



WordPoints
Challenging Every Person to Take God More Seriously

Daily Family Bible Studies

Biblical Themes for Families to Think About Together

Year 1

Gary Henry

Version 1.1 — January 2016

Daily Family Bible Studies: Biblical Themes for Families to Think About Together (Year 1)
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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

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We ought to be thankful for and obey everything in God's word

The Psalmist said, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psa. 119:105). When we recognize the many benefits and blessings that come to us through God's word, we should be grateful that He has chosen to impart His truth to us. And even when the truth hurts our conscience and shows us where we ought to be doing better, it is still true that ***we ought to be thankful for and obey everything in God's word***. Far from being a burden, God's word is a great blessing we are privileged to enjoy.

Many of us have been learning from the Bible since childhood, and we know a great deal about God's will. So our main problem is often not a lack of knowledge, but rather a resistance to the knowledge we already have. Like the foolish man who built his house on the sand (Mt. 7:26,27), we hear the Lord's words but don't do anything about them. And while this may seem like simple negligence, such unresponsiveness to what we know of the Lord's will is actually a worse problem than that of the person who has not even heard what the Lord's will is (Lk. 12:47,48).

Ultimately, how thankful and respectful we are toward God's word is judged not by what we say but by what we do. Jesus said, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" (Lk. 6:46). We must not be selective or picky about which parts of God's word we're willing to obey. As the Lord's people, we need to develop an attitude of eagerness for divine truth as a whole — an obedient thankfulness for all that God has said. And not only is eagerness to obey important in itself; it's the key to growing in our understanding of God's will in the future.

People in the world around us have no real respect for the Bible. Many people simply don't care what God may have said. So it's very important that we instill in our minds (and in the minds of our young people) an attitude of gratitude and receptiveness with respect to the truth contained in the Scriptures. We need to have tender, teachable spirits that are easily moved by divine instruction, eager to hear everything God says. This week, let's meditate on the goodness of all that God has revealed. Let's concentrate on increasing our responsiveness to God's word, whatever it may have to say. Let's learn to love the truth and eagerly receive it!

Monday: 1 Samuel 3:1-18

Key Idea: We should always be ready to listen attentively to God's word.

Questions for Family Growth: What was the name of the priest whom the boy Samuel helped as a servant? What did he tell Samuel to say when God called? How does God speak to us today? In what manner should we listen?

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

Tuesday: Psalm 119:97-104

Key Idea: Without God's word, we can't grow in understanding and obedience.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to "meditate" on God's word? How sweet did the writer say God's word was? In **v.104**, what did he say he received through God's precepts? In your own words, what does that mean?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 1:7.**

Wednesday: 2 Kings 22:8-20

Key Idea: Even when God's word shows that we have sinned, we still ought to listen.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Hilkiah the priest find in the House of the Lord? What did Josiah the king do when this writing was read to him? In **v.19**, what did God say about Josiah's attitude toward His word?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 1:8,9.**

Thursday: Jeremiah 36:1-3,20-26

Key Idea: It is wrong to disregard and disobey what God says.

Questions for Family Growth: Where did the scroll come from that was read to Jehoiakim the king? What did it say? What did Jehoiakim do to the scroll as it was read to him? What attitude toward God and His word do you think was reflected in Jehoiakim's actions?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 1:10-19.**

Friday: Psalm 119:9-16

Key Idea: Even when we are young, we ought to love God's word.

Questions for Family Growth: What does **v.9** say a young person can do by paying attention to God's word? In **v.16**, what do you think these words mean: "I will delight in your statutes" and "I will not forget your word"?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 1:20-33.**

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We grow stronger spiritually when we worship God together

God has graciously supplied our every need, including our need to be edified in spiritual matters. He knew we would face difficulties and discouragements, and He wisely provided the means for us to be strengthened. One of these means is the public worship assembly of the church. *We grow stronger spiritually when we worship God together.* And because this is true, we ought to have a high regard for those occasions when the church gathers to worship.

It is helpful to remember that our worship services are not an end in themselves but rather a means to an end. Paul said that God does not dwell in any temple that we could make: “Nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Ac. 17:25). The acts through which we worship God are important in themselves, to be sure, but God wants us to get the inner strength and spiritual maturity that come from these things. God does not need our worship — we do. If we neglect our worship or fail to appreciate its purpose, we will decline spiritually. None of us is an exception to the rule that Christians need to worship with other Christians.

The Hebrew writer pointed to the need for the Lord’s people to assemble together regularly: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Hb. 10:23-25). Love and good works need to be stirred up in each of us, and our gathering for worship is a prime means of such stimulation. Just as a burning ember dies when it is separated from the fire, those who neglect the practice of gathering with their fellow Christians for worship are likely to grow cold in their devotion to God.

God has never required anything that is not good for us. We should be glad about the privilege of worship. David’s sentiment is a worthy one to emulate: “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD!’” (Psa. 122:1). This week, let’s determine to have a deeper gratitude for the many good things that can happen when we worship together as we should.

Monday: Acts 2:37-47

Key Idea: In the New Testament, the church met frequently to worship.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.42, what does it say the members of the Jerusalem church “devoted” themselves to? In v.46, how often did they meet together in the temple courts for worship? Does it seem that they enjoyed worshipping together?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 2:1-15.

Tuesday: Acts 20:7-12

Key Idea: In the New Testament, church assemblies sometimes lasted a long time.

Questions for Family Growth: When did the disciples come together “to break bread”? What events had happened on that day of the week that would have made it a special day for Christians? How long did Paul speak on this occasion? Why was the group willing to stay so long and listen?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 2:16-22](#).

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Key Idea: God wants us to be edified when the church assembles.

Questions for Family Growth: What does the word “edification” mean? What does Paul mean when he says, “Let all things be done for building up” ([v.26](#))? What are some practical things we can do to help ourselves be edified (as well as edify others) when the church assembles?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 3:1,2](#).

Thursday: Ephesians 4:11-16

Key Idea: The church becomes stronger by being taught God’s truth.

Questions for Family Growth: Looking at [v.12](#), for what practical purpose has Christ provided for the teaching of His word? What is said in [v.15](#) about “growing up”? In [v.16](#), what happens when each part of the body is functioning as it should?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 3:3,4](#).

Friday: Hebrews 10:23-25

Key Idea: When we worship together, we encourage one another to be faithful to God.

Questions for Family Growth: In [v.23](#), what are we exhorted to “hold fast”? In [v.24](#), why do we need to “consider” one another? What were some of the recipients of this letter doing in regard to their assemblies that Christians should not do?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 3:5,6](#).

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God wants His people to work together in the church

No two people are exactly alike, and anytime people are called upon to work together in a cooperative effort, it is necessary for them to discipline themselves so that their individual quirks and preferences don't obstruct the common goal. In one sense, it might be better if everything in the world could be done by people working alone or independently. But in a much more important sense, it is the "together" work that helps make the world the good place that it is. Many of the best things in life would be impossible without teamwork. Recognizing the contribution that others can make is a mark of spiritual maturity, and we should see it as an indication of immaturity if we can't work well with others in the Lord's church.

God has designed the scheme of redemption such that it involves not only the independent work of individuals but also some collective work. The local church, or "congregation," is where that collective work takes place. We are not only workers in the Lord, but we are fellow workers. We must not only operate, but we must cooperate. We need to appreciate the local congregation as the Lord has designed it — and make up our minds to contribute wholeheartedly to the work God has given the church to do.

This week, let's devote some serious thought to the fact that ***God wants His people to work together in the church***. It's a blessing that this is true, not a curse. When we lift our vision high enough to catch sight of the glorious work God wants us to be involved in, and when we look outside of ourselves long enough to notice the contribution others can make to that work, it can't help but move us toward a greater work together. It's a privilege to be a part of the "team" that is made up of the Lord's workers.

Let's be busy about the Master's business. Let's do that work collectively in the congregation, as well as individually in our private lives. Paul wrote that "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (**Eph. 2:10**). As Christians, we have work to do. To the extent that we can enjoy our work together here on earth, we will enjoy the happiness of heaven . . . together!

Monday: Acts 2:42-47

Key Idea: The church should be made up of people who enjoy working together.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.42**, what does the word "fellowship" mean? What does it mean in **v.44** that the members of the Jerusalem congregation were "together"? What do **vv.46,47** say about their activities? Do you detect a note of joy in this passage?

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

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

Key Idea: Jesus wants us to have the right attitude about working together in the church.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **v.10**, what does Jesus want in a congregation instead of “divisions”? What are some practical things we can do that will help us to have “the same mind and the same judgment”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 3:9,10.**

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Key Idea: The church, Christ’s body, is made up of people who can do different things.

Questions for Family Growth: Why does a body need to have different parts? In **vv.15,16**, what should the “foot” and the “ear” not say? In **v.21**, what should the “eye” and the “head” not say? According to **v.18**, who put the church together as it is?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 3:11,12.**

Thursday: Ephesians 4:11-16

Key Idea: The church, Christ’s body, is healthy and grows when we each do our part.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **vv.12,13**, what is the end or goal in view when we work together? In **v.16**, what is meant by this phrase: “when each part is working properly”? When we work together in this way, what happens to the body as a whole?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 3:13-18.**

Friday: Matthew 20:1-16

Key Idea: In the church, Jesus is pleased when we each do all that we have the opportunity to do.

Questions for Family Growth: Does Jesus reward us on the basis of who has done the greatest quantity of work in the church? If not, what makes Jesus pleased with each individual? What different kinds of work might we do in Jesus’ “vineyard” today?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 3:19,20.**

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God wants us not only to know the right thing but to do the right thing

As important as it is to have the truth, it's even more important to obey the truth we have. Failure to follow our conscience is not only a sin, but it is a worse sin than those we commit out of ignorance (**Lk. 12:41-48**). When what we do goes against what our conscience tells us we should be doing, that is a serious problem indeed.

The important principle of knowing and doing is emphasized in James: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing" (**Jas. 1:22-25**). And it is also in James that we read, "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin" (**Jas. 4:17**).

There is an expression that says "talk is cheap." In a certain sense, that's true. It takes very little integrity to say the right things about what people should do. What is of more consequence is the determination of a person to go ahead and do what he should. When we fail to do God's will, we may plead that our sin is only that of neglect, but God looks upon neglect as a serious matter. Sins of "omission" may not seem to us as terrible as those of "commission," but if we end up being lost, it will be little comfort to know that the sins for which we lost our souls were "only" those of neglect.

We live in a society where the Bible and its contents are much discussed. Many people know many things about what God has said. But too few are doing anything about that, even among those who are members of the Lord's church. It's sobering to realize that those who know more are expected to do more. Jesus said, "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required" (**Lk. 12:48**). This week let's meditate on the importance of obedience and determine that we're going to accept the responsibility that goes along with knowing what we know. **God wants us not only to know the right thing but to do the right thing.** If we seek God's blessings, let's remember: it's not the forgetful hearer but the doer of the work who'll be blessed in what he does!

Monday: Deuteronomy 29:29

Key Idea: God has given us His word so that we may know what He wants us to do.

Questions for Family Growth: Has God told us in His word everything we might wish to know just to satisfy our curiosity? If not, why has He told us the things He has told us? When we study God's word, what kinds of help or information should we be looking for primarily?

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

Tuesday: Matthew 7:24-27

Key Idea: It is foolish to know what God wants us to do and not do it.

Questions for Family Growth: In this story, who are those whom Jesus compared to the foolish man? Who are those compared to the wise man? What will happen if we hear God's word and do nothing about it? Consider [Lk. 12:41-48](#).

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

Wednesday: James 2:14-26

Key Idea: If we only have faith and not works, our faith is of no use.

Questions for Family Growth: What is "faith"? What are "works"? What if we have works, but no faith? What if we have faith, but no works? Should we expect to go to heaven without obeying God? What does [Hb. 5:9](#) say?

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

Thursday: Matthew 21:28-32

Key Idea: God is pleased when we actually do His will, and not just when we say we will obey Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What did each of the man's two sons say when he told them to go work in his vineyard? In the end, which one pleased his father? Which matters the most in determining our character: our words or our deeds?

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

Friday: Ezra 7:10

Key Idea: Before we teach God's word to others, we must know it and do it ourselves.

Questions for Family Growth: What three important things did Ezra prepare his heart to do? What will happen if we try to show others God's way but we aren't living in that way ourselves? In trying to influence others, how important is our personal example?

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

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We should set a godly example for those around us

Very few of us realize how many people are watching what we do. But people are watching, and *we should set a godly example for those around us*. As Edward Hyde once wrote, “No man is so insignificant as to be sure that his example can do no harm.” This week, let’s think about our need to do and say things that would make a worthy example for others to follow.

We don’t have to be perfect to provide a helpful pattern for those around us. We just have to provide a model of living that lifts others up and doesn’t pull them down. One part of a good example is the willingness to correct our mistakes when we become aware that our conduct has not been worthy of imitation. Absolute sinlessness is not the kind of consistency others expect of us. They will get that only from the Lord. What they do need from us is very practical and possible, even in a fallen world: a consistent willingness to admit our blunders and correct them.

