the request?

**BELIEVE !**

We are taught in the New Testament both to “believe” and to “have faith.” There is actually no difference between the two expressions, for they are both usually translated from the same Greek word.

### **HAVE FAITH IN GOD.**

Jesus went to a fig tree one morning seeking fruit to eat, but He found no fruit on the tree. So Jesus said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again” (Mark 11:14). The next morning, when the disciples saw that the tree had withered, they were amazed and commented to Jesus on this. He replied to them, **“Have faith in God”** (Mark 11:22). He told them that if they had faith, they would be able to move mountains (Mark 11:23-24). Each of us can investigate and find out for himself whether or not Jesus was right when He said that faith could move mountains.

### **BELIEVE THAT GOD EXISTS.**

If we do not believe that God exists, it shows great ignorance on our part. Such ignorance makes it impossible for us to please God. In the book of Hebrews we read: **“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him”** (Hebrews 11:6).

### **DON'T HAVE A SINFUL AND UNBELIEVING HEART.**

The book of Hebrews says, **“See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God”** (Hebrews 3:12).

### **BELIEVE IN THE ONE WHOM GOD SENT.**

Some people asked of Jesus what they should do in order to do the work of God. They seemed to have thought that the work of God was to do miracles, but Jesus gave them a higher concept. He said, **“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent”** (John 6:29).

### **BELIEVE JESUS' MIRACLES.**

Jesus did the things that God told Him to do. Yet some of the people who experienced Jesus first hand were slow to see the implications of what He did, so He challenged them by saying, **“Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me,**

**believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the father”** (John 10:37-38).

While it is easy for some people to see the divine in Jesus, others are not perceptive enough to discern God’s presence in Him. However, if they have an open mind, they can at least know that Jesus did miracles. This alone should convince them that God was with Jesus. Jesus said, **“Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves”** (John 14:11).

### **DON’T MAKE GOD OUT TO BE A LIAR.**

God testified that Jesus is His Son. God said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5). If we do not believe that Jesus is God’s Son, we make God out to be a liar. The apostle John wrote, **“Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar because he has not believe the testimony God has given about his Son”** (1 John 5:10).

### **BELIEVE IN GOD’S SON.**

Why does God want us to believe in His Son? The answer is, God wants us to believe so that we will not perish. We read, **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”** (John 3:16).

Eternal life is the reward, which God has designed for those who believe in His Son. Jesus said, **“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day”** (John 6:40).

If you want to have eternal life, then believe in Jesus. Jesus said, **“I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life”** (John 6:47).

A person who does not believe in God’s Son stands condemned. However, it is not the lack of belief that condemns him. He is condemned because of his sins. His lack of belief makes it impossible for him to seek forgiveness and thus to escape condemnation. The Bible says, **“Whoever believes in him [Jesus] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son”** (John 3:18). The failure to believe in God’s Son takes away a person’s only avenue of avoiding condemnation. See John 3:36.

If a person refuses to believe, he will die in his sins. Jesus said, **“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins”** (John 8:24).

### **BELIEVE IN THE NAME (AUTHORITY) OF GOD’S SON.**

We should believe “in the name of God’s Son.” That is to say, we should believe that the Son is the one who has been given authority. The apostle John wrote, **“And this in his command; to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded”** (1 John 3:23).

### **BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST.**

Jesus has authority because of His high station. He is Christ (the anointed King). The apostle John wrote, **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well”** (1 John 5:1). When the apostle John speaks of belief, he speaks of strong belief that leads to obedience.

### **BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS.**

When Paul and Silas were in prison in Philippi a violent earthquake shook the prison. The jailer, thinking his prisoners would escape, started to take his own life, but Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” The jailer fell trembling at Paul’s and Silas’ feet and asked, “Sirs what must I do to be saved?” In response they said, **“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household”** (Acts 16:31).

Some people understand this passage to imply that faith is all that is necessary in order to be saved, but that is not what Paul and Silas meant. They meant that if the jailer and his household believed in Jesus, their belief would work to their salvation. If faith alone were all that was needed, it would not have been necessary for the jailer and his household to have been baptized (Acts 16:33). Faith alone is dead (James 2:17,24). Will a dead faith save anyone?

### **BELIEVE IN JESUS AND LIVING WATER WILL FLOW FROM YOU.**

A person who believes in Jesus will be a source of blessing for those who come into contact with him. What such a person says, and what he does, is a source of instruction and encouragement to others. Jesus said,

**“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:38).**

### **BELIEVE IN JESUS AND YOU WILL NOT STAY IN DARKNESS.**

It is necessary to believe in Jesus in order to come out of darkness. Those people who do not believe in Jesus stay in darkness. Jesus said, **“I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness” (John 12:46).**

### **HOLD FIRMLY TO THE FAITH.**

It is important to hold firmly to the faith. **“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess” (Hebrews 4:14).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Why is it sometimes difficult to have faith in God? Is there any evidence of God’s great power at work? Did Jesus do things that astound you? Does believing in Jesus help you to have faith in God?
2. Why it is important to believe that God exists? Why is it important to believe that God rewards those who seek Him?
3. What does it mean to believe “in the name of” the Son of God? Why is it important to believe in the name of the Son of God?
4. Explain how a person who does not believe the testimony that God has given concerning His Son makes God out to be a liar?
5. Does a person stand condemned who does not believe in God’s Son? If so, why?
6. What is wrong with having an unbelieving heart? Can a person do anything about an unbelieving heart?
7. Is it necessary to believe that Jesus is Lord? If so, why? What reason is there to believe that Jesus is Lord? What do we mean when we say that Jesus is Lord?

8. Should faith normally lead to baptism? Please explain why faith leads to baptism? Does faith without baptism help us to be saved? Does baptism complete faith? See James 2:22.
9. Why should we have faith in Christ before baptism? Why is faith by itself not enough? See James 2:17.

## CHANGE

One of the recurring themes of the New Testament is that people must change the way they live. People must change in order to become Christians and they must continually change after they become Christians. Although God is willing to help people change, some effort on their part is also necessary.

### **WAKE UP.**

If Christians are not fully aware of their high station and not fully rejoicing over their privileges, they need to wake up. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you”** (Ephesians 5:14).

### **COME BACK TO YOUR SENSES.**

When people’s thinking becomes contaminated by the world, they need to come back to their senses. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God--I say this to your shame”** (1Corinthians 15:34).

### **BE TRANSFORMED.**

If new Christians are still patterning their lives according to the world, they need to be further transformed. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”** (Romans 12:2).

### **TURN AWAY FROM WICKEDNESS.**

If a person who confesses the name of the Lord finds wickedness in his life, he needs to turn away from it. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Everyone**

**who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness”** (2 Timothy 2:19).

### **DON'T DO WHAT THE PAGANS DO.**

Even after people have become Christians, they usually have a lot of worldly ways still, which they learned before they became Christians. The apostle Paul wrote, **“For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do--living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry”** (1 Peter 4:3).

### **DON'T CONFORM TO EVIL DESIRES.**

Serving Christ brings out the unique qualities of each individual, but evil people all behave alike. The apostle Paul warned, **“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance”** (1 Peter 1:14).

### **FLEE EVIL DESIRES; CHASE AFTER BETTER THINGS.**

There are some things from which a Christian should flee and other things that he should pursue. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart”** (2 Timothy 2:22). Notice that effort is required.

### **CLEANSE YOURSELF.**

The Lord cannot use a person as fully in His service as He would like, unless that person cleanses himself of ungodly deeds. The apostle Paul wrote, **“If a man cleanses himself... he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work”** (2 Timothy 2:21). Notice that a person is partially responsible for cleansing himself.

### **PURIFY YOURSELF.**

Everyone who hopes to get into heaven should start purifying himself while he is still on this earth. The apostle John wrote, **“Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he [Christ] is pure”** (1 John 3:3). Notice that a person is partially responsible for his own purification.

### **PUT OFF THE OLD MAN (OLD SELF).**



Every person who becomes a Christian must get rid of that part of himself that is bad. Paul wrote, **“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires”** (Ephesians 4:22). Compare this verse with Colossians 3:8-10.

#### **PUT ON THE NEW MAN (NEW SELF).**

A Christian should consciously strive to be like God. Paul wrote, **“Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”** (Ephesians 4:24).

#### **PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT.**

Living as a Christian is a struggle, and every person needs all the help he can get. That is why he should put on the armor of light, which will help him win in the struggle against evil. The apostle Paul wrote, **“So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light”** (Romans 13:12).

#### **LIVE AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT.**

When Christ comes into a person's life He brings light. The apostle Paul wrote, **“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)”** (Ephesians 5:8-9).

#### **BEHAVE DECENTLY.**

People who behave decently do not have to hide anything. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature”** (Romans 13:13-14).

#### **GET RID OF BITTERNESS, AND BE KIND:**

Unless a person gets rid of a bad disposition, it will be difficult for him to be kind. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”** (Ephesians 4:31-32).

**GRIEVE, MOURN AND WAIL.**

A person who has not been forgiven of his sins has good reason to be sad. James wrote, **“Grieve, morn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up”** (James 4:9-10). Perhaps a person’s being sad will lead him to repentance, to humble obedience, and to forgiveness.

**COME NEAR TO GOD.**

God is always anxious for people to return to Him. His door is always open. James said, **“Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded”** (James 4:8).

**BE RECONCILED TO GOD.**

It is not God who needs to be reconciled to man, but man who needs to be reconciled to God. The apostle Paul wrote, **“We implore you on Christ’s behalf; Be reconciled to God”** (2 Corinthians 5:20).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. If a person is a sleepy Christian, what can he do to wake up? Can others wake him up? If so, how can they do it?
2. What can a person do to come back to his senses? Does God sometimes do things to people to bring them back to their senses? What does God sometimes do?
3. How would you characterize people who conform to the pattern of this world? Are they true Christians?
4. What is a “pagan?” Are there still pagans in the world today? How do pagans act?
5. Please name some things from which a Christian should flee. Please name some things after which he should chase.
6. Is there anything a Christian can do to cleanse (or purify) himself? If so, what?

7. Is there anything a non-Christian can do to cleanse (or purify) himself? If so, what?
8. If you are now a Christian, can you see a difference between your “old self” and your “new self?” How would you describe the difference?
9. What does it mean to “clothe” oneself with the Lord Jesus Christ?
10. How can a person get rid of bitterness and learn to be kind?

## CHILDREN, DON'T EMBITTER YOUR

The New Testament tells parents how to treat their children and children how to treat their parents.

### **LET CHILDREN COME TO JESUS. DON'T HINDER THEM.**

Jesus was very concerned about children. His disciples feared that children would bother Jesus, but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14).

### **CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN THE LORD.**

The apostle Paul gave advice to children about how to treat their parents. He said, “**Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right**” (Ephesians 6:1).

### **CHILDREN, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.**

To support his advice, the apostle Paul quoted one of the Ten Commandments. Paul said, “**Honor your father and mother--which is the first commandment with a promise--that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth**” (Ephesians 6:2-3).

### **FATHERS, DON'T EXASPERATE YOUR CHILDREN.**

It is possible for parents to be overzealous in forcing their children to obey. The apostle Paul said, “**Fathers, do not exasperate your children;**

**instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”** (Ephesians 6:4).

### **CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN EVERYTHING.**

God wants children to obey their parents. The apostle Paul said, **“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord”** (Colossians 3:20).

### **FATHERS, DON'T EMBITTER YOUR CHILDREN.**

Parents need to correct their children, but they should do it with love. The apostle Paul warned, **“Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged”** (Colossians 3:21).

### **LEARN TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS.**

Grown children have a special obligation to their parents. The apostle Paul said, **“But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grand-parents, for this is pleasing to God”** (1 Timothy 5:4).

### **PROVIDE FOR YOUR OLD OR INFIRM RELATIVES.**

No Christian would think of abandoning his relatives. The apostle Paul said, **“If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”** (1 Timothy 5:8).

### **SISTERS, HELP THE WIDOWS IN YOUR FAMILY.**

Not only men but also women are responsible for looking after their needy relatives. The apostle Paul wrote, **“If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need”** (1 Timothy 5:16).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. What did Jesus do for the little children who were brought to Him? See Mark 10:16. Did He baptize them? Did He ever say that they should be baptized?

2. How can children be taught to obey their parents?
3. Do young people that have obeyed the gospel have a special obligation to show respect to their parents? How should they show respect?
4. Must young people, who are Christians, show respect to their parents even if their parents are not Christians?
5. What should children do if their parents tell them to do something that is illegal or immoral? Should children obey their parents in such a case?
6. What is the promise that is connected with the commandment to honor father and mother? See Exodus 20:12. What is the meaning of the promise?
7. How can fathers avoid embittering their children?
18. If a Christian has relatives that are in need, should he help them? Why?

## **CHURCH, DON'T DESPISE THE**

The New Testament contains instructions about the attitude that Christian people should have toward the congregation to which they belong.

### **AGREE WITH ONE ANOTHER.**

Factions were forming within the church in Corinth. The apostle Paul said to them, **“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought”** (1 Corinthians 1:10).

### **DON'T DESPISE THE CHURCH OF GOD.**

Some of the Corinthian Christians were showing disrespect for the church. They were doing this by turning the Lord's Supper into an ordinary meal. The apostle Paul asked them, **“Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who**

**have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not” (1 Corinthians 11:22)!**

### **SUBMIT TO THE LEADERS.**

The members of a congregation should submit to its leaders. The apostle Paul said to the church in Corinth, **“You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it” (1 Corinthians 16:15-16).**

### **KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.**

It requires effort to maintain unity within a congregation. The apostle Paul said, **“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).**

### **LET THE CHURCH SUBMIT TO CHRIST.**

Since Christ is the head of the church, the church should submit to Him. The apostle Paul said, **“For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (Eph 5:23-24).**

### **BE ONE IN SPIRIT.**

The members of a congregation should try to be like-minded. The apostle Paul said, **“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (Philippians 2:1-2).**

### **RESPECT THOSE WHO WORK AMONG YOU.**

The members of a congregation should respect its leaders. The apostle Paul said, **“Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).**

### **CONDUCT YOURSELF PROPERLY IN GOD’S HOUSEHOLD.**

There is a proper way for members of the church to conduct themselves. To Timothy the apostle Paul wrote, **“Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth”** (1Timothy 3:14-15).

### **DON'T GIVE UP MEETING TOGETHER.**

The weekly meetings are very important. The book of Hebrews says, **“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching”** (Hebrews 10:25).

### **REMEMBER YOUR LEADERS.**

Members of a congregation should remember their godly leaders. The book of Hebrews says, **“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.** (Hebrews 13:7).

### **OBEY YOUR LEADERS.**

Leaders cannot lead if no one will follow. The book of Hebrews says, **“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you”** (Hebrews 13:17).

### **LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD.**

The apostle Peter said, **“Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king”** (1 Peter 2:17).

### **LIVE IN HARMONY WITH ONE ANOTHER.**

The apostle Peter also said, **“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble”** (1 Peter 3:8).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. What is wrong with there being factions within a congregation?

2. What is wrong with turning the Lord's Supper into an ordinary meal?
3. What can leaders of a congregation do to maintain unity within the congregation? What can members of a congregation do to maintain unity among themselves?
4. Members of a congregation should submit to Christ (Ephesians 5:23-24). In what way should their submission express itself?
5. Members of a congregation should respect their leaders (1 Thessalonians 2:12-13). In what way does respect for the leadership of a congregation express itself?
6. A person should conduct himself properly as a member of God's household (1 Timothy 3:14-15). How can a person learn to conduct himself properly as a member of God's household?
7. Why are the weekly meetings of the church important?
8. How does a person become a good follower?
9. How can the members of a congregation learn to live in harmony with each other?

## **CONFESS JESUS**

Jesus was straightforward about the importance of believers confessing their faith in Him. The apostles, too, wanted believers to confess their faith in Jesus. Why did Jesus and His apostles think it was important for people to confess their faith? Let us see:

### **ACKNOWLEDGE JESUS BEFORE OTHER PEOPLE.**

One reason why it is important for believers to acknowledge their faith in Jesus is so that others can know that there are people who believe in Jesus. Jesus also needs to know that His people are loyal to Him. Jesus said, **“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven”** (Matthew 10:32). It is as simple as that. If



Jesus' followers will acknowledge Him before others, Jesus will acknowledge them before His Father in heaven.

### **DON'T DISOWN JESUS.**

If Jesus' followers disown Him, their love and loyalty are not very strong. It also indicates that they are too weak to stand up for what they believe. Jesus said, **"But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven"** (Matthew 10:33). Similar verses can be found in Luke 12:8-9. People who lack the strength of character to confess their faith will find no place in heaven.

### **DON'T BE ASHAMED OF JESUS.**

People should be proud of Jesus. His coming to earth is the greatest thing that ever happened. People should be proud to claim Him as their Lord. Jesus said, **"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the Holy angels"** (Mark 8:38). These words can be found also in Luke 9:26. Jesus will be ashamed of people who cannot see or appreciate His glory.

### **CONFESS THAT JESUS IS LORD.**

The main thing to confess about Jesus is that He is Lord. The apostle Paul wrote, **"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved"** (Romans 10:9-10). Notice that confession of faith in Jesus precedes salvation. Having faith without confessing it is not sufficient for salvation according to this verse.

### **DON'T BE ASHAMED TO TESTIFY ABOUT OUR LORD.**

People who do not believe in Jesus sometimes try to intimidate those who do believe. Believers, however, should not allow themselves to be intimidated, for their confession of their faith may help other people have the courage to obey the gospel. The apostle Paul wrote, **"So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me [Paul] his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God"** (2 Timothy 1:8).

### **DON'T DISOWN JESUS.**

In different places and at different times, it has been dangerous to admit to believing in Jesus. Some governments have tried to control what people think. Many people have been put to death for admitting that they believe in Jesus. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself”** (2 Timothy 2:12-13). It is not always safe to be a Christian, yet the reward is great.

### **DON'T DENY JESUS.**

If a person were to deny that Jesus is the Christ, he would be supporting a falsehood. The devil likes for people to deny that Jesus is the Christ because he supports falsehood. The devil cannot stand the thought that Jesus might be better and greater than He. The apostle John wrote, **“Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist--he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also”** (1 John 2:22-23). A person cannot claim God as His father if He does not acknowledge Jesus as God's Son.

### **ACKNOWLEDGE THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.**

One of the basic requirements for a person's having God live in his or her heart is for that person to acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son. The apostle John wrote, **“If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God”** (1 John 4:15).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Is disloyalty to Jesus a sin? If so, why is it a sin?
2. Why will Jesus be ashamed of people who are ashamed of Him?
3. If anyone is ashamed of Jesus, what does it show about that person's value system?
4. Is confession of faith in Jesus all that is required for a person to get to heaven? What are some of the other things that are required? What about

repentance? See Acts 3:19. What about baptism? See Acts 2:38. What about living a faithful life? See Revelation 2:10.

5. Should a person be asked before he is baptized whether or not he or she believes that Jesus is Lord? If so, why?
6. Why was Moses not ashamed to be identified with the people of God? See Hebrews 11:25.
7. Did the apostle Peter commit a grave sin when he denied that he knew Jesus? See Luke 22:54-62.
8. Did the apostle John mean, in 1 John 4:15, that *every* person who confesses his faith in Jesus has God living in him as a result of that confession alone? Or did John mean that a person's confessing Jesus is one of the essential requirements for having God live in him?
9. Have you ever been asked to disown Jesus? If you were asked to disown Him, what would you do?

## **CONFESS YOUR SINS !**

Not only should Jesus' followers confess their faith in Him, but they should also confess their sins to each other.

It is hard for people to admit that they have sinned. Even though it is hard to confess, it is so beneficial. Christian people are quick to forgive a brother or sister who confesses and turns from their sins. God is also quick to forgive, and it is so good to have a cleared conscience.

The book of James says, **"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective"** (James 5:16).

The apostle John assures us that **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives"** (1 John 1:9-10).

## **THOUGHT QUESTIONS**

1. Do you have to confess your sins to a priest, or would any brother or sister in Lord do just as well.
2. Is it better to confess to the person against whom we have sinned?
3. Do we need to confess our sins only if we are sick and are on our death bed?

## **CROSS, TAKE UP YOUR**

The Roman government had the custom of punishing lowly criminals by crucifying them. It was not uncommon for people in the first century to see condemned criminals carrying their cross on their way to be crucified. The idea of bearing a cross came to represent the epitome of humiliation and suffering. The New Testament contains advice relative to cross bearing.

### **TAKE UP YOUR CROSS.**

If a follower of Jesus refuses to take up the cross that he is called upon to bear, he proves himself to be unworthy of Jesus. Jesus said, **“And anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me”** (Matthew 10:38).

### **BE WILLING TO LOSE YOUR LIFE.**

Christians should not value their earthy lives above everything else. Rather, they should face the possibility that they might be called upon to lose their lives in Christian service. Jesus said, **“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”** (Matthew 10:39). See also Matthew 16:25, Luke 9:24, and Luke 17:33.

### **FOLLOW JESUS.**

No one is prepared to follow Jesus until he is willing to take up the cross that God gives him to bear. Jesus said, **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”** (Matthew 16:24). Similar statements can also be found in Mark 8:34 and Luke 9:23.

### **CARRY YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW JESUS.**

Jesus does not consider anyone to be His disciple who does not carry the cross that has been given to him to bear. Jesus said, **“And anyone who**

**does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27).**

### **HATE YOUR LIFE.**

One of the keys to inheriting eternal life is for a person to avoid putting his life on a pedestal as being the highest good. Jesus said, **“The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:25).**

### **JOIN IN THE SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL.**

The apostle Paul from his own personal experience that when anyone stands up for the truth of the gospel, he often has to suffer for it. He wrote to Timothy, **“So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God” (2 Timothy 1:8).**

### **GO OUT TO JESUS AND BEAR THE DISGRACE THAT HE BORE.**

The writer of the book of Hebrews remembered that Jesus was carried outside the city of Jerusalem to be crucified. This fact reminded him that, under the Jewish system, the bodies of animals, which were sacrificed for sins, were carried outside the camp. Concerning this, the author of the book of Hebrews said, **“The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore” (Hebrews 13:11-13).**

### **FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF THE PROPHETS.**

Those persons who propagate the gospel of Jesus are sometimes called upon to suffer persecution, just as the prophets of the Old Testament did. James wrote, **“Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord” (James 5:10).**

### **PERSEVERE AS JOB DID.**

Christians should be patient when they are forced to suffer for the truth. They should be as patient as Job. James wrote, **“As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s**

**perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy” (James 5:11).**

### **FOLLOW IN JESUS’ STEPS.**

Since the path that Jesus trod led Him to the cross, those people who follow in His footsteps should be prepared to suffer also. The apostle Peter said, **“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).**

### **DO NOT BE FRIGHTENED.**

Christians should not be frightened if they are called upon to suffer for what is right, for they will be blessed because of it. The apostle Peter said, **“But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed, ‘Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened” (1 Peter 3:14).**

### **DON’T BE SURPRISED THAT YOU SUFFER.**

Followers of Jesus should not be surprised if they are called upon to suffer for Jesus’ sake. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you” (1 Peter 4:12).**

### **REJOICE WHEN YOU SUFFER FOR CHRIST.**

Christians should not be sad when they are called upon to suffer for Christ. The apostle Peter said, **“But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4:13).**

### **DON’T BE ASHAMED TO SUFFER AS A CHRISTIAN.**

It is unjust that anyone should have to suffer because he is a Christian, yet if he does suffer because of it, he should not be ashamed. The apostle Peter cautioned, **“However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name” (1 Peter 4:16).**

### **COMMIT YOURSELF TO GOD AND CONTINUE TO DO GOOD.**

People who are made to suffer because they are committed to God and serve Him should not be discouraged. Instead, their suffering should cause them to become more committed and better servants than they were before. The apostle Peter said, **“So then, those who suffer according to God’s will**

**should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good” (1 Peter 4:19).**

### **DON'T BE SURPRISED IF THE WORLD HATES YOU.**

Worldly-minded people hate Jesus, and they also hate His followers. The apostle John said, **“Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous. Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you” (1 John 3:12-13).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Do you think it is possible for a person to be a disciple of Jesus without his having to carry a cross of some kind? Please explain your answer.
2. Why does a person have to “deny himself” before he can take up his cross and follow Jesus?
3. Why should a person not value his earthly life above all else? What is wrong with his doing that?
4. In what ways will the person that loses his life for Christ’s sake find it? Please explain.
5. In what way will the person who finds his life lose it? Please explain.
6. Why is it sometimes thought to be a disgrace to be identified with Jesus?
7. Have you ever had to suffer for being a Christian? Please tell about it?

## **DECEIVED, DON'T BE !**

God does not want His children to be deceived. For that reason He warns them in the New Testament against being deceived.

### **DON'T BE DECEIVED BY FALSE CHRISTS.**

When Jesus' told His disciples that the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed, they assumed that He meant it would be destroyed at the end of the age. So they asked Him when the temple would be destroyed and what the signs would be of His return to the earth and of the end of the age. As a part of His reply to them, Jesus said, **“Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come”** (Matthew 24:4-6). Similar warnings can be found in Mark 13:5-6 and Luke 21:8.

### **DON'T BE DECEIVED BY FALSE PROPHETS.**

Many false prophets will appear toward the end of time, but Christians should not allow themselves to be deceived by them. Jesus said, **“At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people”** (Matthew 24:10-11).

### **DON'T DECEIVE YOURSELF INTO THINKING YOU ARE WISE.**

It is very easy for a person to think that he is wiser than he really is. Therefore, humility is appropriate for all. The apostle Paul said, **“Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a ‘fool’ so that he may become wise”** (1 Corinthians 3:18).

### **DON'T BE DECEIVED: THE WICKED WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

It is painful to think that any individual might not be saved. Yet the apostle Paul wrote, **“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God”** (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

### **DON'T BE MISLED: ASSOCIATING WITH BAD PEOPLE DAMAGES CHARACTER.**

Some people think they can associate with anyone they choose and that they will not be harmed, but the apostle Paul wrote, **“Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character. Come back to your senses as**



**you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame” (1 Corinthians 15:33-34).**

### **DON'T BE DECEIVED: A PERSON WILL REAP WHAT HE SOWS.**

Some people think they can sin without God ever punishing them, but unless they are forgiven, He will. The apostle Paul said, **“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that sinful nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the spirit will reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:7-8).**

### **DON'T BE DECEIVED INTO THINKING THAT THE DAY OF THE LORD HAS ALREADY COME.**

Jesus will not return before a certain man appears who will proclaim himself to be God (1 Thessalonians 2:4). The apostle Paul said, **“Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come, until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction” (2 Thessalonians 2:3).**

### **DON'T BE DECEIVED: GOOD GIFTS ARE FROM GOD.**

Some people think that good things happen to them by chance. As a result, they do not recognize God's hand behind their blessings. But James wrote, **“Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:16-17).**

### **DON'T DECEIVE YOURSELF INTO THINKING YOU DO NOT HAVE TO LISTEN TO WHAT THE WORD OF GOD SAYS.**

God wants His children to listen and to do what He says. James wrote, **“Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:21-22.)**

### **DON'T BE LED ASTRAY: THE PERSON WHO IS RIGHTEOUS SHOULD DO WHAT IS RIGHT.**

God is willing to consider a person to be righteous because of that person's faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22-26), but that does not excuse that person from doing what is right. The apostle John said, **“Dear**

**children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Have you ever heard of anyone who claimed to be the Christ? If so, what did you think about that person?
2. Has anyone who claimed to be a prophet ever confronted you? If so, what was your response to that person?
3. Have you ever met anyone who thought of himself as being a wise person?  
How did you treat that person? How should such a person be treated?
4. Will there be any wicked people in heaven? See Revelation 21:27 and Revelation 22:15.
5. Have you ever personally known anyone whose moral character was damaged by associating with bad people? How can a person avoid associating with bad people?
6. Have you ever seen bad people paid back for the bad things they did? Have you ever seen good people rewarded for the good things they did?
7. Do you think most people give God enough credit for the good things He does for them? Why do people often not recognize the hand of God in their lives? Does God want people to be thankful for what He does for them? Why?
8. Why do some people think they do not have to do what the New Testament says? What are some of the excuses they give for not doing what the New Testament says? Is there a blessing to be found in doing what the New Testament says? If so, what is it?

**DIVORCED, DON'T GET !**

The New Testament contains some very important, and badly needed, advice about divorce and remarriage.

### **DON'T DIVORCE YOUR PARTNER AND MARRY SOMEONE ELSE.**

Jesus said, **“But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness (fornication), causes her to become an adulteress”** (Matthew 5:32a). A man who puts away his wife, who has not committed fornication, may force her to be an adulteress. If a husband divorces his wife for some other reason than because she committed fornication, he exposes her to the possibility of her having to marry again and thus to become an adulteress. If, of course, he divorces his wife because she has committed fornication, his divorcing her does not cause her to be an adulteress, because she has, by the act of fornication, become one already. See also Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18.

### **DON'T SEPARATE WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER.**

Jesus said, **“Haven't you read...that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate”** (Matthew 19:4-6). Similar words are found in Mark 10:6-9

### **DON'T SEPARATE FROM YOUR MATE.**

The apostle Paul said, **“To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband”** (1 Corinthians 7:10).

### **DON'T DIVORCE YOUR MATE JUST BECAUSE HE OR SHE DOES NOT BELIEVE IN CHRIST.**

The apostle Paul said, **“To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him”** (1 Corinthians 7:12-13).

### **DON'T SEEK A DIVORCE.**

The apostle Paul wrote, **“Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife”** (1 Corinthians 7:27). The apostle Paul felt that it might be better for the Christians of his day not to get married. He said this because he saw that persecution was beginning to break over the church and he wanted to spare the believers. Paul was not, however, opposed to marriage in principle.

### **DON'T MARRY SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN DIVORCED.**

To the words in Matthew 5:32a, Jesus added, **“and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery”** (Matthew 5:32). The words “the divorced woman” in this passage refer to a woman who has been divorced (put away) because she committed fornication. Jesus taught that it is wrong for anyone to marry a woman who has been divorced (put away) because of fornication.

### **DON'T DIVORCE YOUR PARTNER AND MARRY SOMEONE ELSE.**

Jesus taught against today's prevalent practice of easy divorce and quick remarriage. Jesus said, **“I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness (fornication), and marries another woman commits adultery”** (Matthew 19:9). The implication of this verse seems to be that a person may divorce his or her spouse and marry another, under the condition that the original partner betrayed the marriage vows by having sexual relations with someone else.

### **IF YOU SEPARATE FROM YOUR MATE, REMAIN UNMARRIED OR GO BACK TO YOUR MATE.**

If a person separates from his or her mate, it would be better for him or her to remain unmarried. The apostle Paul said, **“But if she does [separate from her husband], she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife”** (1 Corinthians 7:11).

### **A WIDOW IS PERMITTED TO REMARRY, PROVIDED SHE MARRIES A MAN WHO BELONGS TO THE LORD.**

Paul said, **“A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 7:39). A Christian widow can

remarry, but she should marry “only in the Lord” (King James Version). That means that she should marry a Christian.

### **YOUNG WIDOWS, MARRY, HAVE CHILDREN, AND MANAGE HOMES.**

The apostle Paul said, “**So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander**” (1 Timothy 5:14).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Are there any scriptural grounds for a husband or a wife to get a divorce? If there are, what are they? See Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9.
2. Why do you suppose the apostle Paul encouraged the younger widows to remarry?
3. Why is it good for a Christian widow to marry only a man who is “in the Lord?”
4. What about young people, who are Christians, should they also marry only “in the Lord?” If so, why?
5. Is it asking too much to ask a Christian man who separates himself from his wife without just cause, or a Christian women who separates herself from her husband without just cause, to remain unmarried? Please explain.

## **EFFORT, MAKE EVERY !**

The New Testament indicates that effort is required of a person if he hopes to please God and to be saved. Here are some of the passages that show this:

**ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE.**

Sadly, only a few people will make it into heaven. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, **“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it”** (Matthew 7:13-14).

### **MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENTER.**

As Jesus was making His way through towns and villages en route to Jerusalem, someone asked Him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” Jesus replied, “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to” (Luke 13:24). This implies that it takes a struggle to make it into heaven.

### **MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO LIVE AT PEACE AND TO EDIFY OTHERS.**

People usually have to make a positive effort in order to have peace. They also usually have to make an effort in order to edify others. The apostle Paul said, **“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification”** (Romans 14:19).

### **MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.**

It is difficult for people to have unity if they are not at peace with each other. The apostle Paul said, **“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”** (Ephesians 4:3).

### **DO YOUR BEST TO BE A GOOD WORKMAN.**

A person who handles “the word of truth correctly” is a good workman. The apostle Paul encouraged Timothy: **“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth”** (2 Timothy 2:15).

### **MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENTER THE HEAVENLY REST.**

Most of the Israelites whom Moses delivered from slavery in Egypt were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. They were not allowed to go in because of their disobedience (Hebrews 4:9). The writer of the Hebrew letter warned Christians not to make a similar mistake. He said, **“Let us,**

**therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience” (Hebrews 4:11).**

### **MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO BE HOLY.**

No one becomes holy by accident. He has to work at it. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).**

### **MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ADD CHRISTIAN VIRTUES.**

No one should think that when he has begun to have faith in Jesus that he has reached the end of his personal growth. The apostle Peter said, **“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love” (2 Peter 1:5-7).**

### **MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE.**

No one should think that, after he has been “called” by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14) and “chosen” (2 Thessalonians 2:13), he has nothing else to do. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10-11).**

### **MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO BE FOUND SPOTLESS.**

If a person hopes to remain spotless and blameless, and thus to have peace with God, he has to work toward that goal. The apostle Peter said, **“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him” (2 Peter 3:14).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Jesus said that the road to eternal life is narrow but that the road to destruction is broad. What do you suppose Jesus meant by this?

2. Is it difficult to be a “peacemaker” or is it easy? Do you recall what Jesus said about “peacemakers?” See Matthew 5:9? How does a person go about being a peacemaker?
3. Is it possible to live at peace with everyone? See Romans 12:18.
4. Can the study of the Bible be exciting and stimulating? What can make it so?
5. Is heaven worth working for? Is the person who expends effort to get to heaven more likely to get there than the person who makes no effort?
6. How does a person go about adding to his life the various virtues listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7?
7. The apostle Peter urged Christians to make their “calling and election sure.” How do Christians go about making their “calling and election sure?”
8. Is it possible for a person to live a life that is absolutely spotless and blameless? If it is not possible to live absolutely spotless and blameless, does that mean that a person should not even try? How can a Christian remove spots and blame from his life?
9. Does a person have to obey the gospel in order to be saved? See 2 Thessalonians 1:8. What does it mean to “obey the gospel?”

## **ELDERS AND DEACONS, SELECT !**

The leadership of a congregation is outlined in the New Testament. The leadership should be composed of elders and deacons.

### **KEEP WATCH OVER YOURSELVES AND ALL THE FLOCK.**

The apostle Paul had many things to say to the elders of the church in Ephesus, but he did not want to go to Ephesus because he knew that he would have to spend some time there if he did. So he invited the elders to meet him at Miletus (Acts 20:17). During the course of Paul’s conversation with the elders he said, “**Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of**



**which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood”** (Acts 20:28). Notice that the elders of the church were also referred to as “overseers” and “shepherds.” Each of these terms refers to a different aspect of the same office. The Greek word that is here translated as “overseer” is also often translated as “bishop.”

### **QUALIFICATIONS FOR OVERSEERS:**

Not every man is qualified to be an overseer of a congregation of God’s people. The apostle Paul wrote a list of the characteristics a man should have in order to qualify. He said, **“Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap”** (1Timothy 3:2-7). A similar list is found in Titus 1:6-9.

### **QUALIFICATIONS FOR DEACONS.**

There were certain men in the early churches who helped the elders look after the congregation. They were called “deacons.” The word “deacon” means “a servant.” The apostle Paul also wrote a list of qualifications for deacons. He said, **“Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus”** (1Timothy 3:8-13).

### **HELP ELDERS FINANCIALLY.**

A congregation should help its elders financially if they need it. The apostle Paul said, **“The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching”** (1 Timothy 5:17).

### **DO NOT SUBJECT THE ELDERS TO UNREASONABLE CRITICISM.**

It is not unusual for the elders of a congregation to be subjected to criticism. So they need protection against false accusations. The apostle Paul said, **“Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning”** (1 Timothy 5:19-20).

### **DO NOT APPOINT ELDERS AND DEACONS TOO QUICKLY.**

A congregation should go slow in selecting its leadership. The apostle Paul said, **“Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure”** (1 Timothy 5:22).

### **SUBMIT TO THE AUTHORITY OF YOUR LEADERS.**

The members of a congregation should cooperate with their elders. The book of Hebrews says, **“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you”** (Hebrews 13:17).

### **BE EAGER TO SERVE AS ELDER.**

Some men are hesitant to serve in the eldership, but the apostle Peter said that men should be willing to serve. He wrote, **“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve”** (1 Peter 5:1-2).

### **BE EXAMPLES TO THE FLOCK.**

The elders of a congregation should not be dictators. The apostle Peter said, **“not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock”** (1 Peter 5:3).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Did the congregation in the city of Ephesus have more than one elder in its leadership? See Acts 20:17. Are the elders of a congregation the same as its overseers and shepherds? See acts 20:28.
2. Is there an advantage in having a plurality of elders over a congregation? If so, what is it?
3. Do you think it likely that a man could have the qualifications required of elders without his planning and preparing for it? How early in life should a man start to prepare himself to be an elder?
4. How old should a man be before he is selected to serve as an elder? Give reasons for your answer.
5. Does the New Testament say anything about women serving as elders? Do women qualify for the eldership? See 1 Timothy 3:2.
6. Can you detect any differences between the qualifications for elders and the qualifications for deacons? If you can, what are the differences?
7. Does it matter whether or not a congregation is organized after the scriptural pattern? What is a congregation to do if it does not have any qualified men to serve as elders?
8. What did the apostle Peter mean when he said (1 Peter 5:3) that overseers should not lord it over the flock?

**ENCOURAGE !**

The New Testament teaches that Christians should encourage each other. Here are some of the passages that teach this:

**IF YOU HAVE A GIFT FOR ENCOURAGING, USE IT.**

Some people are remarkably adept at encouraging others. This is a rare gift. The apostle Paul wrote concerning the various gifts that people have. He said, **“If it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully”** (Romans 12:8).

### **IF A BROTHER CAN SPEAK WELL IN PUBLIC, HE SHOULD SPEAK ENCOURAGINGLY.**

The word “prophesy” has two meanings in the New Testament. One of the meanings is to foretell the future. The other meaning is to speak out for the Lord. If a brother knows the scriptures well, and has the ability to encourage others by using the scriptures, he should do it. The apostle Paul wrote, **“For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged”** (1 Corinthians 14:31).

### **COMFORT THOSE WHO ARE IN TROUBLE.**

One reason why God comforts people is so they will learn to comfort others. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God”** (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

### **COMFORT A RESTORED MEMBER OF THE CHURCH.**

A brother or a sister who repents of sins and turns from evil should be accepted and comforted by the members of the congregation. The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth concerning a brother, who had been excluded from fellowship, but who had repented and returned. Paul advised concerning this brother, **“Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow”** (2 Corinthians 2:7).

### **COMFORT ONE ANOTHER WITH THE LORD’S RETURN.**

Some of the brethren in the city of Thessalonika were worried about those of their number who had died. They apparently feared that the dead would not get to be with the Lord, since they had died before He returned. The apostle Paul told them not to worry about the dead saints, because Jesus would bring them with Him when He returns. Continuing the thought of Jesus’ return, Paul said, **“After that, we who are still alive and are left will**

**be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words”** (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18). Paul gave a similar admonition in 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

### **ENCOURAGE THE TIMID (FAINTHEARTED).**

Sometimes a brother or a sister is discouraged and needs someone to cheer him up. This is a service that Christians can render to each other. The apostle Paul wrote, **“And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone”** (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

### **AN EVANGELIST SHOULD GIVE ATTENTION TO EXHORTATION.**

It is not sufficient for an evangelist simply to lay out Biblical truths before the people. A part of his job is to encourage people. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, who was a young evangelist, as follows, **“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction”** (2 Timothy 4:2).

To Titus, who was also an evangelist, Paul wrote, **“These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you”** (Titus 2:15).

### **EXHORT AN OLD MAN AS A FATHER AND A YOUNG MAN AS A BROTHER.**

Even old people need encouragement. They are frequently not well, and they often get discouraged. Sometimes they are lonely and feel that they are of no use to anyone. The apostle Paul wrote to young Timothy, saying, **“Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers”** (1 Timothy 5:1).

Also young people in the church need encouragement. Paul also wrote to Titus that he should encourage the young men. Paul said, **“Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled”** (Titus 2:6).

### **URGE WORKERS TO BE HELPFUL.**

Some of the early Christians were slaves and some were slaveholders. What attitude should Christian slaves have to their Christian masters? Should they rebel against them? Paul said, “No.” He gave them this advice: **“Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them**

**because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them.** (1 Timothy 6:2).

Due to Jesus' influence, slavery is no longer rampant, yet everyone who works for someone else can learn from what Paul wrote regarding slaves.

### **ELDERS SHOULD EXHORT THOSE WHO CONTRADICT THE TEACHING.**

Many people hold opinions that contradict what the Bible says. When this occurs, the elders [overseers] of a congregation have the responsibility to help people learn the truth. Paul said, **“He [an elder, or bishop] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it”** (Titus 1:9).

### **EXHORT ONE ANOTHER DAILY.**

If everyone were to be exhorted daily, a lot of sins would be avoided. The writer of the book of Hebrews said, **“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness”** (Hebrews 3:13).

Every day brings the day nearer on which Jesus will reappear. Therefore, we need to be exhorting one another. The writer of Hebrews said, **“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching”** (Hebrews 10:25).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Did anyone try to encourage you when you were a new Christian?  
Please,  
tell about it, if anyone did? How was the encouraging done, and how did you respond to it?
2. Do you feel that you received enough encouragement when you were a new Christian? What kind of encouragement would you liked to have received?

3. Have you ever tried to encourage a weak Christian? If you have, how did it turn out? Did you feel good about it? Was your encouraging helpful?
4. What words would you use to encourage someone who is downcast? What would you say to a person who has lost a loved one? What would you say to someone who is sick?
5. Do you think there are enough encouragers? What can be done to get more people to be encouragers? Do you suppose a program for training encouragers would be helpful?
6. Do you feel that you are currently getting enough encouragement? What do you suggest might be done to get more encouragement for you?
7. Do you like for teachers of the Bible and preachers of the gospel to be encouragers? If so, why?
8. What can be done to encourage young people? Can young people become encouragers? How can they become that? Whom can they encourage?
9. What can be done to encourage old people? Who should do this? How should they do it?
10. Have you ever made hospital calls? Would that be a good thing for you to do? Have you ever visited the jails? Would that be good thing to do?
11. Does a person have to be specially chosen by the church in order to be an encourager, or can everyone in the church do it? How can a person get started being an encourager?

## **END TIME: LOOK UP IN THE !**

The world will come to an end. The New Testament tells how people should act when they see the end approaching.

**DON'T BELIEVE THOSE WHO SAY CHRIST IS HERE OR THERE.**

When Jesus returns everyone will know it (Luke 17:23-24; Revelation 1:7). Jesus warned, **“At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--it that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.”** (Matthew 24:23-25). This warning is also found in Mark 13:21-22. See also Luke 21:8.

### **DON'T GO OUT TO FIND CHRIST.**

No one will need to go out in search of Christ when He returns. He will find you (Matthew 24:31). Jesus said, **“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it”** (Matthew 24:26). A similar statement is found in Luke 17:23.

### **LEARN A LESSON FROM THE FIG TREE.**

Everyone will know when the end is at hand. Jesus said, **“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so when you see all these things, you will know that it is near, right at the door”** (Matthew 24:32-33). The same is found in Mark 13:28-29.

### **KEEP WATCH.**

Believers should be on the lookout for their Lord's return. Jesus said, **“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come”** (Matthew 24: 42). Similar words are found in Mark 13:33.

### **BE READY.**

Christians should stay prepared to greet their Lord. Jesus said, **“So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him”** (Matthew 24:44).

### **BE ON GUARD.**

Jesus forewarned people of His return. He did this so they could be ready. He said, **“So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time”** (Mark 13:23).

### **DON'T LET HIM FIND YOU SLEEPING.**



Jesus wants to find His people awake spiritually when He returns. Jesus said, **“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back--whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”** (Mark 13:35-37). The apostle Paul said that Christians should wake up (Romans 13:11-12).

### **DON'T GO BACK FOR ANYTHING.**

Material goods will be of no use to anyone when Jesus returns. Jesus said, **“On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything”** (Luke 17:31).

### **REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE.**

People should not hang their hearts on this world, which will pass away, nor should they look back longingly at this world when Jesus returns. They should not be like Lot's wife, who looked back at Sodom and was turned to a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). Jesus said, **“Remember Lot's wife”** (Luke 17:32).

### **DON'T BE FRIGHTENED.**

People should not be frightened by the upheavals of history. Jesus said, **“When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away”** (Luke 21:9).

### **LOOK UP AND LIFT UP YOUR HEADS.**

The coming end of the world should not frighten Christian people. Jesus said, **“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh”** (Luke 21:28 KJV).

### **BE CAREFUL THAT YOUR HEART IS NOT WEIGHED DOWN.**

Jesus' return will not be pleasant for those whose hearts are weighed down by sin. Jesus said, **“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap”** (Luke 21:34).

**WATCH AND PRAY.**

Christ's people should watch and pray in order to escape the destruction that is coming upon the earth. Jesus said, **"Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man"** (Luke 21:36).

**BE GENTLE, BECAUSE THE LORD IS NEAR.**

Those who love Jesus should be gentle in dealing with others, because Jesus may come soon. The apostle Paul wrote, **"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near"** (Philippians 4:5).

**DON'T LET ANYONE DECEIVE YOU.**

There are certain things that will happen before Jesus comes again. The apostle Paul wrote about a religious leader, whom he called the "man of lawlessness." This man will set himself up to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). He will do counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders in order to deceive people (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). Concerning this Paul wrote, **"Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction"** (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

**TRAIN YOURSELF TO BE GODLY.**

Many believers will depart from the faith as the end approaches. They will follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons (1 Timothy 4:1). The apostle Paul wrote, **"Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly"** (1 Timothy 4:7).

**HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH WICKED PEOPLE.**

The morals of some people will be extremely low toward the end. The apostle Paul wrote, **"There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them"** (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

### **ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER AS YOU SEE THE DAY APPROACHING.**

The Book of Hebrews says, **“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching”** (Hebrews 10:25). The day to which the author of the book of Hebrews referred is, in all likelihood, the day on which Jesus will return, for in Hebrews 10:37 he said, **“He who is coming will come and will not delay.”**

### **DON'T HOARD UP WEALTH.**

To greedy rich people James wrote, **“Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days”** (James 5:3).

### **BE PATIENT, STAND FIRM.**

It would be a tragedy for a person, after having been a faithful Christian all of his life, to give up his faith just before the Lord returns. James wrote, **“You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near”** (James 5:8).

### **BE CLEAR MINDED AND SELF-CONTROLLED.**

The apostle Peter wrote, **“The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray”** (1 Peter 4:7).

### **DON'T BE SURPRISED AT WHAT SCOFFERS SAY.**

The apostle Peter warned, **“First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this ‘coming’ he promised?’ Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation”** (2 Peter 3:3-4).

### **DON'T FORGET THAT THE LORD COUNTS TIME DIFFERENT FROM THE WAY WE DO.**

The apostle Peter wrote, **“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day”** (2 Peter 3:8).

### **LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY AND SPEED ITS COMING.**

The apostle Peter wrote, **“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming”** (2 Peter 3:11-12).

**MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO BE FOUND SPOTLESS, BLAMELESS AND AT PEACE WITH HIM.**

The apostle Peter admonished, **“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make very effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him”** (2 Peter 3:14).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. How should people react to false Christs and false prophets?
2. What lesson can be learned from the fig tree?
3. Why should a person keep watch for the Lord’s return? How does a person keep watch? What will happen if he does not keep watch?
4. What can a person do to get ready for Christ’s return? Does it make any difference whether or not a person is ready? Will all believers be saved whether they are ready or not?
5. How would you describe the difference between a Christian that is sleeping and one that is awake?
6. What can be learned from the fate of Lot’s wife?
7. How do dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life weigh a person’s heart down? (Luke 21:34).
8. Why should the nearness of the day of Jesus’ return make people want to be gentle (Philippians 4:5) in dealing with others?
9. What is wrong with hoarding up wealth in the last days (James 5:3)?
10. Does it disappoint you that after almost two thousand years, the Lord has still not returned?

11. How can we “speed the coming” (2 Peter 3:11-12) of the day of God?
12. How can a person be at peace with the Lord (2 Peter 3:14)?

## **EVANGELIZE THE LOST**

The expression “to evangelize” means to spread the good news about something. Jesus wants His followers to tell all people the good news that He was resurrected and that they also can be resurrected to life.

### **ASK THE LORD TO SEND OUT WORKERS.**

Jesus instructed His disciples to pray that God would send out workers to teach the gospel. He said, **“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field”** (Matthew 9:37-38).

### **GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES.**

Shortly before Jesus ascended to heaven, He commanded His apostles to go and make disciples of all nations. Jesus said, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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”** (Matthew 28:18-19). A similar command can be found in Mark 16:15.

### **PREACH REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS.**

Calling people to repentance is a necessary part of preaching. Jesus said, **“And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”** (Luke 24:47).

### **OPEN YOUR EYES AND LOOK AT THE FIELDS.**

When Jesus and His followers were passing through Samaria, He fell into conversation with a Samaritan woman, who had come to a well to get water. In the course of Jesus’ conversation with her, the woman came to believe in Him. Her reaction prompted Jesus to remind His disciples that many people were ready to receive the gospel. He said, **“Do you not say,**

**‘Four months more and then the harvest?’ I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (John 4:35).**

### **PAY YOUR PREACHER.**

The people who receive the gospel should help take care of the needs of those who bring the gospel to them. The apostle Paul said, **“For it is written in the Law of Moses: ‘Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.’ Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest”** (1 Corinthians 9:9-10).

Paul also said, **“Don’t you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel”** (1 Corinthians 9:13-14).

### **DON’T BE ASHAMED TO TESTIFY ABOUT OUR LORD.**

Some people are afraid to own up to their being Christian. The apostle Paul said, however, **“So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner”** (2 Timothy 1:8).

### **ENTRUST THE TEACHING TO RELIABLE MEN.**

Every evangelist should train someone to help him or someone to replace him. The apostle Paul said, **“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others”** (2 Timothy 2:2).

### **PREACH THE WORD.**

The apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to speak out and not to be afraid. He said, **“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction”** (2 Timothy 4:2).

### **DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST.**

Timothy was an “evangelist.” That is, he went from place to place telling people about Jesus. The apostle Paul gave Timothy, and all evangelists, the following advice: He said, **“But you, keep your head in all**

**situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5).**

### **TURN A SINNER FROM THE ERROR OF HIS WAY.**

Every Christian should try to help people escape death. James wrote, **“Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).**

### **BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER TO EVERYONE WHO ASKS YOU.**

Every Christian, whether man or woman, boy or girl, should be prepared to tell people about Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter said, **“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).**

### **SNATCH PEOPLE FROM THE FIRE.**

When someone converts a sinner, it is like snatching him from the fire. Jude wrote, **“Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear--hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh” (Jude 22-23).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Jesus commissioned His apostles to go and teach all nations. Did Jesus intend for His apostles to teach others also to do what He had commissioned them to do? See Matthew 28:20. Does the great commission apply to us today?
2. Do you think the field is “ripe for harvest” where you are? Should a Christian continue to evangelize where he is, even if the field where he is does not appear to be ripe? Are there some places in the world where the fields may be riper?
3. Should Jesus’ followers today still pray that God would send workers to teach the lost? How would a person decide whether or not he or she should go and teach the lost?
4. Why is the preaching of repentance a necessary part of evangelizing?

5. Why are some people afraid to admit that they are Christians? How can people overcome this fear? How can Christians prepare themselves to give the reason for the hope that they have?
6. If someone turns a sinner from his sinful ways, how does that “cover over a multitude of sins?”
7. Have you ever snatched anyone “from the fire” by teaching him the gospel? Was that person grateful to you afterwards? How did that person express his or her gratitude to you?

## **EXHORTATIONS, HEED THE !**

Here are a few of the passages in the New Testament that contain exhortations and warnings concerning various aspects of the Christian life.

### **DON'T RECEIVE GOD'S GRACE IN VAIN.**

Because God is gracious, He sent His Son to save people from their sins. His grace, however, will not help people unless they respond to it in the right way. The apostle Paul said, **“As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain”** (2 Corinthians 6:1).

### **PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD.**

God has taken elaborate steps to inform people (through the Old and New Testaments) of His will, and He has consistently punished those who have disregarded what He has said. In view of this, the writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away”** (Hebrews 2:1).

### **DON'T TURN AWAY FROM GOD.**

The children of Israel frequently turned away from God. The writer of the book of Hebrews warned Christians not to do the same. He said, **“See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God”** (Hebrews 3:12).

### **DON'T FALL SHORT.**



Most of the children of Israel who were over forty years of age at the time they left Egypt were not permitted to enter the Promised Land. They were not permitted to enter because of their disobedience.

Christians must be careful not to fall short, as the children of Israel did, if they desire to enter heaven. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it”** (Hebrews 4:1).

### **MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENTER THE PROMISED REST.**

The joy of being in heaven will be so great that it will be worth every sacrifice that it takes to get there. The writer of the book of Hebrews said, **“Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience”** (Hebrews 4:11).

### **GO ON TO MATURITY.**

Just as a baby is not fully-grown when it first comes into the world, so a Christian is not fully mature when he is first born into Christ’s kingdom. The book of Hebrews says, **“Therefore let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God”** (Hebrews 6:1).

### **DON’T THROW AWAY YOUR CONFIDENCE.**

In spite of the difficulties that Christians have sometimes been called upon to endure (as described in Hebrews 10:32-34), they should not lose hope. The book of Hebrews says, **“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded”** (Hebrews 10:35).

### **RUN THE RACE WITH PERSEVERANCE.**

The author of the letter to the Hebrews calls upon Christians to persevere in the race toward heaven. He said, **“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us”** (Hebrews 12:1). Some of the faithful people in the “cloud of witnesses,” of whom the book of Hebrews speaks, are named in Hebrews chapter eleven.

## **STRENGTHEN YOUR ARMS AND KNEES; MAKE YOUR PATH LEVEL.**

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews incorporated exhortations from the Old Testament into his letter. He said, **“Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees (from Isaiah 35:3). ‘Make level paths for your feet’ (from Proverbs 4:26-27) so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed” (Hebrews 12:12-13).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. How should people respond to God’s grace? Will God’s grace be sufficient to save everyone, regardless of what he does?
2. Will God’s grace save all Christians, regardless of how they live?
3. Have you ever in your lifetime seen any evidence that God punishes the people who disobey Him? Please cite some examples if you can.
4. Is there any earthly joy so great that it is worth risking the loss of heaven for?
5. How would you describe a mature Christian? What are some of the things that help a Christian to grow to maturity?
6. How would you describe the “confidence” of which Hebrews 10:35 speaks? What is the source of a Christian’s confidence? See Hebrews 10:36-39.
7. What are some of the things that slow Christians down and keep them from running the Christian race as persistently as they should? How can Christians get rid of things that slow them down?
8. What are the rewards for Christians who run successfully? Are Christians likely to get to heaven if they don’t try?

## **FALL AWAY, DON'T !**

Is it possible for Christians to fall away and be lost? Some people doubt it. If the danger exists, is it better to know about it, or not? What does the New Testament say about this?

### **DON'T BE ARROGANT.**

The Jews were God's chosen people. They were chosen to be the people through whom the Savior would come into the world. In spite of this, some of them did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Those who did not believe lost their identity as God's chosen people. The apostle Paul said, "**They [the Jews] were broken off because of unbelief.**" Addressing Gentile believers, Paul said, "**and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches (the Jews), he will not spare you either**" (Romans 11:20-21).

Paul was here cautioning Gentile Christians not to be arrogant and to suppose that they would be kept in God's family no matter what they did. They should be afraid that the same thing that happened to unbelieving Jews might happen to them if they were unfaithful.

### **BE CAREFUL YOU DON'T FALL.**

A Christian should not be overconfident, for the devil is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). The apostle Paul said, "**So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall**" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

### **DON'T TRY TO BE JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW [OF MOSES].**

Some of the early Christians wanted to keep the Law of Moses and follow Jesus at the same time. The apostle Paul pointed out that this is not possible. He wrote, "**You who are trying to be justified by the law [of Moses] have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace**" (Galatians 5:4).

### **BE CAREFUL THAT NONE FALL SHORT.**

Many of the children of Israel were prevented from entering the promised land because of the sins they committed in the wilderness. Some of them worshipped idols, some committed fornication, and some grumbled against God. If Christians today commit these sins (and other sins like

them), it may prevent them from entering into the heavenly rest that God has promised. The book of Hebrews says, **“Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it”** (Hebrews 4:1).

### **SEE THAT NO ONE MISSES THE GRACE OF GOD**

Occasionally a tragic situation might develop within a congregation, which would cause many people to lose their faith. Each member of the church should be careful that nothing of that sort ever happens. The book of Hebrews says, **“See to it that no one misses the grace of God. and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many”** (Hebrews 12:15).

### **SEE THAT NO ONE IS SEXUALLY IMMORAL, OR GODLESS LIKE ESAU.**

Two of the “bitter roots” that can cause trouble in a congregation are fornication and godlessness. The book of Hebrews says, **“See that no one is sexually immoral [a fornicator], or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son”** (Hebrews 12:16). A similarity between the sin of Esau and the sin of fornication may not be immediately apparent. There is, however, some similarity between them. Esau was not thinking about the future consequences of his deeds when he sold his birthright but only about gratifying his immediate desires. The same is true of fornicators.

### **MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE.**

Each Christian has been called by God and elected to be in God’s family. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”** ( 2 Peter 1:10-11).

It may seem to some that Peter should have spoken first about a Christian’s “election” and then mentioned his “calling,” but Peter got the order right. Each person is first “called” by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14), and if he responds to it, he is then “elected” to be in God’s family (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The important thing to notice here is that a person’s calling and election have to be “made sure.” According to Calvinistic theory, once a person is saved, he is saved for eternity and there is nothing he can do that would cause him to lose his salvation. If the Calvinistic theory were correct,

it is difficult to see why the apostles would have warned that a Christian should be careful not to fall.

### **DON'T FALL FROM YOUR SECURE POSITION.**

It is dangerous for a Christian to come under the influence of a lawless person. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position”** (2 Peter 3:17).

### **REPENT AND DO THE THINGS YOU DID AT FIRST.**

One of the greatest dangers for a congregation of Christian people is that it might lose its first love. When this happens, it makes Jesus very sad. That is why Jesus dictated the following message for the church in Ephesus. He said, **“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place”** (Revelation 2:4-5).

If a congregation's “lampstand” is removed from its place, it is a very serious matter, for it means that the whole congregation is no longer recognized as belonging to the Lord.

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS**

1. Why do some people fall away in the time of persecution? Is it likely that a time of persecution will come again? Do you think it might come in your lifetime? What would you do if it did?
2. What did the apostle Paul mean to say when he wrote that unbelieving Jews had been “broken off?” Did their unbelief affect their standing with God?
3. Is it possible for a Christian to be overconfident of his or her salvation?
4. Will God actually break Christians out of the family tree? See Romans 11:22.

5. Can the Law of Moses justify anyone? See Galatians 2:16. Since no one can be justified by keeping the Law of Moses, does that fact imply that Christians do not need to do what is written in the New Testament?

6. Do Christians have the responsibility of protecting each other from falling away? If they do, how should they do this? Should it be done by force?

7. Does a Christian have to be careful lest he falls short of entering into his heavenly rest? Do his actions in any way affect whether or not he will go to heaven?

8. What was Esau's birthright? Why did he not value it? Why did he sell it? Who bought it? See Genesis 25:29-34. Did Esau ever get his birthright back? See Hebrews 12:17.

9. If a Christian falls away, can he get his birthright back? See Acts 8:22.

10. Why does a person's "calling and election" have to be "made sure?" See 2 Peter 1:10-11. What might happen if a person's "calling and election" are not made sure?

11. What are some of the things that will keep believers from falling? See 2 Peter 1:5-8.

12. Does Jesus hold it against Christians who lose their first love? How can Christians avoid losing their first love? How does repentance help?

13. If the "lampstand" of a congregation were to be removed from its place, what would that mean? Can whole congregations fall away? How can they avoid falling away?

## **FALSE TEACHERS, DON'T ASSOCIATE WITH !**

The New Testament warns against false teachers.

**WATCH OUT FOR FALSE PROPHETS.**

It is difficult for an honest person to accept that there are people who would knowingly misrepresent what God has said, but apparently there are such people. Jesus said, **“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruits you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?”** (Matthew 7:15-16). False prophets can be recognized by the fruits they produce.

### **BE ON GUARD AGAINST THOSE WHO DISTORT THE TRUTH.**

The apostle Paul foretold that false teachers would arise. He said that they would even arise from among Christians. He said, **“Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard”** (Acts 20:30-31)!

### **KEEP AWAY FROM THOSE WHO TEACH CONTRARY TO WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED.**

If someone teaches contrary to what the New Testament teaches, that person makes it more difficult for others to learn the truth. That is why Paul urged, **“I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people”** (Romans 16:17-18).

### **DON’T PREACH A DIFFERENT GOSPEL.**

It is natural for people to want to hear something new, but the gospel of Jesus Christ is itself something new. It stays new all the time, and it does not need to be updated. The apostle Paul warned, **“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned”** (Galatians 1:8)!

It is a serious matter if someone tries to preach a new gospel. Even more pointedly than above, Paul wrote, **“As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned”**(Galatians 1:9)!

### **LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU WITH EMPTY WORDS.**

One of the easiest ways to deceive people is to use big words and fancy phrases that sound good but that have no truth in them. That is why the apostle Paul said, **“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for**

**because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient"** (Ephesians 5:6).

### **DON'T BE PARTNERS WITH THOSE WHO ARE IMMORAL, IMPURE, OR GREEDY.**

The apostle Paul warned faithful brethren in Ephesus not to have anything to do with people who are immoral, impure, or greedy (Ephesians 5:5-7). He said, **"Therefore do not be partners with them"** (Ephesians 5:7).

### **DO NOT ASSOCIATE WITH A BROTHER WHO DOES NOT OBEY THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.**

Some of the brethren in Thessalonika seem to have been busybodies and did not want to work. The apostle Paul instructed them in a letter to settle down, go to work, and earn their own food. To the church Paul wrote, **"If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother"** (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

### **DO NOT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH A DIVISIVE BROTHER AFTER YOU HAVE WARNED HIM TWICE.**

People who are contentious often cause great dissension. If they are allowed to go unchecked, they can do much damage to a congregation. Therefore, the apostle Paul wrote to Titus, **"Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned"** (Titus 3:10-11).

### **DON'T BELIEVE EVERY SPIRIT.**

There were false prophets and false teachers in the first century, just as there are today. The apostle John wrote, **"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world"** (1 John 4:1).

False teachers often claim to have received a special revelation from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, however, would not tell anyone anything that contradicts what He inspired holy men to write in the New Testament. Therefore, all that a person has to do in order to check up on those who



claim to have received a message from the Holy Spirit is to compare what they say with the New Testament.

### **DON'T WELCOME ANYONE WHO DOES NOT BRING THIS TEACHING.**

Believers need to be familiar with the teaching of the Bible so they can identify false teaching. Once a person has been identified as a false teacher, faithful brethren should not welcome him into their homes. The apostle John wrote, **“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him”** (2 John 10).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Does it make any difference what a person teaches? Will it affect his salvation if he preaches “another gospel?” Will it affect the salvation of others if he preaches “another gospel?”
2. If a brother is distorting the truth and drawing disciples away after him, what should be done?
3. How should a congregation go about isolating those who cause divisions?
4. Whose responsibility is it to see that a false teacher does not mislead you? Is it your responsibility? Or is it the responsibility of the elders of the congregation?
5. How can a person tell whether or not someone’s words are “empty” (Ephesians 5:6)? What does God think of people whose words are empty of truth?
6. Does it matter who Christian people associate with in the work of the Lord? Should they associate with those who deceive people with empty words? See Ephesians 5:7
7. The apostle Paul told the Thessalonians, that they should not associate with a certain brother, who did not obey the instructions that Paul had written in a letter (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). Question: Should congregations today disassociate themselves from a brother who does not follow what Paul and other inspired brethren wrote in the New Testament?

8. If someone claims today that he is speaking through the Holy Spirit, does that make his teaching more likely to be true, or less likely to be true?
9. Does it take a lot of courage for a congregation to ostracize a false teacher? Do you know of any congregation that has carried this out? If you do, please tell what came from it.

## **FOLLOW !**

We are told in the New Testament to follow certain examples.

### **BE IMITATORS OF GOD.**

Just as children learn from their earthly fathers, so people should learn from God, their heavenly Father. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God”** (Ephesians 5:1-2). Jesus imitated God, and we should imitate Jesus. If we do this, it will make us beloved children of God.

### **TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW JESUS.**

Those who choose to follow Jesus must be prepared to suffer for their choice, if need be. Jesus said, **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it”** (Matthew 16:24-25).

### **FOLLOW JESUS.**

Some religious leaders have led people into paths of darkness, but not Jesus. Jesus leads people into paths of light. He said, **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”** (John 8:12).

### **SERVE JESUS.**

Great blessings will come to those who serve Jesus and who follow Him. They will be permitted to be with Jesus forever, and God will honor them. Jesus said, **“Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am,**

**my servant also will be. My father will honor the one who serves me”** (John 12:26).

### **DO AS JESUS DID.**

At Jesus’ last Passover meal, He wrapped a towel around His waist, poured water into a basin, and washed His disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel. He said to them, **“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them”** (John 13:15-17).

### **FOLLOW IN CHRIST’S STEPS.**

At some time or another, almost everyone who follows Jesus is called upon to suffer unjustly. The apostle Peter wrote, **“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps”** (1 Peter 2:21). Christ is our pattern. We should be willing to suffer for Christ if we are called upon to do so.

### **WALK AS JESUS WALKED.**

Everything that Jesus taught is important. Unless His followers do what He said, they cannot claim to be His disciples. The apostle John wrote, **“Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did”** (1 John 2:6). Jesus is our example in everything.

### **IMITATE THE APOSTLE PAUL.**

The apostle Paul felt that the Gentiles, whom he had taught to believe in Jesus, were his children. He wrote to the Corinthians, **“Therefore I urge you to imitate me”** (1 Corinthians 4:16).

### **FOLLOW PAUL’S EXAMPLE.**

The reason why Paul makes such a good example for people to follow is that he was imitating Jesus. Paul wrote, **“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ”** (1 Corinthians 11:1).

### **BECOME LIKE THE APOSTLE PAUL.**

The apostle Paul gave up many of his Jewish customs. He no longer followed either the law of the Old Testament or human traditions. In many ways, he had become like the Gentiles. Therefore, he felt it was not

unreasonable for him to ask the Gentiles, who had become Christians, to give up any of their ways that contradicted the teaching and example of Jesus. He wrote, **“I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you”** (Galatians 4:12).

### **JOIN OTHERS IN FOLLOWING PAUL’S EXAMPLE**

The apostle Paul encouraged brethren everywhere to live in a specific way. He had given them a pattern to follow. He wrote, **“Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you”** (Philippians 3:17).

Although the apostle Paul could have taken money from the people among whom he worked, he did not do so. He wanted to set an example by working to support himself. He wrote, **“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you”** (2 Thessalonians 3:6-8).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. What are some of the attributes of God, which people should imitate?
2. What are some of the “crosses” that Jesus’ followers are sometimes called upon to bear?
3. How can a person find his life by losing it?
4. In what way will God honor those who serve Jesus and follow Him?
5. Jesus washed His disciples’ feet. What can be learned from this?
6. How should a follower of Jesus react when he is forced to suffer unjustly?
7. Please tell some of the things that Jesus has taught you to do.

8. What can be learned from the apostle Paul? What things do you see in the life of Paul that would be good to follow?
9. Is there anyone among your acquaintances whom you would like to follow? What qualities do you see in them that you would like to imitate?
10. Does the Christian life have a pattern to it? How would you describe the pattern?
11. Why is it good for teachers and preachers to support themselves?

## **FORGIVE !**

It is important that people learn to forgive. If people do not learn to forgive, God will not forgive them.

### **FORGIVE THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST YOU.**

A part of the prayer that is called “the Lord’s prayer” says, “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). By way of explanation, Jesus said, **“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins”** (Matthew 6:14-15).

### **KEEP ON FORGIVING.**

Jesus wants people to forgive over and over again, if necessary. Simon Peter came to Jesus and asked, **“Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?”** Peter probably thought seven times was very many, possibly even the limit. Jesus answered, **“I tell you, not seven times, but seventy seven times”** (Matthew 18:21-22). There appears to be no limit to the number of times that we should be willing to forgive a person. Similar teaching can be found in Luke 17:3-4.

### **FORGIVE YOUR BROTHER FROM YOUR HEART.**

Jesus told a story about a king who severely punished one of his servants who was unforgiving. After Jesus had told the story He said, **“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart”** (Matthew 18:35). It is not enough to say, “I forgive you,” without really meaning it. It must be from the heart.

### **WHEN YOU STAND PRAYING, FORGIVE.**

Jesus said that God would grant whatever a person asks in prayer if that person believes (Mark 11:22-24). Jesus qualified this statement, however, by saying, **“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins”** (Mark 11:25).

### **FORGIVE.**

In His Sermon on the Plain, Jesus said, **“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven”** (Luke 6:37).

### **REBUKE AND FORGIVE YOUR BROTHER.**

It takes a lot of courage to rebuke a person. Most people want to get along with others and do not like to have unpleasant experiences with them. For that reason, many people do not rebuke others even when they deserve it. Jesus said, **“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him”** (Luke 17:3). If the person whom we rebuke repents, we should be quick to forgive him.

### **FORGIVE AND COMFORT A BROTHER WHO HAS BEEN DISCIPLINED PROVIDED HE REPENTS.**

There was a brother in the church in Corinth, who had sinned and from whom the church had withdrawn its fellowship. Paul said, in his second letter to the Corinthian church, that the time had come for them to forgive that brother and to restore him to fellowship. Paul wrote, **“The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow”** (2 Corinthians 2:6-7). The withdrawal of fellowship from a brother is a temporary measure, which is designed to cause him to repent and to reform his life. Once he has done that, he should be forgiven and restored to fellowship.