In a way, we owe others a godly example. To set the right pattern is the least we can do for them. There is no shortage of folks who will set the wrong example. That will be done no matter what our own actions are. But if we don’t set the right example, our friends and neighbors may not get it anywhere else. Doesn’t everybody deserve to have at least one person doing the right thing before them? Is it fair when we deprive our friends of what may be the only godly example they have a chance to be exposed to? It’s something to think about.

Throughout this week, let’s be mindful of our example and look for ways to improve it. If necessary, let’s bend over backward not only to do what is strictly and legally right, but also to go beyond that and choose the very best among the alternatives that are permissible. Being “example conscious” will prompt us to go the extra mile to make sure that others are seeing an unmistakable, unequivocal example of godliness in our lives. Of course, this will mean having to do some inconvenient things — and it will mean leaving off some things we might like to enjoy if we were the only people in the world. But we’re not alone in this world. Others are watching. And that’s why Jesus said, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (**Mt. 5:16**).

Monday: Matthew 5:13-16

Key Idea: We should be a good influence in the world.

Questions for Family Growth: How are Christians to be the “salt of the earth”? How are we to be the “light of the world”? When we let our lights shine, what did Jesus say that others will see? What will those around us will be led to do?

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

Tuesday: Numbers 32:6-15

Key Idea: Our example should never discourage others from doing God's will.

Questions for Family Growth: When all of the spies except Joshua and Caleb gave a bad report to Israel, what effect did it have on the people as a whole? What are some practical ways we might discourage the hearts of those around us today?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 4:10-19](#).

Wednesday: 1 Timothy 4:11-16

Key Idea: Even younger people can set a godly example for others.

Questions for Family Growth: How do we keep others from “despising” our youth? What are the various things Paul said Timothy should be an example in? In [v.15](#), what must happen before others are going to see progress (and therefore a good example) in our lives?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 4:20-27](#).

Thursday: 1 Peter 5:1-4

Key Idea: Elders in congregations of Christians should be examples of godliness.

Questions for Family Growth: What is an “elder” in the Lord's church? What does Peter mean when he speaks of being “examples to the flock”? What are some specific ways in which elders should set a good example for their brethren?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 5:1-14](#).

Friday: 1 Corinthians 11:1

Key Idea: We should follow Christ so that others will be able to follow our example.

Questions for Family Growth: Does the fact that Paul said others should follow his example mean that he was absolutely perfect in every way? When we do what Christ would do in the various situations that we meet, how does that affect those around us?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 5:15-20](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We are in the church which belongs to Christ only if we obey His word

Many people think they have obeyed the gospel of Christ and are members of His church when they have not, in fact, done what is required by the Scriptures. The truth is, ***we are in the church which belongs to Christ only if we obey His word.*** Even if the sign out front says the church we attend is “of Christ,” that does not make it so. Regardless of the name we wear, if we are not governed by Christ’s authority then we have no connection to Him. This week is a good a time to reflect on that fact.

Jesus taught that there would be many who would falsely and without justification claim to have some association with Him. He said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness’” (Mt. 7:21-23). Jesus also said, “You are my friends if you do what I command you” (Jn. 15:14). Whether we are disciples of the Lord is determined not only by our words or our outward profession of allegiance to Him; it is determined by whether we actually follow Him. Paul asked, “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (Rom. 6:16).

The commandments of Christ, of course, have to do with more than just our congregational responsibilities; they also include what we do as individuals. But none can deny that our congregational work and worship are a part of what determines whether we are truly in fellowship with Christ. Who that has seriously read the Bible will say that a church can disregard the Lord’s will and still keep its connection to Him? To the contrary, when a church gets out of line with Christ’s authority and refuses to correct the problem, Christ eventually disavows that church as belonging to Him (Rev. 2:5; 3:16; etc.). May we ever respect the commandments that must be obeyed if we are to be — and continue to be — a church that is genuinely “of Christ.”

Monday: Matthew 16:13-20

Key Idea: Jesus Christ built His church, and that is the church we want to be in.

Questions for Family Growth: Whose church did Jesus say He would build? If people disregard Christ’s teaching, doing contradictory things about even the most basic parts of His will, can they all rightfully claim to be in the church that Jesus said He would build?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 5:21-23.

Tuesday: Romans 16:16

Key Idea: These are many congregations of Christians all around the world.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Paul's expression "churches of Christ" mean? Didn't Christ promise to build only one church? If Christ's churches all follow the same instructions, won't they resemble one another in their doctrine, worship, and organization?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 6:1-5](#).

Wednesday: Revelation 2:1-7

Key Idea: To belong to Christ, a congregation must obey the Lord in genuine love for Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What was wrong with the church at Ephesus? In [v.5](#), what did Christ say He would do if they did not repent and come back to Him? Can we be in Christ's church today if we do not love Him as we should?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 6:6-11](#).

Thursday: Revelation 2:12-17

Key Idea: To belong to Christ, a congregation must not teach or practice false doctrines.

Questions for Family Growth: What was wrong with the church at Pergamum? How was the problem at Pergamum different from the one at Ephesus? In [v.16](#), what did Christ say He would do if they did not repent and correct their problems?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 6:12-15](#).

Friday: Colossians 3:12-17

Key Idea: To belong to Christ, a congregation must respect Jesus' authority in all things.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to do things "in the name of the Lord Jesus"? Where do we find out what Jesus wants us to do if we desire to belong to Him? What does [2 Tim. 3:16,17](#) say the Scriptures are profitable for?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 6:16-19](#).

Gary Henry — [WordPoints.com](#)

God never commands anything that is not for our good

It's a serious mistake to think of God's commandments as unpleasant restrictions that we have to put up with. Instead, we ought to consider that **God never commands anything that is not for our good**. God is our Friend. He knows us inside out, and He loves us more than we can imagine. He wants the very best for us. And if He has ever asked us to say no to anything and yes to something else, it is only because He wants us to have the joy He has. He wants to help us stay away from anything that would interfere with the joy He created us to experience.

David said, "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward" (**Psa. 19:7-11**).

The trouble we have in seeing the goodness in God's commandments comes from our limited perspective. The only attraction sin has is that it offers pleasure in the short term. But if we could see, as God does, the long range consequences of our actions, we would easily realize the wisdom of His way. What we need to do is place our confidence in His perspective (**Prov. 3:5,6**).

How could we ever doubt the intentions of a God who would give the life of His Son as an atonement for our sins? As Paul wrote, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (**Rom. 8:32**). Unlike the devil who is lying when he says he wants what is good for us, God has given conclusive proof that He loves us. Even when the outward appearances of the moment seem to point the other direction, we can know that following God's instructions will lead us to good things. In this life, we are walking across a minefield laid by Satan. Let's have the good sense to trust a God who cares enough to say, "Step here" and "Don't step over there." In showing us the way, God knows what He is doing. We are smart if we follow His guidance.

Monday: Psalm 119:9-16,97-104

Key Idea: We should love God's laws, even when we are young.

Questions for Family Growth: Why do you think it is harder when we are young to see the wisdom and goodness of God's ways? What are some temptations that are especially strong when we are young? Does God know what it's like for us to be young?

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

Tuesday: Galatians 6:7-10

Key Idea: If we disobey God, we will be disappointed in the results we get.

Questions for Family Growth: When we disobey God, do things always work out as we think they will? What did Paul say about “sowing” and “reaping”? What do you think it means that “the way of the unfaithful is hard” (**Prov. 13:15 NKJV**).

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

Wednesday: Genesis 22:1-19

Key Idea: Faith means trusting that God will work everything out for good.

Questions for Family Growth: In this story, do you think God’s command made sense to Abraham? Why did he go ahead and obey God anyway? **Hb. 11:17-19** says that it was “by faith” that Abraham offered up Isaac. What does this mean?

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

Thursday: Philippians 3:7-11

Key Idea: Whenever we have to say no to anything, God has something better for us.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did Paul say he was willing to give up all the things that he had left behind in order to be a Christian? What are some things we might have to sacrifice today in order to be faithful to Christ?

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

Friday: 1 Peter 3:8-12

Key Idea: Obeying God is the way to see “good days.”

Questions for Family Growth: When do we get the full reward for obeying God? According to **1 Tim. 4:8**, what two things does godliness have the promise of? If we seek to be with God in eternity, what kind of life will we have in this world? What are the “good days” Peter speaks of?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Happiness is a product of the help we give to others

This week let's think about the fact that *happiness is a product of the help we give to others*. Contrary to the popular rule that happiness comes from what we get, it is the giving of ourselves that makes life a joy. In fact, there is no real, lasting joy for the self-centered person who thinks only of what he can get from others. It is no exaggeration to say that most of the dissatisfaction and unhappiness in the world is in the minds of those who, for one reason or another, have allowed their basic focus to shift from the work of filling others' needs to the question of whether their own needs are being filled in the manner they desire. In a world where the primary emphasis is almost always on self, we ought not to be surprised that so many people lead lives of great unhappiness. The prevalence of anxiety and unhappiness in a me-first culture is not surprising.

Each of us is primarily a “producer” or a “consumer.” Either our lives are characterized by the doing of productive things for others, or they are characterized by the consuming of that which others do for us. As someone has put it: “There are basically two kinds of people in the world — hosts and guests.” Which trait is the predominant one in our own lives? Are we mostly givers, who find our happiness in the service we render to others? Or are we mainly takers, who frequently find fault with the quality of what is given to us?

Jesus taught, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” ([Ac. 20:35](#)). That doesn't just mean that giving is more pleasing to God; it means that the giver himself is more “blessed” — in other words, he is more fortunate, more joyous (cf. [Prov. 11:24-26](#)). Although it sounds contradictory, the giver gets more of the good things in life than the taker. We are made in the image of God, and it is inherent in God's own nature that He finds joy in the giving of Himself. He is outwardly oriented toward the needs of His creatures, and not primarily concerned about Himself. Like Him, we are made such that we find our true fulfillment and happiness in being outwardly oriented — in being givers rather than takers. A creature in God's image who tries to be happy by selfish means is trying something that is, in the long run, an impossibility. May we learn this week, by meditating on God and His word, that blessedness comes from pouring ourselves out for others.

Monday: Philippians 2:1-11

Key Idea: Jesus, our example, was more concerned about others than about Himself.

Questions for Family Growth: Was Jesus primarily a giver or a taker? What motivated Him to die on the cross for our sins? During His lifetime, what did Jesus spend most of His time doing? What does it mean that He “went about doing good” ([Ac. 10:38](#))?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 8:12-36](#).

Tuesday: Mark 6:30-44

Key Idea: Jesus did not complain when the people around Him took away His time for rest.

Questions for Family Growth: According to vv.31,32, why did Jesus go to a deserted place? How do you think He felt when He got there and saw the multitude? What does v.34 say His attitude was? What did He spend the rest of that day doing?

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

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 12:14,15

Key Idea: As Christians, we should be glad to use ourselves up working for others.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul say he was glad to do for his brothers and sisters in Corinth? In your own words, what does it mean to be “spent”? What motivates a parent to spend himself or herself for a child?

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

Thursday: Matthew 25:31-46

Key Idea: When we serve the needs of other people, we are doing good deeds to Jesus Himself.

Questions for Family Growth: Can we go to heaven without doing good for others along the way? What are some things Jesus said we should be doing for others? What did Jesus mean when He said, “As you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (v.45)?

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

Friday: Proverbs 11:24-26

Key Idea: The more of ourselves we give away, the richer we become.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to be “stingy”? Can a person get rich (in the truest sense) by being stingy? Why is it so hard to part with our possessions? Which do you think is harder to share with others: our money or our time?

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

Gary Henry — *WordPoints.com*

We ought to put the Lord's work ahead of our own interests

This week, it will be good for us to think about this fact: *we ought to put the Lord's work ahead of our own interests*. As in any collective endeavor, it is necessary in the work of the Lord that those who participate be willing to subordinate their own desires and demands to the good of the common work. If that doesn't happen, the work is hindered and obstructed. Paul recognized this need for unity when he expressed his desire for the Philippians: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" ([Phil. 1:27](#)).

A proper orientation toward the Lord's work requires an understanding of ourselves as members of something larger than any of our self-centered concerns. Notice the emphasis on "together" in [Eph. 2:19-22](#): "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." It is no surprise that Paul wrote, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" ([Phil. 2:3,4](#)).

A number of expressions in the New Testament illustrate the "together" nature of what we do in the Lord. We are "fellow citizens" ([Eph. 2:19](#)), "fellow heirs" ([Eph. 3:6](#)), "fellow workers" ([3 Jn. 8](#)), "fellow laborers" ([1 Thess. 3:2 NKJV](#)), "fellow servants" ([Col. 1:7](#)), "fellow soldiers" ([Phil. 2:25](#)), etc. Clearly, the work that we are privileged to do together is of greater importance than any selfish personal consideration we might have. Let's study and think throughout this week on the importance of a genuine "together" attitude about our labor in spiritual matters — and be ready to subordinate our individual desires to the needs of the Lord's work. In Christ, we have a goal that is greater than any of our personal concerns. Let's keep the priority where it ought to be!