**BE COMPASSIONATE AND FORGIVE.**

People should be careful not to hold a grudge. If anyone holds a grudge for a long time, it does not speak well for the person who holds it. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”** (Ephesians 4:32). Christians should be grateful for the forgiveness that they have received through Christ. Their being forgiven should make them anxious to forgive others.

**BEAR WITH EACH OTHER AND FORGIVE.**

If people expect others to put up with their weaknesses, they should be willing to put up with the weaknesses of others. The apostle Paul wrote to the brethren at Colosse, **“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you”** (Colossians 3:13).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Why does God want us to forgive others? What difference does it make to Him whether or not we forgive others?
2. Have you ever forgiven anyone many times for the same offense? If so, please tell about it.
3. If a person asks for our forgiveness, do we have a choice whether or not we should forgive him?
4. Should we only rebuke those people who sin against us personally, or should we point out the mistakes of one and all?
5. How should we feel when someone justly rebukes us? How should we feel if someone rebukes us unjustly?
6. Are we obligated to forgive people even if they do not repent of the wrong they did? Do you recall what Jesus said on the cross regarding His enemies? Look at Luke 23:34.
7. Is it proper for a church to withdraw its fellowship from a brother or a sister who persists in a grievous sin?

8. If a brother, from whom fellowship has been withdrawn, repents and changes his life, should the church forgive and restore that person to fellowship?

## **PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE !**

There is much to be found in the New Testament about how Christians should think and act in order to prepare for their eternal future.

### **CONTINUE IN YOUR FAITH, ESTABLISHED AND FIRM.**

The gospel of Christ holds out the hope of eternal life for Christians who continue in faith. The apostle Paul said, **“But now he [God] has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation--if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel”** (Colossians 1:22-23).

### **SET YOUR HEART ON THINGS ABOVE.**

Christians should be longing to be with Christ. The apostle Paul said, **“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God”** (Colossians 3:1).

### **DON’T SET YOUR MIND ON EARTHLY THINGS.**

Christians should be thinking about how wonderful it will be when they are finally with Christ in heaven. **“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things”** (Colossians 3:2).

### **BE WILLING TO DIE WITH CHRIST (IN BAPTISM).**

People who have been scripturally baptized were baptized into Christ’s death (Romans 6:3-4). They became united with Christ in His death (Romans 6:5). This affects a person’s eternal state, for the apostle Paul said, **“Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him”** (2 Timothy 2:11). (Note: This passage could possibly refer to a Christian’s being willing to endure persecution unto death. While it is true that a Christian should be willing to endure persecution, this thought may



not be what the apostle Paul had in mind in this verse. The word “died,” being in the past tense, suggests that the people to whom Paul was writing had already died in some way.)

### **ENDURE.**

Great reward is promised to those who endure in spite of trials and tribulations. The apostle Paul said, **“If we endure we will also reign with him”** (2 Timothy 2:12).

### **DON'T DISOWN JESUS.**

Christians should never deny their allegiance to Jesus. The apostle Paul said, **“If we disown him, he will also disown us”** (2 Timothy 2:12).

### **JUST SAY “NO.”**

A believer in Jesus should take a stand against evil. The apostle Paul said, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”** (Titus 2:12-13).

### **HOLD ON TO YOUR COURAGE AND HOPE.**

God does not want His people to give up the hope of salvation. The book of Hebrews says, **“But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast”** (Hebrews 3:6).

### **DON'T BE LAZY.**

There should not be any lazy Christians. The book of Hebrews says, **“We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised”** (Hebrews 6:12).

### **HOLD TO THE HOPE.**

Christians should not lose hope. The book of Hebrews says, **“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful”** (Hebrews 10:23).

### **PERSEVERE.**

A Christians should not stop trying to do the will of God. The book of Hebrews says, **“You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised”** (Hebrews 10:36).

### **FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS.**

Jesus is able to lead people through the confusing maze of life. The book of Hebrews says, **“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”** (Hebrews 12:2).

### **BE PATIENT.**

Christians should be patient in waiting for the Lord’s return. James said, **“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains”** (James 5:7).

James also said, **“You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near”** (James 5:8).

### **PREPARE YOUR MINDS FOR ACTION.**

A disciple of Christ should prepare his mind for action, as if he were going on a trip or getting ready for a battle. The apostle Peter said, **“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed”** (1 Peter 1:13).

### **BE CLEAR MINDED AND SELF-CONTROLLED.**

If a Christian’s mind is confused, his prayers will suffer. The apostle Peter said, **“The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray”** (1 Peter 4:7).

### **LIVE A HOLY AND GODLY LIFE.**

A person should be very serious about leading a holy and godly life, especially if he believes that the world will be destroyed. The apostle Peter said, **“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat”** (2 Peter 3:11-12).

**CONTINUE IN HIM.**

If a follower of Jesus does not continue in Jesus, that follower will be without confidence and ashamed when Jesus returns. The apostle John said, **“And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming”** (1 John 2:28).

**PURIFY YOURSELF.**

No one that has not purified himself will be permitted to see Jesus and associate with Him when he returns. The apostle John said, **“Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure”** (1 John 3:3).

**KEEP YOURSELF IN THE LOVE OF GOD.**

Whether or not God continues to love a person depends on what that person does. Jude said, **“Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life”** (Jude 21).

**OVERCOME.**

Great rewards are awaiting those who win in the battle against sin and doubt. Jesus said, **“He who overcomes will...be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my father and his angels”** (Revelation 3:5).

Jesus also said, **“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne”** (Revelation 3:21).

**WASH YOUR ROBES.**

Jesus’ blood washes away sin. All people who wash themselves in Jesus’ blood are clean. They are clean like freshly washed clothing. Jesus said, **“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).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. How can a person set his mind on things that are above? Does reading the Holy Scriptures help? Does talking with his friends about spiritual things help?
2. How can a person know when he is supposed to say “Yes” and when he is supposed to say “No?”
3. Why do you suppose it is that God wants His people to be courageous and not to give up hope?
4. Do you know any lazy Christians? What is wrong with a Christian being lazy?
5. What does baptism have to do with whether or not a person will live with Jesus?
6. What difference does it make whether or not a Christian loses hope? Does hope have anything to do with his salvation? If so, what?
7. Should a person try to do the will of God? Does the fact that a person tries to do the will of God imply that he is attempting to save himself by his good works?
8. How can a person keep his eyes on Jesus? How does keeping one’s eyes on Jesus help a person get through the maze of life?
9. Why should a disciple of Christ prepare his mind for action, as if he were going on a trip or getting ready for battle?
10. Why should everyone that has a hope of seeing Jesus purify himself? How can a person purify himself?
11. Is it true that God loves everyone, no matter what a person does? What should a person do in order to keep himself in the love of God?
12. How can a person get in contact with the blood of the Lamb? See  
Romans  
6:3-4.

## **GIVE !**

There is a lot of instruction in the New Testament about giving.

### **GIVE TO THE ONE WHO ASKS YOU.**

Jesus expects His followers to be generous. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, **“Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you”** (Matthew 5:42).

### **GIVE SECRETLY.**

Jesus does not want people to make a show of giving. He said, **“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.**

**“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you”** (Matthew 6:1-4).

### **GIVE, AND DON'T DEMAND IT BACK.**

Jesus said in His sermon in the field, **“Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back”** (Luke 6:30).

### **LEND AND DON'T EXPECT TO GET ANYTHING IN RETURN.**

Jesus also said, **“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked”** (Luke 6:35).

### **GIVE GENEROUSLY.**

God is generous and He loves generous people. Jesus said, **“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”** (Luke 6:38).

The apostle Paul wrote, **“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously”** (2 Corinthians 9:6).

### **GIVE TO THE POOR.**

One of the Pharisees was surprised that Jesus did not wash his hands before eating. Jesus said to that man, **“Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? But give what is inside the dish to the poor, and everything will be clean for you”** (Luke 11:39-41).

### **SELL YOUR POSSESSIONS AND GIVE TO THE POOR.**

Jesus’ economic program seems to be based on the distribution of wealth rather than the acquisition of it. Jesus said, **“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”** (Luke 12:33-34).

### **INVITE THE POOR, NOT THE RICH.**

Jesus noticed that people invited their rich neighbors and friends to eat with them, but not the poor. Jesus said, **“When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous”** (Luke 14:12-14).

### **WORK SO YOU CAN HELP PEOPLE WHO ARE WEAK.**

The Apostle Paul set a good example as regards giving. He said, **“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’”** (Acts 20:35).

### **IF YOU HAVE A TALENT FOR GIVING, GIVE GENEROUSLY.**

Not everyone has the same talent. The talent of some is the ability to give. The apostle Paul wrote, **“If it [your talent] is encouraging, let him**

**encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully” (Romans 12:8).**

### **SHARE WITH GOD’S PEOPLE.**

Christians have a special opportunity and responsibility for sharing within the church. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13).**

### **FEED YOUR ENEMY AND GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO DRINK.**

The apostle Paul wrote, **“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head” (Romans 12:20).**

### **EXCEL IN GIVING.**

Christians are supposed to be good at giving. The apostle Paul wrote, **“But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us --see that you also excel in this grace of giving” (2 Corinthians 8:7).**

### **DECIDE WHAT TO GIVE AND THEN GIVE CHEERFULLY.**

The church should not attempt to dictate how much each person should give. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).**

### **BE RICH IN GOOD DEEDS.**

There is a type of wealth that is more valuable than material wealth. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Command them (rich people) to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).**

### **DON’T FORGET TO DO GOOD AND TO SHARE.**

The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Hebrews 13:16).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Is it possible to give to everyone what he or she asks for? What if someone were to ask you for something that you knew would be harmful to that person or to others, what would your obligation be in such a case?
2. If you were to lend a valuable tool to someone, and that person did not return it, what should you do?
3. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Matthew 6:3)? Why should people keep their giving a secret? What is wrong with letting other people know about it?
4. Why is greed a sin? Do “greed and wickedness” normally go together, as in Luke 11:39? If a person gets rid of either one of the two sins (greed or wickedness), will it be easier for him to get rid of the other?
5. Do you think there are many people who sell things, or take out loans, so they will have something to give to the poor? Do you know anyone who does things like that? Please tell about that person, if you know of such an one.
6. Do think there are many people who invite people to eat at their house just because those people whom they invite are poor, crippled, lame, or blind? Do you know anyone who does that? Why is it important to do that?
7. If a person’s enemy needs food, why should he feed him? How would this affect a person’s relationship to his enemy? Would the person feel better about his enemy if he did that? How would the enemy feel?
8. If a person gives generously, will God reward that person generously? Does that imply that stinginess can lead to poverty?
9. Why do you suppose God loves a “cheerful giver?”
10. How is giving like sowing seed in a field?
11. Which should a person try harder to do, to use his possessions wisely or to acquire more possessions? Which is more important?



## **GODLY LIFE, LIVE A !**

The New Testament teaches that people should respect the rights and prerogatives of God. Respecting the rights and prerogatives of God is what godliness is all about.

### **TRAIN YOURSELF TO BE GODLY.**

A person does not become godly by accident but by effort and training. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives tales; rather train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come”** (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

### **PRACTICE GODLINESS BY LOOKING AFTER YOUR FAMILY.**

When anyone takes care of his own family, he is doing what God would have him do. That is why a part of godliness is to look after family members. The apostle Paul wrote, **“But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God”** (1 Timothy 5:4).

### **BE GODLY AND BE CONTENTED.**

**It is wrong to teach false doctrines for financial gain. God wants His people to teach the truth, live godly lives, and be contented with what they have. The apostle Paul wrote, “If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:3-6).**

### **PURSUE GODLINESS.**

Godliness is desirable and worth pursuing. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, **“But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue**

**righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness”** (1 Timothy 6:11).

#### **AVOID GODLESS CHATTER.**

A person should always speak in a way that shows his respect for God. The apostle Paul said, **“Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly”** (2 Timothy 2:16).

#### **AVOID PEOPLE WHO HAVE ONLY A FORM OF GODLINESS.**

The apostle Paul described how bad things would be on earth in the last days. He said, **“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them”** (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

#### **LIVE A GODLY LIFE, AND SAY ‘NO’ TO UNGODLINESS.**

The grace of God does not give people license to do evil. Rather, His grace instructs people to live in a certain way. The apostle Paul said, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age”** (Titus 2:11-12).

#### **LIVE A HOLY AND GODLY LIFE.**

The Bible teaches that this world will be destroyed. Since that will happen, the apostle Peter said that people ought to live holy and godly lives. He said, **“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in heat”** (2 Peter 3:11-12).

#### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Do you have any suggestions for a person who wants to train himself in godliness? Are there any exercises he could do?

2. What is your opinion of a religious person who does not look after his aged parents or grandparents? Should a Christian try to help other relatives of his who are in need? Is a Christian obligated to help his relatives only if they are Christians? Is a Christian obligated to help his relatives only if they are worthy of being helped and if they are thankful for it? How does a person decide when to help and when not to help?
3. The apostle Paul said that some people do not love “sound instruction” and “godly teaching” (1 Timothy 6:3). Why, do you suppose, some people do not love these things? Do you have any suggestions for the person who wants to learn to love “sound instruction” and “godly teaching?”
4. What do you think the apostle Paul meant when he said, “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6)? Why is godliness desirable? How should a person pursue it?
5. What is “godless chatter” (2 Timothy 2:16)? Why is it dangerous? How can a person avoid it?
6. How would you characterize people who have only a “form of godliness” (2 Timothy 3:5)? What is so bad about having only a “form of godliness?” Why should God’s people avoid people like that?
7. How would you describe a godly life? Is it difficult to live a godly life?
8. The earth will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:11). How should that fact influence the way people live? Do you see any difference between holiness and godliness?

## **GOVERNMENT, BE SUBJECT TO THE !**

The attitude that Christians ought to have toward their government is spelled out in the New Testament.

**GIVE TO CAESAR WHAT IS CAESAR’S.**

Certain critics asked Jesus whether or not Jews should pay taxes to the Romans, who had conquered them. In response to their question Jesus asked them to show Him a coin. They showed Him a coin and He asked them, **“Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” ‘Caesar’s,’ they replied. Then he said to them, ‘Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s’**” (Matthew 22:20-21). This conversation is recorded also in Mark 12:14-17 and in Luke 20:21-25.

### **SUBMIT TO GOVERNING AUTHORITIES.**

The apostle Paul was accused of turning society upside down and, truly, he did occasionally cause an uproar, but he did not preach insurrection against the government. Rather, he said, **“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God”** (Romans 13:1).

### **DON'T REBEL AGAINST AUTHORITY.**

Since God allows civil authorities to exist, it is not the duty of Christian to rebel against them. The apostle Paul said, **“He who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves”**(Romans 13:2).

### **DO WHAT IS RIGHT.**

Here is the advice that the apostle Paul gave for keeping the government off of one's back. He said, **“For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you”** (Romans 13:3).

### **SUBMIT TO AUTHORITIES AS A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE.**

A Christian should not only submit to civil authorities for fear of being punished but also as a matter of conscience to God. The apostle Paul said, **“Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. (Romans 13:5).**

### **PAY YOUR TAXES, SHOW RESPECT, GIVE HONOR.**

Christians are indebted to the government for keeping order in society. The apostle Paul said, **“This is also why you pay taxes, for the**

**authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor”** (Romans 13:6-7).

### **BE SUBJECT TO RULERS AND AUTHORITIES.**

Christians are supposed to be good citizens. The apostle Paul wrote to Titus, **“Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men”** (Titus 3:1-2).

### **SUBMIT TO EVERY AUTHORITY.**

Also the apostle Peter said that Christians should be submissive to civil authorities. He wrote, **“Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right”** (1 Peter 2:13-14).

### **HONOR THE KING.**

There is (normally) no conflict between a Christian's honoring the king and fearing God. The apostle Peter wrote, (1 Pet 2:17 NIV) **“Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king”** 1 Peter 2:17).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's?”
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Give to God what is God's?”
3. Was Jesus opposed to people paying taxes?
4. Did Jesus oppose paying taxes to an unjust and tyrannical government?
5. What should a Christian's attitude be if the government under which he lives is unjust and tyrannical? Should he rebel against it and try to overthrow it?

6. Is there any reason why a Christian should not try to change the government for better under which he lives? What are some things a Christian who lives in a democracy can do to change the government for the better?
7. Do the people in government sometimes praise those citizens who do what is right? Does that mean that some people in the government know the difference between right and wrong, and that they appreciate citizens who do what is right?
8. What is a Christian to do if his government forbids him to worship God? See Acts 5:29.
9. In what way should a Christian show respect for his government and give honor to the authorities?
10. Is it proper for a Christian to 'badmouth' the people in charge of the government? Is there a difference between constructive criticism and slander? What is the difference?

## HATE

There are certain things that a Christian is supposed to hate and certain things he is not supposed to hate.

### **HATE YOUR RELATIVES AND YOUR OWN LIFE.**

Jesus made a very strong statement to the effect that His followers should not allow anyone to keep them from following Him. Jesus said, **“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his brother and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple”** (Luke 14:26).

This seemingly harsh teaching by Jesus is found in a milder form in the book of Matthew. Jesus said, **“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life**

**will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:37-39).**

### **DON'T LOVE YOUR LIFE.**

Jesus warned that a person should not love his earthly life too much. Jesus said, **“I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground it dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me” (John 12:24-26).**

### **DON'T HATE JESUS.**

When Jesus was on earth, some people hated Him. Jesus said, **“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father as well” (John 15:20-23).**

### **HATE WHAT IS EVIL.**

Hate is not always a bad thing. The apostle Paul admonished, **“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good” (Romans 12:9).**

### **DON'T HATE YOUR BROTHER.**

The apostle John had much to say to believers about the attitude they should have toward their brothers and sisters in the Lord. He wrote, **“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him” (1 John 2:9-11).**

**IF YOU HATE YOUR BROTHER OR SISTER, IT IS THE SAME AS IF YOU WERE A MURDERER.**

The apostle John went further and made an even stronger statement than the one immediately above. He said, **“Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life in him”** (1 John 3:15).

### **IF YOU HATE YOUR BROTHER, YOU DO NOT LOVE GOD.**

John said, **“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen”** (1 John 4:20).

### **HATE EVEN THE CLOTHING STAINED BY CORRUPTED FLESH.**

God wants His people to love sinners but to hate the sinful things sinners do. Jude wrote, **“Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear--hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh”** (Jude 22-23). Jesus’ followers must try to save people from their sins, but they must be careful not to participate in the sins people do.

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Do some people fail to follow Jesus, because of the influence of their relatives? Please give some examples, if you can.
2. Did Jesus mean that His followers should actually “hate” their relatives? If He did not mean that, what did He mean?
3. As a general rule, is a person more likely to love his relatives after he becomes a Christian than he did before he became a Christian? If so, how would you explain that?
4. Explain how a person may lose his life if he loves it too much? Please cite an example of that, if you can.
5. Explain how a person will be more likely to keep his life if he loses it? Please give an example.
6. Why did some of the people of Jesus’ day hate Him? Why do some people hate Jesus today? Do you know anyone who hates Jesus?



7. Why do you suppose Jesus thought that those who hate Him also hate His Father? Do you find it true from your experience that those who hate Jesus also hate God?
8. Why should a person hate what is evil? Do you think most people today really hate evil? How can a person learn to hate evil? How will a person act if he learns to hate evil?
9. Explain how it is true that if anyone hates his brother or his sister in the Lord, he is still in darkness.
10. In what way is hating a person similar to killing that person?
11. Is a person that hates his brother or sister likely to make it to heaven? See 1 John 3:15. Why should the act of hating a brother or a sister keep a person out of heaven?
12. Is it possible for a person to love God even though he hates his brother or sister? If not, why not?

## **HOLY, BE !**

The Bible teaches that God wants His people to be holy.

### **OFFER YOUR BODY AS A LIVING SACRIFICE.**

The Jewish people used to slaughter animals and offer them to God as a sacrifice. They were commanded to do this by Moses in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, a different kind of offering is required. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship”** (Romans 12:1).

### **DON’T BE YOKED WITH UNBELIEVERS.**

Idol worshippers often use unclean practices in their worship. They sometimes also live in immoral ways. For these reasons, Christian people should not get too closely involved with them in their personal lives, lest

they be influenced by them. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever”** (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)?

### **SEPARATE YOURSELVES FROM PAGAN WAYS.**

The apostle Paul quoted from the Old Testament to show that God’s people should separate themselves from those who engage in unclean practices. He said, **“What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. ‘Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty”** (2 Corinthians 6:16-18).

### **LET US PURIFY OURSELVES.**

Christian people should purify themselves from unclean practices and thus perfect holiness. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify our-selves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God”** (2 Corinthians 7:1).

### **DON’T LIVE AS GENTILES LIVE.**

Christians should not live like non-Christians. The apostle Paul wrote, **“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more”** (Ephesians 4:17-19).

### **LEARN TO CONTROL YOUR BODY IN A HOLY WAY.**

A Christian’s body does not belong to him but to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:15). Therefore, a Christians should use his body in pure ways. The apostle Paul wrote, **“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality [fornication]; that each of you**

**should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you”** (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6).

### **LIVE A HOLY LIFE.**

God wants His children to live a holy life. The apostle Paul continued the above thoughts by saying, **“For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit”** (1Thessaalonians 4:7-8).

### **AVOID EVERY KIND OF EVIL.**

There are many ways in which a person’s life can be contaminated with evil. Therefore, the apostle Paul wrote, **“Avoid every kind of evil”** (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

### **SAY ‘NO’ TO UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY PASSIONS.**

Living a godly life calls for self-discipline. The apostle Paul wrote, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age”** (Titus 2:11-12).

### **MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO BE HOLY.**

Living a holy life does not come by accident. It requires much effort. The writer of the Hebrew letter wrote, **“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord”** (Hebrews 12:14).

### **BE HOLY IN ALL YOU DO.**

True holiness permeates every aspect of one’s life. The apostle Peter wrote, **“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy”**” (1 Peter 1:14-16).

### **ABSTAIN FROM SINFUL DESIRES.**

No one should give in to his sinful desires. The apostle Peter said, **“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which wars against your souls”** (1 Peter 2:11).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. How would you describe the “living sacrifices” of which the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12:1? How are such sacrifices superior to the sacrifices of the Old Testament?
2. Do you think a Christian should form a business partnership with a person who is a pagan? Please explain your answer.
3. Do you think a Christian should marry a non-Christian? Please explain your answer.
4. Should a Christian go into a pagan temple and there worship an idol? Should a Christian worship an idol anywhere? If not, why not.
5. Should a Christian worship the statue of a holy person? If not, why not?
6. Should a Christian worship a picture of a holy person? If not, why not?
7. Should a Christian pray to a statue or picture? If not, why not?
8. Does holiness have to be “perfected,” or does it come without effort? See 2 Corinthians 7:1. If holiness has to be perfected, how does a person do it?
9. Do you see much difference between the way non-believers live and the way Christians should live?
10. Can a person learn to control his body? If so, how?
11. How do sinful desires war against the soul?

## **HOSPITABLE, BE**

The practice of hospitality is an ancient custom and it is encouraged in the New Testament.

### **INVITE STRANGERS IN.**

Jesus said that at the last Judgment the Son of Man will say to those on His right-hand, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, etc.” (Matthew 25:35). Those on His right hand will reply, “Lord when did we see you a stranger and invite you in, etc.” (Matthew 25:38)? Then the King will say, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

The king will say to those on His left-hand, “**I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, etc.**” (Matthew 25:43).

### **INVITE NEEDY PEOPLE.**

Jesus gave His disciples instruction about whom they should invite when they give a luncheon or a dinner. He said, “**When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous**” (Luke 14:12-14).

### **PRACTICE HOSPITALITY.**

Many of the early Christians were forced to leave their homes due to persecution (Acts 8:1). Wherever they went, they were often dependent upon the brethren to show them hospitably. To the brethren in Rome the apostle Paul wrote, “Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13).

### **ELDERS OF THE CHURCH SHOULD BE HOSPITABLE.**

Only men who have set a good example by showing hospitality should be selected to be overseers (elders) of a congregation. The apostle Paul wrote, “**Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of**

**but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, etc.”** (1 Timothy 3:2). A similar list of requirements for elders (overseers) is found in Titus 1:8.

### **SHOW HOSPITALITY WITHOUT GRUMBLING.**

No one wants to be a guest in the home of a person who complains about having to be the host. The apostle Peter said, **“Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling”** (1 Peter 4:9).

### **DON'T SHOW HOSPITALITY TO A FALSE TEACHER.**

Faithful brethren are under no obligation to show hospitality to false teachers. The apostle John wrote, **“Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work”** (2 John 9-11).

### **BE HOSPITABLE TO THOSE WHO ARE TRAVELING FOR JESUS' NAME.**

The earliest evangelists, who went out preaching, often did not have enough money to pay for a night's lodging. They were dependent upon the hospitality of the people among whom they worked. The apostle John wrote, **“Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth”** (3 John 5-8).

### **DON'T REFUSE TO WELCOME THE BROTHERS.**

A man named Diotrephes was refusing to show hospitality to the evangelists who were travelling in Jesus' name (3 John 9). Diotrephes was also putting people out of the church that wanted to show hospitality to the evangelists. The apostle John wrote, **“So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church. Dear friend, do not imitate what is**

**evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God” (3 John 10-11).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Can you think of any instances in which Jesus was a guest in someone's home? Please tell of the instances, if you can.
2. Do you think people in general are as hospitable today as they were in the past? What is the reason for this? What is the cure?
3. Have you ever invited anyone that was poor, crippled, lame, or blind into your home for a meal? Do you know anyone who specializes in inviting such people?
4. Have you ever encountered anyone who had to flee his home because of persecution? What is the responsibility of a congregation to those brethren who have been forced to flee their homes?
5. Why should only men that are hospitable be selected as bishops (or elders)?
6. Have you ever been forced to stay in a home where you were not welcome? If a host grumbles about having to show hospitality, does it lessen the beauty of his hospitality? Do you think a guest is afterwards grateful to a host who grumbles about showing hospitality? Do you think that a grumbling host gets as much credit with the Lord as someone who is gracious?
7. Should the brethren take just anyone into their homes? Please suggest some possible reasons why the apostle John did not want the brethren to show hospitality to false teachers?
8. Can you think of any instances in which one of the apostles was a guest in someone's home? Please tell of those instances, if you can.

9. Have you ever welcomed anyone into your home that was travelling for the name of Jesus? Do you suppose that having such a person visit in your home would be a blessing to you?
10. Please suggest some possible reasons why Diotrephes was not willing to receive the travelling evangelists and why he wanted to throw those out of the church that did receive them?

## **HUMBLE, BE !**

There is a lot of teaching in the New Testament about being humble.

### **HUMBLE YOURSELF LIKE A LITTLE CHILD.**

Once, when Jesus' disciples were discussing among themselves which of them would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus called a little child and stood him among them. Jesus said to them, **"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"** (Matthew 18:3-4). Similar teaching is found Mark 10:15 and Luke 18:17

### **DON'T LORD IT OVER YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST.**

**The mother of James and John came to Jesus and requested that her sons might sit on Jesus' right hand and left hand in His kingdom. When the other disciples heard about her request, they were indignant. Jesus called them all together and said to them, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you" (Matthew 20:25-26).**

### **BE A SERVANT OF YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.**

Jesus continued teaching his disciples regarding humility, by saying, **"Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"** (Matthew 20:26-28). See also Matthew 23:11, Mark 9:35; 10:43-45; and Luke 22:26-27.



**DON'T ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE CALLED 'TEACHER.'**

Jesus observed that the religious leaders of His day enjoyed being called 'Rabbi,' which means 'Teacher' or 'Doctor.' Jesus did not want His disciples, however, to allow themselves to be called 'Teacher.' He said to His disciples, **"But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers"** (Matthew 23:8). Again, Jesus said, **"Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ"** (Matthew 23:10).

**DON'T CALL ANYONE ON EARTH 'FATHER'.**

Jesus also did not want His disciples to address anyone as 'Father,' in the sense of that person's being a religious leader. Jesus said, **"And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven"** (Matthew 23:9).

**HUMBLE YOURSELF.**

People who exalt themselves will be humbled. Jesus said, **"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted"** (Matthew 23:12). A Similar warning is found in Luke 14:11.

**DON'T TAKE THE BEST SEAT.**

On one occasion, when Jesus went into the house of a Pharisee to eat, He observed that the guests were choosing the places of honor for themselves. Whereupon, Jesus said, **"When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited"** (Luke 14:8). Jesus further said, **"But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place'"** (Luke 14:10).

**CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BE AN UNWORTHY SERVANT.**

A person should not be proud of having only done what he was supposed to do. Jesus said, **"So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"** (Luke 17:10).

**WASH EACH OTHER'S FEET.**

On the evening before Jesus was put to death, He washed the feet of His disciples. He said to them, **“Now that I, your teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet”** (John 13:14).

### **DO NOT BOAST OVER THE JEWS.**

Believers in Jesus should not look down on the Jews. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Do not boast over those branches (the Jews). If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you”** (Romans 11:18).

### **DON’T THINK TOO HIGHLY OF YOURSELF.**

The Apostle Paul wrote: **“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you”** (Romans 12:3).

### **ASSOCIATE WITH PEOPLE OF LOW POSITION.**

Some people want to associate only with those who are highest in society, but the apostle Paul said, **“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud. But be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited”** (Romans 12:16).

### **IF YOU ARE GOING TO BOAST, BOAST IN THE LORD.**

The only thing that a child of God has to boast about is how great God and His son are and how wonderfully God treats His children. **“Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let him who boasts boast in the Lord’”** (1 Corinthians 1:31).

### **DON’T BOAST ABOUT MEN.**

Christians should not boast about who taught them the gospel or who baptized them. The apostle Paul said, **“So then, no more boasting about men”** (1 Corinthians 3:21).

### **LEAD A SIMPLE LIFE.**

Christians should not aspire to be in the public eye. The apostle Paul said, **“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody”** (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

**RICH PEOPLE, DON'T BE ARROGANT.**

Some rich people think their riches make them better than poor people. But the apostle Paul said, **“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment”** (1 Timothy 6:17).

**SHOW WISDOM BY DOING HUMBLE DEEDS.**

James wrote, **“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom”** (James 3:13).

**YOUNG MEN, BE SUBMISSIVE TO OLDER MEN.**

A congregation is greatly blessed if it has younger men in it. Yet the younger men should learn to be submissive. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older”** (1 Peter 5:5).

**CLOTHE YOURSELF WITH HUMILITY.**

God wants all the members of the church to be clothed with humility. The apostle Peter said, **“All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time”** (1 Peter 5:5-6).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Why should Christians be humble?
2. Please suggest a reason why Jesus did not want His disciples to be called ‘Teacher’ or ‘Master.’ Do religious leaders today sometimes appear to desire to be called by exalted titles? Is it proper for preachers and teachers of the Bible to be haughty?
3. Does it strike you as strange that the two titles that Jesus said should be reserved for Him, namely, ‘Master’ and ‘Teacher’ (or Doctor) are the very titles that His followers sometimes use for themselves when they wish to appear to be educated? What should a Christian think about this?

4. When Christians call some man “Father,” does it dishonor God? Did Jesus institute and authorize the papacy?
5. Does God humiliate proud people and exalt humble people in this life? See 1 Peter 5:5. Please cite some examples of how God has exalted the humble and humiliated the proud.
6. Does Jesus expect people to do their duty? See Luke 17:10.
7. Are rich people more inclined to be arrogant than poor people? What are some of the other things, besides wealth, that make some people arrogant?
8. Why should young men in a congregation be submissive to the older men? Are older men permitted to be haughty in dealing with the young?
9. Do you consider a humble person to be wiser than a haughty person? If so, why?
10. What did Jesus teach by washing His disciples’ feet? Should the washing of feet become a ritual in the assembly? Please give some examples of how the followers of Jesus can (and should) serve each other, and thus symbolically wash each other’s feet.
11. What did the apostle Peter mean when he instructed (1 Peter 5:5) the members of the church to be “clothed with humility?”

## **INFLUENCING OTHERS**

The New Testament teaches that people should be careful about the kind of influence they have on others.

### **LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN.**

Jesus wanted His followers to have a good influence on society. He said, **“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.**

**Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).**

#### **DON'T CAUSE A LITTLE ONE TO SIN.**

People should be careful not to cause any of the little ones to sin, who believe on Jesus. Jesus said, **“But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).**

#### **DO WHAT IS RIGHT IN THE EYES OF EVERYBODY.**

Non-Christians are watching to see if Christians live up to what they profess. The apostle Paul said, **“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody” (Romans 12:17).**

#### **DON'T PUT A STUMBLING BLOCK IN YOUR BROTHER'S WAY.**

No one should put a stumbling block in the path of a brother, which might cause a brother to sin. The apostle Paul said, **“Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way” (Romans 14:13).** See also 1 Corinthians 8:9.

#### **DON'T DESTROY YOUR BROTHER BY WHAT YOU EAT.**

In New Testament times, much of the meat that was available to buy in the markets of Roman cities had been sacrificed to idols. Although Christians could eat such meat, the apostle Paul instructed them to be careful not to tempt any brother to eat it who had a conscience against it. Paul said, **“If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died” (Romans 14:15).** See also Romans 14:20 and 1 Corinthians 10:28.

#### **PLEASE YOUR NEIGHBOR.**

A follower of Jesus should go as far as he can in pleasing his neighbors as long as his doing so does not violate the word of God. The apostle Paul said, **“Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up” (Romans 15:2).**

**DO GOOD TO ALL PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY TO BELIEVERS.**

A Christian should try to do as much good as he can for as many people as possible. The apostle Paul said, **“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers”** (Galatians 6:10).

**BE WISE IN THE WAY YOU ACT TOWARD OUTSIDERS.**

If Christians use wisdom in the way they act toward outsiders, many opportunities to witness for Jesus will present themselves. The apostle Paul said, **“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity”** (Colossians 4:5).

**WIN THE RESPECT OF OUTSIDERS WITH YOUR DAILY LIFE.**

A lazy and improvident Christian will not gain the respect of his acquaintances. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody”** (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

**LIVE GOOD LIVES AMONG UNBELIEVERS.**

Jesus expected His followers to work as leaven (Matthew 13:33) in society. The apostle Paul said, **“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us”** (1 Peter 2:12).

**SILENCE IGNORANT TALK BY DOING GOOD.**

People sometimes criticize Christians, but there is a way to put a stop to their criticism. The apostle said, **“For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men”** (1 Peter 2:15).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Is there a difference between a person’s letting his light shine (Matthew 5:16) and his doing righteous deeds before men in order to be seen by them (Matthew 6:1)? What is the difference?
2. Can a person be forgiven of causing someone to sin? Please explain

your answer.

3. Do non-Christians hold Christians to a higher standard than they do other people? If so, why is that?
4. If a Christian does all he can to please his neighbor, as Paul recommended in Romans 15:2, how does that build his neighbor up?
5. Have you ever met anyone who had turned against Jesus because some professing Christian had mistreated him? What would you say to a person who has been mistreated by a Christian?
6. Do you find that Christians are usually better workers, more honest, and more generous than people who are not Christians? How do you explain this, if this is true?
7. Have the Christians you have known strengthened your faith? Can you think of anything that you could do to influence the people around you for good? Please mention something that you could do.
8. Do you acquainted with anyone who is critical of Christianity? What does that person (or persons) say about Christianity? Can you suggest anything that Christians might do to put a stop to such criticism? Please make a suggestion, if you can.

## INVITATIONS, RESPOND TO GOD'S

There are several invitations in the New Testament.

### COME TO JESUS.

Jesus invited everyone to come to Him who was worn out from hard work or weighted down with the burdens of life. He said, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”** (Matthew 11:28-29). Notice that Jesus provides a yoke to help people pull their loads.

### **LISTEN TO WHAT JESUS SAID.**

Many of Jesus' contemporaries heard Him speak without really listening to what He had to say. To such people Jesus occasionally said, **"He who has ears to hear, let him hear"** (Mark 4:9). James expressed a similar thought when he said that people should not be hearers only, but doers of God's word (James 1:22-25).

### **LET LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO JESUS.**

Some people were bringing their little children to Jesus so that He could bless them, but His disciples rebuked the people for bringing their children. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to His disciples, **"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these"** (Mark 10:14).

### **DRINK THE WATER THAT JESUS GIVES.**

As Jesus and His disciples were walking from Judea to Galilee, they came to a well outside of the city of Sychar. While His disciples were in the city buying food, a woman came to the well to draw water. Jesus asked the woman, **"Will you give me a drink"** (John 4:7)? The woman was surprised that a Jew would ask her, a Samaritan, for a drink. So Jesus said to her, **"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water"** (John 4:10). The woman inquired of Jesus how He would draw up water, since the well was deep and He had nothing in which to carry water. Jesus replied, **"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life"** (John 4:13-14).

### **COME TO JESUS FOR A DRINK OF WATER.**

Jesus knew that many people were thirsty for something to refresh their hearts. So on the last day of one of the feasts, Jesus stood up and said in a loud voice, **"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him"** (John 7:37-38). Jesus was speaking here about the Holy Spirit, whom the believers would later receive. At the time Jesus said this, however, the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been crucified and raised from the dead (John 7:39).



**EAT THE LIVING BREAD.**

Just as physical bread sustains physical life, so Jesus is Himself the living bread that sustains eternal life. Jesus said, **“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”** (John 6:51).

**FEED ON JESUS.**

If a person appropriates into his life Jesus and His teaching, that person will live forever. Jesus said, **“Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever”** (John 6:57-58).

**GO IN THROUGH JESUS.**

Jesus described Himself as the “good shepherd” (John 10:11) and the “gate” to the sheepfold. He said, **“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture”** (John 10:9). God’s sheepfold is the body of Christ, which is also referred to in Scripture as the kingdom or the church.

**BE RECONCILED TO GOD.**

The apostle Paul considered himself to be an ambassador for Christ. His mission was to persuade people to be reconciled to God. The apostle Paul wrote, **“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.** (2 Corinthians 5:20). Paul did not have to persuade God, because God was already disposed to accept people, due to the death of Jesus.

**COME NEAR TO GOD.**

God wants people to feel free to come to Him. He wants them to take the initiative. James wrote, **“Come near to God and he will come near to you”** (James 4:8).

**OPEN THE DOOR AND LET JESUS IN.**

Jesus is ready to enter into the heart and life of every person, but He must be invited in. Jesus said, **“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me”** (Revelation 3:20).

### **COME TO THE WATER OF LIFE.**

A magnificent invitation is found in the last chapter of the Bible. It says, **“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life”** (Revelation 22:17). The water that gives life is free. It does not cost anything. Everyone is invited to come and drink of it. The Holy Spirit and the bride (the church) are inviting people to come to Jesus.

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Why was Jesus not more selective in choosing the people whom He invited to be His followers? Why did He not seek out the rich and important people?
2. What did Jesus mean when he said, “Let the little children come to me” (Mark 10:14)? Did He mean that His disciples should baptize babies?
3. What is the “water” that Jesus gives to people? How do people get this “water?”
4. Was Jesus referring to communion bread when He said that people should eat His flesh? If not, to what was He referring? In what way can a person feed on Jesus?
5. Do you think many people are thirsty in a way that this world cannot satisfy? Can you describe this thirst? How does Jesus satisfy the thirst you have described?
6. Is there anything a person can do to receive the Holy Spirit? See Acts 2:38-39 and Acts 5:32.
7. How can a person come near to God?

8. How does the Holy Spirit invite (call) people to come to God? Does He do it through the gospel? See 2 Thessalonians 2:14.

## **JUDGE NOT**

Over and over again, people are warned in the New Testament not to judge others.

### **DON'T JUDGE.**

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught people not to be judgmental. He said, **“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”** (Matthew 7:1-2). See also Mark 4:24 and Luke 6:38

### **TAKE THE PLANK OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE.**

Jesus appears to have used a bit of humor when He spoke of a man who had a whole plank in his eye while he was trying to help get a bit of sawdust out of another man's eye. Jesus said, **“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye”** (Matthew 7:3-5). Similar words are found in Luke 6:41-42.

### **DON'T CONDEMN.**

In the Sermon in the Field, Jesus said, **“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven”** (Luke 6:37).

### **DON'T KEEP A PERSON FROM DOING GOOD IN JESUS' NAME.**

One of the Twelve spoke to Jesus about a man whom they had seen driving demons out in the name of Jesus. The disciples had tried to stop the man from doing this because he was not one of their group. But Jesus said, **“Do not stop him, for whoever is not against you is for you”** (Luke 9:50).

**DON'T JUDGE BY APPEARANCES.**

Some of the contemporaries of Jesus wanted to kill Him (John 7:19) because He had healed a man on the Sabbath (John 5:6-10). So Jesus said to them, **“Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment”** (John 7:24).

**DON'T DO THE SAME THINGS THAT YOU CONDEMN IN OTHERS.**

If a man does the same things for which he condemns others, he passes judgment on himself. The apostle Paul said, **“You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things”** (Romans 2:1).

**DON'T LOOK DOWN ON THE MAN WHO DOES NOT KEEP YOUR CUSTOMS.**

Some of the believers in Rome, who had come from a Jewish background, felt that it was wrong for Christians to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Other believers felt there was nothing wrong in eating such meat. The apostle Paul wrote, **“The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him”** (Romans 14:3).

**DON'T LOOK DOWN ON YOUR BROTHER.**

The believers in Corinth were also debating the issue of whether or not it was permissible for a Christian to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. To them the apostle Paul wrote, **“You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat”** (Romans 14:10).

**DON'T PASS JUDGMENT ON YOUR BROTHER.**

Some of the early believers were passing judgment on each other over the question of whether or not meat that had been sacrificed to idols should be eaten. Regarding this, the apostle Paul said, **“Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way”** (Romans 14:13).

**JUDGE NOTHING BEFORE TIME.**

There will come a time for judging. Judgment will take place at the Judgement Seat on the Judgment Day. The apostle Paul said, **“Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God”** (1 Corinthians 4:5).

**JUDGE YOURSELF.**

A person who partakes of the Lord Supper in a frivolous manner, without recognizing the significance of the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself (1 Corinthians 11:29). For that reason, the apostle Paul urged brethren in Corinth to be reverent and introspective when they came together. He said, **“But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world”** (1 Corinthians 11:31-32).

**DON’T JUDGE YOUR NEIGHBOR.**

Christians have not been appointed to pass judgment on each other. Therefore they should not act as judges. James wrote, **“Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you--who are you to judge your neighbor”** (James 4:11-12)?

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Is it true that Jesus does not want His followers to be judgmental? Why is it, do you suppose that Jesus does not want His followers to be judgmental? What is wrong with being judgmental?
2. Do you think that Jesus does not want His people to judge at all or that He does not want them to judge harshly?
3. If a Christian is not suppose to not pass judgment on his brother, does that mean that he must approve of everything his brother does?

4. Is there a difference between judging and condemning? If so, please describe the difference.
5. Should all members of a congregation try to restore a brother who has fallen into sin, or should only certain members of a congregation try to restore such a brother? See Galatians 6:1.
6. Should Christians pray for a brother who sins? See 1 John 5:16.
7. If a person tends to forgive others, does that make it easier for others to forgive him? If so, why?
8. How can people learn to make “right judgments” (John 7:24) and avoid judging by “mere appearances?”
9. If a person does the things that he criticizes others for doing, does that make him a hypocrite? What is wrong with being a hypocrite?
10. Can you think of any customs that are not harmful in themselves, but about which Christians sometimes differ? Should their differing cause dissention in the congregation?
11. Should the members of a congregation refrain from keeping a custom that offends other members of that congregation?

## **KIND, BE !**

The New Testament shows that simple kindness is a hallmark of a person who follows Jesus. Here are some of the verses that show this:

### **DO TO OTHERS WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO TO YOU.**

It is not difficult to find out how to treat people. All a person has to do is to ask himself how he would like to be treated if he were that person. Jesus said, “**So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets**” (Matthew 7:12). The same thought is found in Luke 6:31.

**GIVE A CUP OF COLD WATER.**

Simple acts of kindness are sometimes the most rewarding. Jesus said, **“And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward”** (Matthew 10:42).

**WELCOME A LITTLE CHILD.**

No one should feel that he is too busy to have time for a child. Jesus said, **“And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me”** (Matthew 18:5). The same thought is found in Luke 9:48.

**BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR TO THOSE IN NEED.**

Jesus told a story about a man who had fallen into the hands of robbers. As the robbed man lay wounded, a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan passed by, but only the Samaritan stopped to help the wounded man. After Jesus had told this story, he asked an expert in the law, **“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”** The expert in the law replied, **“The one who had mercy on him.”** Jesus told the expert in the law, **“Go and do likewise”** (Luke 10:36-37).

**BE DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER.**

One of the kindest things that a person can do for another is to have brotherly love in his heart for him. The apostle Paul said, **“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love”** (Romans 12:10).

**HONOR ONE ANOTHER.**

No Christian should think that he is worthier of honor than any other Christian. The apostle Paul said, **“Honor one another above yourselves”** (Romans 12:10).

**BE HOSPITABLE.**

Being hospitable shows kindness. The apostle Paul said, **“Practice hospitality”** (Romans 12:13). Additional advice about being hospitable can be found in Hebrews 13:2, 1 Peter 4:9, and 3 John 8.

**REJOICE WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE.**

It is rare to find people who can rejoice with those who are happier and more prosperous than they themselves are. The apostle Paul said, **“Rejoice with those who rejoice”** (Romans 12:15).

### **MOURN WITH THOSE WHO MOURN.**

It is, perhaps, equally as rare to find people who are genuinely sorrowful over the misfortunes of others. The apostle Paul said, **“Mourn with those who mourn”** (Romans 12:15).

### **ASSOCIATE WITH PEOPLE OF LOW POSITION.**

A Christian should not attempt to climb the social ladder by associating only with people who are richer and more famous than they. The apostle Paul said, **“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited”** (Romans 12:16).

### **STRIVE FOR MUTUAL EDIFICATION.**

Christians should try to get along with all the members of the congregation and to help each other grow spiritually. The apostle Paul said, **“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification”** (Romans 14:19).

### **BEAR WITH THE FAILINGS OF THE WEAK.**

True Christians are not quick to criticize the shortcomings of their brothers and sisters. The apostle Paul said, **“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves”** (Romans 15:1).

### **GREET ONE ANOTHER WITH A HOLY KISS.**

This custom has, unfortunately, gone out of style among Christians in the West, but it is still practiced in Eastern Europe. The apostle Paul said, **“Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings”** (Romans 16:16). Similar admonitions can be found in 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:26, and 1 Peter 5:14.

### **CARRY EACH OTHER’S BURDENS.**



People who are true Christians help each other. The apostle Paul said, **“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ”** (Galatians 6:2).

### **BE HUMBLE, GENTLE, PATIENT, AND LOVING.**

The apostle Paul gave in the following sentence an excellent description of what a person is like who has the spirit of Jesus. Paul said, **“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love”** (Ephesians 4:2).

### **BE KIND AND COMPASSIONATE.**

Here is another short description of how Christians should treat each other: The apostle Paul said, **“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”** (Ephesians 4:32).

### **LET YOUR GENTLENESS BE EVIDENT TO ALL.**

Some people are afraid to be gentle in dealing with others for fear that others will think they are weak and will take advantage of them. The apostle Paul said, however, **“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near”** (Philippians 4:5).

### **DON’T GRUMBLE AGAINST EACH OTHER.**

It is dangerous for people to grumble against each other, for the Lord takes it seriously. James wrote, **“Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door”** (James 5:9)!

### **LIVE IN HARMONY.**

Here is another of those short summaries, which describe how the followers of Jesus should treat each other: The apostle Peter said, **“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble”** (1 Peter 3:8).

### **BE MERCIFUL TO THOSE WHO DOUBT.**

Brethren should not despise those who are struggling with doubts. Jude wrote, **“Be merciful to those who doubt”** (Jude 1:22).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Are you surprised over how much teaching there is in the New Testament about being kind? Why do you think there is so much teaching in the New Testament about being kind?
2. What is the kindest thing that anyone ever did for you? How does it make you feel when someone does something really kind for you? How does it make you feel when you do something really kind for someone else?
3. How would you describe a “good neighbor?” Do you have any really good neighbors? Do you consider yourself to be a good neighbor to others?
4. Have you ever been the recipient of genuine hospitality? Who was it that showed you hospitality? Have you ever had an opportunity to show hospitality to someone? Please tell of it, if you feel free to do so.
5. Which do you find easier, to rejoice with those who rejoice, or to mourn with those who mourn? Please explain.
6. What do you think the apostle Paul meant when he told Christians to “associate with people of low position” (Romans 12:16)? Did he mean that they should not have any rich and influential friends at all?
7. Do you admire people who are gentle? Do you know any gentle person who is not afraid to let his or her gentleness show? Has anyone ever taken advantage of that person’s gentleness, as far as you know?
8. Why should Christians not grumble against each other? What harm is there in it?

**LORD’S SUPPER, DON’T NEGLECT THE !**

Ever since Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week, His followers have met on that day to remember Him by observing the Lord’s

Supper. Here are some instructions from the New Testament regarding the observance of Lord's Supper:

### **TAKE AND EAT.**

While Jesus was eating the last Passover meal with His disciples, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, **‘Take and eat; this is my body’**” (Matthew 26:26). Similar words can be found in Mark 14:22 and Luke 22:19.

### **DRINK FROM IT, ALL OF YOU.**

After the meal, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, and offered it to them, saying, **“Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”** (Matthew 26:27-28). Similar words can be found in Mark 14:22-24 and Luke 22:17-20.

### **EAT THE BREAD IN REMEMBRANCE OF JESUS.**

The gospel of Luke adds significant words, which explain why followers of Jesus should partake of the Lord's Supper. Jesus said, **“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me”** (Luke 22:19). Similar words can be found in 1 Corinthians 11:24.

### **DON'T PARTICIPATE WITH DEMONS.**

Followers of Jesus should not participate in Pagan worship, for the sacrifices, which Pagans offer, are offered to demons. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for Jesus' followers, who eat at the table of the Lord, to participate in pagan sacrifices. The apostle Paul wrote, **“No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons”** (1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

### **DRINK THE CUP IN REMEMBRANCE OF JESUS.**

Just as Jesus' followers should eat the bread in remembrance of Jesus, so should they also drink the cup in remembrance of Him. The apostle Paul wrote, **“In the same way, after supper he [Jesus] took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me’**” (1 Corinthians 11:25).

### **DON'T EAT THE BREAD OR DRINK THE CUP IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER.**

The Lord's Supper is not just an ordinary meal, and those who participate in it should do it in a respectful manner. **"Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord"** (1 Corinthians 11:27).

### **EXAMINE YOURSELF BEFORE YOU EAT THE BREAD AND DRINK THE CUP.**

When followers of Jesus partake of the Lord's Supper it is a time for them to be introspective. The apostle Paul wrote, **"A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself"** (1 Corinthians 11:28-29).

### **WAIT FOR EACH OTHER WHEN YOU COME TOGETHER TO EAT.**

Although the members of the church should try to arrive for meetings punctually, it would be good for the congregation to wait for a reasonable time before serving the Lord's Supper so as many of the members as possible can arrive. The apostle Paul wrote, **"So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other"** (1 Corinthians 11:33).

### **DON'T EAT THE LORD'S SUPPER TO SATISFY YOUR HUNGER.**

The reason a follower of Jesus partakes of the Lord's Supper is not to satisfy his hunger but to remember Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:23-25) and to proclaim His death until He comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26). The apostle Paul wrote, **"If any one is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment."** (1 Corinthians 11:34).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Can you think of some possible reasons that Jesus may have had for introducing the Lord's Supper? Please suggest a few if you can. Do you find that the Lord's Supper is a fitting memorial for Jesus? Please explain your thinking.

2. On what day of the week did early Christians come together? See 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. What was the purpose of early Christian's gatherings? See Acts of Apostles 20:7.
3. How often should a congregation of Christian people come together to celebrate the Lord's Supper, once a year, once a quarter, once a month, or every Lord's day? Please give a reason, or reasons, for your answer.
4. How often should an individual Christian try to be present to participate in the Lord's Supper? Once a year, once a quarter, once a month, or every Lord's Day? Please give a reason, or reasons, for your answer.
5. Should all the members of the congregation be permitted to partake of both the bread and the cup? Please explain your answer.
6. Do the bread and the fruit of the vine become the literal body and blood of the Lord when a prayer is spoken over them? What type of prayer should be spoken over the bread and the fruit of the vine? Can only a priest serve at the Lord's table?
7. Does a person's being present for the Lord's supper give that person forgiveness of his sins? Please explain. Does a person have to fast before partaking of the Lord's Supper?
8. When a person is examining himself before he partakes of the Lord's supper, what type of questions should he ask himself? Please suggest a few questions to ask if you can?

## **LOVE**

Love is one of the central themes of the New Testament. There are many passages about it.

### **LOVE YOUR ENEMIES.**

It has been assumed since ancient times that a person should hate his enemies and love his friends, but Jesus rejected that assumption. He said,

**“But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”** (Matthew 5:44). This teaching is also found in Luke 6:27, 35.

### **LOVE JESUS.**

Jesus took the position that His followers should love Him more than their own families. He said, **“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me”** (Matthew 10:37).

### **LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART.**

Jesus was asked which of the commandments in the Old Testament is the greatest. In reply, Jesus quoted from the Old Testament, saying, **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”** Then Jesus said, **“This is the first and greatest commandment”** (Matthew 22:37-38). Jesus’ teaching concerning the supremacy of love can also be found in Mark 12:28-30 and Luke 10:25-27.

### **LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**

Jesus said that the commandment of the Old Testament that is second in order of greatness is the one that says, **“Love your neighbor as yourself”** (Matthew 22:39). The instruction to love one’s neighbor is repeated in Mark 12:31, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14, and James 2:8.

### **LOVE ONE ANOTHER.**

Jesus instructed His disciples to love each other. He said, **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another”** (John 13:34). Jesus repeated this command several times, as in John 15:12 and John 15:17.

Jesus’ command that His followers should love each other is echoed in the writings of the apostle John, who wrote, **“This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another”** (1 John 3:11). Similar expressions can be found in 1 John 3:23, in 1 John 4:7, 11, and in 2 John 5.

### **LOVE SINCERELY.**

Love is important, but it is of no value if it is not sincere. The apostle Paul said, **“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good”** (Romans 12:9). The apostle John agreed with this teaching. John

said, **“Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth”** (1 John 3:18).

### **BE DEVOTED IN BROTHERLY LOVE.**

Love is especially important within the church. The apostle Paul said, **“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves”** (Romans 12:10).

It is very pleasing to see the members of a church family loving each other as brothers and sisters. The apostle Peter said, **“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble”** (1 Peter 3:8).

The apostle John thought it would be easier for Christians to avoid stumbling into sin if they love each other. He said, **“Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble”** (1 John 2:10).

The apostle John also pointed out that loving God finds its corollary in loving a brother. John said, **“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love”** (1 John 4:8). John recalled what Jesus had commanded, namely, **“Whoever loves God must also love his brother”** (1 John 4:21). The apostle John felt that anyone who does not love his brother is not a child of God. John said, **“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother”** (1 John 3:10).

### **OWE NO ONE ANYTHING EXCEPT TO LOVE THAT PERSON.**

The apostle Paul taught Christians to pay their debts. They should not be indebted to anyone for anything, except to love people. They should love people in the church and people who are not in the church. Paul said, **“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law”** (Romans 13:8).

### **DO EVERYTHING IN LOVE.**

Nothing should be said or done in the church community that is not said and done in a loving way. The apostle Paul said, **“Do everything in love”** (1 Corinthians 16:14).

### **LIVE A LIFE OF LOVE.**

The Christian way of living is like no other. It is a life of love. The apostle Paul said, **“And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God”** (Ephesians 5:2).

### **PUT ON LOVE.**

Love is like a belt. It holds all the other virtues together. The apostle Paul said, **“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity”** (Colossians 3:14).

### **LOVE DEEPLY, FROM THE HEART.**

The apostle Peter described how people learn to love deeply: First, they must purify themselves by obeying the truth. Then, they will be able to love. Peter said, **“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart”** (1 Peter 1:22).

The apostle Peter also said, **“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins”** (1 Peter 4:8).

### **LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD.**

The only thing that people are told in the New Testament to do regarding the brotherhood is to love it. The apostle Peter said, **“Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king”** (1 Peter 2:17).

### **DON'T LOVE THE WORLD.**

It is wrong to love the world. The apostle John said, **“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him”** (1 John 2:15).

### **DON'T REMAIN IN DEATH.**

Loving is one of the tests by which a person can tell whether he is still dead in sin or whether he has come to life in God. The apostle John said, **“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death”** (1 John 3:14).

### **BE WILLING TO LAY DOWN YOUR LIFE FOR THE BROTHERS.**

Here is a test by which people can know whether or not they love their brothers in the church as much as they should. John said, **“This is how we**



**know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers”** (1 John 3:16).

### **LOVE ONE ANOTHER SO THAT GOD CAN LIVE IN YOU.**

God will not live in the heart of a person who does not love. The apostle John said, **“No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us”** (1John 4:12).

### **LIVE IN LOVE.**

God will live in the heart of the person who lives in love. The apostle John said, **“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him”** (1 John 4:16).

### **WALK IN LOVE.**

Here is another test that shows whether or not people walk in love. John said, **“And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love”** (2 John 6).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Why is the commandment to love God the most important of all commandments?
2. Why should Jesus' followers love Him more than they love their own family members?
3. Why do you think Jesus wanted His disciples to love each other? Read what Jesus said in John 13:35 and 1 John 4:20.
4. Why are Christians indebted to love their fellow men, whether their fellow men are in the church or not in the church? Do you find it difficult to love some people? If so, why? Do you find it difficult to love your enemies? If so, why?
5. What is brotherly love? Why is brotherly love so important? Why should everything that is done or said in the church community be done or said in a loving way? What is the “brotherhood of believers?”

6. How does living “a life of love” differ from living a worldly life? How can a person “put on love?”
7. Why is it difficult for true love to grow in the heart of a person who has not obeyed the truth? How does a person obey the truth?
8. In what way does love cover a multitude of sins?
9. Is it possible for a person to think he has love in his heart when he does not? How can a person tell whether or not he is walking in love? See 1 John 5:2 and 2 John 6.

## **MONEY, DON'T LOVE !**

To some people what the New Testament says about money seems impractical, but no one should call it impractical until he has tried it.

### **DON'T STORE UP TREASURES ON EARTH.**

It is a comforting feeling to have a lot of money stored up, but Jesus said, **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”** (Matthew 6:19-21).

### **DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHAT YOU WILL EAT, DRINK, OR WEAR.**

Most people worry about what they will eat, drink, or wear, but Jesus said, **“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes”** (Matthew 6:25).

### **SEEK FIRST GOD'S KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

Jesus assured His followers that if they would put advancing God's kingdom and the doing of what is right ahead of their own personal enrichment, God would provide for their welfare. Jesus said, **“But seek first**

**his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”** (Matthew 6:33). This promise is repeated in Luke 12:31. Anyone can find out for himself whether or not this promise is valid.

### **GUARD AGAINST GREED.**

Greed is insidious. It can slip up on a person when he is not looking. Therefore, Jesus said, **“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions”** (Luke 12:15).

### **USE YOUR MONEY TO GAIN FRIENDS IN HEAVEN.**

Jesus told a story about a dishonest manager who was about to be fired. The manager went to the creditors of his employer and had them falsify the records of how much they owed his employer. He did this in order to make friends, so that after he was fired, he could go to them for help. Jesus commended the dishonest manager for having acted wisely, according to own worldly principles. Jesus used the man as an example to show how His followers should act wisely, according to their heavenly principles. Jesus said, **“I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings”** (Luke 16:9).

### **TAKE SOME POSSESSIONS WITH YOU WHEN YOU GO OUT ON A MISSION.**

When Jesus sent out His disciples on what is sometimes called “the limited commission,” He told them to take no money with them (Matthew 10:9). When He sent them out on their worldwide mission, however, He told them to take money with them. Jesus said to them, **“But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one”** (Luke 22:36).

### **WORK FOR HEAVENLY FOOD.**

After Jesus had fed five thousand people, some of the people came to Him and wanted to make Him king. Apparently, they were impressed that Jesus could provide food for them, but Jesus was not interested in becoming the kind of king they had in mind for Him to be. Jesus told them, **“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval”** (John 6:27).

**PAY YOUR DEBTS.**

Honesty in fulfilling financial obligations is one of the foundations of society. The apostle Paul said, **“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law”** (Romans 13:8).

**COLLECT MONEY IN THE SUNDAY ASSEMBLY.**

The apostle Paul prescribed an arrangement whereby churches could collect money for the poor. To the Corinthians he wrote, **“Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatians churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made”** (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

**LOOK TO THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS.**

It is only natural for a person to look to his own interests, but the apostle Paul admonished, **“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others”** (Philippians 2:4).

**DON’T PUT YOUR HOPE IN WEALTH.**

Rich people have a tendency to think they are better than poor people, but here is what the apostle Paul told Timothy to say to rich people: **“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment”** (1 Timothy 6:17).

**LAY UP A TREASURE FOR THE COMING AGE.**

People should make provisions for their life after death. The apostle Paul advised, **“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life”** (1 Timothy 6:18-19).

**DON’T LOVE MONEY.**

The writer of the Hebrew letter advised: **“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you’”** (Hebrews 13:5).

**WEEP AND WAIL, YOU RICH PEOPLE.**

Riches are a blessing from God, yet God holds people accountable for how they use their riches. James said, **“Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days”** (James 5:1-3). If people use their riches selfishly, they should weep and wail because of the punishment that is going to come to them; but if they use their wealth to the glory of God, they should rejoice.

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Why should Jesus' followers not store up treasures for themselves on earth?
2. Why should Jesus' followers not worry about what they are going to eat, drink, or wear?
3. Should Christians be saving up money for emergencies? Please, elaborate.
4. What about old age? Is it all right for Christians to provide for their old age, rather than depend upon their children, or upon the state, to take care of them?
5. How can people make friends with their money for the life after death?
6. Why do you suppose Jesus told His disciples to take no money with them when He sent them out on the limited mission?
7. Why do you suppose Jesus told His disciples to take money with them when He sent them out on the worldwide mission?
8. What is the food that endures for eternal life? Can you describe it?
9. Why are we indebted to love one another?

10. Why should each one of us look out for the interests of others? What all does that include?
11. Why do rich people sometimes think they are better than poor people? What is wrong with their thinking like that?
12. Why do poor people sometimes think they are not as good as rich people? What is wrong with their thinking like that?
13. How can we learn to trust in God rather than in money?

## **RESIST EVIL, DON'T**

Jesus taught His followers neither to resist evil and nor to exact retribution.

### **REJOICE WHEN PEOPLE PERSECUTE YOU.**

If anyone endures persecution because of his faith in Jesus, God will reward him for it. Jesus said, **“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you”** (Matthew 5:11-12). A similar statement by Jesus is found in Luke 6:22-23.

### **DON'T RESIST EVIL.**

The right to use force to defend one's person and one's property is embedded in the civil laws of most countries, but Jesus taught His followers not to rely on force. He said, **“But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person”** (Matthew 5:39). Christians should pray that they will not be brought into a situation where they will be tempted to do bodily harm to an evil doer.

### **TURN THE OTHER CHEEK.**

Jesus' way of thinking about retribution is entirely different from the thinking of many people. Jesus said, **“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil**

**person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also”** (Matthew 5:38-39). This teaching is also found in Luke 6:29.

### **LET THE ONE WHO SUES YOU HAVE YOUR COAT, TOO.**

Many legal systems provide for the right to sue people in order to seek redress for wrongs, but Jesus taught that it is best not to use this right. He said, **“And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well”** (Matthew 5:40). Similar teaching can be found in Luke 6:29.

### **GO THE SECOND MILE.**

Roman soldiers, who grew weary of carrying their heavy load, could conscript civilians to carry it for a mile. This was irksome to civilians, but Jesus had an unusual solution to this problem. He said, **“If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles”** (Matthew 5:41).

### **GIVE TO THE ONE WHO ASKS YOU.**

Perhaps none of Jesus’ statements is more foreign to the way most people think than what He said regarding giving. He said, **“Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you”** (Matthew 5:42). Jesus also said, **“Give to everyone who asks you. And if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back”** (Luke 6:30).

### **LOVE YOUR ENEMIES.**

Jesus introduced a new way of thinking about enemies. He said, **“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you; Love your enemies...”** (Matthew 5:43-44). This teaching is repeated in Luke 6:27-28 and Luke 6:35.

### **PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU.**

Many Jews in Jesus’ day hated the Romans because of their oppression. They also no doubt cursed the Romans, at least in private, but Jesus said, **“But I tell you; Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven”** (Matthew 5:44-45). This thought is also found in Luke 6:27-28.

### **DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HATE YOU.**

It is only natural for subjugated people to hate those who oppress them, but Jesus said, **“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you”** (Luke 6:27).

### **LEND, BUT DO NOT EXPECT TO GET ANYTHING BACK.**

Jesus said, **“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked”** (Luke 6:35). It is unclear whether Jesus meant that His followers should lend to people without expecting to borrow from them later, or whether He meant that when His followers lend anything, they should not ask to get it back. Perhaps both thoughts are included.

### **DON'T REPAY EVIL FOR EVIL.**

The teaching of the apostle Paul reflected the teaching of Jesus. Paul said, **“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody”** (Romans 12:17).

### **DON'T TAKE REVENGE.**

The apostle Paul explained why individuals should not take revenge. He said, **“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord”** (Romans 12:19).

### **FEED YOUR ENEMY; GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO DRINK.**

In his letter to the church at Rome, the apostle Paul quoted from Proverbs 25:21-22. He said, **“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head”** (Romans 12:20).

### **OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.**

Just as God is stronger than Satan, so is good stronger than evil. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”** (Romans 12:21).

### **WHY NOT RATHER BE WRONGED?**

Lawsuits are out of place, especially among members of the Lord's church. The apostle Paul wrote, **“The very fact that you have lawsuits**



**among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated” (1 Corinthians 6:7)?**

### **DON'T PAY BACK WRONG FOR WRONG.**

Christ's followers should not try to pay people back for the wrong they have done to them. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else” (1 Thessalonians 5:15).**

### **BEAR UP UNDER THE PAIN OF UNJUST SUFFERING.**

Out of respect for God, Christians should bear up under unjust treatment. The apostle Peter wrote, **“For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God” (1 Peter 2:19).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Why should a person rejoice when people persecute him or her for believing in Jesus?
2. Are Christians really supposed to turn the other cheek, to go the second mile, and to give an additional garment when one is taken? If they do that, will it give bad people an opportunity to take further advantage of them?
3. Are we entitled to defend ourselves? Please share your thoughts on this.
4. If we lend to everyone who asks us, will they borrow everything we have? What do you think?
5. Should we give to a person what he asks for, even if we know that it will not be good for him? If not, why not?
6. If we don't punish people who treat us badly, will we be encouraging them to do more evil?
7. What did King Solomon mean when he wrote that by doing good to our enemies we would “heap coals of fire on their heads” (Proverbs 25:21-22)? Did Solomon mean that God would punish our enemies all the more

if we did them good? Or did he mean that our enemies' consciences would be troubled if we did them good and that they would be changed? Or did Solomon have, perhaps, some other thought in mind? What do you think?

8. Is it wrong for parents to punish their children when the children do something bad? What types of punishment do you recommend for children?
9. Is it wrong for governments to punish lawbreakers? Please explain your answer.
10. Does God have ways of protecting people who do not defend themselves? What are some of the ways open to Him to intervene in their behalf? Have you ever been protected from evildoers? Can you tell of someone who was protected against evil doers? Please tell of it.

## **PATIENT, BE !**

Patience is an admirable attribute. The New Testament teaches that a person should be patient.

### **BE PATIENT IN AFFLICTION.**

Trials and troubles are unavoidable, yet God expects a person to bear up patiently and not to give way to despair. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer”** (Romans 12:12).

### **BE PATIENT.**

Not only does God want His people to be patient in time of trouble but also in dealing with others. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love”** (Ephesians 4:2).

### **CLOTHE YOURSELF WITH PATIENCE.**

A Christian should clothe himself with patience as if it were a garment. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Therefore, as God's chosen people,**

**holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Colossians 3:12).**

### **BE PATIENT WITH EVERYONE.**

There is scarcely anyone with whom a person should not be patient. The apostle Paul wrote, **“And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1 Thessalonians 5:14).**

### **PREACH WITH GREAT PATIENCE.**

Patience is especially important in preaching and teaching God’s word. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of seasons; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2).**

### **BE PATIENT UNTIL THE LORD COMES.**

It may seem that the Lord Jesus has taken a long time in returning, but when the proper time arrives, He will return. His people should wait patiently for His return. James wrote, **“Be patient, then brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near” (James 5:7-8).**

### **ENDURE PATIENTLY.**

Patience is needed in a time of persecution. The book of Revelation says, **“If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints” (Revelation 13:10).**

### **BE PATIENT IN THE END TIME.**

Patient endurance will be very important for those Christians who will, by God’s grace, be alive on the earth in the days shortly before the end of time. The book of Revelation says, **“This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).**

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Why does God want a person to be patient in suffering? What is the harm in giving away to despair?
2. What is the advantage of being patient with each other? How does it help? How do you feel about people who are not patient with you?
3. How can a person learn to “clothe” himself with patience?
4. Can you think of anyone with whom you should *not* be patient? What about a person who is lazy? Should you be patient with such a person?
5. Why is patience important in teaching? Can an impatient person learn to be a good teacher?
6. Why do you suppose the Lord has waited so long to come back? See 2 Peter 3:9.
7. Have you ever faced discrimination or persecution because of your faith? If you have, what was it like, and how did you cope with it?
8. How do you think you would react if you were to have to face persecution? How can a person prepare himself to face persecution?

**PERSEVERE !**

The New Testament teaches that it is necessary for a person to persevere in the Christian life.

**REMAIN IN CHRIST.**

Once a person has come into Christ Jesus by obedience to the gospel, he should stay in Him. Jesus said, **“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you**

**are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned”** (John 15:4-6).

### **REJOICE IN SUFFERING.**

The apostle Paul rejoiced that he could persevere in suffering for Christ because he knew it produces character. Paul wrote, **“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope”** (Romans 5:3-4).

### **BE PATIENT IN AFFLICTION.**

The apostle Paul wrote, **“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer”** (Romans 12:12).