Monday: Mark 9:33-37

Key Idea: Jesus taught His disciples not to try to be the greatest but to serve one another.

Questions for Family Growth: What were the disciples arguing about while they traveled along the road? What did Jesus say a person should do if he "would be first"? What are some practical ways we can serve others?

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

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Key Idea: Envy and quarreling are out of place among those who are doing the Lord's work.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul mean when he said the Corinthians were “carnal” (NKJV)? How were they showing that they were carnal? In **1 Cor. 1:10**, what did Paul say they should do? How can we be “perfectly joined together” (NKJV)?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:2,3.**

Wednesday: Philippians 2:19-30

Key Idea: We should give of ourselves unselfishly to help others learn and obey God's will.

Questions for Family Growth: Looking at **vv.20,21**, how do you think Timothy's attitude was different from that of Paul's other coworkers? According to **v.30**, how did Epaphroditus show that he had a godly attitude?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:4,5.**

Thursday: Philippians 2:5-11

Key Idea: Jesus Christ gave up what He may have wanted in order to do what we needed.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some things Christ might have given up in order to come to earth and die for our sins? Why do you think He made this sacrifice? How can we learn to have the same attitude that Christ had?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:6.**

Friday: Philippians 2:1-4

Key Idea: We should be humble about ourselves and always do what is best for the Lord's work.

Questions for Family Growth: What is “selfish ambition”? What is “conceit”? What does it mean that each should “count others more significant than yourselves”? What are some ways we can look out for the interests of others?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:7.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Elders are given to us by God to help us grow spiritually

It is a sad fact that so many of the Lord's people worship where there are not even two men who are qualified to serve as elders, and so the congregation has to do without an eldership. But maybe it is just as sad that those of us who are fortunate to be in congregations where there are elders don't appreciate them as we should. The fact is, *elders are given to us by God to help us grow spiritually*. If we are so blessed as to have scripturally qualified elders, we should consider them as nothing less than gifts from God for our good.

In **Hb. 13:17**, the writer said, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning." What a priceless blessing! Yet how long has it been since any of us thanked God for His provision of wise, godly men in the congregation who are willing to watch out for our spiritual welfare? Do we not see the benefit we've been given in the provision of these men?

In **Ac. 20:28**, elders are instructed to "care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." Having men of integrity and spiritual maturity to lead and feed us in the Lord is a wonderful thing. We need to acknowledge the goodness of this blessing. More than that, we need to cooperate with the process of edification of which it is a part. In a good sense, we need to "take advantage" of what God has given us.

The eldership is not a man-made institution. We need to remember that the work of elders — two other New Testament descriptions of the same office are bishops/overseers (**Ac. 20:28; Phil. 1:1**) and shepherds/pastors (**Eph. 4:11; 1 Pt. 5:1-4**) — is a part of the wise plan that God has devised for His church. We read in **1 Tim. 3:1**: "The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task." When godly men fill these roles, the result is the strengthening of the church. In His infinite wisdom, God knew precisely the type of leadership and service that would contribute to the kind of strong relationship He wanted us to have in the church. Rather than resent these means of strength, let's be appreciative. And let's help our children to have healthy attitudes toward leadership in God's family.

Monday: Ephesians 4:11-16

Key Idea: Christ gave us elders to build up the church.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.11**, what other term is used to describe those who are elsewhere called "elders"? What does it mean that Christ "gave some to be" (NKJV) shepherds, etc.? What does **v.12** say about the purpose for which Christ gave these?

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

Tuesday: Acts 20:17-38

Key Idea: Elders are shepherds of God's flock.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.28**, what does it mean that elders are to “feed” (KJV) the church? In **vv.29,30**, what kind of dangers are they to look out for? What does it mean that elders are to “be alert” (**v.31**)?

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

Wednesday: Hebrews 13:7,17

Key Idea: Elders watch out for our souls.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.7**, what things are we to do in regard to our elders? What are we instructed to do in **v.17**? What is it that elders will have to “give an account” for? How should we help them?

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

Thursday: 1 Peter 5:1-4

Key Idea: Elders are examples to us of how to live the Christian life.

Questions for Family Growth: Name some activities in which elders can be a good example to us. What does it mean that elders exercise “oversight” (**v.2**)? According to **v.4**, what is the reward that faithful elders will receive from the Lord?

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

Friday: 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13

Key Idea: We are to honor our elders in love for their work's sake.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.12**, what does it mean to “know” (KJV) those who are over us in the Lord? What are some ways we can show that we “esteem them very highly in love because of their work” (ESV)?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Jesus taught us to pray

We may be busy, but none of us has ever been busier than the Lord. There were times in His ministry when there was so much to be done and so many people crowding around Him that Jesus and His apostles “had no leisure even to eat” (Mk. 6:31). Even so, the Lord did what had to be done to spend significant time alone with His Heavenly Father.

Mark records one occasion when “rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed” (Mk. 1:35). On the very busy day when He fed the five thousand, we are told that “after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray” (Mk. 6:46). Luke tells us that the Lord “would withdraw to desolate places and pray” (Lk. 5:16). Jesus is, of course, our example in everything. And if He taught us anything by His own actions, it is certain that *Jesus taught us to pray*. We can't be spiritually strong if we neglect the means through which that strength is built.

One of the really unfortunate things about most of our lives is that we spend the least time on the things we say are most important. Perhaps because so many important things are easily procrastinated, we find ourselves spending the bulk of our time doing urgent things that matter very little in the long run. What a difference it would make in our spiritual health if we started putting first things first, devoting amounts of time to our spiritual lives that accurately reflect how important we really believe that side of life is. More time in prayer would be conducive to great progress in our relationship with God.

This week let's take more time not only for prayer but also for Bible study and meditation. Let's think about the important fact that our love for the Lord and our diligence in His service depend on whether we take the time to build our spiritual resources. In the physical realm, we understand how foolish it is to expect a machine to run indefinitely without sufficient maintenance. The same thing is true in the spiritual realm. Even if the work we are so busy doing is the Lord's work, it is still true that we require regular replenishment and refreshment. Prayer is one of the activities through which we gain spiritual strength. If we don't take plenty of time to pray, we won't be strong spiritually. Let's think about it.

Monday: Luke 5:15,16

Key Idea: Jesus often took time to pray in private.

Questions for Family Growth: Is it easy to pray with noise and people all around us? Did Jesus have more time to pray than we do? Consider Mk. 6:31. What can we do if we find ourselves too busy to pray as we should?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 10:13.

Tuesday: John 17:1-5

Key Idea: Jesus prayed for Himself.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus ask for Himself in v.5? In v.4, what did Jesus say He had done on earth? In v.3, what did Jesus say about eternal life? Can we come to know God without praying to Him?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 10:14.

Wednesday: John 17:6-19

Key Idea: Jesus prayed for His apostles.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.8, what did Jesus say He had done with His apostles? In v.15, what did Jesus pray for His apostles? What did Jesus mean by His statement, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (v.17)?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 10:15.

Thursday: John 17:20-26

Key Idea: Jesus prayed for us.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.21, what did Jesus pray for all of His disciples? In v.24, what did Jesus say He desired for those whom God had given Him? In v.26, what kind of love did Jesus say He wanted His disciples to have?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 10:16.

Friday: Matthew 6:5-15

Key Idea: Jesus taught us how to pray.

Questions for Family Growth: According to Jesus, what was wrong with the way the hypocrites prayed? In this model prayer, what kinds of things did Jesus teach us to ask for? On what can we base our confidence that God will answer our prayers?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 10:17.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

God is our strength

Let's take some time each day this week to meditate on the great thought that **God is our strength**. Both individually and congregationally, we frequently come up against things that seem beyond our ability to handle. There are awesome tasks to be accomplished, fearful dangers to be risked, terrible temptations to be overcome, and serious needs to be filled. Nearly every day we are reminded that we can't make it on our own. And we ought to be genuinely thankful that we don't have to do so. Since God is our strength, our confidence is in Him.

God is the inexhaustible supply of everything we need to live joyous lives and do His work productively. Are we in any kind of physical jeopardy? Do we fear for our lives or our health? Is Satan assaulting us with persecution or temptation? God cares, and He will help us. Whatever we need to do to be victorious over the bad things in life, God will see that we can do it. Paul's attitude can be ours: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (**Phil. 4:13**).

Do we worry over not having life's material necessities? Do we fear being inadequate in the spiritual work God has for us? Do we feel inferior or needy? God knows how we feel, and He is the strength that we need to rely on. In fact, God's strength shines through brightest during our times of greatest need and apparent weakness.

To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (**2 Cor. 12:9,10**). And concerning their own work, he wrote, "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (**2 Cor. 9:8**).

God wants us to be cheerful and courageous, not because we feel adequate ourselves but because we can be strong in Him. Jesus told His disciples: "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (**Jn. 16:33**). If God is truly the God we believe He is, we can "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" (**Eph. 6:10**).

Monday: Exodus 14:10-14,21-31

Key Idea: God is much stronger than we are.

Questions for Family Growth: Just because a problem looks big to us, does that mean God can't do anything about it? What did the people of Israel say when they saw the Egyptians? What did Moses say in **vv.13,14**? What are some things we'll need God's help with this week?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 10:18**.

Tuesday: Daniel 1:1-21

Key Idea: God helps us when we stand up for what is right.

Questions for Family Growth: Do we ever have to do what is wrong just because somebody else says so? Is it ever permissible to do wrong in order to be successful or get ahead in life? What does God want us to do when we're tempted to do wrong?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 10:19-21](#).

Wednesday: Luke 22:54-62

Key Idea: We ought never to be ashamed of God.

Questions for Family Growth: What do you think Peter was afraid of? What are some ways we may act as Peter did on this occasion? In his fear, what were some truths Peter was forgetting? How did Peter feel when he realized what he had done?

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

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 3:4-6

Key Idea: God will always see that we have what we truly need.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to be "sufficient"? Will God give us everything we want in life? Why or why not? Does God ever expect us to do anything we do not have the resources to do? Will He help us in the doing of His will?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 10:23-25](#).

Friday: Psalm 23:1-6

Key Idea: With God, we don't ever have to be afraid.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the things we tend to be most afraid of in life? What is "the valley of the shadow of death"? What are some practical things we can do to build up our confidence in God's strength?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 10:26](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We ought to look forward to the Lord's Day

When you think about it, it really is a long way from one Sunday to the next. As busy as we are, a week seems to go by rather quickly — but spiritually there are so many temptations and difficulties and discouragements in a week's time, we ought to be glad there aren't any more than six days from one Sunday to the next. And considering the toll that each week takes on our spiritual lives, *we ought to look forward to the Lord's Day*. Sunday is a true oasis in the often dry desert of our weekly routine. The things we do on this day are much more than duties and responsibilities — they are blessings.

A part of what we ought to look forward to is the “mutual” aspect of what happens when Christians assemble. When Paul wrote to his brethren in Rome, expecting to visit them soon, he said, “I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you — that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine” (**Rom. 1:11,12**). As an apostle, Paul obviously had some encouragement that he could give to the Christians in Rome. But he also looked forward to being encouraged by them. The encouragement would be mutual. And it should be the same with us — we should see our assemblies as opportunities to build up each other.

Such encouragement is not limited to Sunday, of course, but when we're together on the Lord's Day we should encourage our brethren and be encouraged by them. This mutual encouragement is not only important; it is something we should look forward to very much. The first day of the week ought to be a much-anticipated day of refreshment.

Sunday is not the only day of the week when Christians meet together (**Ac. 2:46**). Nevertheless, God did intend the first day of the week to have a special meaning, a meaning that no other day has. It is, among other things, the one day each week when we observe the Lord's Supper (**Ac. 20:7**). Sunday is the day, more than any other, when we receive inner strength and refreshment to go onward and successfully meet the challenges that are before us. In a sense, our attitude about the Lord's Day — along with the feeling we have when we anticipate it — says a great deal about the state of our spiritual health. If we don't find ourselves looking forward to the best day of the week, then it's time for a spiritual checkup. This week, let's think about that.

Monday: Acts 20:5-12

Key Idea: We ought to look forward to observing the Lord's Supper.

Questions for Family Growth: In this text, why did the disciples meet on the first day of the week? Why do you think they would have looked forward to this event? Why do we call the first day of the week the Lord's Day? Do you think **Rev. 1:10** is a reference to the first day of the week?

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

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Key Idea: We ought to look forward to giving of our means.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul say he wanted the brethren in Corinth to do every first day of the week? With what attitude are we to do this, according to **2 Cor. 9:7**? Should we be eager to do this or reluctant?

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

Wednesday: Acts 2:42-47

Key Idea: We ought to look forward to singing, praying, and studying the Bible together.

Questions for Family Growth: What is said in these verses to indicate that the Christians in Jerusalem enjoyed being together? What effect would this have on their attitude toward the special things they did on the Lord's Day?

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

Thursday: 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

Key Idea: We ought to look forward to being with the Lord's people.