### **DON'T BECOME WEARY IN DOING GOOD.**

People sometimes think their good works are not noticed and not appreciated. To such people the apostle Paul said, **“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up”** (Galatians 6:9).

### **WATCH YOUR LIFE AND DOCTRINE.**

A person should never give up living right and teaching what is true. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers”** (1 Timothy 4:16).

### **BE FAITHFUL TO THE END.**

Christians need to be faithful to the end of life, because those who give up may lose their reward. The book of Hebrews says, **“You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised”** (Hebrews 10:36).

### **RUN THE RACE WITH PERSEVERANCE.**

Athletes who do not give up are the ones who win the race. The book of Hebrews exhorts, **“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin**

**that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1).**

### **LET PERSEVERANCE FINISH ITS WORK.**

Holding on to their faith in times of difficulties and trials matures people. James wrote, **“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).**

### **STAND THE TEST.**

James wrote, **“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12).**

### **FOLLOW JOB’S EXAMPLE.**

Job suffered more than most people, yet he persevered. Concerning Job, James wrote, **“As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy” (James 5:11).**

### **ADD PERSEVERANCE TO SELF-CONTROL.**

Self-control precedes perseverance, and godliness follows it. The apostle Peter wrote, **“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love” (2 Peter 1:5-7).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. What did Jesus mean when He said that people should “remain” in Him?
2. Is it difficult to remain in Jesus? If it is so, why is it difficult? What can a person do in order to overcome this difficulty?
3. How does perseverance in time of suffering produce character?

4. How can a person learn to be patient in afflictions? What help is available?
5. Why is it important to live right? And why is it important to teach the truth? How do these two fit together?
6. Why is it necessary for Christians to be faithful unto death? Why does God not reward people according to the length of time they have served, rather than according to their spiritual condition at the time of their death?
7. Is it possible for Christians to lose their reward?
8. Why should Christians rejoice when they face trials? How does the testing of their faith develop perseverance? How is perseverance a sign of maturity?
9. What are some of the trials that come upon God's people? How is a person blessed if he perseveres under trial? What is the "crown of life" (James 1:12)?
10. How did Job feel about his suffering? Have you suffered as much as Job? Is it easier today for people to deal with suffering than it was for Job? If so, why?

## **PLEASE GOD !**

The New Testament tells people how to please God.

### **OFFER YOUR BODY AS A LIVING SACRIFICE.**

The priests of the Old Testament offered animal sacrifices to God, but animal sacrifices no longer please God. He now wants a different kind of offering. The apostle Paul wrote, **"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship"** (Romans 12:1)

**DON'T CONFORM TO THE WORLD.**

God does not want His people to pattern their lives after those who do not know God. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will”** (Romans 12:2).

**SERVE GOD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE, AND JOY.**

Regulations about what a person should eat were very prominent in the Old Testament, but not very prominent in the New Testament. The apostle Paul wrote, **“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men”** (Romans 14:17-18).

**MAKE IT YOUR GOAL TO PLEASE CHRIST.**

Since God has made Jesus Christ the head of the church (Ephesians 1:20-22), it is God’s desire that people in the church try to please Christ. The apostle Paul wrote, **“So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it”** (2 Corinthians 5:9).

**PLEASE THE SPIRIT.**

The Spirit of God is present among His people. Therefore, His people should be careful not to displease Him by the way they live. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Do not be deceived: God can not be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life”** (Galatians 6:7-8).

**FIND OUT WHAT PLEASES THE LORD.**

As a Christian matures, he finds out more about what pleases the Lord. The apostle Paul wrote, **“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord”** (Ephesians 5:8-10).

**CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS.**



God is pleased when children obey their parents. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord”** (Colossians 3:20).

### **LIVE PLEASING TO PLEASE GOD.**

A child of God should try all the time to please God more. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more”** (1 Thessalonians 4:1).

### **PRAY THAT YOU CAN LIVE A PEACEFUL AND QUIET LIFE.**

God wants His children to pray that they may live peaceful lives in godliness and holiness. The apostle Paul wrote, **“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”** (1 Timothy 2:1-3).

### **CARE FOR YOUR OWN FAMILY.**

God wants His people to take care of their parents and older relatives. The apostle Paul wrote, **“But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God”** (1 Timothy 5:4).

### **DON'T SHRINK BACK.**

God wants His people to live by faith. In the book of Hebrews, it says: **“But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him”** (Hebrews 10:38).

### **BELIEVE IN GOD.**

Unless people have faith in God, they will not be able to please Him. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him”** (Hebrews 11:6).

### **BE THANKFUL.**

Unless people are thankful, they are not likely to worship God acceptably. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe”** (Hebrews 12:28).

### **DO GOOD AND SHARE.**

God wants His people to share with others. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased”** (Hebrews 13:16).

### **OFFER SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES.**

Christians do not bring animal sacrifices and meal offerings to God, as was done in Old Testament times. They bring different sacrifices. The apostle Peter wrote, **“You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”** (1 Peter 2:5).

### **IF YOU SUFFER FOR DOING GOOD, ENDURE IT.**

God is pleased when His people patiently bear undeserved suffering. The apostle Peter asked, **“But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?”** Then Peter added, **“But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God”** (1 Peter 2:20).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Please tell some of the ways in which a person can offer his body as a living sacrifice?
2. How can a person “sow to the Spirit” (Galatians 6:8)? Please give some examples of people who sow to the Spirit.
3. How do the “children of the light” differ from other people?
4. How can a person find out more about what pleases the Lord? Does reading the Bible help? Can he learn anything from experience?
5. Why is God so insistent that children obey their parents?

6. Why does God want His people to look after their elderly parents?
7. Is a person who has faith in God more likely to live courageously than one who does not have faith? If so, why?
8. What do you suppose the “spiritual sacrifices” are of which the apostle Peter spoke in 1 Peter 2:5? Please suggest a few of them.
9. Does it make any difference whether or not a person tries to please God? If it does make a difference, why does it?
10. Is it an intolerable burden to try to please God? If not, why not?

## **PRAY!**

The New Testament contains many instructions for praying.

### **PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU.**

Jesus said, **“But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”** (Matthew 5:44). Jesus also said, **“Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you”** (Luke 6:28).

### **DON'T BE LIKE THE HYPOCRITES.**

**Praying should not be done for show. Jesus said,** “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full” (**Matthew 6:5**).

### **PRAY IN SECRET.**

Jesus said, **“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you”** (Matthew 6:6).

### **DON'T BABBLE LIKE THE PAGANS.**

God is an intelligent God and prayers to Him should make sense. Jesus said, **“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans,**

**for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him”** (Matthew 6:7-8).

### **ADDRESS PRAYERS TO THE FATHER.**

Jesus taught people how to pray. He said, **“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, etc.’”** (Matthew 6:9). See also Luke 11:2.

### **PRAY FOR DAILY BREAD.**

Jesus taught people even to pray for things that some people take for granted. He said to pray like this: **“Give us today our daily bread”** (Matthew 6:11). See also Luke 11:3.

### **PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS.**

Jesus taught people to pray for forgiveness. He said to pray like this: **“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”** (Matthew 6:12). See also Luke 11:4.

### **PRAY TO BE DELIVERED FROM EVIL.**

Jesus said to pray like this: **“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”** (Matthew 6:13). See also Luke 11:4.

### **ASK, SEEK, AND KNOCK.**

Jesus wants people to ask for the things they desire. He said, **“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you”** (Matthew 7:7). Similar words can be found in Luke 11:9.

### **BELIEVE YOU WILL GET WHAT YOU ASK FOR.**

Jesus wants people to pray with confidence. He said, **“I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer”** (Matthew 21:21-23). Similar words can be found in Mark 11:22-24.

### **FORGIVE OTHERS.**

Whether or not God forgives a person depends, in part, on whether or not he forgives others. Jesus also said, **“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins”** (Mark 11:25).

### **PRAY ALWAYS, AND DON'T GIVE UP.**

Jesus wants His followers to pray always. Luke 18:1 says, **“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”** (Read Jesus' parable of the Persistent Widow in Luke 18:2-5 and Jesus' comment on it in Luke 18:6-8.)

The apostle Paul said, **“Pray continually”** (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Paul also said, **“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful”** (Colossians 4:2).

### **WATCH AND PRAY.**

If Jesus' followers will watch and pray, it will help them escape the end-time destruction (Luke 21:35) that is coming upon the world. Jesus said, **“Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man”** (Luke 21:36).

### **ASK IN JESUS' NAME.**

Prayers should be offered in Jesus' name. Jesus said, **“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it”** (John 14:13-14). The instruction that a person should ask in Jesus' name is repeated in John 15:16 and John 16:23.

### **ASK WHATEVER YOU WISH.**

If a follower of Christ fulfills certain conditions, he can ask for whatever he wishes. Jesus said, **“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you”** (John 15:7).

### **GIVE THANKS.**

Giving thanks is an important part of praying. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Ephesians 5:20). Paul also said, **“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus”** (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

**PRAY ON ALL OCCASIONS.**

Prayer is always appropriate. The apostle Paul said, **“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints”** (Ephesians 6:18). All true Christians are called “saints” in the New Testament.

**DON'T BE ANXIOUS, PRAY.**

Prayer can bring great relief in times of stress. The apostle Paul said, **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God”** (Philippians 4:6).

James said, **“Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise”** (James 5:13).

**PRAY FOR THOSE IN AUTHORITY.**

Every nation profits from having Christians in it, partly because Christians make a habit of praying for a nation's leaders. The apostle Paul urged Christians to do this very thing. He said, **“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayer, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness”** (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

**MEN, LIFT UP HOLY HANDS IN PRAYER.**

Men have a special responsibility to take the lead in prayer. The apostle Paul said, **“I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing”** (1 Timothy 2:8).

**DRAW NEAR TO GOD.**

Christian people can come with confidence before God in prayer. The book of Hebrews says, **“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water”** (Hebrews 10:19-22).

**ASK FOR WISDOM.**

God wants people to ask for wisdom. James wrote, **“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him”** (James 1:5).

**CALL FOR THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH TO PRAY OVER THE SICK.**

The elders of the congregation have a special obligation to pray for the members of their congregation. James wrote, **“Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord”** (James 5:14).

**CONFESS YOUR SINS TO EACH OTHER AND PRAY FOR EACH OTHER.**

It is good for people to pray with each other and for each other. James wrote, **“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective”** (James 5:16).

**ASK ACCORDING TO GOD’S WILL.**

God knows what is best. For that reason, the apostle John said, **“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us”** (1 John 5:14).

**IF YOUR BROTHER SINS, PRAY FOR HIM.**

God wants people to pray for each other’s forgiveness. The apostle John said, **“If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that”** (1 John 5:16).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Why should Christians pray for those who persecute them?
2. What difference does it make whether or not prayers are offered for show?

3. Why should prayers be addressed to God alone, and not to dead saints, or to Mary?
4. Should people ask for their daily bread, even at time when they have enough bread? What do you think?
5. Why do you suppose Jesus wants His followers to believe that they will get what they pray for?
6. Why do you suppose God will not forgive people unless they forgive others?
7. Why is it important to ask for things in Jesus' name?
8. Why is it important to give thanks to God for His blessings?
9. What do you think the apostle Paul meant when he said, "Pray continually?" How can a person pray continually?
10. Please, explain how prayer relieves a person's anxieties?
11. What would be some good requests to make for kings and those in authority?
12. Why is it important for men to take the lead in prayer?

## **READY, BE**

Christians need to be ready for the Lord's return.

### **KEEP WATCH FOR YOUR LORD'S RETURN.**

No one knows either the day nor the hour (Matthew 24:36) of the Lord's return. His people should be prepared for his return at all times. Jesus said, "**Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come**" (Matthew 24:42).

### **BE READY.**



The return of the Son of Man will be like the coming of a thief: No one knows when He will come. Jesus said, **“But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him”** (Matthew 24:43-44). Similar passages can be found in Mark 13:32-33 and Luke 12:40.

### **KEEP WATCH.**

Jesus spoke a parable about ten young bridesmaids who were waiting for a bridegroom to arrive. Five of them were wise and five were foolish. The wise ones had extra oil for their lamps, but the foolish ones did not have enough and they ran out. At the conclusion of this parable, Jesus said, **“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour”** (Matthew 25:13).

### **BE ON GUARD! BE ALERT!**

It is important for Christians to be on guard and not to fall asleep. Jesus said, **“Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come”** (Mark 13:33).

### **KEEP WATCH.**

Jesus’ servants need to keep watch so as not to be found derelict in their duties when Jesus arrives. Jesus said, **“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back--whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”** (Mark 13:35-37).

### **BE READY TO RECEIVE HIM.**

A nice surprise will be in store for Jesus’ servants whom He finds ready for service when He comes: The Lord will serve them. Jesus said, **“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night”** (Luke 12:35-38).

**STAND UP; LIFT UP YOUR HEADS.**

The believers who are alive at the end should not be disturbed when they see the natural world beginning to dissolve. Jesus said, **“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near”** (Luke 21:28).

**BE CAREFUL.**

Some sins can cause a person to be unprepared for the Lord’s return, such as dissipation, drunkenness, and anxiety. Jesus said, **“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man”** (Luke 21:34-36).

**BE ALERT AND SELF-CONTROLLED.**

Some people are not aware of what is going on in the world nor of what is happening to them. They are asleep. The apostle Paul wrote, **“So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled”** (1 Thessalonians 5:6).

**WAKE UP!**

Some people have stopped watching for their Lord’s return. To such people Jesus said, **“Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you”** (Revelation 3:2-3).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Jesus said that no one knows the “day” or the “hour” of His return (Matthew 24:36). Does anyone know the year?
2. Is Jesus “the Son of Man?” See John 9:35-37.

3. What did Jesus teach by His parable of the ten young women (Matthew 25:1-13)? How can a Christian keep his lamp burning? How can a person keep “oil” on hand for his lamp?
4. How would you characterize a disciple of Jesus who has fallen asleep? How would you characterize one who is awake?
5. Can you think of some things that Jesus wants to find His servants doing when He returns? Please suggest a few.
6. Why should those believers who will be alive at the end of time “stand up” and “lift up” their heads? What did Jesus mean when He said, “your redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:28)?”
7. How can a servant of Jesus stay “dressed and ready for service?” How can a person keep his lamp burning (Luke 12:35-38)?
8. How do dissipation, drunkenness, and anxiety weigh a person’s heart down and keep him from being ready for the Lord’s return?
9. What does a sleepy person need to do in order to wake up? See Revelation 3:2-3.

## **REJOICE !**

Christ wants His people to experience the joy that is available to them. Here are some of the New Testament’s injunctions relative to rejoicing:

### **REJOICE WHEN YOU ARE PERSECUTED.**

Jesus told His followers to rejoice when they are persecuted because of their faith. Jesus did not mean that His followers should take pleasure in the persecutions but in the reward that would follow. Jesus said, “**Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you**” (Matthew 5:11-12). A Similar statement can be found in Luke 6:22-23.

### **REJOICE THAT YOUR NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN.**

Jesus sent out seventy-two of His followers on a short mission (Luke 10:1). When they returned they were filled with Joy that the demons had been subject to them (Luke 10:17). Jesus told them that it would be more appropriate for them to rejoice over their prospects for getting into heaven than over the fact that the demons had been subject to them. He said, **“However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven”** (Luke 10:20).

### **BE JOYFUL IN HOPE.**

A Christian’s hope is a great source of joy. The apostle Paul said, **“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer”** (Romans 12:12).

### **REJOICE WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE.**

Joy is contagious. One person’s joy can cause another person to rejoice. The apostle Paul encouraged Christian people to rejoice with each other. He said, **“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn”** (Romans 12:15).

### **LET THE NATIONS REJOICE!**

Moses called upon the Gentiles (nations) to join the Jews in rejoicing over the things that God had done for them (Deuteronomy 32:43). The apostle Paul used this and other quotations from the Old Testament to show that the Old Testament speaks of the conversion of the Gentiles. Paul wrote, **“For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: ‘Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name.’ Again, it says, ‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people’”** (Romans 15:8-10).

### **REJOICE IN THE LORD.**

The apostle Paul felt that it was a safeguard for Christians to be reminded to rejoice. He said, **“Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you”** (Philippians 3:1).

### **REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS.**

The apostle Paul repeated the injunction to rejoice. He said, **“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice”** (Philippians 4:4)! In another place, He said, **“Be joyful always”** (1 Thessalonians 5:16).

## **REJOICE THAT YOU PARTICIPATE IN THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.**

If a Christian can rejoice when he is being persecuted, he will really have something to be happy about when Christ returns. The apostle Peter said, **“But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed”** (1 Peter 4:13).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. How can a Christian bring himself to rejoice when he is being persecuted? Why should he?
2. Why do you suppose the seventy-two followers of Jesus rejoiced when they found the demons to be subject to them?
3. What is a Christian’s hope, and why should it cause him to rejoice?
4. Does it take a special type of person to rejoice with those who rejoice? What type of person does it take? How can a person learn to rejoice with those who rejoice?
5. Do the Gentile nations have reason to rejoice over the things that God has done for the Jews? How has God blessed the Gentiles through the Jews?
6. What does the expression “Rejoice in the Lord” mean? Why should a person rejoice in the Lord? How does a person rejoice “in the Lord?”
7. Why was it “safe” for Christian people to be reminded to rejoice?
8. How can a person rejoice “always,” as the apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:4? Are there situations in which it is seemingly impossible for people to rejoice? How should a Christian confront those situations?

## REMEMBER !

The New Testament tells of things that people should remember and never forget.

### REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE.

God sent two angels to lead Lot and his family out of Sodom. The angels took Lot, his wife, and his two daughters by the hand and led them out of Sodom. The angel said, "Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain!" But, alas, Lot's wife looked back, and the Bible says that she turned to a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26).

Jesus, speaking of the end time, said, **"It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife"** (Luke 17:30-32)! Jesus warned that at His return people should not worry about their material possessions.

### REMEMBER TO GIVE GENEROUSLY.

The apostle Paul encouraged the brethren in Corinth to get ready to make a generous contribution for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Paul wrote, **"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously"** (2 Corinthians 9:6).

### REMEMBER THE POOR.

When the apostle Paul visited Jerusalem, the believers extended to him the right hand of fellowship and requested that he remember the poverty of the saints in Jerusalem and that he try to find help for them. Paul made reference to this in his letter to the Galatian churches. He said, **"All they (the leaders of the church in Jerusalem) asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do"** (Galatians 2:10).

### REMEMBER YOU WERE ONCE SEPARATE FROM CHRIST.

Many people were converted to Christ in the city of Ephesus. In his letter to the Ephesian church, the apostle Paul reminded them of how their situation had changed since they had become Christians. Paul wrote, **"Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called 'uncircumcised' by those who call themselves 'the circumcision'**

**(that done in the body by the hands of men)--remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ"** (Ephesians 2:11-13).

### **REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST.**

It is very important that Christ's people not forget the gospel. The apostle Paul wrote to young Timothy, **"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel"** (2 Timothy 2:8).

### **DON'T FORGET TO ENTERTAIN STRANGERS.**

The kind hospitality of early Christians was one of their most attractive attributes. The book of Hebrews says, **"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it"** (Hebrews 13:2).

### **REMEMBER THOSE IN PRISONS.**

People who are in prison because of their faith in Christ are worthy of whatever encouragement others can give them. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **"Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering"** (Hebrews 13:3).

### **REMEMBER YOUR LEADERS.**

What a debt each Christian owes to the person (or persons) who taught him! The book of Hebrews says, **"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith"** (Hebrews 13:7).

### **DON'T FORGET TO DO GOOD AND TO SHARE.**

God has given material blessings to Christians, not for themselves alone, but so they can share with others. The book of Hebrews says, **"And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased"** (Hebrews 13:16).

## **REMEMBER TO TURN A SINNER FROM THE ERROR OF HIS WAY.**

One of the ways for a Christian to repay the debt he owes to the one (or ones) who taught him is to teach someone else. James wrote, **“Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins”** (James 5:20).

## **DON'T FORGET THAT WITH THE LORD A THOUSAND YEARS ARE LIKE ONE DAY.**

It may seem like the Lord Jesus has forgotten to return, but the apostle Peter said, **“Do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day”** (2 Peter 3:8).

## **REMEMBER WHAT THE APOSTLES SAID ABOUT THE LAST TIMES.**

The apostles had warned (2 Peter 3:3) that there would be scoffers. Jude said, **“But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, ‘In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires’”** (Jude 17).

## **REMEMBER WHAT YOU RECEIVED, HEARD, AND OBEYED.**

It is very important for Christians to remember what they have learned. Jesus said to the church at Sardis, **“Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you”** (Revelation 3:3).

## **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Is it true that the more a person gives, the more he gets? See what Jesus said about this in Luke 6:38.
2. Do you think people tend to forget to help the poor? Do you think one congregation should help another congregation in need?
3. Do Gentiles, who have become Christians, have citizenship in spiritual Israel? Do they also benefit from the promises (Romans 4:11-16) that God made to Abraham? Please explain.



4. Do you know anyone who is exceptionally hospitable? Please tell of that person. What did Jesus say about hospitality? See Matthew 25:35.
5. Have you ever visited anyone in prison? How did you feel about it? Was it a good thing to do? What did Jesus say about this? See Matthew 25:36
6. How can believers avoid being discouraged by those who scoff at them? What did Jesus say? See Matthew 5:11-12.
7. How can Christians keep fresh in their minds what they have been taught?  
Does reading the Bible help? Does attending church help? Please explain.

## **REPENT !**

There are repeated calls in the New Testament for people to repent.

### **REPENT!**

John the Baptist preached that the kingdom of heaven was near and that people should repent. John said, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near**” (Matthew 3:2).

### **REPENT!**

Jesus started preaching after He learned that John the Baptist had been put in prison (Matthew 4:12). He began with the same message that John had been preaching. Jesus said, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near**” (Matthew 4:17). Jesus also said, “**Repent and believe the good news**” (Mark 1:15)!

Jesus’ sent out the twelve disciples on what is sometimes called the “limited commission.” When the disciples went out they also preached that people should repent. See Mark 6:12.

### **REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED.**

The apostle Peter preached to the people in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, saying, “**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the**

**name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).**

### **REPENT AND TURN TO GOD.**

The apostle Peter healed a lame man at one of the entrances to the temple in Jerusalem. The man, after he was healed, began walking, jumping, and praising God. The man’s antics attracted the attention of many people, to whom Peter preached, **“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).**

### **REPENT AND PRAY.**

There was a certain man in Samaria who had been a sorcerer before he became a Christian. The man’s name was Simon. After Simon became a Christian he tried to buy from the apostles the authority to give to people spiritual gifts of a miraculous nature. The apostle Peter said to the Simon, **“Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart” (Acts 8:22).**

### **ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE SHOULD REPENT.**

Some of the leading men in the city of Athens invited the apostle Paul to speak before them. Paul spoke to them about the sin of idolatry. During the course of his remarks, Paul said, **“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).**

### **TURN TO GOD IN REPENTANCE.**

The apostle Paul reminded the elders from the city of Ephesus of the work that he had done among them. He said, **“I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus” (Acts 20:21).**

### **PROVE YOUR REPENTANCE BY YOUR DEEDS.**

When Festus, the Roman governor in Judea, arranged for the apostle Paul to speak before King Agrippa, Paul described his activities as follows. He said, **“First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds” (Acts 26:20).**

### **GOD WANTS EVERYONE TO REPENT.**

Some skeptics said that since Jesus had not yet returned, He would not return at all. To such criticism the apostle Peter replied, **“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”** (2 Peter 3:9).

### **REPENT AND DO THE FIRST WORKS.**

Jesus threatened to remove the “lampstand” of the Ephesian church if its members did not repent. Jesus said, **“Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place”** (Revelation 2:5).

### **REPENT THEREFORE!**

To the church at Pergamum Jesus said, **“Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth”** (Revelation 2:15-16).

### **REPENT OF IMMORALITY.**

To the church at Thyatira Jesus said, **“Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways”** (Revelation 2:20-22).

### **OBEY AND REPENT!**

To the church in Sardis Jesus said, **“Remember, therefore what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent”** (Revelation 3:3).

### **BE ZEALOUS AND REPENT.**

To the church at Laodicea Jesus said, **“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest [zealous], and repent”** (Revelation 3:19).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Why did the nearness of the kingdom of heaven in the days of John the Baptist and of Jesus necessitate that people repent?
2. Why do you suppose the apostle Peter told the people on the day of Pentecost to repent before he told them to be baptized (Acts 2:38)? Will baptism do a person any good if he has not repented of his sins beforehand?
3. The apostle Peter told Simon that he should repent and pray for forgiveness. See Acts 8:22. What do you suppose Peter would have told Simon to do if Simon had not already been baptized?
4. Is it sometimes necessary for people to repent of their sins before they can believe and accept the gospel? See Acts 20:21.
5. How can a person show that he has truly repented? See Acts 26:20.
6. Can you offer an explanation as to why Jesus has waited so long in coming back again? See 2 Peter 3:9.
7. Is it sometimes necessary for a whole congregation of Christian people to repent? If the “lampstand” of a congregation has been removed (Revelation 2:5), can that congregation still to be thought of as a true church of the Lord?
8. What will happen to false teachers against whom the Lord will fight with the sword of His mouth, as mentioned in Revelation 2:15-16?
9. What kind of suffering (Revelation 2:20-22) do you suppose a church will have to go through if its members lead immoral lives and do not repent?
10. Does a congregation of Christian people need to repent if the people in it do not obey the truth in the New Testament? See Revelation 3:3.
11. Why does a church that is not zealous (Revelation 3:19) need to repent?

## **RESPECT, SHOW !**

The New Testament teaches that people should respect each other and show it.

### **RESPECT EVERYONE TO WHOM RESPECT IS DUE.**

Christians have been taught to respect the government and to honor those who represent it. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor”** (Romans 13:7).

### **WIVES RESPECT YOUR HUSBANDS.**

Wives are taught by the New Testament to respect their husbands. The apostle Paul said, **“However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband”** (Ephesians 5:33). It is, of course, difficult for a wife to respect her husband unless he loves her.

### **SLAVES RESPECT YOUR MASTERS.**

The New Testament was written at a time when many of the Christians were slaves. Christians slaves were expected to submit respectfully to their masters. The apostle Paul wrote as follows, **“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ”** (Ephesians 6:5).

The apostle Paul also wrote, **“All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered”** (1 Timothy 6:1).

The apostle Paul admonished Christian slaves to be especially respectful of their owners if their owners were Christians. He wrote, **“Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them”** (1 Timothy 6:2).

The apostle Peter wrote in a similar vein. He said, **“Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh”** (1 Peter 2:18).

## **ELDERS, SEE THAT YOUR CHILDREN SHOW PROPER RESPECT.**

Elders of the Lord's church must see to it that their own children obey them with respect. Speaking of elders, Paul wrote, **"He [an elder] must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect"** (1 Timothy 3:4). The implication is that if a man, who cannot train up his own children to respect him, is chosen to be an elder of the church, he may not be able to gain the respect of the members of the church either.

## **DON'T SHOW FAVORITISM.**

It is very important that proper respect be shown to all members of the church, without favoritism. James wrote, **"My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you.' 'But [if you] say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him"** (James 2:1-5).

James also wrote, **"But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers"** (James 2:9).

## **SHOW PROPER RESPECT TO EVERYONE.**

Christians are the ones who most fully appreciate the value that God places upon each individual person. Therefore, they should be among the kindest and most respectful people on earth. The apostle Peter wrote, **"Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king"** (1 Peter 2:17). Notice that everyone is to be respected, the brotherhood is to be loved, God is to be feared, and the king is to be honored.

## **HUSBANDS RESPECT YOUR WIFE.**

Husbands should love their wives and treat them with respect. The apostle Peter said, **"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and**

**as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (1 Peter 3:7).**

### **ANSWER PEOPLE WITH RESPECT.**

A Christian should not act disrespectful to those who inquire into the reason for the hope that he has. The apostle Peter said, **“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”** (1 Peter 3:15).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Should a Christian act respectful to a public official whom he considers to be corrupt? Explain your answer.
2. Is it easier for a husband to love his wife if he feels that she respects him? If that is so, why is it?
3. Does the biblical teaching regarding the relationship between slaves and their masters have anything to say regarding the relationship between employees and their employers today? If so, what?
4. Why is it important for a congregation to know that the children of its elders show respect to their own fathers?
5. Why is it not good for anyone to show favoritism among the brothers and sisters of the church?
6. Can a person grow in his ability to show respect for the brothers and sisters in the church? If so, how?
7. Does it gratify a wife if her husband respects her and if he shows it? Why is that important to her?
8. Is it easier for a wife to be submissive to a husband who respects her? If it is, why is it?
9. Why is it sometimes difficult for a Christian to explain his or her faith to others with gentleness and respect? How can a Christian learn to do that?

## **RETURN TO THE LORD !**

The New Testament calls for people to return to the Lord.

### **BE RECONCILED TO GOD.**

The apostle Paul considered himself to be an ambassador for Christ. He wrote, **“We are, therefore, Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God”** (2 Corinthians 5:20).

### **LIVE A LIFE WORTHY OF YOUR CALLING.**

In ancient times, people were invited to a feast by word of mouth; that is, they were “called.” Every Christian has been invited, or “called,” to heaven and should live a life worthy of the great things to which he has been invited. The apostle Paul wrote, **“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love”** (Ephesians 4:1-2).

### **DON'T LIVE LIKE THE GENTILES ANY LONGER.**

Gentiles who become Christians change their lifestyle and must be careful not to fall back into their old ways. The apostle Paul cautioned, **“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking”** (Ephesians 4:17).

### **PUT OFF YOUR OLD SELF. PUT ON YOUR NEW SELF.**

People who have become Christians without having gotten rid of their old, sinful ways need to change. The apostle Paul wrote, **“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”** (Ephesians 4:22-24).

### **LIVE AS CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT.**

Everyone who receives and understands the gospel of Jesus has light by which to live. The apostle Paul wrote, **“For you were once darkness,**



**but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8-9).**

### **DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE DEEDS OF DARKNESS.**

The apostle Paul cautioned, **“Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret” (Ephesians 5:11-12).**

### **WAKE UP; RISE FROM THE DEAD.**

If a person is dead in sin, he needs to wake up. The apostle Paul wrote, **“But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: ‘Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you’” (Ephesians 5:13-14).**

### **BE CAREFUL HOW YOU LIVE.**

A person will make unwise decisions unless he is careful. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15-16).**

### **COMPLETE THE JOY OF THE ONE WHO CONVERTED YOU.**

The person who taught you the gospel rejoices over you, but if you are not learning to love the brethren, he will be saddened. The apostle Paul wrote to his beloved converts in the city of Philippi, as follows: **“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (Philippians 2:1-2).**

### **START LIVING A LIFE WORTHY OF THE LORD.**

Christians need to live a life that is worthy of their high privilege. The apostle Paul wrote, **“And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10).**

### **SET YOUR HEART ON THINGS ABOVE.**

A Christian should not concentrate on the material world. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God”** (Colossians 3:1-3).

### **SAY “NO” TO UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY PASSIONS.**

Even though a person is saved by grace, he still must say “No” to evil if he wants to be self-controlled, upright and godly. The apostle Paul wrote, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age”** (Titus 2:11-12).

### **DON’T HAVE A SINFUL AND UNBELIEVING HEART.**

Since a person has some control over what is in his heart, he needs to see to it that his heart is right. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God”** (Hebrews 3:12).

### **BE CAREFUL NOT TO FALL SHORT.**

If a person wants to enter heaven, he must be careful what he does. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it”** (Hebrews 4:1).

### **REMEMBER THE EARLIER DAYS.**

If a Christian’s zeal for the Lord has cooled, he needs to remember the earlier days. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated”** (Hebrews 10:32-33).

### **DON’T THROW AWAY YOUR CONFIDENCE.**

A person can be confident of receiving the reward that God has promised him if he lives according to the will of God. The writer of the Hebrew letter cautioned, **“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done**

**the will of God, you will receive what he has promised”** (Hebrews 10:35-36).

### **RUN THE RACE; FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS; DON'T LOSE HEART.**

The writer of the Hebrew letter compared the Christian life to a race. He said, **“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart”** (Hebrews 12:1-3).

### **STRENGTHEN YOUR ARMS AND KNEES.**

Many Christians are languishing for the lack of strength, but they can do something about that. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. ‘Make level paths for your feet,’ so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed”** (Hebrews 12:12-13).

### **MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE.**

In spite of a person's having been called and elected, he can lose both his calling and his election if he is not careful. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”** (2 Peter 1:10-11).

### **DON'T LOSE WHAT YOU HAVE WORKED FOR.**

Many Christians have worked hard for their religion, but they can lose their reward if they turn away. The apostle John admonished, **“Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully”** (2 John 1:8).

### **WAKE UP; STRENGTHEN OTHERS.**

Once a backsliding Christian realizes that he is on a slippery slope, he needs to wake up and help others to do the same. In the book of Revelation

Jesus said, **“Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you”** (Revelation 3:2-3).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. How should people act, who have been invited to live in the house of a great king? How should people act who have been invited to live in God’s heaven?
2. How does a Christian’s “new self” (Ephesians 4:22-24) differ from his “old self?” Point out some of the differences between the way that Gentiles live and the way Christians should live.
3. Are you thankful for the one who taught you the gospel? What can you do to increase that person’s joy?
4. What are the “things above,” which are spoken of in Colossians 3:1-3? How does a person set his heart on things above?
5. How can a person find out what it is that pleases the Lord? Does reading the Bible help? Does attending church services and Bible classes help? Does talking with Christian people help? Does praying for wisdom help?
6. How can a person “wake up” and become spiritually alive? What is involved in a non-Christian’s waking up and becoming spiritually alive? What is involved in a Christian’s waking up and becoming spiritually alive?
7. How does a person get the strength to say “no” to sin? Does saying “no” the first time, help in saying “no” the second time?
8. How can a Christian keep from losing heart? How can a person strengthen his “arms” and “knees,” as suggested in Hebrews 12:12?

## **SAVE YOURSELF !**

The New Testament has a lot to say about salvation. Here are some of the things that people must do in order to be saved.

### **BE WILLING TO LOSE YOUR LIFE FOR JESUS.**

If anyone does not have a deep devotion to Jesus, and a strong passion for His cause, Jesus cannot help him very much. Jesus said, **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it”** (Matthew 16:24-25).

### **BELIEVE IN GOD’S SON.**

Salvation is for those who believe in God’s Son. Jesus said, **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son”** (John 3:16-18).

### **BELIEVE AND YOU WILL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.**

Belief in Jesus is essential to a good life both now and in the time to come. Jesus said, **“I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life”** (John 6:47).

### **CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD.**

Salvation is not restricted to the people of one nation. Several times in the Bible the promise is repeated that says, **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”** (Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21, and Romans 10:13).

### **REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED.**

The people who call on the Lord must also obey Him. The apostle Peter said, **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2:38).

### **SAVE YOURSELF.**

Salvation does not come to people unless they want it and unless they are willing to do what is necessary to get it. The apostle Peter told the people on Pentecost to bestir themselves. He said, **“Save yourselves from this corrupt generation”** (Acts 2:40). Peter meant that people should save themselves by obeying the gospel.

### **REPENT AND TURN TO GOD.**

Repentance is necessary for salvation, because a person’s faith will not help him until he turns away from sin. The apostle Peter said, **“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).