Questions for Family Growth: In **vv.19,20**, what did Paul say about his brethren in Thessalonica? In **Rom. 1:11,12**, what did he say he hoped for when he arrived in Rome to be with the brothers and sisters in that city?

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

Friday: Psalm 122:1-9

Key Idea: We ought to look forward to worshiping the Lord with His people.

Questions for Family Growth: What did David say he was glad about? What is the "house of the Lord" of which he spoke? What is the house of the Lord today? What feelings should we have about being with the Lord's people?

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

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We can expect the devil to make things difficult for us

From the beginning of time, it has apparently been Satan's intent to overthrow the good creation of God. By temptation, he introduced sin and rebellion into the world, and since then he has worked with evil ingenuity to obstruct God's work of bringing us back to Himself. We are called upon daily, both in our individual lives and in our congregational work, to overcome the devil's obstacles in our path to heaven. Since he does not want us to be saved and go to heaven, ***we can expect the devil to make things difficult for us.*** As Peter put it, he "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pt. 5:8).

In the message of Christ to the saints in Philadelphia, He spoke of the threat of Satan to their well-being, but He also spoke of His power to help them: "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie — behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown" (Rev. 3:8-11). It's a fact that our adversary is a terrible foe. But it's also a fact that God is greater than our adversary (1 Jn. 4:4).

The wonderful, triumphant truth is that we serve a Risen Savior who has overcome every work of Satan. Eventually, God will crush his efforts completely (Rom. 16:20). This week, let's concentrate our minds on the overwhelming victory that we are assured of in Jesus Christ. He never promised us that life in His kingdom would be without resistance; He only promised to help us deal with that resistance by His strength. He said, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). Yes, we do have an enemy — but our God is a mighty fortress of safety and security. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

Monday: Genesis 3:1-7

Key Idea: Sin entered the world when Adam and Eve yielded to the devil's temptation.

Questions for Family Growth: What lie did the devil present to Eve? Did he really want what was good for Adam and Eve? Why do you think he was trying to get Adam and Eve to disobey God? Did they have to do what the devil said? What are the keys to resisting temptation?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:2.

Tuesday: 1 Peter 5:6-11

Key Idea: The devil wants to keep us away from God.

Questions for Family Growth: What kind of animal is the devil compared to in this text? What is an “adversary,” and why is that word appropriate for the devil? What can the devil do to try to keep us away from God? What advice does Peter give us in dealing with the devil?

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

Wednesday: Matthew 4:1-11

Key Idea: Even Jesus was tempted by the devil.

Questions for Family Growth: What three things did the devil try to get Jesus to do? What did Jesus do to overcome these temptations? Do you think Jesus knows how hard it is for us to do the right thing? What does **Hb. 4:15,16** say?

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

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 10:12,13

Key Idea: When faced with temptation, we always have a choice whether to yield to it or not.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean when it says that temptation is “common to man”? What does it mean that “God is faithful” to us? What does God always provide for us when we are tempted to sin? How does knowing of God’s faithfulness help us to resist temptation?

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

Friday: Romans 8:31-39

Key Idea: If we choose to be faithful to God, He will defeat the devil for us.

Questions for Family Growth: Can the devil ever pull us away from God against our will? What has God done to prove how much He loves us and how much He can do for us? Do we ever have a problem that is bigger than God? In practical terms, what does it mean to have courage?

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

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Our homes should be places where we learn about God together

It is no coincidence that God often uses family relationships to explain or illustrate the relationship that ought to exist between Him and us. The family structure that was meant to exist in our earthly homes is modeled after God's relationship to us. The parallels are not coincidental.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the home is an excellent place to learn about God and our relationship to Him. As we live together in the closeness of our families things happen every day that can teach us much (if we're looking and listening) about God's love for us and the way He wants us to relate ourselves to Him. The family is the best laboratory that ever existed for discovering the practical truth of the principles about God that we have read about in the Bible. We need to be using our homes for this good purpose. ***Our homes should be places where we learn about God together.***

There is no less need today than in ancient Israel for us to make God's word the central part of our family life. As Moses said, "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (**Deut. 6:6-9**). When families think about God and talk about Him during their daily lives, many good things result.

Daily Bible study and prayer should be normal, routine characteristics of our homes. Talk and discussion of spiritual things should be frequent. Our children need to grow up in an environment where God is real and His word is held to be precious. Our little ones desperately need to be seeing in their parents more than a "Sunday and Wednesday night" religion. Each day they need to observe Dad and Mom showing an example of the love and purity that exists between Christ and His church (**Eph. 5:22-33**). This week, let's strive for seven days of progress in the spiritual priorities of our homes. Let's think and talk together of our need to grow — and help one another to grow — in the things that concern heaven.

Monday: 2 Timothy 1:3-7; 3:14,15

Key Idea: Children should have faith in God imparted to them, especially by their parents.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **1:5**, what kind of faith did young Timothy have? Who influenced him to have that kind of faith in God? What had Timothy known since he was a child, according to **3:15**?

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

Tuesday: Ephesians 6:1-4

Key Idea: Parents, and especially fathers, have a responsibility to teach their children about God.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” (v. 4 KJV) that Paul spoke of? What help is given by other translations of this verse? What does it mean to “bring up” children in this? What role does the father play? What about the mother?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:9.

Wednesday: Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Key Idea: It is good to talk about God during the ordinary activities of daily living.

Questions for Family Growth: What were the people of Israel to talk about in their families? When were they to do this? When we are together as families, what factors determine the things we talk about in one another’s presence? What can we do to improve our family conversations?

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

Thursday: Deuteronomy 6:20-25; Joshua 4:1-7

Key Idea: Parents should explain the meaning of God’s commandments and His memorials.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some things that children in ancient Israel might have asked their parents to explain? How were the parents to use these opportunities when their children asked such questions?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:12.

Friday: Psalm 78:1-8

Key Idea: Parents should tell their children about God’s wonderful works.

Questions for Family Growth: According to v.4, what did the writer say “we will not hide”? Who are the “children” spoken of in this verse? If the children were taught these things, what would be the normal result, according to vv.7,8?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:13.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Youth is a time to love God and be faithful to Him

While there are certainly good things about every stage of life, it is true that youth is an especially good time to enjoy and be grateful for. Solomon said, “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (Eccl. 12:1). Later in life, when the difficult days have come and the years have drawn near when we have no pleasure in them, it is gratifying to be able to recall the days of youth and remember not only that we enjoyed them, but that we were mindful of our Creator in those days and enjoyed our youth within His will. A godly youth is a great storehouse of pleasant memories.

Let’s spend some time this week considering the importance of youth as a time of dedication to God. Indeed, ***youth is a time to love God and be faithful to Him***. If there is a sense in which youth is the “prime” of life, there is a good argument that can be made for giving those premium years to the Lord — rather than spending them on our selfish indulgence and then giving the Lord whatever years are left over. The song “Give of Your Best to the Master” has some good advice: “Give of your best to the Master, give of the strength of youth; throw your soul’s fresh, glowing ardor into the battle for truth” (Howard B. Grose). In whatever ways youth is the “best” time of life, shouldn’t we give that “best” to the Lord?

Youth is a time when unique contributions can be made to the Lord’s work. There are things our young people can help us with in the local congregation that they can do better than anybody else. We need the things they can do so well, just as they need the wisdom of their elders. Our congregations will be better able to carry out the Lord’s work when we fully employ the energies and skills of our younger ones.

Let’s be positive about our young people — and encourage the highest and best that is in them. Let’s make sure they know how important they are to the Lord and to us. And let’s meditate on the qualities of youth — such as zeal and vigor — that the rest of us should determine to hold on to. Let’s be thankful for youth!

Monday: Psalm 119:9-16

Key Idea: When we are young, God’s word can keep us in the right path.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.9, what does it mean for a young person to “cleanse his way” (KJV)? According to v.9, how can a young person do that? What does v.11 suggest that we should do with God’s word?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:14.

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Key Idea: Faithful young people are valuable to God.

Questions for Family Growth: Out of all of Jesse's sons, why might he not have thought of David as a possibility for the new king? Even though David was still young, what was special about him? In regard to David's character, what is said about him in [1 Sam. 13:14](#).

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

Wednesday: 2 Timothy 2:22

Key Idea: When we are young, we should stay away from certain kinds of temptation.

Questions for Family Growth: What kinds of temptation might be called "youthful passions"? How does one "flee" from them? What does this verse say we should pursue? With what kind of heart should we call on God?

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

Thursday: 2 Timothy 1:3-7; 3:14-17

Key Idea: It is important to remember what we have been taught from God's word.

Questions for Family Growth: Where had Paul first met Timothy? See [Ac. 16:1,2](#). What kind of reputation did Timothy have? What kind of training had he had? How does one "continue" in the things he has learned?

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

Friday: Ecclesiastes 11:9,10; 12:1,13,14

Key Idea: We should remember our Creator in the days of our youth.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some things about youth that we should rejoice in? What does it mean to "remember" God in our youth? According to [12:13,14](#), what should be the main object in our lives?

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

Gary Henry — [WordPoints.com](#)

It is a blessing to have fellowship with gospel preachers in other places

If we are able to worship with a congregation that supports one or more men to work within the congregation as evangelists, we are participating in an arrangement that can do great good. Obviously, we need to be grateful for the relationship we can have with gospel preachers in the congregation of which we are members. It's also important, however, for us to remember that ***it is a blessing to have fellowship with gospel preachers in other places***. Whenever we have the opportunity to help with the support of faithful men laboring in other fields, we should look upon that opportunity as an extension of the work we are doing at home. We should be grateful for the additional privilege.

To the Philippians, Paul wrote, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (**Phil. 1:3-5**). He was more specific about this when he said, "And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only" (**Phil. 4:15**).

It is sad that some Christians seem to have little interest in the Lord's work and His people in places other than where they are. Such individuals appear to think that there's no need to concern ourselves about anything except what is happening right around us. Yet, as the song says, the gospel is for all: "Say not the heathen are at home, beyond we have no call; for why should we be blest alone? The gospel is for all" (J. M. McCaleb). We miss out on great joys and blessings when we fail to take an active interest in the Lord's work worldwide.

The world is "opening up" in ways that we could not have predicted a few years ago. It is now possible for faithful saints to carry the gospel into places that were almost unthinkable before. These developments have broadened the horizons of the saints of the Lord in the United States. In most congregations, there is now a keener interest in the work of the gospel around the world. This is a wonderful development. Let's think this week about the need to carry the gospel everywhere — and let's be thankful for the part we can play in that great enterprise.

Monday: 1 Corinthians 9:3-14

Key Idea: It is right for gospel preachers to receive wages for their work.

Questions for Family Growth: What basic principle is pointed to in **v.9**? What did Paul say in **v.11** concerning spiritual things and material things? What privilege is granted to gospel preachers in **v.14**? What point is made in **Gal. 6:6**?

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

Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 11:7-9

Key Idea: It is right for gospel preachers to be supported by brethren in other places.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.7**, what did Paul mean when he said he preached to those in Corinth “free of charge”? What is meant by the word “wages” (**v.8 KJV**)? According to **v.9**, who had helped Paul while he was in Corinth?

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

Wednesday: Philippians 4:10-20

Key Idea: It is well pleasing to God when we help support gospel preachers.

Questions for Family Growth: In **vv.14-16**, what did Paul say the brethren in Philippi had done to help him? According to **v.18**, what does God think about that kind of generosity? What is “the fruit that increases to your credit” in **v.17**?

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

Thursday: Philippians 1:3-7

Key Idea: Gospel preachers are thankful for brethren who have fellowship with them.

Questions for Family Growth: Why was Paul particularly thankful for the brethren in Philippi? What does the expression “partnership in the gospel” (**v.5**) mean? Consider also **4:15**. What do you think Paul’s feelings were for the Philippians?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:29**.

Friday: Acts 13:1-3; 14:24-28

Key Idea: We should be eager to hear about the work of the gospel in other places.

Questions for Family Growth: From what congregation did Paul and Barnabas leave on their first preaching trip? To what congregation did they return? What did they do immediately after they got back from their work?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 11:30**.

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God shows His love in the help that He gives us

When Jesus was about to send out His disciples to preach the gospel of the coming kingdom, He warned them of the problems they would have and the dangers they would face. But He said they should not be afraid: “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Mt. 10:29-31). It is greatly comforting to know that we worship and serve a God who knows us personally and cares about us. Since He is intimately involved in everything that concerns our well-being, we may rest in the assurance of His help.

God’s love causes Him to be steadfast in the help He gives. He is trustworthy and dependable. We may confidently entrust ourselves to His care, knowing that He will be not only good to us but also wise in His goodness. In the Old Testament, *hesed* (“lovingkindness” in the KJV) is translated in the *English Standard Version* as “steadfast love.” That’s exactly what God’s love is: a trustworthy love that can be counted on because God has entered into a covenant with us.

Peter wrote, “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good” (1 Pt. 4:19). Because He “cares” for us, we may cast our “care” upon Him: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” (1 Pt. 5:6,7). God loves us with a benevolent, active love. When all other sources of help in this world have failed us, our Heavenly Father will be there to graciously fill our needs.

There are those who observe the pain and heartache in the world and question whether God is there, or at least whether He cares. But the evidences of God’s concern are literally all around us every day. And we should stop often to think that ***God shows His love in the help that He gives us.*** This week, let’s make it our aim to more fully appreciate the wondrous love with which our God loves us. And let’s more fully express our gratitude for His help by devoting ourselves to the work and worship of God.

Monday: 1 Samuel 17:31-37

Key Idea: God will help us when we need Him.

Questions for Family Growth: In this story, what needed to be done that all the soldiers in Israel were afraid to do? Why did David think he could do this? Had God ever helped David before? How can we be like David in this regard?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 11:31.

Tuesday: Psalm 23:1-6

Key Idea: God provides for us as a shepherd cares for his sheep.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some things a shepherd does to care for his sheep? What are some things God does to care for us? Is there any kind of help that would be too much for God to give us? In **v.4**, why did David say he would fear no evil?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 12:1.**

Wednesday: Romans 5:6-11

Key Idea: God gave His Son for us.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **v.6**, what condition was the human race in when Christ died for us? According to **v.8**, what does the death of Christ demonstrate to us? Should we ever doubt that God wants to help us?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 12:2.**

Thursday: Hebrews 4:14-16

Key Idea: We should not be afraid to ask God for His help.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some characteristics that make Jesus a perfect high priest for us? What does it mean that we can “come boldly to the throne of grace” (NKJV)? What will we find when we do that?

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

Friday: 1 Peter 5:6,7

Key Idea: We may cast all our care upon God, because He cares for us.

Questions for Family Growth: What are our “cares”? What should we do with them? What does it mean that God “cares” for us? What did Jesus say that we should do in **Mt. 7:7-11**? How can we thank God for the help He gives us?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 12:4.**

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Jesus wants us to be His disciples

It will do us good this week to consider that *Jesus wants us to be His disciples*. Sometimes we think that when we obeyed the first steps of the gospel we did all that is necessary to attain heaven. We may think that, having obtained membership in the Lord's church, our salvation is certain. But there is a big difference between becoming a "member of the church" and becoming a disciple. It is discipleship that the Lord wants, and without that, nothing else matters very much.

In Bible times, the idea of discipleship was more familiar than it is now. In those days, before the existence of universities and trade schools, if one wanted to become learned in a certain field or skilled at some craft, one found a scholar or master craftsman and became his "disciple." The disciple often lived with his master. He and the master became intimate friends. The disciple not only learned the information available from his master, but he also patterned his life after him. He ate and drank with his master. He traveled with him. He emulated his master's words and actions and attitudes. He tried to become like his master, believing him to be worthy of such imitation. There was a personal relationship of friendship and trust, in which the master shared what he knew with his disciple and the disciple patterned himself after his master.

We ought to seek that kind of relationship with Christ. He wants us to follow Him and learn from Him, to become His friends. He wants us to "walk" with Him, to live with Him day and night, absorbing His skill in living and adopting His way of thinking. He desires that we become so devoted to Him as our Master that it becomes the height of our ambition to be just like Him. And doing that is a far more personal thing than we often make it out to be. It is more than the dry and dusty obligation of doing what He demands. Instead, it is the privilege of learning life from the Lord of life in a relationship of closest intimacy. Discipleship is not a hoop we have to jump through to gain heaven. Even in the here and now, the requirements of discipleship are a blessing.

Without genuine discipleship, the thing many people call "Christianity" is worthless. Many have thought that having their names on the roll of some faithful congregation assured their entrance into eternal glory. But the gospel which saves is the gospel which produces disciples (**Mt. 28:19**). So the question this week is: are we disciples? Let's think about it.

Monday: Matthew 28:16-20

Key Idea: When we obey the gospel of Christ, we enter into a discipleship.

Questions for Family Growth: In **vv.18,19**, what did Jesus command His apostles to do? What were they to teach those who were baptized? On the basis of this passage, what would you say a "disciple" is?

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

Tuesday: John 8:31; 15:14

Key Idea: A disciple is one who learns from and obeys his master.

Questions for Family Growth: If we say we are Jesus' disciples but we do not obey Him, is that not contradictory? In [Jn. 15:14](#), what did Jesus say we are if we do what He commands us? How can we know what Jesus wants us to do?

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

Wednesday: John 15:1-11

Key Idea: Jesus' disciples are those who bear much fruit for Him.

Questions for Family Growth: In practical terms, how do we "bear fruit" for Jesus Christ? What will happen if we say we are Jesus' disciples but do not bear fruit? Will Jesus help us do the things He wants us to do?

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

Thursday: Acts 9:36-43

Key Idea: There are things all of us can do to demonstrate our discipleship.

Questions for Family Growth: Who is called a "disciple" in this passage? In what ways did she "bear fruit" as a disciple? What are some activities we can engage in today to show our discipleship to the Lord?

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

Friday: Acts 11:19-26

Key Idea: The disciples of Jesus Christ are called Christians.

Questions for Family Growth: Can a person be a faithful Christian without being a disciple? What does the term "Christian" mean? If we wear the name of Christ, what sense of responsibility should we feel toward Him?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We should be willing to give up some things for the Lord

Life is full of choices, some of which are not easy to make. As followers of Christ, there are times when doing the right thing requires not doing (or sometimes not having) certain other things. When we face such choices, it is usually a waste of time to try to figure how to have it both ways. The fact is, *we should be willing to give up some things for the Lord.*

We live in a bountiful society where we are surrounded by good things that are very interesting. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that we have a right to have and do all we want, and that there must be some way to have it all and do it all without hurting our spiritual priorities. Such is not the case, however. There is simply too much out there. No Christian can have everything and do everything that strikes his fancy and still have the resources left over that the Lord's work deserves. Some choices have to be made. Some things have to be let go.

Someone has said that the good is often the enemy of the best. It is certainly so in matters that relate to eternity. If our heart is not so fully set on heaven that we are willing to relinquish any lesser thing in order to get there, it is not likely that we will reach the goal. Receiving the best (heaven) often requires a willingness to sacrifice that which is merely good (the pleasures God has placed in this world). Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt. 5:8). This means not only that we must purge our minds of anything dirty; it means we must sacrifice any concern, even if it is good, that gets in the way of our wholehearted pursuit of God.

Jesus made the point clearly in Mt. 16:25 when He said, "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." If we had to choose between heaven and our physical life, we should be willing to let go of even such a precious thing as our life! We must think like Paul who said, "Nor do I count my life dear to myself" (Ac. 20:24 NKJV).

This week, as we meditate on the Lord's word, let's concentrate on the concept of sacrifice. Let's see if we can't get a fresh understanding of the notion of "letting go" of activities and priorities that hinder our full dedication to the Lord and His work. It is vital for us and our children.

Monday: Matthew 16:24-26

Key Idea: Sometimes we have to make a choice between the Lord and other things.

Questions for Family Growth: What did the Lord mean when He said we must "deny" ourselves? What are some ways we might "save" our lives instead of giving them up for the Lord? If we refused to let them go, what would these things profit us?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 12:11.

Tuesday: Luke 18:18-25

Key Idea: We cannot serve Christ if the material things we possess mean too much to us.

Questions for Family Growth: Think carefully: what was the “one thing” the rich young ruler lacked in order to serve the Lord? Why would he not do such a thing? How can we tell if we are developing the same kind of attitude?

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

Wednesday: 2 Samuel 24:18-25

Key Idea: What we give to the Lord should “cost” us something.

Questions for Family Growth: Why would David not accept the things that Araunah wanted to give him for the sacrifice? What does the word “sacrifice” really mean? What are some things we might have the opportunity to sacrifice for the Lord today?

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

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Key Idea: We will be willing to sacrifice any possession if we have first given ourselves to the Lord.

Questions for Family Growth: What good work did the Macedonians want to help with? Why might they have been excused from helping? What does it mean, in practical terms, to give “ourselves” to the Lord?

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

Friday: Mark 10:28-31

Key Idea: We never give up anything for the Lord without receiving better things in return.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some valuable things we might have to give up in doing the Lord’s will? What are some things we might get in doing the Lord’s will? How might the “first” come to be “last”?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Our families are good gifts that God gives to bless us

There has not been a single family in the world that was perfect, and sometimes it may seem that the problems outnumber the blessings. We all know of things we could be doing to make our own families better, but even when our family problems are the most worrisome, the fact remains that **our families are good gifts that God gives to bless us**. God instituted the family relationship in the beginning. It was His idea — and it was an exceedingly good idea. At its worst, the home still has the potential for great and good things. That being true, we need to be careful not to give up on our homes when problems arise.

We are living in an age when the very notion of the “traditional” family is scoffed at. The idea that a husband, a wife, and their children can live happily together while each fulfills the different roles given in the Scriptures is an idea that many think has outlived its usefulness. But we believe differently. We have the conviction that, God having ordained the home and having laid down the principles for its joy and fulfillment, He is still willing and able to bless those who obey His will regarding the home. God’s plan is not only right, but it is good! And as those who believe in God’s will for the family, we need not only to be teaching it, but also showing in our own families that it is a workable plan that yields positive results.

God will help us build better families. We can take it for granted that He wants our homes to be joyful and fulfilling to us. That obviously being His will, we need to pray regularly for the help of our Heavenly Father in improving the quality of our family relationships. He can render aid to us that will actually make a difference for good. Husbands and fathers, especially, ought to make fervent prayer for their families an important part of their leadership in the home. God has not only given us our families, but He is ready to bless those families.

This week, let’s concentrate on our families and how we may improve them. Let’s devote some serious consideration to the good things about our family relationships, and be thankful for every blessing God has given to us in our homes. And let’s work on showing our gratitude for those who are our own flesh and blood!

Monday: Genesis 2:18-25

Key Idea: It was God who created the first family.

Questions for Family Growth: What need did Adam have for a helper? What did God do to provide such a helper for Adam? If it was God who made the family in the first place, what should be our attitude toward our own family?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 12:24.**

Tuesday: Ephesians 5:22-33

Key Idea: A husband/father ought to love his family.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.23**, what does it mean that “the husband is the head of the wife”? In practical terms, how does a husband show that he loves his wife? What are some attitudes and activities that make a man a good husband in God’s eyes?

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

Wednesday: Ephesians 5:22-33

Key Idea: A wife/mother ought to love her family.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.22**, what does it mean that the wife is to “submit” to her husband? In practical terms, how does a wife show that she respects her husband? What are some attitudes and activities that make a woman a good wife in God’s eyes?

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

Thursday: Ephesians 6:1-3

Key Idea: Children ought to obey their parents.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the most important reason why children should obey their parents? In **v.1**, what does it mean that children are to obey their parents “in the Lord”? How should children be taught to obey their parents?

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

Friday: Ephesians 6:4

Key Idea: Parents ought to teach their children to love and obey God.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that fathers should not “provoke” their children to anger? What is “the discipline and instruction of the Lord”? What are some ways that parents can teach their children about God?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

If we walk with God, we grow closer to Him every day

There is a story about a little boy who studied about Enoch in his Bible class. When his parents quizzed him as to what he had learned about Enoch, he said, “Well, Enoch walked with God. And they walked and walked and walked, until they were so far from Enoch’s house that God said, ‘Enoch, why don’t you just come on and go home with Me?’” That is not a bad view of what seems to have happened between Enoch and God. And though it is not to be expected that we will be translated from this world in the same manner as Enoch, there is still an important point here. ***If we walk with God, we grow closer to Him every day.*** And if we walk with Him long enough, it gets to the point where we are so “far away” from the world that is our home right now that heaven is the only place we can truly call home. The more we grow to be like our Father, the less at home we will be anywhere but where He lives.

Every day that we live on this earth, we are one day closer to going to heaven. Each step we take with the Lord takes us that much nearer the home He has prepared for us. This week, let’s concentrate on that thought. Let’s see if we can’t make heaven more real to ourselves, and realize that at the pace life goes nowadays it will be here before long! As the song says, “Just a few more days to be filled with praise, and to tell the old, old story; then, when twilight falls, and my Savior calls, I shall go to Him in glory.” We can do the Lord’s will (**Hb. 13:20,21**). We can please the Lord (**Hb. 11:5,6**). And every day that we do these things, we move closer to God.

Another one of our older songs says, “When we walk with the Lord in the light of His word, what a glory He sheds on our way!” On our way to heaven, God brightens the path upon which we walk even in the present world. It is not as though we are bound for heaven but must endure a dreary ordeal until we get there. No, the Christian is privileged to have many foretastes of the joy of heaven before he arrives. Doing the Lord’s work with the Lord’s people is a glorious thing in itself. But just over the horizon, our Father beckons us home to rest — and, even at this moment, we may be closer to that rest than we think. Let’s not fall short of the thing we have looked forward to all our lives. Let’s strive for heaven this week, and hasten the day of the Lord’s coming.

Monday: 2 Kings 2:1-14

Key Idea: God wants those who love and obey Him to be with Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What kind of person was Elijah? How did God take him home to heaven? Even though we won’t go to heaven in the same way as Elijah, should we not look forward to being with God when we die?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 13:1.**

Tuesday: Hebrews 11:8-10,13-16

Key Idea: If we love and obey God, we can go to live in the city that He has built.