### **BELIEVE IN JESUS.**

The apostle Paul and his traveling companion Silas were thrown in jail in the city of Philippi, and an earthquake shook the jail. The jailer was frightened, and when he had brought Paul and Silas out, he asked them, **“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”** They replied, **“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household.”** Then Paul and Silas spoke the word of the Lord to the jailer and all the people in his house and the people believed on the Lord and were baptized (Acts 16:30-33). This story shows that the natural result of believing in Jesus is for a person to be baptized.

### **CONFESS YOUR FAITH IN JESUS.**

It is very important that those who believe in Jesus tell others about their faith. The apostle Paul wrote, **“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved”** (Romans 10:9-10).

### **WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION.**

Continuing effort is involved in being saved. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling”** (Philippians 2:12).

### **OBEY JESUS.**

Let no one think that since he is saved by God's grace through faith, it is not necessary for him to do what Jesus said. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **"Although he [Jesus] was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him"** (Hebrew 5:8-9).

### **GET RID OF FILTH AND EVIL! ACCEPT THE WORD AND DO WHAT IT SAYS.**

Even after a person has become a Christian, he must still perfect holiness by following the directions of the word of God. James wrote, **"Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says"** (James 1:21-22).

### **YOU ARE JUSTIFIED BY WHAT YOU DO.**

Don't fall for the idea that a person is saved by faith alone, without repentance and baptism and without subsequently living by the word of God. James wrote, **"You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone"** (James 2:24).

### **BAPTISM SAVES YOU.**

Of course, baptism by itself does not save a person. It is Jesus who saves, but baptism contributes to a person's salvation by giving him a clean conscience toward God. The apostle Peter wrote, **"And this water (the flood in the time of Noah) symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ"** (1 Peter 3:21).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Did Abraham become righteous before God by merely believing what God had promised him? See James 2:21-24.
2. Does God want people actually to become righteous, or is He content only to think of them as being righteous? What do you think, and why?

3. Jesus said that people who believe in him (John 6:47) have eternal life. What do you suppose the connection is between believing in Jesus and having eternal life?
4. Is it important that the gospel of Jesus be preached today? If so, why is it important?
5. Do you think God will save people without their having to lift a finger to be saved? Please explain your answer.
6. Why is it, do you suppose, that God requires repentance before baptism?
7. Does God also require repentance after baptism? If so, why is that, do you suppose?
8. Why is it that God wants people to confess their faith in Jesus?
9. Why is it important for people to do what Jesus said? Why is it not sufficient for a person merely to believe in Him and praise Him?

## **SCRIPTURES, READ THE !**

The New Testament contains instructions as to how the Bible should be used.

### **LET THE SCRIPTURES TEACH YOU.**

The apostle Paul expected Christians to be reading the Old Testament and to be learning from it. He said, **“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope”**(Romans 15:4).

### **DO NOT GO BEYOND WHAT IS WRITTEN.**

In order to show that a person should have a modest opinion of himself, the apostle Paul quoted several passages from the Old Testament in his first letter to the Corinthians. From Isaiah Paul quoted, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise” (1 Corinthians 1:19). From Jeremiah he quoted, “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). And from Job he



quoted, “He catches the wise in their craftiness” (1 Corinthians 3:19). By way of summing up what these passages teach, Paul said, **“Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, ‘Do not go beyond what is written.’ Then you will not take pride in one man over against another”** (1 Corinthians 4:6).

### **BE WARNED.**

Stories of what happened to people in Old Testament times were recorded as warnings for those who would come after them. The apostle Paul said, **“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come”** (1 Corinthians 10:11).

### **LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY.**

Christians should be constantly reading and teaching the Scriptures. The apostle Paul admonished, **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God”** (Colossians 3:16). It is also good to be singing portions of Scripture.

### **READ THIS TO ALL THE BROTHERS.**

The apostle Paul wanted his letters to be read aloud in the assembly of the church. In his letter to the church at Thessalonika, Paul said, **“I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers”** (1 Thessalonians 5:27).

### **DEVOTE YOURSELF TO READING THE SCRIPTURES.**

The apostle Paul instructed Timothy to read the Scriptures to people as a method of teaching them. He wrote, **“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching”** (1 Timothy 4:13).

### **HANDLE THE WORD CORRECTLY.**

The apostle Paul encouraged Timothy, who was a young preacher of the gospel, to study the Scriptures. He said, **“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth”** (2 Timothy 2:15).

### **CONTINUE READING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.**

The apostle Paul wanted Timothy to continue reading the Old Testament, just as he had done before he became a believer in Christ. Paul said, **“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”** (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

### **USE THE SCRIPTURES TO TRAIN PEOPLE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

The stories in the Bible are very useful for teaching people. Lessons can be learned from the lives of the people who did right, as well as from the lives of those who did wrong. The apostle Paul wrote, **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”** (2 Timothy 3:16). Notice that Paul said that the Scriptures are “God-breathed.” That is, they are inspired.

### **HUMBLY ACCEPT THE WORD THAT WAS PLANTED IN YOU.**

A person needs to keep living by the word of God. James wrote, **“Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you”** (James 1:21). Notice that the word that is planted in people’s hearts can save them.

### **KEEP THE ROYAL LAW THAT IS FOUND IN SCRIPTURE.**

Although a Christian is not obligated to keep the law of the Old Testament, certain portions of the Old Testament are incorporated into the New Testament, and these parts he should keep. For example, James wrote, **“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right”** (James 2:8).

### **CRAVE PURE SPIRITUAL MILK.**

A person is greatly blessed if he has a craving to know what the Scriptures say. The apostle Peter said, **“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”** (1 Peter 2:2).

### **PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT THE PROPHETS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WROTE.**

The books written by the prophets of the Old Testament are very useful, especially in that they tell of the coming of the Messiah. The apostle Peter wrote, **“And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts”** (2 Peter 1:19).

### **UNDERSTAND THAT THE PROPHETS SPOKE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

No one should suppose that the Bible came about by accident, or that the prophets spoke from their own imagination. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”** (2 Peter 1:20-21).

### **RECALL THE WORDS OF THE PROPHETS AND APOSTLES.**

The apostle Peter expected Christians to be familiar with the prophetic books of the Old Testament and with the words of the apostles. Peter wrote, **“I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles”** (2 Peter 3:2).

### **TAKE TO HEART WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION.**

It is good to read the book of Revelation. The apostle John, who wrote the book of Revelation, said, **“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near”** (Revelation 1:3).

### **DON’T ADD ANYTHING TO THE WORDS OF THE PROPHECY.**

No one should add anything to the book of Revelation. The apostle John wrote, **“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book”** (Revelation 22:18).

### **DON’T TAKE ANYTHING AWAY FROM THIS BOOK.**

No one should take away anything from the book of Revelation. The apostle John wrote, **“And if anyone takes words away from this book of**

**prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (Revelation 22:19).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Does reading the Bible help a person to think modestly about himself? If it helps, how does it help?
2. What do you consider to be the greatest hindrance to your reading the Bible? How can that hindrance be removed?
3. Has anyone ever read the Bible to you? If so, how did you like it? Did it help you? Have you ever read from the Bible to anyone? Have you ever read from the Bible to a child?
4. Would you trust a person to be able to show you the way to heaven if that person does not know the Bible? How can you determine whether or not a person knows the Bible?
5. How does the Bible help make a person “wise unto salvation?”
6. Can you think of any Bible story from which a good lesson can be drawn? If so, please tell about it.
7. How would you use the Bible for rebuking and correcting people?
8. How do you explain the fact that many people do not follow what the Bible says, even though they know it?
9. How can a person develop a desire to know what the Bible says?
10. Which books in the Old Testament are prophetic books? Why should a person not neglect reading them?
11. Does what the apostle John said about not taking anything away from the book of Revelation and about not adding anything to it apply to the rest of the Bible as well? See Deuteronomy 4:2, Deuteronomy 12:32, and Proverbs 30:6?

## **SERVE OTHERS !**

Jesus calls people to serve Him by ministering to others.

### **BE A SERVANT TO OTHERS.**

Some of Jesus' disciples wanted to have the first place among the disciples, but Jesus said to them, **“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave”** (Matthew 20:25-27). Similar teaching is found in Matthew 23:11, in Mark 9:35, and in Mark 10:43-44.

### **BE A FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT.**

Even a person who has an exalted position should consider himself to be a servant of those who are under him. Jesus said, **“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns”** (Matthew 24:45-46). Similar teaching is found in Luke 12:35-37.

### **SERVE WITH THE GIFT YOU HAVE.**

A person should use whatever gift he has. The apostle Paul said, **“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully”** (Romans 12:6-8).

### **SERVE ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE.**

Christians are free from the Law of Moses. They should not use their freedom to sin, but to love others and serve them. The apostle Paul said, **“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’** (Galatians 5:13-14).

### **OBEY EARTHLY MASTERS.**

Slavery was a fact of life when Jesus came into the world. His first task, however, was not to free slaves but to make them worthy of freedom. Here is the advice that the apostle Paul gave to slaves who had become Christians: **“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart”** (Ephesians 6:5-6). This same advice is given in Colossians 3:22-23, 1 Timothy 6:1-2, and in 1 Peter 2:18-21.

### **MINISTERS MUST POINT OUT THE TRUTH,**

Gospel ministers have a special responsibility to point out the truth. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, **“If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and the good teaching that you have followed”** (1 Timothy 4:6).

### **FAITHFULLY ADMINISTER GOD’S GRACE**

God gives gifts in order to equip people for service. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms”** (1 Peter 4:10).

### **SERVE WITH THE STRENGTH THAT GOD PROVIDES**

God gives strength to people so they can serve others. People should use their strength wisely in order to please God. The apostle Peter wrote, **“If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen”** (1 Peter 4:11).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Why does Jesus want His people to be true servants? If Jesus’ people are servants, does it debase them or does it elevate them?

2. Should people who have responsible positions in government or in business consider themselves to be servants? If so, why?
3. Do you think Christians make better public officials and business executives than other people?
4. Should people who have responsible positions in the church consider themselves to be servants? How can they demonstrate that they consider themselves to be servants?
5. How can a person identify the gift that God has given him?
6. Can you identify some of the gifts that God has given you? If you can identify your gifts, how do you aspire to use them?
7. If you are a servant of others, does that mean that you are not an honorable person? Does it mean that you are not a free person? Please elaborate on your answers.
8. Should a person pray for enough strength to be able to perform the service that he is called upon to render?
9. What are some of the responsibilities of Gospel ministers? Is everyone called upon to “minister” to others in some way?
10. Does a person have to be an ordained minister before he can teach someone the gospel?

## **SIN NOT !**

### **DON'T KEEP ON SINNING.**

It would be foolish for a person to think that if he keeps on sinning, God's grace would be increased. The apostle Paul asked, **“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”** (Romans 6:1-2).

## **DON'T SIN JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE UNDER GRACE AND NOT UNDER LAW.**

The fact that God is gracious does not free people from the obligation to try to avoid sin. The apostle Paul asked, **“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!”** (Romans 6:15).

## **COUNT YOURSELVES DEAD TO SIN.**

When a person is baptized in water, he dies with Christ (Romans 6:4-5). For that reason he should consider himself dead to sin after he is baptized. The apostle Paul said, **“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus”** (Romans 6:11).

## **DON'T LET SIN REIGN IN YOUR BODY.**

Satan tries to take charge of your body by tempting you to sin. The apostle Paul warned against letting this happen. He said, **“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires”** (Romans 6:12).

## **DO NOT OFFER THE PARTS OF YOUR BODY TO SIN.**

Your body belongs to God. It should be dedicated to God's service. The apostle Paul said, **“Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness”** (Romans 6:13).

## **DON'T LIVE ACCORDING TO THE SINFUL NATURE.**

A person's body has certain fleshly desires, but no one is under obligation to do what his body desires. The apostle Paul said, **“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it”** (Romans 8:12).

## **PUT TO DEATH THE MISDEEDS OF THE BODY.**

If a person has the Spirit of God in his heart, he is better able to avoid the sins that his body desires. The apostle Paul said, **“For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live”** (Romans 8:13).

## **LIVE DECENTLY, AS IN THE DAY.**



A Christian should have nothing to hide. He should live in such a way that he is not ashamed for everyone to know what he does. The apostle Paul said, **“Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy”** (Romans 13:13).

### **DON'T CAUSE YOUR BROTHERS TO GO AGAINST THEIR CONSCIENCE.**

Some of the early Christians felt that it was wrong to eat food that had been sacrificed to idols. The apostle Paul warned Christians at Corinthian not to eat food sacrificed to idols if it would cause others to sin. Paul said, **“When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ”** (1 Corinthians 8:12).

### **DON'T SET YOUR HEARTS ON EVIL THINGS.**

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they became very hungry for meat. They even lusted after it (Numbers 11:4) and they were punished for their lust (Numbers 11:33). Concerning this, the apostle Paul admonished, **“Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did”** (1 Corinthians 10:6).

### **DON'T BE IDOLATERS.**

While Moses was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments, the children of Israel made a golden calf and worshipped it (Exodus 32:3-6). The apostle Paul warned the Corinthians not to do such a thing. He said, **“Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: ‘The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry (Exodus 32:6)’”** (1 Corinthians 10:7).

### **STOP SINNING.**

A Christian needs to be careful with whom he associates. The apostle Paul warned, **“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’ Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame”** (1 Corinthians 15:33-34).

### **DON'T INDULGE THE SINFUL NATURE.**

A Christian is free from the Law of Moses, yet he is not free to sin. The apostle Paul admonished, **“You, my brothers, were called to be free.**

**But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature** (the Greek says ‘flesh’); **rather, serve one another in love**” (Galatians 5:13).

### **DON’T BE DECEIVED.**

Some people think they will not be punished for their sins, but this is not true. The apostle Paul warned, **“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows”** (Galatians 6:7).

### **DON’T STEAL ANY MORE.**

In some cultures it is not thought of as being wrong for a person to steal. The apostle Paul said, however, **“He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need”** (Ephesians 4:28).

### **DON’T GET DRUNK.**

Drunkenness gets people into a lot of trouble. The apostle Paul said, **“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit”** (Ephesians 5:18).

### **DON’T BE PARTNERS WITH EVIL PEOPLE.**

A Christian should not get involved in other people’s sins. The apostle Paul said, **“For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them”** (Ephesians 5:5-7).

### **HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH FRUITLESS DEEDS.**

Rather than participate in sinful deeds, a Christian should expose them and not participate in them. The apostle Paul said, **“Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them”** (Ephesians 5:11).

### **DO NOT SHARE IN THE SINS OF OTHERS.**

A young Christian needs to learn early which things he should participate in and which not. The apostle Paul told Timothy, **“Do not be**

**hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22).**

### **DON'T KEEP ON SINNING DELIBERATELY.**

After a person has become a Christian, he should become intolerant of all sin in his life. The letter to the Hebrews says, **“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God”** (Hebrews 10:26-27). See also 1 John 2:1-2; 1 John 3:8; and 1 John 5:18.

### **LET US THROW OFF SIN.**

Sin entangles people. It keeps people from performing, as they should. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews said, **“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witness, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us”** (Hebrews 12:1).

### **RESIST SIN.**

Most people give up too soon in their struggle against sin. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood”** (Hebrews 12:4).

### **DON'T BE ENVIOUS; DON'T HAVE SELFISH AMBITION.**

A wise person does not have selfish ambition or boast of his attainments. James, who wrote the book of James, said, **“But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil”** (James 3:14-15).

### **DON'T BE A FRIEND OF THE WORLD.**

A Christian should not be too closely attached to the world. James wrote, **“You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God”** (James 4:4).

### **DO THE GOOD YOU KNOW TO DO.**

Christians need to be aggressive in doing good. James said, **“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins”** (James 4:17).

### **DON’T CLAIM TO BE WITHOUT SIN.**

It is wrong for a person to claim that he does not commit sins. The apostle John said, **“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us”** (1 John 1:8). See also 1 John 1:10.

### **CONFESS YOUR SINS.**

People should be quick to confess their sins. The apostle John said, **“If we confess our sins, he (God) is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”** (1 John 1:9).

### **DO NOT LET ANYONE LEAD YOU ASTRAY.**

**“Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous”** (1 John 3:7).

### **DON’T IMITATE WHAT IS EVIL.**

**“Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God”** (3 John 1:11).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Can a person be dead to sin before he is baptized? If not, why not?
2. Do you see any signs that Satan is trying to get control of your life?  
What is he doing?
3. How can a person keep Satan from getting control of his body?
4. In what way does the Spirit of God help a Christian avoid sinning?
5. Why do people try to hide their sins? Why are certain types of sins done at night?
6. Why is it wrong for a person to go against his conscience?
7. Why was it sinful for the children of Israel to lust after meat?

8. Why is it wrong to worship idols?
9. How does bad association corrupt good character?
10. Why is a Christian not bound to keep the Law of Moses? See Galatians 3:24-25 and Colossians 2:14).
11. Why is it wrong to steal?
12. How much sin should a Christian tolerate in his life? Can he get rid of sin all at once? If he cannot get rid of sin all at once, how is he different from a non-Christian?

## **SLAVES, DON'T BE !**

Jesus came into a world in which slavery was commonplace, and there are instructions in the New Testament for both slaves and masters to follow. Actual slavery is not a problem in most places today, but the principles involved are still helpful.

### **DON'T BE SLAVES TO SIN.**

The most common form of slavery is slavery to sin. The apostle Paul said, **“Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”** Romans 6:16-18

### **DON'T LET BEING A SLAVE TROUBLE YOU, BUT GAIN YOUR FREEDOM IF YOU CAN.**

Whether a person is a slave or free is not the most important thing in life. The apostle Paul said, **“Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you--although if you can gain your freedom, do so”** (1 Corinthians 7:21).

**DON'T BECOME SLAVES OF MEN.**

A Christian is free, yet he should serve Christ. The apostle Paul said, **“For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord’s freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ’s slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men”** (1 Corinthians 7:23).

**DON'T BE SLAVES AGAIN TO IDOLS.**

When people become Christians, they get free from serving idols, demons, and false gods. So they should take care not to fall into that form of slavery again. The apostle Paul said, **“Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?”** (Galatians 4:8-9).

**DON'T BE SLAVES TO THE OLD LAW.**

The apostle Paul compared the covenant of the Old Testament to Hagar, Sarah’s slave whom Abraham took as a concubine. Paul said that Christian people are not descendants of the slave woman, but of Sarah, the free woman. Paul asked, **“But what does the Scripture say? ‘Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son’”** (Galatians 4:30). Christian people are not subject to the laws of the Old Testament. Their inheritance is a heavenly one and is not restricted to any one nation of people.

**SLAVES OBEY YOUR MASTERS.**

Slaves who became Christians were not supposed to rebel but to become better slaves. The apostle Paul said, **“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ”** (Ephesians 6:5).

**DO THE WILL OF GOD FROM THE HEART.**

Slaves who became Christians served Christ as well as their own masters. The apostle Paul said, **“Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart”** (Ephesians 6:6).

**SERVE WHOLEHEARTEDLY.**

Slaves who became Christian were expected to be much better servants than they were before they became Christians. The apostle Paul said, **“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free”** (Ephesians 6:7-8).

**MASTERS, DON'T THREATEN YOUR SLAVES.**

Any slaveholder who became a Christian was supposed to have an entirely new attitude toward his slaves. The apostle Paul said, **“And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him”** (Ephesians 6:9).

**OBEY YOUR MASTERS IN EVERYTHING.**

Christian slaves were supposed to give good service, whether their masters were looking or not. The apostle Paul said, **“Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord”** (Colossians 3:22).

**MASTERS, TAKE CARE OF YOUR SLAVES.**

Christian masters were supposed to treat their slaves in a fair manner. The apostle Paul said, **“Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.”** (Colossians 4:1).

**RESPECT YOUR MASTERS.**

Every slave was aware that slavery is an indignity, and they all resented it, but Christian slaves were not supposed to despise their masters. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, **“All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered”** (1Timothy 6:1).

**DON'T SHOW LESS RESPECT FOR YOUR MASTER JUST BECAUSE HE IS A BROTHER.**

If, for some reason, Christian masters did not see fit to release their slaves, Christian slaves should not be disrespectful of them. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Those who have believing masters are not to show less**

**respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them”** (1 Timothy 6:2).

### **TEACH SLAVES TO BE SUBJECT, TO TRY TO PLEASE, NOT TO TALK BACK, NOT TO STEAL.**

Slavery was not a satisfactory arrangement. Slaves were always causing trouble, but Christian slaves were supposed to be different. The apostle Paul wrote to Titus, **“Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive”** (Titus 2:9-10).

### **SLAVES, SUBMIT TO YOUR MASTERS.**

Christian slaves were expected to give good service even if their masters were harsh. The apostle Peter said, **“Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh”** (1 Peter 2:18).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Everyone knows that slavery was cruel, but were there some good aspects to it? What do you think?
2. Was it difficult for slaves to obey their masters? What happened to those slaves who did not obey?
3. Everyone is glad that he is not a slave, but do you think you would have made a good slave?
4. What would have happened to first century society if Christ had declared all slaves free? How would this have affected the spread of Christianity?
5. Can you explain what caused slavery finally to disappear? Please explain it briefly, if you can.
6. Describe the advantage of not being under bondage to sin.



7. What is the advantage of not being under bondage to Old Testament laws?
8. Was it hard for slaves to respect their masters? Do you think most of them did or did not respect their masters?
9. What do you think about bosses who threaten their workers and use bad language at them?
10. Do you think that giving good service on the job is important in today's world?
11. Should Christians give a good days work for a day's pay? Do you think that many workers are lazy on the job? Are there many people who are eye pleasers and work only when their boss is watching?
12. What can employers do to see that their employees are treated fairly?
13. Is it common for employees to speak disrespectfully of their bosses and employers behind their backs? What should a Christian's attitude about this be?
14. If a Christian feels that he is not being treated properly, or that he is not being paid adequately for his work, does that give him an excuse to steal from his employer? What do you think?

## **SOLDIER, BE A GOOD**

The apostles were well acquainted with Roman soldiers. They saw them nearly everywhere they went. Many of the soldiers were, no doubt, sinful men, yet some of them possessed qualities that Christians should imitate. There are a number of allusions to proper military conduct in the New Testament.

### **PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT.**

Christ's soldiers need to put on the spiritual armor that is available to them. The apostle Paul wrote, "**The night is nearly over; the day is almost**

**here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Romans 13:12).**

### **CARRY YOUR OWN LOAD.**

The best soldiers are those who can take care of themselves and who are not be a burden to others. The apostle Paul said, **“For each one should carry his own load”** (Galatians 6:5).

### **BE STRONG IN THE LORD.**

Christ wants His spiritual warriors to be strong. The apostle Paul said, **“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power”** (Ephesians 6:10).

### **PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD.**

Christ’s soldiers should put on the entire spiritual armor, not just a part of it. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes”** (Ephesians 6:11).

### **STAND YOUR GROUND.**

After Christians have put their armor on, they need to stand their ground. The apostle Paul said, **“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand”** (Ephesians 6:13).

### **BUCKLE ON THE BELT OF TRUTH.**

Truth is like a belt. It holds the armor together. Without truth the armor falls apart. The apostle Paul said, **“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist”** (Ephesians 6:14).

### **PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

A breastplate protects a soldier’s heart. If a person lives righteously, his heart will be protected. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Stand firm then, ...with the breastplate of righteousness in place”** (Ephesians 6:14).

### **BE READY TO TEACH THE GOSPEL.**

Knowing the gospel is like having good footwear. It enables a person to go places and to do things he would otherwise be unable to do. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Stand firm then, ...and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace”** (Ephesians 6:14-15).

**TAKE UP THE SHIELD OF FAITH.**

A Christian's faith shields him from wrong ideas. The apostle Paul wrote, **"In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one"** (Ephesians 6:16).

**TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION**

A helmet protects a soldier's head, which is his most essential body part. Salvation is similar to a helmet in that it protects a Christian's eternal spirit, which is the most essential thing about him. The apostle Paul wrote, **"Take the helmet of salvation"** (Ephesians 6:17).

**TAKE THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.**

A Christian should wield the sword of the spirit by sharing the word of God. The apostle Paul wrote, **"Take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"** (Ephesians 6:17).

**KEEP ON PRAYING.**

Praying is a part of the fight. The apostle Paul said, **"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints"** (Ephesians 6:18).

**STAND FIRM IN THE LORD.**

A Christian is bound to face some opposition. When he faces it, he should not retreat from it. The apostle Paul wrote, **"There, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends"** (Philippians 4:1)!

**PUT ON FAITH, LOVE, AND HOPE.**

Faith, love, and hope are a part of a Christian's spiritual armor. The apostle Paul wrote, **"But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet"** (1 Thessalonians 5:8).

**FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT.**

God wants His soldiers to fight bravely. The Apostle Paul wrote, **"Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the**

**prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight” (1 Timothy 1:18).**

### **FIGHT THE FIGHT OF FAITH.**

A Christian soldier should defend the faith. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6:12).**

### **ENDURE HARDSHIP.**

There are hardships involved in being a soldier, especially when a battle is raging. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, **“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:3).**

### **DON'T GET INVOLVED IN CIVILIAN AFFAIRS.**

A commanding officer is not pleased with a soldier who gets so involved with civilian affairs that he is unprepared to fight. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, **“No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer” (2 Timothy 2:4).**

### **BE SELF-CONTROLLED AND ALERT.**

The devil is a cunning adversary. That is why the apostle Peter warned, **“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers through the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering” (1 Peter 5:8-9).**

### **RESIST THE DEVIL.**

The devil can be successfully resisted. James wrote, **“Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Is a person likely to be able to stand against the devil if that person wears only a portion of the armor that is available to him? How can a person tell whether or not he is fully protected? After a person has identified his unprotected spots, what can he do about it?

2. How important is it to love the truth? How can a person tell whether or not he loves the truth? What can a person do to increase his love for the truth?
3. What is righteousness? How does righteous living protect a person?
4. What is the “gospel?” See 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Is the gospel important? See Romans 1:16. How does anyone acquire knowledge of the gospel? How does one “obey the gospel?”
5. Is there anything a person has to do in order to get salvation? Or is salvation merely a matter of a person’s thinking that he is saved? Does obedience play a role in salvation?
6. How can speaking a prayer be considered a part of doing battle for Christ?
7. How can faith, love, and hope be considered a part of the Christian’s armor?
8. What kind of opposition is a Christian likely to face? How should a Christian conduct himself in the face of opposition?
9. How does a Christian soldier distinguish between his own private, “civilian” affairs and the affairs of his commander-in-chief (Jesus)?
10. How does a person go about resisting the devil? Are people supposed to rebuke the devil? See Jude 9.

## **SPEAK, BE CAREFUL HOW YOU !**

There is a lot of information in the New Testament about the use of the tongue.

**DON'T GET ANGRY WITH YOUR BROTHER AND SAY BAD WORDS TO HIM.**

It is very easy for a person to get angry and to say something that he should not. Jesus warned against this. He said, **“But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell”** (Matthew 5:22).

### **DO NOT SWEAR AT ALL.**

Jesus wants His people to be so truthful that it will not be necessary for them to take an oath. He said, **“But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No;’ anything beyond this comes from the evil one”** (Matthew 5:34-37).

Jesus’ teaching against swearing was repeated by James, who wrote, **“Above all, my brothers, do not swear--not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your ‘Yes’ be yes, and your ‘No,’ no, or you will be condemned”** (James 5:12).

### **DON’T SPEAK CARELESS WORDS.**

God hears every word that is spoken and a record is kept. Jesus said, **“But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken”** (Matthew 12:36).

### **BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU.**

The expression “to bless” means “to say good words” to a person. Jesus taught His disciples to say good words to those who curse them. He said, **“Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you”** (Luke 6:28).

Similarly, the apostle Paul taught that Christians should say good words to those who do bad things to them. Paul said, **“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse”** (Romans 12:14).

### **CONFESS: “JESUS IS LORD.”**

One of the noblest of uses to which the human mouth can be put is to confess Jesus as Lord. The apostle Paul said, **“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ And believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”** (Romans 10:9).

It is generally true that if a person confesses his faith in Jesus, it will lead to his being saved, but this is not always true. For, regrettably, some people confess their faith in Jesus, but they do not do what Jesus has said. See Matthew 7:21-23.

### **DON'T GRUMBLE.**

Grumbling may not seem to be a very serious sin, but it is. The children of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and it proved disastrous for them. The apostle Paul said, **“And do not grumble, as some of them did--and were killed by the destroying angel”** (1 Corinthians 10:10).

James wrote, **“Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door”** (James 5:9)!

### **SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE.**

If people can learn to speak the truth in love, it will facilitate their spiritual growth. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ”** (Ephesians 4:15).

### **DON'T LET UNWHOLESOME TALK COME OUT OF YOUR MOUTH.**

People with perverse minds and wicked hearts delight in filthy speech and dirty stories. Christians, however, should avoid such talk. The apostle Paul admonished, **“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen”** (Ephesians 4:29).

### **DON'T USE OBSCENITY.**

Some people think that using dirty language and telling obscene stories adds zest to their speech, but the apostle Paul said, **“Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving”** (Ephesians 5:4).

### **SPEAK PSALMS, HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS.**

Christians are a happy people. They have much to sing about. The apostle Paul said, **“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord”** (Ephesians 5:19).

**PUT OFF FALSEHOOD; SPEAK TRUTHFULLY.**

It is very important to learn to speak truthfully. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body”** (Ephesians 4:25).

Paul also wrote, **“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices”** (Colossians 3:9).

**GET RID OF ANGER, RAGE, MALICE, SLANDER, AND FILTHY LANGUAGE.**

It is wise not to speak to a person in a harsh and unforgiving manner, even if that person deserves to be rebuked. The apostle Paul advised, **“But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips”** (Colossians 3:8).

**LET YOUR CONVERSATION BE SEASONED WITH SALT.**

Christians should season their conversation by using gracious words. The apostle Paul advised, **“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone”** (Colossians 4:6).

**KEEP A TIGHT REIN ON YOUR TONGUE.**

People need to watch what they say, for the tongue can do a lot of harm. James wrote, **“If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless”** (James 1:26).

**LET NO CURSES COME OUT OF THE MOUTH THAT SPEAKS PRAISES.**

It is unattractive for a Christian, who is taught to praise God, to use curse words. James wrote, **“Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be”** (James 3:10).

**DON'T SLANDER ONE ANOTHER.**

Each member of a congregation should be careful not to slander other members. James wrote, **“Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law**



**and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it” (James 4:11).**

### **DO NOT RETALIATE INSULT WITH INSULT.**

Christians are people who are blessed, and they should bless others. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:9).**

### **KEEP YOUR TONGUE FROM EVIL.**

How a person uses his tongue will greatly affect the quality of his life. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech” (1 Peter 3:10).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Will a person’s confession of faith in Jesus lead to that person’s salvation, even if he does not do what Jesus has said? Please, explain your answer.
2. Do you think it would be helpful to memorize portions of the Bible? Have you ever tried to memorize certain passages? Did you have any luck at it? What is a good way to memorize passages?
3. How can a person stop using harsh language?
4. Can you think of a reason (or reasons), why God does not want His people to get angry with others? Please elaborate.
5. Should Jesus’ words be taken literally, where He said, “Bless those who curse you?” Have you ever tried to bless anyone who cursed you? If you did, was it easy to do? What effect did it have?
6. Why does God not want us to grumble about our lives?
7. Is it worse for a Christian to say bad words and to curse, than it is for a non-Christian to do so? If so, why?

8. What should a Christian say (or do) when someone starts to tell him a dirty story? Should he laugh at dirty jokes?
9. Is it possible to rebuke someone in a kind manner? If it is possible, how can it be done?
10. Do you know anyone who never (or hardly ever) tells a lie? Please, tell about that person.

## **SPIRIT, BE LED BY THE !**

It is interesting that the New Testament does not tell people to love the Holy Spirit, to sing to the Holy Spirit, to pray to the Holy Spirit or to worship the Holy Spirit. Those expressions of devotion are supposed to be directed toward God, the Father. The New Testament does tell people, however, how they should treat the Holy Spirit.

### **DON'T BLASPHEME THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Pharisees accused Jesus, who did His miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, to be working through an evil spirit. This was blasphemy, because it cast aspersion on the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Jesus said, **“And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come”** (Matthew 12:31-32). Similar teaching can be found in Mark 3:29-30.

### **PUT EVIL DEEDS TO DEATH BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

The New Testament teaches that if people live according to dictates of their sinful nature (flesh), they will die; but if they by the Spirit put their sinful nature (flesh) to death, they will live. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live”** (Romans 8:12-13).

**ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.**

The next verse explains how it is that some people are able to put to death their sinful nature (flesh). They do it by allowing themselves to be led by the Spirit of God. That is to say, they do what the Spirit says for them to do. In this way, they allow the Spirit to lead them.

Their allowing the Spirit to lead them identifies them as God's children. As a result of their being His children, God will allow them to live with Him eternally. The apostle Paul continued the above in this way: **“but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God”** (Romans 8:13-14).

**KEEP IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT.**

The apostle Paul gave a clear picture of what kind of a life the people live whom the Spirit of God leads. He said, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit”** (Galatians 5:22-25).

**DO NOT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force. He is knowing and caring, and He is grieved when people do wrong. The apostle Paul said, **“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption”** (Ephesians 4:29-30).

**BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.**

Christians do not need artificial stimulation in order to be happy. The apostle Paul said, **“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Ephesians 5:18-20).

When the apostle Paul urged Christians to be “filled with the Spirit,” it implied that their being “filled with the Spirit” was something over which they had some control.

### **DON'T PUT OUT THE SPIRIT'S FIRE.**

People should not put a damper on the zeal of others. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the Good. Avoid every kind of evil”** (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22).

### **PRAY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Everyone who has God's Spirit in his heart will try to avoid praying foolish and selfish prayers. Instead, he will try to speak prayers that are in harmony with God's Spirit. Jude wrote, **“But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life”** (Jude 20-21).

### **HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS.**

People should hear (pay attention to) what the Holy Spirit has caused to be written in the New Testament. In the book of Revelation, it is recorded that Jesus said, **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God”** (Revelation 2:7). This admonition is repeated in Revelation 2:11, 17, 29 and in Revelation 3:6, 13, 22.

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. In what way does the Holy Spirit speak most clearly to people today? Through people's emotions? Through tradition? Or through the New Testament?
2. Would you expect the Holy Spirit to say anything today that is contrary to what He has caused to be written in the New Testament? If not, why not?
3. What can a person do in order to be sure that He is allowing himself to be led by the Spirit of God? If a person allows himself to be led by what the

- Holy Spirit said in the New Testament, is that the same as his being led by the Holy Spirit Himself? Please explain.
4. If a person's heart seems to be telling him to do something that is contrary to what the New Testament says, what should he do?
  5. When a person walks according to the New Testament does it give him confidence and hope for the future? If so, how?
  6. How can a person avoid "grieving" the Holy Spirit?
  7. If a person can grieve the Holy Spirit, does that imply that he can also gladden the Holy Spirit? If so, how?
  8. How can a person tell the difference between a prayer that is prayed in the Spirit and one that is not? Does it depend solely upon the fervency with which a prayer is spoken?
  9. Are churches, as well as individuals, supposed to hear (pay attention) to what the Spirit says in the New Testament? What will happen to the churches that do not pay attention to what the Spirit says in the New Testament? See Revelation 2:5,23 and Revelation 3:3.
  10. If a person is convinced that he possesses the Holy Spirit, does that give him the right to ignore what the New Testament says? If not, why not?
  11. How can a non-Christian put the sinful deeds of the body to death? See what the Holy Spirit said in Romans 6:1-7.
  12. Is anyone ever told in the New Testament to pray that he might receive the Holy Spirit? If so, where and under what circumstances?
  13. Does the Holy Spirit come into the life of a person before he is baptized? See Acts 2:28-39 and Acts 5:32.