Questions for Family Growth: What kind of person was Abraham? In **v.10**, what kind of city does it say he was looking for? Did he find that city in this world? Where is it, according to **v.16**? What are some things that make heaven a “better country”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 13:2,3.**

Wednesday: Revelation 4:1-11

Key Idea: It will be wonderful to be where God’s throne is.

Questions for Family Growth: Describe what John said that he saw. What were the people doing who were around God’s throne? What were they saying? How do you think we will feel when we ourselves are in God’s presence?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 13:4.**

Thursday: 2 Peter 1:1-11

Key Idea: To go to heaven, we must learn to love the same things God does.

Questions for Family Growth: What do you think it means to become “partakers of the divine nature” (**v.4**)? What are the things Peter says we must add to our faith? What will these things do for us, according to **vv.10,11**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 13:5,6.**

Friday: Hebrews 9:27,28

Key Idea: We are looking forward to the day when Christ will come back to take us to heaven.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the thing that everyone is “appointed” to do? What comes after that? When Christ appears a second time, what will it be for? What does it mean to be “eagerly waiting” for Christ?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 13:7.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Our faith needs to be in God and not in things that will disappoint us

God is the only sure and steady source of true security, and we are foolish if we ignore that fact. It may be tempting to focus our faith on other people and other things, but we must keep our ultimate trust in the God who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. ***Our faith needs to be in God and not in things that will disappoint us.***

Even we who profess to be the Lord's people sometimes have difficulty keeping our faith in the right place. Under pressure, we often find that our basic trust has not really been in the Lord Himself, but in "what we have always done," "what our preacher says," or "what the majority is doing." But we need to be extremely careful about the object of our ultimate trust. If we pay too much attention to sources of authority and guidance other than the Lord, we will eventually leave the straight and narrow path of God's will.

We talk with great concern to our religious friends and neighbors about placing their faith in Christ, rather than in human religious institutions, man-made creeds, etc. However, if we trust for our salvation in anything other than the Lord Himself, that is just as wrong for us to do as it is for anyone else. Paul said, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim. 1:12 NKJV).

When serious difficulties in life arise, we often find that our faith has not really been in the Lord but only in human wisdom and human ability. In the midst of trials and tribulations, if we're not willing to do the Lord's will unless we can understand the rationale for His commandments and unless it seems to us that we have the ability to accomplish the task, then our faith is not really in the Lord — it's in our own understanding and our own capabilities.

Yet whenever we face a choice between different loyalties our allegiance should be given to Jesus Christ. Having considered the alternatives and their relative degree of trustworthiness, we must decide to put our trust in God. If we do that, we will never be disappointed, no matter what happens and no matter what anyone else does. Trusting our Lord is the only safe course eternally!

Monday: Judges 7:1-8,19-25

Key Idea: We need to rely on what God can do, rather than on what we can do.

Questions for Family Growth: According to v.2, why did God say Gideon's army was too large? How many men did Gideon finally have with which to fight the Midianites? What lesson was God wanting His people to learn?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 13:8.

Tuesday: Luke 12:13-21

Key Idea: We cannot count on money or material things to take care of us.

Questions for Family Growth: Was it wrong for the farmer in this story to have good success with his crops? What was wrong with his attitude? What are some things we can do to keep from putting our faith in money and material things?

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

Wednesday: John 13:21-30

Key Idea: Sometimes even our friends will disappoint us.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean for one person to “betray” another? Was Judas a close friend of Jesus? What should we do when a friend says or does something that is disappointing to us?

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

Thursday: Hebrews 6:13-20

Key Idea: Our hope of heaven is something we can hold on to.

Questions for Family Growth: Will God ever lie to us? What does an “anchor” do for a ship? In **v.19**, what does the writer mean when he says that our hope is an anchor? Is going to heaven something that we can be sure about?

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

Friday: 1 Peter 4:12-19

Key Idea: If we are faithful to God, He will always be faithful to us.

Questions for Family Growth: According to this passage, what can we count on when bad things happen? What does it mean to “commit” (NKJV) our souls to God? What does it mean that God is a “faithful” Creator? Why should we trust God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 13:12.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We should try to be as patient with others as God has been with us

There are many stories in the Bible that teach us *we should try to be as patient with others as God has been with us*. None, however, is any more powerful than the one in **Mt. 18:21-35**. There Jesus told about the servant whose gracious master forgave him a debt amounting to a vast sum of money. This servant then proceeded to go out and beat a fellow servant unmercifully who owed him a much smaller debt. Drawing what ought to be an obvious conclusion, Jesus said that God will not forgive us our sins if we are not willing to forgive those who have sinned against us. The story is a lesson in forgiveness, but it is also a lesson in patience — because forgiveness and patience are very closely tied together.

Both patience and forgiveness are characteristics of love. As Paul pointed out so beautifully in **1 Cor. 13:1-13**, love imparts steadiness and stability to all that we do. Love makes it possible for us to endure considerable hardship without complaining or giving up. Because the loving heart is strong and stable, it can forbear and be longsuffering when others persist in doing wrong to us. Irritability, grudge-bearing, and the impulse to retaliate are failures of love. Imagine what would have happened to us long before now if God's strong love had not held Him back from giving us what we deserve! We can be thankful He has loved us and been patient with us — and forgiven us. Considering this, we ought to “keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins” (**1 Pt. 4:8**).

The longer we live in this world, the more we can look back and see that others have loved us and been patient with us. In fact, it is somewhat embarrassing to recall situations in which those around us were being patient with us and we didn't even realize it at the time. Some of these people may have passed on, and it not possible to thank them now. So let's pay the debt forward and look for others to whom we can show the same kind of patience that has been shown to us.

Throughout this week, let's each try to concentrate on patience. Let's meditate on the immensity of the patience that God has demonstrated toward us, and let's show our gratitude for His patience in our dealings with one another. Let's remember that others have to be patient with our impatience!

Monday: Matthew 7:1-5

Key Idea: We should not expect more of others than we expect of ourselves.

Questions for Family Growth: In this text, what does Jesus say is the wrong way to judge others? What does James mean when he says that “judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy” (**Jas. 2:13**)?

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

Tuesday: Matthew 18:21-35

Key Idea: Forgiveness is a part of patience.

Questions for Family Growth: What did the servant do after his master forgave him a huge debt? What exactly does it mean to “forgive” someone? How often did Jesus say we should forgive another person? Should we be eager to forgive or reluctant?

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

Wednesday: Colossians 3:12,13

Key Idea: Since Christ has been forgiving toward us, we should be forgiving toward others.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some ways we can show appreciation for the forgiveness Christ has extended to us? In [v.13](#), what does it mean to “bear with” one another? In [v.12](#), what are “kindness” and “patience” (or “longsuffering”)?

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

Thursday: 2 Timothy 2:24-26

Key Idea: In helping others overcome their problems, we should be gentle.

Questions for Family Growth: In [v.24](#), what does Paul say the servant of the Lord should not be? What does it mean to be “kind” (or “gentle”) with someone? According to [Gal. 6:1,2](#), in what spirit should we deal with people who are struggling?

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

Friday: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Key Idea: Patience is a part of loving others.

Questions for Family Growth: Which should we be toward other people: short-tempered or long-tempered? In [v.5](#), what does the expression “is not provoked” (NKJV) have to do with patience? What does [v.7](#) say about the way love behaves?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Believing in God means that we trust Him

In the Bible, belief means more than one thing. At the very least, it involves the notion that we accept the truth of what God has said to us. But more than that, **believing in God means that we trust Him**. It does very little good for a person to believe God's word is correct if he does not trust God enough at the practical level to launch out and do what God has said. People of genuine faith are those who actually depend on God enough to take risks in obeying Him.

There is no better example in the Bible of trusting faith than Abraham. When God called him from the security of his home in Ur of the Chaldeans to go to a strange land, Abraham packed up and went where God led him. When God said Abraham and Sarah were going to have a son, Abraham simply assumed, despite the seeming impossibility of such a thing, that God would somehow fulfill His promise. When God later told Abraham to go and make a sacrifice of Isaac, the promised son, Abraham got up early the next morning to make the trip.

At every turn of the road, Abraham believed God enough to trust Him. As a result, Abraham is the prototype of all those who by faith are pleasing to God. He is “Exhibit A” of how faith works: “Abraham ‘believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness’ . . . So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith” (**Gal. 3:6-9**). To share in the eternal blessings that came to Abraham, we must not only believe the same things about God that he believed; we must be willing to trust God as he did. And it's in the hard choices we must make — when we face a risky fork in the road — that we find out whether we really trust God or not.

We, like God's people in every age, need to be people of authentic faith. In uncertain or fearful situations, we should be willing to depend on our Father in heaven. It is not always easy, but in the long run, it is always rewarding. However much it may go against the grain of our spirit of independence and self-sufficiency, the ability to “let go and let God” is a greatly satisfying thing in the end. Throughout the coming week, let's concentrate on our need to trust God. Let's learn to trust Him with our material needs, our obedience to His commands, and our service in His kingdom. God has promised to supply our every real need. He will make us adequate in the things that really matter. But we must have the faith to depend on Him.

Monday: Genesis 6:9-22

Key Idea: Trusting faith means that we obey exactly what God commands.

Questions for Family Growth: What were the specific instructions God gave Noah about building the ark? Did Noah trust God's wisdom? What if Noah had changed some of God's instructions? What does **v.22** say about Noah?

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

Tuesday: Hebrews 13:5,6

Key Idea: Trusting faith means that we're not discontent or worried about material things.

Questions for Family Growth: What is "covetousness" (NKJV)? What does it mean to be "content" with the things God has provided us? How does trusting God help us to be more content? What does [Mt. 6:31-33](#) say our attitude should be?

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

Wednesday: 2 Kings 5:1-14

Key Idea: Trusting faith means that we obey God even if we can't see any sense in His commands.

Questions for Family Growth: What was Naaman's problem, and what did God tell him to do about it? What was Naaman's attitude at first, but then what did he decide to do? What should we do if we don't understand why God has commanded something?

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

Thursday: Matthew 14:22-33

Key Idea: Trusting faith means that we let our confidence in God conquer our fears.

Questions for Family Growth: What mistake did Peter make as he tried to walk on the water? What could he have done to avoid this mistake? Did Peter believe Jesus was the Son of God? If so, why did Jesus, in [v.31](#), say he had "little faith"?

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

Friday: Hebrews 11:8-10

Key Idea: Trusting faith means that we're content for God to lead the way.

Questions for Family Growth: Why would it have been hard for Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldeans? If we do not know where God is leading us, how can we be sure He will not lead us into trouble? With God, do we need to know the itinerary before we begin the journey?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Whether we go to heaven depends on what we do with God's word

This week it will be good for us to consider this sobering fact: *whether we go to heaven depends on what we do with God's word*. When confronted with the truth of what God has said, what we do next says much about the kind of character we have. Jesus said, "If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day" (Jn. 12:47,48).

Jesus came into the world to save it, not to condemn it — but many will be condemned as a result of Jesus' coming. They will be condemned, not because that was Jesus' purpose, but because they placed themselves under condemnation by their rejection of Jesus' saving word. They will have judged themselves by refusing that which could have saved them.

This explains an apparent contradiction in Jesus' statements about why He came. In the text above, Jesus clearly said that He "did not come to judge the world." Yet, in another place, He said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind" (Jn. 9:39). There is no contradiction when we see that although Jesus did not come for the express purpose of condemning anyone, nevertheless many will be condemned — not because He willed it, but because they refused His offer of forgiveness.

The word spoken by Jesus Christ divides mankind into two categories: those who accept it and those who do not. In this sense, Jesus is the Great Divider. His word demands a decision, and by their decision, people divide themselves in relation to His word. Jesus said simply, "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters" (Mt. 12:30).

It is sobering to think that we choose our destiny. If we turn away from the word which now comes to us as a message of salvation, that same word will confront us finally as a word of condemnation. To listen to Christ is no small matter. For in hearing His word, we take sides. Which side we take makes all the difference in the world! Let's reflect on that all through this week.

Monday: John 12:42-50

Key Idea: At the Judgment Day, we will be judged by God's word.

Questions for Family Growth: What does this passage say some of the Pharisees had done? What does it mean to "confess" Christ? What did Jesus mean when He said that His word will "judge" us in the last day if we reject Him?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 13:25.

Tuesday: Matthew 7:24-27

Key Idea: It is foolish to hear God's word and then disobey it.

Questions for Family Growth: Whom did Jesus compare to the foolish man? What does the word "foolish" mean? Even if we do not deliberately disobey Jesus, what will happen if we just delay obedience and do nothing about what He says?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:1](#).

Wednesday: Luke 8:4-15

Key Idea: What we do about God's word shows what kind of people we are.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus refer to when He used the word "heart" ([v.15](#))? What four kinds of people are described in the Parable of the Sower? What kind of heart is described in [v.15](#), and why is that so important in our study of God's word?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:2](#).