**STRONG, BE !**

It is important that Jesus' followers be strong. It takes considerable strength to be a true Christian. It is not physical strength, however, that is required, but the strength that is described below.

### **BE STRONG.**

The apostle Paul often used military terminology to encourage Jesus' followers. He said, for example, **"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong"** (1 Corinthians 16:13).

### **BE STRONG IN THE LORD.**

The only way for a follower of Christ to be strong is to tap into God's power. The apostle Paul said, **"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power"** (Ephesians 6:10).

### **TAKE A STAND AGAINST THE DEVIL'S SCHEMES.**

The main battle in life is against the devil. The apostle Paul advised, **"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes"** (Ephesians 6:11).

### **STAND FIRM.**

The apostle Paul knew that it is important for believers to be protected fully. He said, **"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one"** (Ephesians 6:13-16).

### **BE STRONG IN THE FAITH.**

A believer should try to continue strong in the faith that he was taught from the New Testament. The apostle Paul said, **"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness"** (Colossians 2:6-7).

### **STAND FIRM IN THE TEACHING.**

It is especially important that a person who is just starting out as a Christian receive proper Biblical teaching and stand firm in it. Otherwise false teachers and wicked people might lead him astray. That is why the apostle Paul said, **“So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter”** (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

### **BE STRONG IN THE GRACE.**

God showed grace to Timothy by allowing him to hear the gospel, to believe and obey it, and to become a minister of the gospel. The apostle Paul advised Timothy not to take God’s grace for granted but to be strong in the grace that was shown to him. Paul said, **“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”** (2 Timothy 2:1). This advice, which Paul gave to Timothy, applies to every Christian, for every Christian should take delight in the grace (privilege) that made it possible for him to hear the gospel share it with others.

### **HOLD ON TO YOUR COURAGE AND HOPE.**

A follower of Jesus should never let go of his courage and hope. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast”** (Hebrews 3:6).

### **HOLD FIRMLY TO THE FAITH.**

If a person has been taught faithfully from the Scriptures, he should not let go what he has learned. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess”** (Hebrews 4:14).

### **LET YOUR HEART BE STRENGTHENED BY GRACE.**

Ceremonial foods do not strengthen a person’s heart, but God’s grace can strengthen it. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them”** (Hebrews 13:9).

### **STAND FIRM IN THE FAITH.**

The devil is cunning, and he tries to deceive everyone, but a firm commitment to the faith that is taught in the New Testament will help a person to be able to resist the devil. The apostle Peter said, **“Resist him [the devil], standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings”** (1 Peter 5:9).

### **MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE.**

A person has to make his “calling” (invitation to heaven) and his “election” (selection for salvation) sure. The apostle Peter said, **“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall”** (2 Peter 1:10).

### **HOLD ON TO WHAT YOU HAVE.**

It would be tragic if a person were to lose his crown (reward) after that he had lived most of his life as a faithful Christian. Therefore, Jesus warned, **“I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown”** (Revelation 3:11).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Against what (or against whom) should a Christian be on guard?
2. What are some of the devil’s deceptive schemes? Please name a few if you can.
3. What advice do you have for resisting the devil? How does the “armor of God” protect a person?
4. What does it mean to be “rooted” in Christ? How can a person be “built up” in Christ?
5. What can a person do to make sure that he holds firmly to what the New Testament teaches?
6. How should a person react to God’s grace (kindness)?
7. Do you find that it takes courage to be a Christian? Please elaborate.



8. Should a person hold tenaciously to what he believes, even if he finds out that what he has believed is not true? Is it permissible for a person to hold on to error?
9. How can a person tell whether or not a teaching that he hears is “strange” teaching?
10. How can a person make his “calling and election sure?”

## **TEACH AT ALL TIMES !**

There is a lot of instruction in the New Testament concerning how the Christians should be taught.

### **TEACH THEM TO OBEY EVERYTHING THAT JESUS COMMANDED.**

When Jesus sent out His apostles He told them to teach their converts to do everything that He had commanded them to do. Jesus said, **“and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”** (Matthew 28:20).

### **TEACH YOURSELF.**

Some of the Jews of the first century were teaching Gentiles about God, but they themselves were not doing what God taught them to do. Therefore, the apostle Paul said to them, **“--you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples”** (Romans 2:21-22)?

### **IF YOUR GIFT IS TEACHING, THEN TEACH!**

Paul reminded the church in Rome that if anyone is able to teach, he should do it. Paul said, **“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach”** (Romans 12:6-7).

## **IF YOU ARE A PREACHER OR A TEACHER, DEVOTE YOURSELF TO YOUR WORK.**

A preacher or a teacher should not be lazy. The apostle Paul exhorted Timothy, a young evangelist, as follows: **“Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching”** (1Timothy 4:11-13). Again Paul said, **“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers”** (1Timothy 4:16).

## **ENTRUST THE WORD TO RELIABLE MEN.**

Every congregation of Christian people and every gospel preacher should be searching out reliable men to whom the truth of the gospel can be entrusted. This should be done so that knowledge of the truth will survive. The apostle Paul said, **“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others”** (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

## **KEEP ON REMINDING THEM.**

A good teacher repeats his message over and over so that it will stick in the minds of his hearers. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, **“Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen”** (2 Timothy 2:14).

## **PREACH THE WORD AT ALL TIMES.**

A preacher should be willing to speak the truth on all occasions. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, **“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction”** (2 Timothy 4:2).

## **SHOW INTEGRITY, SERIOUSNESS, AND SOUNDNESS IN SPEECH.**

A preacher (or teacher) gains credibility by what he says and by the way he conducts himself. The apostle Paul wrote to Titus, an evangelist, **“In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching**

**show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us” (Titus 2:7-8).**

### **ENCOURAGE AND REBUKE PEOPLE.**

There are certain things that a preacher (or teacher) should teach. He should teach them with the authority of the Holy Scriptures. The apostle Paul wrote to Titus, **“These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you” (Titus 2:15).**

### **DON'T DECIDE LIGHTLY TO BECOME A PREACHER OR A BIBLE TEACHER.**

Preaching and teaching is a serious responsibility. There are some people who should become preachers and teachers and some who, perhaps, should not. James wrote, **“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (James 3:1).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Is it your understanding that Jesus wants His people today to obey the teachings that He gave during His lifetime? Have you always understood that Jesus wanted this? How did you come to your present understanding regarding this?
2. Why is it important that Christians exemplify in their personal lives what they teach others to do?
3. Does a congregation have the responsibility to see to it that its members are taught the Bible? Do you feel that you are being adequately taught? What would you like to see done that perhaps is not being done to teach the Bible to members of the congregation?
4. Many Christians have a gift for teaching. How can a Christian tell whether or not he has such a gift? How can a Christian tell whether or not he could develop such a gift?

5. If a certain person in the congregation thinks that he or she either has a gift for teaching or could develop it, what should he or she do about it?
6. Should a congregation be training future Bible teachers and gospel preachers? How would a congregation go about doing this?
7. Why should a congregation concentrate on entrusting the truth primarily to “reliable men,” as it says in 2 Timothy 2:1-2? Does that exclude women?
8. Is there a need for more gospel preachers? How does a young man decide whether or not he should preach the gospel? If he decides to preach, how can he prepare himself for it?
9. Is a congregation responsible for seeing to it that the children of the members of the church are taught the Bible, or is it the responsibility of the parents to train their own children?
10. How can women be useful in the teaching ministry of the church?

## **TEACHING, HOLD TO THE !**

Many verses in the New Testament deal with keeping (preserving) the original teaching of Jesus and His apostles. Here are some of the verses:

### **HOLD ON TO WHAT IS GOOD.**

The apostle Paul summed up his admonition in his first letter to the church in Thessalonika by saying, **“Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil”** (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

### **HOLD TO THE TEACHING.**

The apostle Paul was concerned lest the teaching that he had passed on to the early Christians might get lost. So he said to the Thessalonian church, **“So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter”** (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

**DON'T ABANDON THE FAITH.**

Evil spirits are continually trying to deceive God's people and in latter times they will deceive more people than ever before. The apostle Paul said, **"The [Holy] Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons"** (1 Timothy 4:1).

**HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH MYTHS.**

The minds of people in the first century were filled with various myths about gods and goddesses. Although some of these myths had an element of truth in them, they were imaginary. The gods and goddesses of whom the myths speak do not exist, and many of the myths were vile. The apostle Paul warned Timothy, **"Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly"** (1 Timothy 4:7).

**GUARD WHAT HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO YOUR CARE.**

The apostles felt that the original teaching was precious and should be guarded carefully. The apostle Paul wrote, **"Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge"** (1 Timothy 6:20).

**KEEP THE PATTERN OF SOUND TEACHING.**

Many people do not realize that sound (healthy) teaching has a distinctive pattern to it. This pattern must be kept if the truth is to be kept in tact. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, **"What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus"** (2 Timothy 1:13).

**CONTINUE IN WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED.**

The apostle Paul warned Timothy not to abandon the things he had learned from his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5) and from Paul himself. Paul wrote to Timothy, **"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"** (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

**ELDERS, HOLD FIRMLY TO THE TRUSTWORTHY MESSAGE.**

The elders (or bishops) of a congregation must see to it that the original teaching of Jesus and His apostles is maintained. The apostle Paul wrote to Titus, **“He (an elder) must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach--and that for the sake of dishonest gain”** (Titus 1:9-11).

### **REBUKE THOSE SHARPLY WHO REJECT THE TRUTH.**

The apostle Paul instructed Titus how to deal with the people on the island of Crete who rejected the truth. He said, **“Even one of their own prophets has said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth”** (Titus 1:12-14).

### **TEACH WHAT IS IN ACCORD WITH SOUND DOCTRINE.**

The apostle Paul felt that it was very important for a gospel preacher or Bible teacher to teach things that are conducive to sound (or healthy) teaching. He wrote to Titus, **“You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine”** (Titus 2:1).

### **SET AN EXAMPLE.**

Any person who preaches the gospel or teaches the Bible should set an example by doing good works. The apostle Paul wrote to Titus, **“In everything set them an example by doing what is good”** (Titus 2:7).

### **TEACH IN THE PROPER MANNER.**

Every person who preaches (or teaches) the Bible should try to speak in a manner that will not be offensive to people. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, **“In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us”** (Titus 2:7-8).

### **DO NOT DRIFT AWAY FROM WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD.**

Christians must pay attention not to drift away from the original teaching of Christ and His apostles. The book of Hebrews says, **“We must**

**pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away”** (Hebrews 2:1).

### **HOLD FIRMLY TO THE FAITH.**

A person who believes in what the New Testament teaches should hold firmly to the faith that he professes. The book of Hebrews says, **“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess”** (Hebrews 4:14).

### **DON'T BE CARRIED AWAY WITH STRANGE TEACHINGS.**

Believers in Christ should be careful not to be carried away by any of the strange (foreign) teachings that are in the world. The book of Hebrews says, **“Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them”** (Hebrews 13:9).

### **SPEAK THE VERY WORDS OF GOD.**

Anyone who attempts to speak for God should realize that he is under obligation to stick closely to what God says in the Bible. The apostle Peter said, **“If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen”** (1 Peter 4:11).

### **SEE THAT WHAT YOU HEARD FROM THE BEGINNING REMAINS IN YOU.**

A disciple of Jesus should see to it that the teaching that came from Jesus and His apostles remains in his heart. The apostle John said, **“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father”** (1 John 2:24).

### **CONTINUE IN THE TEACHING OF CHRIST.**

A desire to appear modern and up-to-date can cause a person to run ahead and not remain in the teaching of Christ. The apostle John warned, **“Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son”** (2 John 9).

**CONTEND FOR THE FAITH.**

Believers should stand up for what Jesus and the apostles taught. Jude wrote, **“Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints”** (Jude 1:3).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. There are many false teachings in the world today. Do you suppose there are as many false teachings today as there were in the first century? Explain.
2. Do you suppose there are as many myths in the world today as there were in the first century? Please describe a few of the present-day myths, if you can.
3. Why is it important for believers to maintain what Jesus and His apostles taught?
4. Did the apostle Paul consider his letters to be authoritative? See 2 Thessalonians 2:15. Are his letters still authoritative for Christians today?
5. The apostle Paul said that the onslaught against true teaching comes from deceiving spirits. See 1 Timothy 4:1. Through whom do deceiving spirits speak?
6. Second Timothy 1:4 says that believers should keep the “pattern of sound teaching.” What can a person do to keep the sound teaching and avoid drifting away from what Jesus and His apostles taught?
7. Hebrews 4:14 says that a Christian should “hold firmly to the faith.” How can a person hold firmly to the faith and at the same time keep an open mind? Are the two things incompatible?
8. What should a person do if he finds that the faith that he has previously held is not in accordance with the Bible?
9. Is there ever a situation in which a gospel preacher or a Bible teacher



should rebuke someone sharply? See Titus 1:13-14.

10. What role do the elders (bishops) of a congregation have in maintaining the original teaching of Jesus and His apostles? See Titus 1:9-11.

## **TEST EVERYTHING!**

Christian people should not blindly accept everything they hear. The New Testament teaches that they should put everything, except God, to the test.

### **DO NOT PUT GOD TO THE TEST.**

The devil tried to get Jesus to put God to the test by throwing himself down from a high point in the temple. The devil said, **If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’**” But Jesus realized that this would be testing God, so He replied, **“It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’”** (Matthew 4:6-7). Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16.

### **TEST AND APPROVE WHAT GOD’S WILL IS.**

Every one who seriously tries to do what God wants him to do will find that God’s will for people is good, pleasing, and perfect. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will”** (Romans 12:2).

### **EXAMINE YOURSELF.**

No one should partake of the Lord’s Supper in a flippant manner. Instead, he should examine himself as he partakes of it. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks**

**without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself”** (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

### **TEST YOURSELVES.**

A Christian should repeatedly examine himself to determine whether or not he is “in the faith.” If a person is truly “in the faith,” then Christ Jesus is in him. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test”** (2 Corinthians 13:5)?

### **TEST YOUR OWN ACTIONS.**

Each person should concentrate on testing his own actions rather than the actions of others. The apostle Paul wrote, **“If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.”** (Galatians 6:3-5)

### **FIND OUT WHAT PLEASES THE LORD.**

If people become “children of the light,” they will find out how to please the Lord. They will also find out how pleasant it is to show goodness, to have righteousness, and to love and speak the truth, which things are the “fruit of the light.” The apostle Paul wrote, **“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord”** (Ephesians 5:8-10).

### **DISCERN WHAT IS BEST.**

No one can discern what is best unless his love increases to the point where he can have knowledge and insight. The apostle Paul said, **“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 until the day of Christ”** (Philippians 1:9-10).

### **TEST EVERYTHING.**

In the early days of the gospel, some Christians had a special gift that enabled them to speak prophetically for God. There were also false prophets, who claimed to speak for God, but who did not. The early Christians, therefore, had to test everything they heard. The apostle Paul

wrote, **“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil”** (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22).

### **TEST THE DEACONS.**

No one should be chosen to serve as a deacon in a congregation until he has first been tested. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons”** (1 Timothy 3:8-10).

### **DON’T LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND THEN FORGET.**

The New Testament is like a mirror. When a person reads it or hears it read, he can compare himself with it and see what kind of a person he is. James wrote, **“Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like”** (James 1:23-24).

### **TEST THE SPIRITS.**

Although the Holy Spirit is not now revealing truths directly to people, as He did in the early days before the New Testament was completed, there are still people around today who claim to speak under the influence of the Spirit of God. Therefore, Christians need to be on guard. The apostle John wrote, **“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world”** (1 John 4:1-3).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. If Jesus had thrown Himself down from the high point in the temple, how would that have put God to the test? How do people today sometimes put God to the test?
2. How can a person find out what God's will for him is? Does reading the Bible help? If so, how?
3. When a person puts God's will to the test, how will he know whether or not God's will was the best for him?
4. What type of self-examination should a person make as he partakes of the Lord's Supper? What are some of the questions he should ask himself?
5. How can a person determine whether or not he is in the faith and whether or not Christ Jesus is in him?
6. How can a person tell whether or not what he does for the Lord is appropriate and adequate?
6. How does the light of the gospel affect the life of a person? In what way does the light dispel darkness?
7. How does a person's having love in his heart help him gain knowledge and insight? How does a person's having knowledge and insight contribute to his being able to discern what is best?
8. By what standard should the words of people that claim to speak prophetically for God, be tested? If someone claims to speak for God today, does that automatically disqualify him from being heard?
9. How should deacons be tested before they are put into office? What are some of the things that the congregation ought to look at regarding deacons?
10. Does having the New Testament make it easier for people to avoid being led astray by those who falsely claim to speak under the influence of the Holy Spirit? Please explain.

## **THINK GOOD THOUGHTS !**

The New Testament gives advice about how people should think.

### **DON'T THINK JESUS CAME TO ABOLISH THE LAW OR THE PROPHETS.**

Jesus came in order to make it possible for people to live according to the righteousness, which the law of the Old Testament advocated, and to fulfill the things that the prophets of the Old Testament foretold. He said, **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them”** (Matthew 5:17).

### **DON'T THINK THAT BABBLING WILL HELP YOU GET YOUR PRAYERS ANSWERED.**

God does not decide whether or not to answer a person's prayers on the basis of how many words a person speaks. Jesus said, **“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words”** (Matthew 6:7).

### **DO NOT THINK JESUS CAME TO BRING PEACE.**

Jesus knew that most people were steeped in tradition and that they could not be induced to change their ways without conflict. For that reason He said, **“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword”** (Matthew 10:34).

### **CONSIDER THE RAVENS.**

Jesus taught a lesson from the birds. He said, **“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds”** (Luke 12:22-24)! Similar thoughts can be found in Matthew 6:26.

### **CONSIDER THE LILIES.**

Jesus taught a lesson from the flowers. He said, **“Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon**

**in all his splendor was dressed like one of these”** (Luke 12:27). Similar thoughts can be found in Matthew 6:28-29.

### **DON'T THINK OF GOD AS AN IMAGE.**

The apostle Paul did not want people to think of God as an image. In his speech to the Athenians, Paul said, **“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone--an image made by man’s design and skill”** (Acts 17:29).

### **DON'T DO WHAT YOU YOURSELF CONDEMN.**

Some of the Jewish people condemned the sins of the Gentiles and committed the same sins themselves. Therefore, the apostle Paul asked them, **“So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them [the Gentiles] and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment”** (Romans 2:3)?

### **DON'T THINK YOU ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU REALLY ARE.**

It is very important for people to think modestly about themselves. The Apostle Paul warned, **“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you”** (Romans 12:3).

### **DON'T MAKE PLANS FOR GRATIFYING THE SINFUL DESIRES OF YOUR FLESH.**

No one should make plans to get drunk, to engage in sinful sex, or to get into a brawl. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature”** (Romans 13:13-14).

### **DON'T THINK YOU ARE WISE.**

Many people think they are wise when they are not. The apostle Paul said, **“Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a ‘fool’ so that he may become wise”** (1 Corinthians 3:18).

**DON'T THINK YOU ARE STANDING FIRM.**

Some people seem to think that no confident Christian can fall from grace, but the apostle Paul did not share this opinion. He said, **“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall”** (1 Corinthians 10:12)!

**STOP THINKING LIKE CHILDREN.**

Some of the members of the church in Corinth were speaking foreign languages in their assemblies, and some of them were babbling like little children. So the Apostle Paul wrote, **“Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults”** (1 Corinthians 14:20).

**DON'T THINK YOU KNOW BETTER THAN THE APOSTLE PAUL.**

Some people think that what they believe is better than what the apostle Paul taught. However, Paul said, **“If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command”** (1 Corinthians 14:37).

**DON'T DECEIVE YOURSELF.**

It is easy for a person to over evaluate himself. For that reason the apostle Paul warned, **“If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.** (Galatians 6:3).

**CONSIDER OTHERS TO BE BETTER THAN YOURSELF.**

No one should consider himself to be the best and most valuable person in the church. The apostle Paul admonished, **“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves”** (Philippians 2:3).

**THINK GOOD THOUGHTS.**

Since sins come out of people's hearts (Mark 7:20-23 and James 1:14-15), it is vital for people to fill their minds with good thoughts. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things”** (Philippians 4:8).

**REFLECT ON WHAT THE APOSTLE PAUL WROTE.**

Some people look down on what the apostle Paul wrote but that is a great mistake. Paul urged Timothy, **“Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all of this”** (2 Timothy 2:7). This implies that the Lord may not give insight concerning spiritual things to a person who does not reflect on what Paul wrote.

### **FIX YOUR THOUGHTS ON JESUS.**

Jesus should be constantly in people’s thoughts. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, **“Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess”** (Hebrews 3:1).

### **CONSIDER HOW TO ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER.**

God’s people should be constantly thinking about how they could encourage one another. The book of Hebrews says, **“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds”** (Hebrews 10:24).

### **CONSIDER HOW JESUS ENDURED OPPOSITION.**

A good way to keep from becoming discouraged is to think about how Jesus endured opposition. The book of Hebrews says, **“Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart”** (Hebrews 12:3).

### **BELIEVE THAT YOU WILL RECEIVE WISDOM.**

When a Christian prays for wisdom, he should believe that he will get it. James wrote, **“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord”** (James 1:5-7).

### **DON’T THINK THAT IT IS WITHOUT REASON THE BIBLE SAYS THAT GOD IS A JEALOUS GOD.**

God’s Spirit will not live in the hearts of people who idolize the world. James wrote, **“You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us**



**envies intensely”** (James 4:4-5)? James was referring to such Old Testament passages as Exodus 20:5.

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Please explain how Jesus fulfilled the law. Please explain how Jesus fulfilled the prophets.
2. Is there a difference between how Pagans pray and the way in which Christians should pray? Please describe the difference.
3. What can be learned by considering the ravens? What can be learned by considering the flowers?
4. Can a failure to think about God in the proper way cause people to be lost? See Acts 17:29-31.
5. What will happen to people who do the very things they themselves condemn? See Romans 2:5.
6. Is it a sin if a person is proud and haughty? Will a person's pride affect the way God thinks about him? See James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5. Does that mean that proud people will not be saved?
7. What do you think will happen to people who continually think about how they can gratify the sinful desires of their flesh (body)? Will it affect their salvation?
8. Why should anyone reflect on what the apostle Paul wrote? Do you think people should try to do what Paul wrote? Please explain.
9. Why should people consider others to be better than themselves?
10. If people fix their thoughts on Jesus, will it help them control their thinking? If so, how?
11. Will people be required at the Judgment to give an account for the way they think? See Romans 2:15.
12. Who is the ultimate judge over what is right and what is wrong?

13.If a person does not see the reason behind what the New Testament says, does that excuse him from doing what it says?

## **TRUST IN GOD !**

The New Testament teaches that God wants people to trust in Him.

### **NATIONS SHOULD PUT THEIR HOPE IN JESUS!**

Jesus healed all the people who followed Him (Matthew 12:15). This fulfilled the words of Isaiah, who said, **“Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope”** (Matthew 12:18-21). This is a quotation from Isaiah 42:1-4.

### **DON'T BE CONFIDENT OF YOUR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

Some of the people in Jesus' day were confident of their own righteousness. To such people Jesus told the following story: **“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’”**

Concerning the tax collector, Jesus said, **“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”** (Luke 18:10-14).

### **PUT YOUR TRUST IN THE LIGHT.**

Jesus encouraged the people of His day to take advantage of the light that He was bringing to them. He said, **“You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he**

**is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of the light” (John 12:35-36).**

### **DON'T BE TROUBLED; TRUST IN GOD; TRUST IN JESUS.**

Jesus did not want His followers to worry about the future. He assured them that He would make the future bright for them. He said, **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”** (John 14:1-3).

### **TRUST IN THE STONE (CHRIST).**

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the Messiah as a “Rock.” He foretold that the Messiah would come to Zion (Jerusalem). Isaiah said that the “Rock” (Messiah) would cause some people to stumble but that those who put their trust in Him would not be put to shame. Isaiah wrote, **“See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame”** (Romans 9:33). This quotation is from Isaiah 28:16. It is referred to also in Romans 10:11 and 1 Peter 2:6.

### **PUT YOUR HOPE IN THE LIVING GOD.**

No man can save himself. Everyone must trust in God for salvation. The apostle Paul said, **“This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe”** (1 Timothy 4:9-10).

### **DON'T PUT YOUR HOPE IN WEALTH.**

The apostle Paul told Timothy to command rich people not to put their hope in wealth. He said, **“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment”** (1 Timothy 6:17).

### **DO NOT THROW AWAY YOUR CONFIDENCE.**

Christians should not throwaway their confidence when persecutions come upon them. The book of Hebrews says, **“Remember those earlier**

**days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.**

**“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised”** (Hebrews 10:32-36).

### **SET YOUR HOPE ON THE GRACE.**

Christians hope that God will extend grace to them when Christ appears so that they will be unscathed by the judgment and be brought securely into heaven. The apostle Peter said, **“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed”** (1 Peter 1:13).

### **RELY ON THE LOVE GOD HAS FOR YOU.**

God also wants all people to rely on the fact that God loves them so that they will respond by loving other people and by loving God. The apostle John said, **“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.**

**“Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him”** (1 John 4:16).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. The prophet Isaiah foretold (Isaiah 42:1-4) that nations would put their hope in the name of the Messiah (Jesus). How have those nations been affected in which many people have put their hope in Jesus? How would all nations be affected if they would put their hope in Him?
2. How would you describe the mistake that the Pharisee made in the parable that Jesus gave in Matthew 18:10-14?
3. If a person trusts in the light that Jesus brings, will he be more likely or less likely to do what Jesus has said?
4. Please tell of something that Jesus said (or did) that makes you think He

will come back for you and take you to be with Him? See John 14:1-4.

5. How does Jesus' being the Messiah cause some people to stumble? What did Isaiah mean when he said (Romans 9:33) that those who put their trust in the Rock (Jesus) "will never be put to shame?"
6. What is wrong with a person's putting his hope in his wealth?
7. How can a Christian avoid losing his confidence in the face of persecution?
8. What did the apostle Peter mean when he said (1 Peter 1:13), "set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed?"
9. Have you ever been disappointed by what has happened to you as a result of your having placed your trust in Jesus? Please explain.
10. What does it mean to place one's trust in Jesus? Is it difficult to place one's trust in Jesus? If so, why? How can a person learn to place his trust in Jesus?

## **WAR, WAGE !**

Being a Christian is like waging war. Here is a part of what the New Testament says about how a Christian should wage war:

### **OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.**

One of the weapons that a Christian possesses is to do good things for those who do bad things to him. The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good**" (Romans 12:21).

### **PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD.**

Every Christian needs help in fighting against the devil. He needs the spiritual armor that God makes available. The apostle Paul wrote, "**Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and**

**against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand”** (Ephesians 6:11-13).

### **STAND FIRM.**

The devil will try to frighten Christians, but the apostle Paul urged them to stand firm. He said, **“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace”** (Ephesians 6:14-15).

### **TAKE UP THE SHIELD OF FAITH, THE HELMET OF SALVATION, AND THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.**

God makes both defensive and offensive weaponry available. The apostle Paul said, **“In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”** (Ephesians 6:16-17). The Christian’s armor is described in a slightly different way in 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

### **ALWAYS KEEP ON PRAYING.**

No one should stop praying. It would be disastrous to stop. The apostle Paul said, **“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints”** (Ephesians 6:18).

### **PRESS ON.**

The apostle Paul knew that he himself was not perfect and that he had to press on toward perfection. He wrote, **“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me”** (Philippians 3:12).

### **THINK ABOUT GOOD THINGS.**

The battle against evil takes place primarily in ones’ mind. For that reason it is very important that a person tries to think about good things. The apostle Paul said, **“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever**

**is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things”** (Philippians 4:8).

### **PUT INTO PRACTICE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED.**

Some people are better informed than their actions show. The apostle Paul encouraged Christians to put into practice what they had learned. He said, **“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”** Philippians 4:9

### **FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT.**

It requires just as much bravery to be a good Christian as it does to be a good soldier. The apostle Paul exhorted Timothy in the following way: **“Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith”** (1 Timothy 1:18-19).

The apostle Paul also told Timothy: **“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses”** (1 Timothy 6:12).

### **FLEE YOUTHFUL DESIRES.**

There are certain things that a Christian should flee and certain things that he should pursue. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, **“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart”** (2 Timothy 2:22).

### **BE SELF-CONTROLLED AND ALERT.**

Let no one think that he is entirely safe from the devil’s attacks. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”** (1 Peter 5:8).

### **RESIST THE DEVIL.**

Concerning the devil, the apostle Peter wrote, **“Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings”** (1 Peter 5:9).

## **YOU HAVE TO BE BORN OF GOD BEFORE YOU CAN OVERCOME THE WORLD.**

The world presents many sinful enticements, against which a person will be powerless unless he is born again. The apostle John wrote, **“This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world”** (1 John 5:3-4).

## **YOU HAVE TO HAVE FAITH IN ORDER TO OVERCOME THE WORLD.**

Unless a person believes that Jesus is God’s Son he will not be able to overcome the world. The apostle John wrote, **“This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God”** (1 John 5:4-5).

## **OVERCOME!**

There is a great reward waiting for those people who gain the victory over discouragement and sin. In his letters to the seven churches in Asia the apostle John quotes Jesus as promising, **“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God”** (Revelation 2:7).

Jesus promised, **“He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death”** (Revelation 2:11).

Jesus promised, **“To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it”** (Revelation 2:17).

Jesus promised, **“He who overcomes will.... be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels”** (Revelation 3:5).

Jesus promised, **“Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name”** (Revelation 3:12).

And Jesus promised, **“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne”** (Revelation 3:21).



**BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.**

No one should ever give up struggling against sin. Jesus said, **“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life”** (Revelation 2:10).

**DO CHRIST’S WILL TO THE END.**

As long as a person lives, he should try to do what Christ wants him to do. Jesus said, **“To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations--”** (Revelation 2:26).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Can you identify some of the devil’s schemes? What do you suppose he wants to do with you?
2. How does a person’s having put on the various parts of the Christian’s armor (as described in Ephesians 6:14-18) help that person win his battle against sin? How does his having put on the “belt of truth” help? How does the “breastplate of righteousness” help? How does a readiness to teach “the gospel of peace” help? How does the “shield of faith” help? How does the “helmet of salvation” help? How does his wielding “the sword of the spirit” help? How does prayer help?
3. Jesus has overcome the world. Does that mean that our victory is already won and that we have nothing to do in overcoming evil? Or should we “press on,” as the apostle Paul did, toward salvation?
4. Is it possible for a person to think that he is winning the battle against sin while he is actually losing it? Is it possible for a person to think that he is losing the battle, while winning it? How can a person know whether he is winning or losing?
5. How can a person be “born of God?” See John 3:3,5; Titus 3:4-7; and Romans 6:4.
6. How does a person resist the devil?

7. How can a person control his sinful desires?
8. What can a person do to hold on to the truth of the gospel?
9. What must a person do in order to keep his conscience clean?
10. How does doing good to one's enemies help a person overcome his enemies?
11. Why is it important for a person to think good thoughts?
12. Why should people put into practice what they have learned by reading the letters of the apostle Paul?
13. What will happen to a person who lives a faithful Christian life for a very long time and then, toward the end of his life, gives up battling against sin? What will Christ think of that person? Will Christ save that person?

## **WATCH OUT!**

There has long been a controversy among Protestants about whether or not a believer, once he has been saved, can be lost. This study, which deals with some of the things a believer ought to watch out for, goes to the heart of this controversy.

### **WATCH OUT FOR FALSE PROPHETS.**

There were false prophets in Old Testament times, who claimed to speak for God but who were lying. Jesus foretold there would be false prophets also in the future. He said, **“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves”** (Matthew 7:15).

### **WATCH OUT THAT NO ONE DECEIVES YOU.**

Most people find it hard to believe that anyone would deliberately deceive them. Yet Jesus foretold that there would be such people and that His followers should be on the lookout for them. He said, **“Watch out that**

**no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many”** (Matthew 24:4-5). This warning is also found in Mark 13:5 and Luke 21:8.

### **WATCH AND PRAY.**

Jesus took Peter, James and John into the garden of Gethsemane with Him, where he intended to pray. He went on a little farther by Himself and began to pray. After a while He returned and found His disciples sleeping. He asked Peter, **“Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?”** Then Jesus told His disciples to stay alert, saying, **“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak”** (Matthew 26:40-41). This admonition is also found in Mark 14:38, and similar words are found in Luke 22:40,46. Jesus knew that Peter, James, and John were good men but that they were weak, as all humans are. That is why He told them to watch out for the devil’s temptations and to pray that God would help them resist the devil.

### **WATCH OUT FOR THE YEAST OF THE PHARISEES AND OF HEROD.**

Jesus indicated that the teaching of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees worked like yeast (Matthew 16:12). Just as yeast works to turn dough into a loaf, so their teaching worked to turn them into hypocrites (Luke 12:1). It allowed them to bind burdens on others while excusing themselves (Matthew 23:1-4).

Jesus’ disciples, on one occasion, forgot to bring bread along with them in the boat, but Jesus did not think that bread was the main thing. So He warned His disciples, saying, **“Be careful.”** Then He added, **“Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod”** (Mark 8:15).

### **WATCH OUT FOR THE TEACHERS OF THE LAW.**

Some of the teachers of the law (scribes) were hypocrites just like the Pharisees. They wanted to be thought of as wise and good, but actually they were evil men. Jesus said that they devour widows houses and make lengthy prayers for show (Mark 12:40). To His followers Jesus said, **“Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces”** (Mark 12:38). Similar thoughts are found in Luke 20:46-47.

### **SEE TO IT THAT THE LIGHT IN YOU DOES NOT BECOME DARK.**

Some people think they have the light of understanding in their hearts, but actually all is darkness. For that reason, Jesus warned His followers to pay close attention to the way they think. He said, **“See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness”** (Luke 11:35).

### **BE ON GUARD AGAINST GREED.**

A certain man asked Jesus to command his brother to share their inheritance with him. Instead, Jesus rebuked the man who complained about his brother, and to those who were present He said, **“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions”** (Luke 12:15).

### **DON’T CAUSE ANYONE TO SIN.**

It is just as bad for a person to cause someone to sin as it is for him to sin himself. Jesus warned that if a person causes others to sin, he puts himself in a dangerous position. He said, **“Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves.”** (Luke 17:1-3).

### **WATCH OUT FOR THOSE WHO CAUSE DIVISIONS.**

Division weakens a church. That is why the apostle Paul warned, **“I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them”** (Romans 16:17).

### **BE CAREFUL YOU DON’T FALL.**

No one should think that he is so strong that he cannot fall into temptation and sin. The apostle Paul wrote, **“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall”** (1 Corinthians 10:12)!

### **WATCH YOURSELF SO YOU WILL NOT BE TEMPTED.**

If a brother tries to restore someone who has fallen into sin, he must be careful not to fall into sin himself. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted”** (Galatians 6:1).

**BE CAREFUL YOU DON'T EAT EACH OTHER UP.**

Christian people need to be careful not to devour each other in debate. The apostle Paul wrote, **“If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other”** (Galatians 5:15).