Thursday: Luke 19:1-10

Key Idea: We ought to be eager to obey Jesus.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Zacchaeus do when Jesus came to Jericho? Did Jesus have to beg and plead with him to do what was right? Why not? In [v.9](#), what did Jesus say had come to Zacchaeus' house?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:3](#).

Friday: John 3:16-21

Key Idea: Jesus wants us to obey Him.

Questions for Family Growth: According to [v.16](#), why did God offer up Jesus to die for our sins? Will some people still be lost? Why? What did Jesus say about "truth" and "light"? How do we show that we love the light?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:4](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Being a hypocrite is one of the worst things in the world

A hypocrite is a person who is one thing outwardly but another thing inwardly; he appears to others as something other than what he truly is. The Bible has a great deal to say about hypocrisy, and what it says is basically this: ***being a hypocrite is one of the worst things in the world.*** We need to be as careful as we can be to avoid this fault.

Actually there are two kinds of hypocrites. One is the person who is wicked in his heart but wishes to appear righteous in the eyes of other people. According to Jesus, this was the problem many of the Pharisees had. But another kind of hypocrite is the person who has a basically good heart, but he does not live outwardly the way his conscience tells him he ought to. He knows what is right and wants to do it, but he consistently fails to do so. It is a bad thing to be either kind of hypocrite, and neither one of them can be a very happy person.

Jesus indicated that happiness comes from consistently doing what we know is His will: “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (Jn. 13:17). And James wrote that “the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing” (Jas. 1:25).

One caution is in order, however. Our primary motive for doing right should not be our own happiness. That would be a self-centered reason for our righteousness. Instead, we are to obey our conscience simply because it's the right thing to do, whether it feels good or not. Whatever good feelings come from obedience are a secondary benefit, although those feelings are quite wonderful.

We need to strive for greater congruency in our lives, the state in which our walk is aligned with our talk. If we are not living what we say we believe, two things are likely to happen: (1) we will be ashamed of our lives, and (2) we will be unsuccessful in having a good influence on other people. This week, let's work on getting our heart and our actions lined up and synchronized. Let's see if we can't bring some harmony and joy into our lives by being the sort of people we really want to be. When we truly are what we profess to be, our reputation will take care of itself.

Monday: Genesis 3:1-24

Key Idea: Sin takes away our happiness.

Questions for Family Growth: Before they committed sin by disobeying God, were Adam and Eve perfectly happy in the Garden of Eden? Was the devil telling the truth when he said that sin would bring better things to them than God had provided?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 14:5.

Tuesday: Luke 22:54-62

Key Idea: It makes us miserable to go against our conscience.

Questions for Family Growth: On the night of Jesus' betrayal, what did Peter do that he knew he ought not to do? After he did this the third time, how do you think he felt when Jesus turned and looked at him? What does **v.62** say?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:6-8.**

Wednesday: 1 Timothy 4:1,2

Key Idea: If we keep disobeying our conscience, we will damage it.

Questions for Family Growth: What would it mean to have our conscience "seared with a hot iron" (NKJV)? If we seem to have trouble obeying our conscience, what are some things we can do that will help us overcome this problem?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:9.**

Thursday: Romans 14:13-23

Key Idea: We ought to follow our conscience in everything we do.

Questions for Family Growth: What should we do if we question whether something is right but others say we should go ahead and do it anyway? What if we know what we should do but we don't put it into action? What does **Jas. 4:17** say?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:10.**

Friday: James 1:19-27

Key Idea: It makes us happy to do what we know we ought to do.

Questions for Family Growth: Is it ever enough just to know in our hearts what is the right thing to do? What is said in **v.25** about the one who is a "doer who acts"? What did Jesus say in **Jn. 13:17** about those who do His will?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

The first day of the week is a day to remember the Lord

Those of us who have long attended the services of the Lord's church on the first day of the week may have gotten to the point where Sunday is no longer anything special to us. If so, we urgently need to do whatever is necessary to regain a sense of just how great a day the Lord's Day is. This week, let's consider the fact that *the first day of the week is a day to remember the Lord*.

The Lord's Day is the day that God has commanded us to remember His Son, and He has filled it with good things we ought to treasure. Sunday is our best opportunity to be with the best people in the world — the Lord's people — to worship and learn and pray and sing, to give of our means and observe the Lord's Supper, to edify and be edified, to rejoice in the blessings we enjoy in Christ.

At the very center of all these good things is the Lord Himself. If we love Him, His day ought to be the day we look forward to most of all. John wrote, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome" (1 Jn. 5:3). The fact that we are commanded to worship on the Lord's Day does not mean it has to be a dreary duty. If we love the One who commanded us to remember Him, the day on which we do that will be a pleasure.

It would be profitable for us all to spend some time thinking about how we can — particularly in our families — make the Lord's Day what it ought to be for us. What can we do to get out of the ruts we have gotten into? What can we do to make Sunday our favorite day of the week?

And consider this: how can we better prepare for the Lord's Day? What activities in our homes would make it more a day of remembrance about the Lord? How can we convey to our children the specialness of this day? What can we do to ensure that their childhood memories of Sunday in their parents' home involve more than the NFL and the NBA? What are some things we can do that will be conducive to growth in our understanding and observance of the Lord's Day?

Let's devote this week to working on the project. Think about it. Pray about it. Talk about it. Share the results with others. Together, let's work on letting the first day be the Lord's Day!

Monday: Luke 24:1-12

Key Idea: The first day of the week is the day of our Lord's resurrection.

Questions for Family Growth: Describe how the disciples felt at first when they found the tomb empty, and then later when they realized what had really happened to Jesus. How should the assurance of the Lord's resurrection make us feel on Sunday?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 14:12.

Tuesday: Acts 20:7-12

Key Idea: In the New Testament, Christians met on Sunday for the Lord's Supper.

Questions for Family Growth: According to v.7, why did the disciples come together on the first day of the week? What else is said about their assembly? Why is the Lord's Supper something Christians should look forward to throughout the week?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 14:13.

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Key Idea: The Lord's Supper reminds us that Christ died for our sins.

Questions for Family Growth: Who first commanded us to partake of the Lord's Supper? What does v.26 say we "proclaim" until Christ comes again? Why do we need a frequent reminder about this important event?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 14:14.

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Key Idea: Sunday is the day we give of our means for the Lord's work.

Questions for Family Growth: On what day did Paul say the Corinthians should "lay by in store" (KJV) for the financial needs of the Lord's work? Is any other day acceptable? How does our giving make Sunday a happier day?

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

Friday: Revelation 1:9-16

Key Idea: The first day of the week is the Lord's Day.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the things in the New Testament that happened on the first day of the week that would make it appropriate to call it "the Lord's Day"? In practical terms, what are some things we could do to make this day truly the Lord's Day?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We should grow wiser by learning from the experiences others have had

As we meditate upon God's word this week, let's reflect on the fact that *we should grow wiser by learning from the experiences others have had*. One lifetime is simply too short a time for anyone to learn all he needs to know by experiencing everything himself. The person who is not willing, or does not take the time, to learn from the experiences that others have passed through will not be very wise.

When we are in our younger years, we are tempted to dismiss the warnings and admonitions that older folks try to give us. We presume that they don't fully understand the uniqueness of our personal situation. So we plunge ahead, ignoring the advice of others — and often find years later that we could have spared ourselves much heartache by listening when others tried to tell us we were on the wrong path.

Eventually, it will be too late to profit from the advice others have tried to give us. In Proverbs, wisdom is described as saying, "Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices" (**Prov. 1:28-31**).

Actually, pride is the main reason we don't listen to others and profit from their experience. It takes swallowing our pride to put ourselves in the position of a learner, one who does not yet know what others know. But the fellow whose pride keeps him from yielding to the judgment and wisdom of others is doomed to remain a fool the rest of his life. He will never be anything but a novice in the school of life.

In the Lord's church, we are fortunate to have others around us whose experience we could learn from. In particular, our elders in the local congregation are men whose wisdom we should be eager to benefit from. We are to follow their faith, considering "the outcome of their way of life" (**Hb. 13:7**). Let's make it a priority this week to gain from somebody else's hard knocks.

Monday: Proverbs 19:20

Key Idea: We should learn from the advice others give us.

Questions for Family Growth: What is "counsel" (NKJV)? What is "instruction"? What does it mean to truly "listen" and "accept" what others are teaching us? At what point in life does wisdom usually come: when we are young or when we are older?

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

Tuesday: Proverbs 15:31,32

Key Idea: We should learn from the reproof others give us.

Questions for Family Growth: What is “reproof”? Why is it so hard to accept reproof in the way that we should receive it? What, according to these verses, are some benefits of accepting reproof? What if we “disdain instruction” (NKJV)?

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

Wednesday: Proverbs 10:8

Key Idea: We should learn from the commands others give us.

Questions for Family Growth: How is a “command” different from “advice” or “reproof”? What does it mean to “receive” commands? According to this verse, what kind of person receives commands as he should? What kind of person does this verse say will “come to ruin”?

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

Thursday: Proverbs 15:5; 23:22

Key Idea: We should learn from the advice our parents give us.

Questions for Family Growth: What kind of person is it who “despises” his father’s instruction? What should we do when we disagree with our parents’ wisdom? What would be some practical suggestions for how should parents give advice to their children?

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

Friday: Proverbs 21:11

Key Idea: We should learn from the punishment others receive.

Questions for Family Growth: What is a “scuffer”? When a scuffer is punished, who may be helped by the punishment in addition to the scuffer himself? Even though it is painful, what good things can come from the experience of punishment?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

God wants us to think before we act

Especially in matters with serious consequences, it is better to be cautious and careful — rather than to act hastily and thoughtlessly in ways that turn out to be wrong. It will help us greatly if we can consider this week that **God wants us to think before we act**. Better planning is a benefit to any endeavor in life, and it certainly pays big dividends in our spiritual lives.

Most of the things we do that we later regret are things we do thoughtlessly. Yet the excuse “I didn’t think” is not enough to justify wrong conduct. And even the good things we do would be even better if we thought them out more deliberately in advance. The person who is careful in the way he lives his daily life renders more effective service to the Lord.

One of the disadvantages of the fast-paced way we live is that it leaves us little time for reflection. Too many concerns crowd in on us, and we find ourselves rushing into and out of activities with no opportunity to think and evaluate and consider. Our deeds are hasty, rather than cautiously thought out. Our lives end up being haphazard hodgepodes of this and that, rather than the well-constructed results of premeditation. Nowadays we truly need the biblical warning to think about what we are doing.

Each of us is involved in the business of building a life. When the process is completed, we will have a character that we are responsible for because it is the result of decisions we have made. Since we will have to account for the life we have lived, living is serious business. Once our lives are finished, there will be no opportunity for us to go back and remake them. Careless mistakes can be eternally costly. So it pays to check — and recheck — our principles and our actions to make sure they are right. It is better to take the time to ensure accuracy than to rush into actions that we will later regret.

Paul wrote to his young friend Timothy, “Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim. 4:15,16). As we make our way through the activities of this week, may we allow enough space in our daily routines to consider, to plan, and to prepare. May we take the time necessary to make sure we are on the right track.

Monday: Titus 2:11-14

Key Idea: If we work at it, we can learn how to say no to things God does not want us to do.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.12, what does it mean to “live soberly” (NKJV)? What are some reasons why we should live that way, according to these verses? What are some things we do that we should be more careful about?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 14:28.

Tuesday: Joshua 7:1-26

Key Idea: If we do not think before we act, we may do things that hurt others.

Questions for Family Growth: Before the battle at Jericho, do you think Achan purposely planned to disobey God? What might have helped him to do what was right in the moment when he was tempted? How were others hurt by what he did?

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

Wednesday: Matthew 26:14-16; 27:3-5

Key Idea: If we do not think ahead, we will do things that later fill us with remorse.

Questions for Family Growth: How might Judas have felt when he realized what he had done in betraying Jesus? If he could have gone back and started over, do you think Judas would have been more careful in what he did? How can we avoid the kind of mistake that Judas made?

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

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 10:12,13

Key Idea: If we do not make wise escape plans, temptation is likely to overcome us.

Questions for Family Growth: Is anybody so strong spiritually that he does not need to be careful? What does it mean to “take heed”? What are some practical things we need to do ahead of time so that temptation will not defeat us?

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

Friday: Genesis 39:1-23

Key Idea: God wants us to decide on our convictions before temptation comes our way.

Questions for Family Growth: When is the best time to decide what we really believe and what we are going to do about our beliefs? If we simply make up the rules as we go along, will we live a life that is pleasing to God?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

In both word and deed, we should be thankful for God's blessings

We happen to live in a country where, once a year in the fall, a day of “thanksgiving” is observed. It is appropriate that we have such a day to remind ourselves of how blessed we are. No nation has ever prospered as we have. And since we tend to forget our blessings and take them for granted, it is helpful to set aside a day to remember to be thankful.

But being thankful — truly thankful — is more than a matter of words. ***In both word and deed, we should be thankful for God's blessings.*** It should be apparent by the way we conduct our lives every day of the year that we appreciate God's goodness. Paul wrote, “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17).