**BE VERY CAREFUL HOW YOU LIVE.**

Christians need to be careful how they live so they can avoid doing things that are unwise. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil”** (Ephesians 5:15-16).

**WATCH YOUR LIFE AND YOUR DOCTRINE.**

Teachers of religion must watch how they live and what they teach. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, **“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers”** (1 Timothy 4:16).

**BE CAREFUL THAT YOU DON'T FALL SHORT.**

The writer of the Hebrew letter felt that there is a danger that Christians might fall short and not be permitted to enter into the heavenly rest. He wrote, **“Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it”** (Hebrews 4:1).

**BE SELF-CONTROLLED AND ALERT.**

A soldier who drinks alcoholic beverages or who goes to sleep while he is supposed to be standing watch is not a very dependable guard. The apostle Peter admonished believers to be sober and to stay awake. He said, **“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings”** (1 Peter 5:8-9).

**DON'T FALL FROM YOUR SECURE POSITION.**

No one can snatch Christians out of God's hand (Romans 8:31-35), but they might possibly stray from their secure position if they are not careful. Hence, they should be on guard. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard**

**so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position” (2 Peter 3:17).**

### **DON'T LOSE WHAT YOU WORKED FOR.**

It would be a tragedy if anyone should happen to lose the treasure that he has stored up in heaven. The apostle John admonished Christians, saying, **“Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully” (2 John 8).**

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Why do false prophets try to conceal what kind of people they are? Why do they want others to think they are good people?
2. How can “false Christs” be identified? How can a person avoid being deceived by them?
3. How does a person’s watching and praying help him not to fall into temptation? Is it possible for a person who has good intentions to fall into temptation?
4. What is a hypocrite? If a person is a hypocrite, will that affect his salvation? If so, why?
5. Why do Christians need to watch out for teachers who love the honor of their profession more than they love righteousness and truth? What kind of danger do such teachers present?
6. How is it possible that the light in a person can turn into darkness? If that happens, does it mean that such a person can lose his salvation unless he repents?
7. Is it harmful to a person if he is greedy? How is it harmful to him, if it is? Does the greed of a person harm others? If so, how does it harm others? Can a poor person be just as greedy as a rich person?
8. Will a person who causes others to sin be lost if he does not repent?

9. How should a congregation react to someone who causes division in the church? See Romans 16:17.
10. Is it possible for Christians to fall short and, therefore, not be permitted to enter into their heavenly rest? See Hebrews 4:1. If Christians see themselves falling short, should they be concerned? What should they do if they see themselves falling short? What can they do in order to avoid falling short?
11. Do you think the apostles would have gone to the trouble of warning Christians about the danger of their falling and losing their salvation if it were not possible for them to do so? If it should be possible for you to fall, would you prefer to know about the possibility of it or not?

## **OBEY JESUS !**

Did Jesus really expect His followers to try to do what He said? After you read the following passages, you can decide for yourself.

### **BE WISE.**

Jesus expects His followers to be wise. If they are wise, they will put His words into practice. Jesus said, **“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock”** (Matthew 7:24). People who build their lives on the teaching of Jesus will be able to maintain their balance when the storms of life beat against them. Similar words can be found in Luke 6:47-48.

### **DON'T BE FOOLISH.**

A person who does not build his life on the teaching of Jesus is foolish. Jesus said, **“But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand”** (Matthew 7:26). A person who does not put Jesus' teaching into practice will find his life filled with many sorrows. Similar words are found in Luke 6:49.

### **CHOOSE TO DO THE WILL OF GOD.**

Some people do not seem to be able to find out whether or not the teaching of Jesus came from God. Perhaps it is because they do not sincerely

desire to do the will of God. Jesus said, **“If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own”** (John 7:17). Jesus’ teaching has internal credibility: That is, anyone who tries to do what Jesus has taught will soon find out whether or not He spoke God’s truth.

### **HOLD TO JESUS’ TEACHING.**

It is not sufficient for a disciple of Jesus to give mental assent to what Jesus taught; he must do what Jesus taught. That is what Jesus meant when He said, **“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples”** (John 8:31). Only those people who “hold to” Jesus’ teaching by doing what He said are truly His disciples. A great blessing is in store for those who hold to Jesus’ teaching. Jesus said, **“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”**(John 8:32).

### **KEEP JESUS’ WORD.**

Jesus wants His people to preserve what He said and not forget. He also wants them to do what He said. Jesus said, **“I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death”** (John 8:51). Jesus’ words are important because the people who keep them will never see death.

### **IF YOU LOVE JESUS, DO WHAT HE COMMANDED.**

Jesus provided His disciples with an easy test to determine whether or not they truly love Him. He said, **“If you love me, you will obey what I command”** (John 14:15). Jesus is not deceived by those who claim they love Him but who neglect to do what He commands.

### **SHOW YOUR LOVE FOR JESUS BY OBEYING HIS COMMANDS.**

In what way should people express their love for Jesus? Does He want them to offer effusive words of praise? If He does, He never mentioned anything about that in the gospels. Instead, He pointed to a very specific way in which people can express their love for Him. He said, **“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him”** (John 14:21).

No one should suppose that since he loves Jesus he does not need to do what Jesus said. A person who thinks like that is deceiving himself, for Jesus and the Father will not love a disobedient person. Jesus will love an



obedient person. He will love him or her so much that He will “show” Himself to that person by coming into that person’s heart and life.

Jesus said, **“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him”** (John 14:23). Both Jesus and the Father will come to a person who obeys Jesus’ teaching, and they will make their home with Him. They cannot make their home with a person who does not obey Jesus’ teaching, for as soon as they moved in they would have to move right out again, because the heart and life of a disobedient person would be repugnant to them.

### **DON’T SHOW YOUR LACK OF LOVE BY NOT OBEYING JESUS’ TEACHING.**

Everyone who truly loves Jesus obeys His teaching. Those people who do not love Jesus disregard His teaching. Jesus said, **“He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me”** (John 14:24). Since the words that Jesus uttered came from the Father, they are doubly important. Therefore it is doubly tragic if a person disregards them.

### **REMAIN IN JESUS’ LOVE BY OBEYING HIS COMMANDS.**

The way for a person to remain in Jesus love is to obey what Jesus commanded. Jesus said, **“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love”** (John 15:10). If a person does not obey what Jesus commanded, that person may call himself a Christian, but Jesus does not love him. If Jesus does not love a person, his Christianity is of no advantage to him.

### **SHOW YOURSELF TO BE A FRIEND OF JESUS BY DOING WHAT JESUS COMMANDED.**

Jesus’ apostles were His friends. Jesus expected certain things of them because of their friendship. Jesus said, **“You are my friends if you do what I command”** (John 15:14). It is still true today that Jesus expects certain things of His friends.

### **OBEY JESUS’ WORD.**

A person’s love for Jesus is not complete until He has learned to obey Jesus’ word. The apostle John wrote, **“But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are**

**in him”** (1 John 2:5). People often wonder whether or not they are truly “in Him.” How can they know? By analyzing their feelings? Does a rosy glow in people’s hearts mean that they are saved? Does their strong assertion of confidence of salvation assure them of it? Let them ask whether or not they are keeping what Jesus (and the Apostles) taught. The answer they give to this question will tell them whether or not they truly “know” Jesus.

### **WALK IN OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMANDS.**

God wants people to obey Jesus’ commands. Any theological speculation that releases people from the necessity of doing what Jesus commanded is harmful and should be abandoned. The apostle John summed the matter up by saying, **“And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love”** (2 John 6). In this verse is found the definition of what it means to love Jesus and to be loved by Him.

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Have you found any of Jesus’ teachings to be true by putting them to practice? Please tell what teachings of Jesus you have proved to be true in this way.
2. Can a person be a true disciple of Jesus without holding to His teaching? If not, why not?
3. In what way does Jesus’ teaching set people free?
4. Does the keeping Jesus’ words, or the not keeping of them, affect whether or not that person will live forever? If so, how?
5. Is love an adequate substitute for obedience? Does a person’s love for Jesus excuse him from having to do what Jesus said? Why is love for Jesus not just as good as obedience to Him?
6. Do Jesus and the Father love a person more who obeys Jesus’ commands? Why do you suppose they do?
7. Why do you suppose that neither Jesus nor the Father is willing to make His home with a person who does not obey Jesus’ teaching?

8. Have you observed that Jesus' true friends try to do what Jesus said? Please tell of some specific people whom you think are trying to be true friends of Jesus.

## **WOMEN !**

There are instructions in the New Testament for women and about women.

### **HUSBANDS AND WIVES, FULFILL YOUR SEXUAL DUTIES TO YOUR SPOUSE.**

Husbands and wives should try to fill the sexual needs of each other. The apostle Paul said, **“But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control”** (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).

### **HUSBANDS AND WIVES, DON'T SEPARATE FROM YOUR SPOUSE; BUT IF YOU DO, REMAIN UNMARRIED.**

God wants married people to stay married to each other. The apostle Paul said, **“To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife”** (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

### **DON'T DIVORCE YOUR SPOUSE JUST BECAUSE HE OR SHE IS NOT A BELIEVER.**

Some of the Christian in the days of the New Testament wondered whether or not they should stay married to their spouses that were not believers. The apostle Paul said, **“To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who**

**is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him”** (1 Corinthians 7:12-13).

### **IF YOUR SPOUSE DEPARTS BECAUSE YOU ARE A BELIEVER, LET HIM OR HER GO.**

If a woman is forced to choose between an unbelieving husband and Christ, she should choose Christ. The apostle Paul said, **“But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace”** (1 Corinthians 7:15).

### **LADIES, DON’T DISHONOR YOUR HEAD.**

The apostle Paul expected women to have a head covering when they prayed or prophesied. He said, **“Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head--it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head”** (1 Corinthians 11:4-6).

### **LADIES, HAVE A SIGN OF AUTHORITY ON YOUR HEAD.**

It may sound strange to modern ladies, but the apostle Paul felt that sisters in the church need to have a sign of authority on their heads. He said, **“For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head”** (1 Corinthians 11:10).

### **LADIES, LET YOUR HAIR GROW.**

The apostle Paul felt that ladies should let their hair grow long. He said, **“Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering”** (1 Corinthians 11:14-15).

### **LADIES, REMAIN SILENT IN THE ASSEMBLIES.**

The apostle Paul wanted the men to do the public speaking in the assemblies. He said, **“As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about**

**something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church” (1 Corinthians 14:33-35).**

### **HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES.**

God wants a husband to love his wife. The apostle Paul said, **“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25).**

### **WIFE, RESPECT YOUR HUSBAND.**

God also wants a wife to respect her husband. The apostle Paul said, **“However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband” (Ephesians 5:33).**

### **LADIES, DRESS MODESTLY.**

Christian ladies are supposed to dress modestly. The apostle Paul said, **“I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God” (1 Timothy 2:9-10).**

### **LADIES, DON’T EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER A MAN.**

The apostle Paul wanted men to do the teaching in the church. He said, **“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent” (1 Timothy 2:11-12).**

### **DEACON’S WIFE, BE WORTHY OF RESPECT.**

The wives of men who have a responsible position in the church should set a good example for other women. The apostle Paul said, **“In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything” (1 Timothy 3:11).**

### **DO NOT PUT YOUNGER WIDOWS ON THE LIST TO BE HELPED FINANCIALLY.**

The apostle Paul expected the churches to help older widows who were worthy of support. He said, **“No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing**

**hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds. As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry” (1 Timothy 5:9-11).**

#### **TEACH THE OLDER WOMEN.**

The apostle Paul instructed Titus to teach the older women. He said, **“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good” (Titus 2:3).**

#### **OLDER WOMEN, TEACH THE YOUNGER WOMEN.**

After older women have been taught they should train the younger women. The apostle Paul said, **“Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God” (Titus 2:4-5).**

#### **TAKE CARE OF THE WIDOWS.**

Christians are supposed to take care of widows who are in distress. The book of James says, **“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27).**

#### **WIVES, BE SUBMISSIVE TO YOUR HUSBANDS.**

The sweet submissiveness of a Christian wife may help soften the hard heart of an unbelieving husband. The apostle Peter said, **“Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives” (1 Peter 3:1).**

#### **LADIES, DON'T MAKE OUTWARD ADORNMENT THE SOURCE OF YOUR BEAUTY.**

There is a difference between the way worldly women dress themselves and the way godly women should dress themselves. The apostle Peter said, **“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes” (1 Peter 3:3).**

## **LADIES, MAKE A GENTLE AND QUIET SPIRIT YOUR ADORNMENT.**

It is not the outward adornment that makes Christian women beautiful. The apostle Peter said, **“Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands”** (1 Peter 3:4-5).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Does a head covering show a woman’s humility?
2. What do you think the “sign of authority” is that the apostle Paul speaks about in 1 Corinthians 11:10? Is it a head covering of some kind?
3. How long does hair have to be before it is considered long?
4. What did the apostle Paul mean when he said in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 that women should “remain silent” in the assembly? Did he mean that they should not preach? If he did, does this still apply today?
5. Why do you suppose it was that the apostle Paul wanted women to remain silent in the assembly?
6. Is it easier for a woman to respect her husband if he loves her? How should a woman show respect for her husband?
7. In what way is a wife to be in submission to her husband? Are husbands also to be submissive to their wives in some ways?
8. The apostle Paul said that women should dress themselves “modestly.” What did he mean?
9. Why do you suppose the apostle Paul did not want a woman to teach or have authority over a man (1 Timothy 2:11-12)? Did Paul mean that a woman should not have authority over a man in the business world, or did he mean that she should not exercise authority over a man within the context of the church?

10. Should a congregation select men to be elders or deacons if their wives do not command the respect of the members of the church?
11. What important service can older women render to the congregation?  
See Titus 2:3-5.

## **WORK !**

The New Testament teaches that work is honorable and beneficial. Here are some of the passages that show this:

### **WORK FOR FOOD THAT ENDURES.**

After Jesus fed a great crowd of people, some of them followed Him around and wanted to make Him their king (John 6:15). Jesus knew, of course, that these people were following Him primarily because of the food. So He rebuked them and said, **“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval”** (John 6:27). Jesus identified the work of which He was speaking. He said, **“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent”** (John 6:29).

### **SAVE YOURSELF.**

The apostle Peter preached a magnificent sermon in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. In his sermon, Peter told his Jewish listeners that they had crucified their own Messiah. Many of the people who heard Peter speak were deeply touched by his words, and they cried out, **“Brothers, what shall we do”** (Acts 2:37)? Peter then told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38). After having said that, he continued warning the people and pleading with them, saying, **“Save yourselves from this corrupt generation”** (Acts 2:40). The book of Acts tells how the people understood Peter’s words. Acts says, **“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day”** (Acts 2:41).

### **WORK SO YOU CAN HELP THE WEAK.**



The apostle Paul was hesitant to accept money for his preaching (1 Corinthians 9:3-18). When he spoke to the elders of the church in Ephesus, he reminded them that he had worked with his own hands during the time that he had lived among them. He said, **“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”** (Acts 20:35).

### **SERVE THE LORD.**

Although a follower of Jesus may have to work for an employer in order to support himself, it is not for his employer alone that he works. He also works for the Lord. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord”** (Romans 12:11).

### **GIVE YOURSELVES FULLY TO THE WORK OF THE LORD.**

The apostle Paul, toward the end of his first letter to the Corinthians, gave this admonition, **“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain”** (1 Corinthians 15:58).

### **DO SOMETHING USEFUL.**

Some of the members of the church in Ephesus had been thieves before they were converted. To them, the apostle Paul wrote, **“He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need”** (Ephesians 4:28).

### **WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.**

Even after people have obeyed the gospel and have become Christians they still have to work out their salvation. The apostle Paul said, **“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose”** (Philippians 2:12-13).

### **BEAR FRUIT IN EVERY GOOD WORK.**

The Lord wants His people to be good workers so they can bear good fruit. **“And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the**

**Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10).**

### **WORK AS FOR THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART.**

Slavery was common when Jesus came into the world. Although the teaching of Jesus eventually did away with slavery, it did not do so immediately. Therefore, it was necessary for the slaves who had become Christians to be taught how to conduct themselves. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Colossians 3:22-23).**

### **WORK WITH YOUR HANDS.**

Some of the brethren in Thessalonika had stopped working because they thought that the Lord Jesus would return soon and that there was no need for them to work. However, the apostle Paul corrected their thinking. He wrote to them, **“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you” (1 Thessalonians 4:11).**

### **IF YOU WANT TO EAT, WORK.**

As far as possible, each Christian should be self-sufficient, so as not to be a burden to others unnecessarily (Galatians 6:5). The apostle Paul wrote, **“For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat’” (2 Thessalonians 3:10).**

### **BE PREPARED TO DO ANY GOOD WORK.**

The apostle Paul referred to the fact that in a large house there are many kinds of pots and pans that are used for different functions. He wrote, **“In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work” (2 Timothy 2:20-21).** A person should cleanse himself from sins so that he can be used for the noble purposes.

### **DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST.**

The work to which Timothy had dedicated himself was that of spreading the gospel. He was an evangelist. Paul wrote to Timothy, **“But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry”** (2 Timothy 4:5).

### **DEVOTE YOURSELF TO DOING WHAT IS GOOD.**

It is very important that a Christian devote himself to doing what is good. The apostle Paul wrote to Titus, **“This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone”** (Titus 3:8).

### **PROVIDE FOR DAILY NECESSITIES.**

The apostle Paul also wrote to Titus, **“Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives”** (Titus 3:14).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. How does a person work for food that does not perish? Is reading the Bible such work? Is the Bible spiritual food? See 1 Peter 2:2.
2. Why did the apostle Paul work with his own hands to support himself rather than rely on the brethren for his support? See 1 Corinthians 9:16-18. Is it a sin for a person who proclaims the gospel to accept support from others?
3. Is it degrading for a person to work with his own hands? What about preparing food and washing dishes? Is housework demeaning?
4. Why is it good for a person to be enthusiastic about whatever work he does?
5. What is “the work of the Lord” to which the apostle Paul referred in 1 Corinthians 15:58? Why is it important for all Christians to be involved in the work of the Lord?

6. Are there various kinds of stealing? Do you find it especially appropriate that a former thief should be asked to work with his own hands so that he can have something to give to others? Why is it wrong to steal?
7. What do non-Christians need to do in order to save themselves? See Acts 2:38.
8. What do people that are already Christians need to do in order to “work out” their own salvation, as Philippians 2:12-13 says? If a person trusts in Christ for his salvation, why does he still have to work at it? Is his faith not sufficient to save him? See James 2:26.
9. What kind of fruit would you like to bear for the Lord?
10. What is an evangelist? Do you know any evangelists? How does a man become an evangelist? Are only men permitted to be evangelists according to the Bible?
11. Should Christian people provide for the needs of their own relatives? If so, why? See 1 Timothy 5:8.

## **WORRY, DON'T !**

The New Testament teaches people to trust in God and not to worry.

### **DO NOT WORRY ABOUT YOUR LIFE.**

Anxiety afflicts many people, but Jesus tried to convince people not to worry. He said, **“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?”**(Matthew 6:25). Similar words can be found in Luke 12:22

### **LOOK AT THE BIRDS OF THE AIR.**

God’s thoughtful care for His creatures is evident in the natural world. Jesus said, **“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store**

**away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”** (Matthew 6:26).

### **DON'T WORRY ABOUT CLOTHES.**

Jesus does not want His followers to spend an inordinate amount of time thinking about clothing. He asked, **“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these”** (Matthew 6:28-29).

### **DON'T WORRY ABOUT FOOD AND DRINK.**

Jesus does not want His followers to worry about whether they will have enough to eat or not. He said, **“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’”** (Matthew 6:31). Similar thoughts can be found in Luke 12:29.

### **SEEK GOD'S KINGDOM FIRST, AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

Jesus made a startling promise to those who desire to do God's will: God will take care of them. Jesus said, **“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”** (Matthew 6:33).

### **DON'T WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW.**

Some people are so worried about tomorrow that they miss the joy that could be theirs today. Jesus said, **“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own”** (Matthew 6:34).

### **WHY WORRY?**

Worrying does not help, so it is better not to worry at all. Jesus asked, **“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest”** (Luke 12:25-26).

### **TRUST IN GOD.**

The way to be released from worry is to trust in God and in Jesus. Jesus said, **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me”** (John 14:1).

**DO NOT BE AFRAID.**

Fear often causes people to worry, but Jesus taught His followers not to be afraid. He said, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid”** (John 14:27).

**TRUST IN JESUS.**

God foretold the coming of the Christ by saying that He would lay a precious corner stone in Jerusalem (Isaiah 28:16). The apostle Paul quoted this prophecy. The prophecy says, **“See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame”** (Romans 9:33). People who put their trust in Jesus will not be disappointed.

**CONFESS YOUR TRUST IN JESUS.**

The apostle Paul said that people who trust in Christ should confess that they do. His words are: **“For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, ‘Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame’”** (Romans 10:9-11). The apostle Peter also referred to this prophecy in 1 Peter 2:4-6.

**DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING.**

Prayer is the key to overcoming anxiety. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God”** (Philippians 4:6).

**DON'T PUT YOUR HOPE IN WEALTH.**

Even if God should happen to bless some individuals so lavishly that they became rich, they should not put their hope in their riches. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment”** (1 Timothy 6:17).

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Do you feel that God has taken care of you in the past? If He has taken care of you in the past, does that fact give you confidence that He will continue to do so in the future?
2. Do you think Jesus expressed a realistic attitude toward life when He said that His followers should not worry about what they would eat, drink, or wear? Please give the reasons for your answer.
3. Are people better able to deal with the problems of life when they worry about them or when they do not worry about them? Please explain.
4. Why do you suppose that Jesus was so strongly opposed to people's worrying? Does worrying harm people? Do you think worrying shows a lack of faith? Please explain.
5. What did Jesus mean when He said "all these things will be given" (Matthew 6:33) to those who seek God's kingdom and God's righteousness first? What is God's kingdom? What did Jesus mean when He said that people should "seek" God's kingdom? What did Jesus mean when He said that people should seek God's "righteousness?" What is righteousness?
6. Does Matthew 6:33 mean everyone who seeks God's kingdom and God's righteousness will be spared the necessity of working for his livelihood? Please explain.
7. How does a confession of faith in Jesus lead to salvation? See Romans 10:9-10? Is a confession of faith all that is required to attain salvation? What else is required?
8. Has anyone ever tried to put you to shame because you are a Christian? How did you react? Are you currently ashamed of being a Christian?
9. Does prayer help a person overcome anxiety? See Philippians 4:6. Does a person's being thankful help him overcome anxiety? How?
10. Do rich people worry less than poor people? Why are riches so unreliable?

11. Do you think rich people are happier than poor people? Do you find that rich people are often arrogant? Why are they?

## **WORSHIP GOD !**

The New Testament teaches that we should worship God.

### **WORSHIP GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.**

The devil took Jesus on a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. The devil said to Jesus, “this will I give you, if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said, **“Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’”** (Matthew 4:10). These words of Jesus are also found in Luke 4:8.

### **WORSHIP GOD IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.**

A woman of Samaria asked Jesus whether people should worship God in Samaria or in Jerusalem. Jesus replied to her, **“Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews”** (John 4:21-22).

Following this statement, Jesus said, **“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth”** (John 4:23-24). Where a person worships is not so important. More important is how one worships. Worship should be done in “in spirit” and “in truth.” No one can truly worship “in spirit” unless he has been born (John 3:3-5) of the Spirit. And no one is likely to know how to worship “in truth” unless he reads the New Testament and follows it.

### **LIVE IN A SACRIFICIAL WAY.**

Under the Old Covenant (i.e. Old Testament) animals were put to death as a part of the worship. Worship under the New Covenant (i.e. New Testament) is different. It should be “in spirit” and “in truth.” This type of worship demands a “living sacrifice,” as opposed to a dead one. The apostle Paul wrote, **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to**



**offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1).**

Paul went on to describe how a living sacrifice is made. He said, **“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).**

### **DON'T RELY ON SELF-IMPOSED WORSHIP.**

The world is full of rules and regulations regarding religion, but the apostle Paul wrote, **“Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’” (Colossians 2:20-21)**

With regards to such rules, Paul said, **“These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. (Colossians 2:23).**

### **WOMEN, IF YOU ARE WORSHIPPERS OF GOD, DRESS MODESTLY.**

The apostle Paul wrote, **“I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God” (1 Timothy 2:9-10).**

### **WORSHIP GOD WITH REVERENCE AND AWE.**

The worship of God is no light matter. It should be done in a respectful manner. The book of Hebrews says, **“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire’” (Hebrews 12:28-29).**

### **FEAR GOD AND GIVE HIM GLORY.**

The apostle John saw in a vision an angel flying in midair. The angel had an announcement to make. The angel said in a loud voice, **“Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs**

**of water"** (Revelation 14:7). This angel's admonition to worship God is timely, not only for the end time, but for all preceding time as well.

### **WORSHIP GOD, NOT ANYONE ELSE.**

The apostle John fell at the feet of an angel in order to worship him, but the angel said, **"Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"** (Revelation 19:10).

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:**

1. Please explain why it is wrong to worship Satan.
2. What do you think would have happened if Jesus had worshipped Satan?
3. How did Jesus ward off Satan? Should we ward off Satan in the same way today?
4. Why would it be difficult for people who have not been born again to worship truly "in spirit?"
5. Does what people teach have any bearing on the validity of their worship?  
See Matthew 15:8-9.
6. When people study the Bible, does their Bible study help them to worship acceptably? If it does help, how does it help?
7. Is there anything wrong with people making up their own rules and rituals for worship? If so, what is wrong with it? See Colossians 2:20-23.
8. How should women dress who worship God?
9. Pagan worship in the ancient world was sometimes wild and gruesome. In many places today pagan worship is still that way. How does pagan worship differ from Christian worship? See Matthew 6:7.
10. Why should we fear God?

11. How should we give glory to God?
12. Why is it wrong to worship an angel?
13. Is it wrong to worship a human being? If so, why is it wrong? See Acts 10:25-26
10. Is it wrong to worship an idol? If so, why is it wrong? See Romans 1:21-23.
14. Is it wrong to worship an animal? If so, why is it wrong?

## **ARE CHRISTIANS SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?**

Since a great number of the instructions in the New Testament came from Jesus, a person should ask, “What did Jesus intend, when He instructed His followers to do something, or not to do something? Did He mean for them to do what He said, or not?” The answer to this question can be found in what Jesus said regarding His teaching. He said,

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’  
will enter the kingdom of heaven,  
but only he who does the will of my Father  
who is in heaven.  
Many will say to me on that day,  
‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name,  
and in your name drive out demons  
and perform many miracles?’  
Then I will tell them plainly,  
‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine  
and puts them into practice is like a wise man  
who built his house on the rock.  
The rain came down, the streams rose,

and the winds blew and beat against that house;  
yet it did not fall,  
because it had its foundation on the rock.  
But everyone who hears these words of mine  
and does not put them into practice  
is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.”  
Matthew 7:21-26

These words indicate that Jesus intended for His followers to do what He said. The same is true for Jesus' apostles. They intended for people to do what they said. Here is some of what the Apostle Paul wrote:

“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet  
or spiritual,  
let him acknowledge  
that the things which I write to you  
are the commandments of the Lord.”  
1 Corinthians 14:37

It would appear, judging from such statements as these, that the New Testament is a different kind of a book from what many people think it is. It is not merely a set of stories and non-binding thoughts intended primarily for edification and meditation. Rather, in addition to its value for edification and meditation, it contains specific instructions that are valid for people's lives.

Look, for example, at the twelfth chapter of the book of Romans. In that chapter, I find 39 exhortations, both positive and negative. Here is a sampling that shows what the exhortations in Romans chapter twelve are like:

“Love must be sincere.  
Hate what is evil;  
cling to what is good.  
Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.  
Honor one another above yourselves.  
Never be lacking in zeal,  
but keep your spiritual fervor,  
serving the Lord.  
Be joyful in hope,

patient in affliction,  
 faithful in prayer.  
 Share with God's people who are in need.  
 Practice hospitality.”

Romans 12:9-13

There are thirteen exhortations in these five verses. Twelve of them are positive and one is negative. (There may be two negatives, if “Abhor what is evil” is considered to be negative. )

What should a person think about such instructions? Should he try to follow them in his daily life, or can he safely set them aside? If Christians are not supposed to do what the New Testament says, then one must ask, “Why is all this teaching found in the New Testament?”

### WHY SOME PEOPLE WANT TO GET RID OF WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES

Some people are dead-set against doing what the New Testament says. Perhaps, it is human nature to not want to do what one is told to do. Years ago, King David was aware of this problem. He wrote,

“Why do the nations conspire  
 and the peoples plot in vain?  
 The kings of the earth take their stand  
 and the rulers gather together against the LORD  
 and against his Anointed One.  
 ‘Let us break their chains,’ they say,  
 ‘and throw off their fetters.’”

Psalm 2:1-3

Many people realize that God desires to influence their lives, and some of them resent it. Yet, if God were to let people go their own way and do what they please, without His instructing or restraining them in some way, it would be the same as His turning them over to the devil. Recall how quickly the children of Israel fell into idolatry and revelry while Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments (Exodus 32:5-6).

The devil seems always anxious to help people devise some excuse for not doing what God has said to do. Recall how the devil tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, when he challenged what God had said (Genesis 3:1).

The devil said to Eve, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

The devil does not seem to object to people being “religious” or attending church as long as they do not otherwise do what God has said to do. The one thing that the devil does not appear to be able to tolerate is our obeying God. Perhaps the reason why he is so intolerant of human’s obeying God is that their obedience highlights his disobedience.

Here are some popular theological dodges that people use to avoid doing what God has said for them to do. Some people say:

**“IF I TRY TO DO WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS, IT DOES  
AWAY WITH MY BEING SAVED BY FAITH”**

Martin Luther in the sixteenth century saw that some of the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church contradicted the New Testament. He understood that the New Testament teaches that salvation is by faith in Christ Jesus and not by keeping the laws of the Old Testament. To what extent, however, Martin Luther believed that salvation is by faith alone is not clear. On the one hand, when he translated the book of Romans into German he said that salvation is by faith only. On the other hand, he clung to the practice of baptizing babies so they would not be lost. That was inconsistent, of course. If baptism contributes in some way to salvation, then salvation is not by faith only.

Irrespective of what Martin Luther actually thought, his teaching has been widely interpreted to mean that a person has only to believe in Jesus in order to be saved. This interpretation leaves out several instructions that are found in the New Testament. It leaves out the necessity for a person to repent of his sins (Acts 2:38), to confess his faith in Christ Jesus (Romans 10:9-10), to request baptism for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 8:36), and to live a godly life after baptism (Romans 6:4). Consequently, the theory of salvation by faith alone confronts the New Testament at several points.

Even if it should be true that a person can become a Christian by faith only, that still does not excuse a person from doing what the New Testament says he should do after becoming a Christian. For no person can prepare himself for heaven, unless he or she takes the New Testament seriously. Anyone that feels that following the instructions in the New Testament is not a salvation issue, fails to understand that there are two salvations. One salvation takes place when a person is saved from the world and becomes a Christian (Ephesians 2:4); the other will take place when a person is

redeemed from the final destruction that will befall the earth and its evil inhabitants (Ephesians 4:30). People who claim to believe in Christ, but who live godless lives, will be consumed along with this world and its evil inhabitants..

Again, some people affirm:

**“A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS IS THE ONLY THING  
THAT MATTERS”**

Such an affirmation is not right, because no one can have a personal relationship with Jesus if he ignores what Jesus taught. Anyone who claims to love Jesus, but who ignores what He said, makes a mockery of Him. The deeds of such a person deny that he has a personal relationship with Jesus, for Jesus said,

“If you obey my commands,  
you will remain in my love,  
just as I have obeyed my Father's commands  
and remain in his love.”

John 15:10

In addition, some people contend:

**“A PERSON WHO TRIES TO DO WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT  
SAYS IS TRYING TO BE SAVED BY HIS WORKS”**

While it is true that no one can “earn” his or her salvation, it is also true that there are certain things a person should do in order to receive (and to retain) his or her salvation.

There is no reason to suppose that a sincere person who lives by the New Testament is trying to earn his salvation. Such a person is merely trying to “grow in the grace” (2 Peter 3:18), which God has extended to make his or her “calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10).

Further, some people charge:

**“DOING WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS DOES AWAY WITH  
SALVATION BY GRACE”**

This statement assumes that God would be ungracious if He were to require people to live in a way that corresponds to His nature. The truth of the matter is that no person does away with salvation by grace simply by reading the New Testament and doing what it says. Instead, such a person is responding properly to God's grace by doing what God wants him or her to do.

The person that seeks to be saved while ignoring what the New Testament says commits the sin of presumption. He is challenging God to take him to heaven on his own terms, no matter what kind of a life he leads.

In addition to the above, some people contend:

#### “TO LIVE BY THE NEW TESTAMENT IS LEGALISM”

This, of course, is incorrect. It is not legalism to live by God's instructions in the New Testament. Instead, it is child-like obedience to a loving Father.

The instructions in the New Testament are, by and large, of a spiritual nature. The few instructions a physical nature have likely been placed in the New Testament to test whether or not people have enough faith to obey what God has said.

Jesus and the apostles did not teach that an obedient person is a “legalist.” A person that maintains that those who follow the New Testament are “legalists” turns the New Testament against itself. The New Testament always tells a person to do what it teaches. It never restrains a person from doing what it teaches.

Finally, some people think,

#### “LIVING BY THE NEW TESTAMENT HAMPERS THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT”

Here again, this is not true. If a person lives by the New Testament, he does not hamper the work of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit inspired the New Testament. The Holy Spirit said through Jesus,

“The Spirit gives life;  
the flesh counts for nothing.  
The words I have spoken to you are spirit  
and they are life.”



## John 6:63

Concerning the work of the Holy Spirit the apostle Paul wrote,

“We have not received the spirit of the world  
but the Spirit who is from God,  
that we may understand what God has freely given us.  
This is what we speak,  
not in words taught us by human wisdom  
but in words taught by the Spirit,  
expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”

1 Corinthians 2:12-13

The Holy Spirit would never lead people to ignore what He (the Holy Spirit) has said and He (the Holy Spirit) does not reveal things that conflict with each other.

The Holy Spirit uses the New Testament to teach people. The New Testament tells specifically, and in detail, how to be saved and how to be led by the Holy Spirit.

There is no spiritual attainment higher than to live in conformity with what God has revealed through the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. Outside of the New Testament, not much is known about what the Spirit of God wants people to do or be.

The instructions that are given in the New Testament are spiritual, and the person who lives by them is a spiritually minded person. It is unthinkable that such a person would look down upon the inspired writers of the New Testament and suppose that he is more spiritual than the Scriptures. It is also unthinkable that any spiritually minded person would ignore the light that shines so brightly in the New Testament and go chasing after dimmer lights. Why should a person forsake the wealth of instruction in the New Testament and try to gain wisdom elsewhere?

Anyone that rejects the instructions of the Holy Spirit, as found in the New Testament, shows that he is not spiritually minded. This is true because God uses the New Testament to clarify what it means to be spiritually minded. The more a person lives in conformity with the New Testament, the deeper one's spirituality grows and the more like God he becomes.

It is my hope that an awareness of the large amount of the practical instruction in the New Testament about spiritual living will encourage

people to dig for spiritual gold in it, the richest of all veins.

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