Are we thankful for our families? Let's show it by treating them more lovingly. Are we thankful for our material possessions? Let's be good stewards of them by using them in the Lord's work. Are we thankful for our city and state and nation? Let's do something about it by working as active citizens for the betterment of our communities and the preservation of our freedoms. Are we thankful for our friends? Let's demonstrate it by being a better friend to them. Are we thankful for the gospel? Let's prove it by sharing it with everybody around us.

Perhaps it is not going too far to say that every sin we commit is a failure of gratitude in one way or another. If we could properly keep in mind the blessings of our Creator and be adequately thankful for them, we would never want to violate His will.

Without a doubt, the greatest blessing God ever gave us was the gift of His Son. Lest we forget to be grateful, God has given us the Lord's Supper. Today, as we partake of the Supper — and throughout this week — let's meditate on God's grace in the giving of so many good things. May we be determined more than ever to give ourselves back to God in grateful obedience and service. Let's show that we mean what we say when we offer thanks, such that outsiders may look at us and be moved to say, “Now there is a thankful group of people!”

Monday: Hebrews 13:10-16

Key Idea: In Christ, thanksgiving and praise are the sacrifices we offer to God.

Questions for Family Growth: In vv.10-13, what comparison or analogy does the writer make? In v.15, what does the writer say we should “continually offer up” to God? How do we do that? According to v.16, what kind of sacrifices is God pleased with?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 14:33.

Tuesday: Romans 1:18-21

Key Idea: It is very dangerous to cease being thankful to God.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **v.20**, if people live in sin is it because they have no way of knowing about God at all? In **v.21**, what does Paul say sinners fail to do, even though they “know” God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:34**.

Wednesday: Luke 17:11-19

Key Idea: We should remember to express our thankfulness, even if no one else does.

Questions for Family Growth: In this story, what miracle did Jesus perform? According to **vv.15,16**, what did one of the lepers do? What is the significance of the fact that this man was a Samaritan? Why do you think the others did not do what this man did?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:35**.

Thursday: Matthew 18:21-35

Key Idea: Being thankful for God’s forgiveness will make us more forgiving of others.

Questions for Family Growth: What question did Peter ask of the Lord, and what was Jesus’ answer? Would you say that the servant who would not forgive his fellow servant was ungrateful to his master? Why so? What happened to him as a result?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:1,2**.

Friday: 1 Corinthians 15:9,10

Key Idea: The more thankful we are, the more enthusiastically we will labor in the Lord’s work.

Questions for Family Growth: Why was Paul especially thankful to be a Christian, a preacher, and an apostle? What did he say about God’s patience in **1 Tim. 1:16**? How did he show his gratitude for God’s grace? What did Paul say that we should do in **1 Cor. 15:58**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:3**.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

There are many doctrines and practices that Christ does not approve of

We might wish it were otherwise, but in the world around us *there are many doctrines and practices that Christ does not approve of*. This week let's make it the theme of our meditations that religious error is something we must deal with. Both the Lord and His apostles predicted that some would depart from the faith — and that those who would remain faithful must hold steadfastly to the truth. The question is not whether we will have to deal with religious error, but whether we will deal with it in a way that honors Christ.

Certainly our children will be confronted with religious ideas foreign to what we have taught them in our homes. They will want to know why other people believe as they do. They will look to us for guidance in relating to those who have erred in their teaching. It is our parental duty to teach (and show by our example) the way the Lord wants us to deal with erroneous ideas. We need to pray and study and share ideas about how to train our young to take a firm and wholesome stand for the New Testament order — avoiding cowardice on the one hand and arrogance on the other.

A passage that is good for us to think about is **2 Tim. 2:24-26**: “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.” This passage urges us to learn patience in our dealings with others, and that should be an obvious point, shouldn’t it? After all, we wouldn’t be where we are if it had not been for the Lord’s patience with us. How could we be anything other than patient with others?

Living around “denominational Christianity” is not easy. But it can be done. We can drink deeply from the truth of God’s word and be people of frequent and fervent prayer. We can have godly integrity and character, and practice the truth as well as preach it. We can, with love and true compassion, help our friends and neighbors out of the quagmire of religious error. As children of the King, we can work in the knowledge that we are doing His work in His strength. Who knows but what we have “come to the kingdom for such a time as this” (**Esther 4:14**)?

Monday: 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Key Idea: Sometimes people are not satisfied with what God’s word says.

Questions for Family Growth: What is “sound” doctrine or teaching? According to this text, what do people sometimes desire more than they desire the truth of God’s word? What should we want preached by those who preach to us?

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

Tuesday: Leviticus 10:1-7

Key Idea: God is displeased when we disregard the way He has said to worship Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Nadab and Abihu do that was wrong enough to call for such a severe punishment? Did God have to specifically command them not to do what they did? Does it matter to God how we choose to worship Him?

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

Wednesday: 1 Chronicles 13:1-14

Key Idea: We should never disobey God, even when we think we have a good reason.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Uzzah do that was wrong? What had been said in [Num. 4:15](#)? When God has said to do something in a certain way, is there ever a good reason to do it some other way? How do we sometimes rationalize departing from God's instructions?

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

Thursday: 2 John 4-11

Key Idea: We should stay within the boundaries of what Jesus has taught.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to “walk in the truth” and to “walk according to his commandments”? In [v.9](#), what is the “teaching of Christ”? What happens if we go beyond the teaching of Christ?

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

Friday: John 4:1-26

Key Idea: We must worship God in both spirit and truth.

Questions for Family Growth: How do we worship God in “spirit”? What about worshiping in “truth”? Is either of these more important than the other? What is the only way we can know whether we are worshiping in truth?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

If we are faithful, we can look forward to Jesus coming again

The longer something goes on, the more we tend to think it will always go on. But it would be a great mistake to think the world in which we live will always continue just because it has gone on so long already. The Bible teaches that the day is coming when Christ will return for His faithful followers, this world will be destroyed, and those who are lost will be consigned to their punishment. Truly, the coming of the day of judgment is a thought full of awe.

But for the Christian, the thought of Christ's return ought to be a comfort. *If we are faithful, we can look forward to Jesus coming again.* The prospect of being with the Lord and the saints of all ages before the very throne of God ought to be a thrilling hope. And there need not be any doubt about our place in heaven. John wrote, "And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming" (1 Jn. 2:28).

We need to be careful about the hope of our salvation. "Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it" (Hb. 4:1).

But to the extent that we faithfully love the Lord, the hope of one day getting to be with Him is a very positive thought. "By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world" (1 Jn. 4:17). And Peter said, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith — more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire — may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Pt. 1:6-9).

This week, may our aim be to strengthen our hope and be more appreciative of it. Living in a difficult world, it makes a big difference to be a faithful Christian and be able to look forward to being forever with a Lord whom we love. Let's consider the meaning of this blessing.

Monday: John 14:1-7

Key Idea: Jesus Christ has gone away to prepare a place for us in heaven.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.1, why did Jesus say His disciples' hearts should not be troubled? Where did Jesus say He was going? What did He say He was going to do when He returned? What did Jesus say, in v.6, about the way to the Father?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 15:10.

Tuesday: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Key Idea: Christ will gather all His faithful people together when He returns.

Questions for Family Growth: When Christ returns, will the faithful who are still alive have any advantage over those who have already died? Where will all of God's faithful people go? Whom will we be with forever? In **v.18**, what did Paul say we should do?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:11.**

Wednesday: 1 John 4:17,18

Key Idea: If we love and obey God, there is no need for us to fear the judgment day.

Questions for Family Growth: Why might somebody be afraid to think about God's judgment? In **v.17**, what does it mean to have "boldness" (NKJV) in the day of judgment? What is the difference that love makes? What is said in **1 Pt. 1:8,9**?

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

Thursday: 1 John 2:28-3:3

Key Idea: When Christ comes, we shall be made like Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that we may "have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming"? What change in us will God bring about when Christ returns? What did Paul say in **Phil. 3:20,21**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:13.**

Friday: 2 Peter 3:1-13

Key Idea: We should be looking forward to Christ's return.

Questions for Family Growth: What will happen to this world when Christ returns? Does God desire that anyone should be lost? What does it mean that we should be "waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (**v.12**)?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

To be in the kingdom of God means being a worker in the kingdom

We make a big mistake when we think of being a Christian as merely a “relationship” that we sustain to the Lord, for Christianity is as much something we do as it is something we are. God’s kingdom is a realm of activity, and *to be in the kingdom of God means being a worker in the kingdom*. Paul wrote, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (**Eph. 2:10**).

Nearly every description of God’s people in the New Testament is a description of those who are to be engaged in activity. We are “branches” (**Jn. 15:1-8**), and branches bear fruit. We are “laborers” (**Mt. 20:1-16**), and laborers work. We are “soldiers” (**Eph. 6:10-20**), and soldiers fight. It is clear that God wants us to be disciples in deed as well as word. Being a Christian is an active endeavor.

We often point out to our religious friends and neighbors that faith alone will not save a person, but do we recognize the application of that truth to ourselves? Jesus was talking to us as much as anyone else when He asked, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” (**Lk. 6:46**). And we as much as anyone else need to think about the point He made in **Mt. 7:21**: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Heaven will be for those who have served the Lord actively and faithfully, not those who have merely professed to belong to Him.

The day is coming when we will stand before the Lord who died for us and account to Him for the stewardship that we have exercised in His work. Until that day arrives, we need to be diligently working, so we won’t have to be ashamed of our workmanship. Paul wrote, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (**2 Tim. 2:15**).

This week, let’s be thinking of ways we can improve the quality of the work we’re doing in the Lord, both individually and congregationally. Let’s set a good example for each other in our participation in what is, after all, the greatest work in the world: the work of the Lord.

Monday: Ephesians 2:10

Key Idea: We are “in Christ Jesus” in order to work for Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that we are the Lord’s “workmanship”? What does it mean that we are “created in Christ Jesus for good works”? How should we define “good works,” and what does it mean to “walk” in them?

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

Tuesday: Matthew 21:28-32

Key Idea: What we actually do about God's work matters more than what we say we will do.

Questions for Family Growth: What was the difference in the attitudes of the two sons in this story? Is it important to have good intentions? By themselves, are good intentions enough? What did Jesus mean that "tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you" (v.31)?

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

Wednesday: John 9:4

Key Idea: Eventually, the time for doing our work in the Lord will run out.

Questions for Family Growth: What "works" did Jesus have to do while He was in the world? What was the "night" that He spoke of? What are we encouraged to do in [Eph. 5:15,16](#)? How does [Eccl. 9:10](#) apply to our work in the Lord today?

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

Thursday: Matthew 20:1-16

Key Idea: God will bless us according to how much we have used the opportunity we had.

Questions for Family Growth: Why was it right for the owner of the vineyard to pay all his workers the same? How is it that "little" things can sometimes be as great as "big" things in the Lord's work? In [Mk. 14:8](#), what did Jesus mean when He said, "She has done what she could"?

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

Friday: 2 Timothy 2:15

Key Idea: We should work so as not to be ashamed of our work before the Lord.

Questions for Family Growth: What does the word "study" (KJV) mean in this verse? What are we to "study" to do? Is it possible for us to be "approved" in God's sight? What are some things that might make us ashamed when the Lord inspects our work in His kingdom?

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

Gary Henry — [WordPoints.com](#)

God requires that we pay serious attention to Him

Throughout the coming week, let's center our minds on the fact that our relationship to God is the most important consideration in life. It is not enough to give casual, once-in-a-while thought to God and His will. **God requires that we pay serious attention to Him.** Anything less than a diligent approach will not get us to heaven.

Peter wrote, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (**1 Pt. 1:13 NKJV**). To "gird up" the "loins" of our minds means to prepare our minds for responsible action and to get control of our thinking. To be "sober" means to have a serious regard for things we ought to be serious about. Considering the tactics of our enemy, the devil, we won't survive what we're up against if we're anything less than serious-minded about what is going on.

Unfortunately, words like "serious" and "diligent" do not describe the approach most people take to religion. In an age of convenience and ease, there is a strong tendency for us to make our relationship to God nothing more than one of our activities, a respectable part of our "lifestyle."

Against this trend, we need to impart to our children the concept that being God's person is not merely a part of life — it is all of life. We need to show them, by our deeds as well as by our words, that pleasing God is all that really matters in this world. They should see in our actions that the business of serving the Lord is a thing we are more serious about than anything else that concerns us. Solomon observed that a right relationship with God is the whole of what it is to be a human being: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (**Eccl. 12:13,14 NKJV**).

When we take honest inventory of our lives, most of us can see areas in which we have been doing little more than playing at religion. As our kids would say, we need to "get real." If God is God, He deserves nothing less than our passionate devotion. Let's think about that all this week.

Monday: Hebrews 12:18-29

Key Idea: When God speaks, it is wise of us to pay serious attention.

Questions for Family Growth: What was it like when God spoke to Israel from Mount Sinai? See **Exo. 19:16-20; 20:18-21**. Today, when we hear God speak in the Scriptures, what should be our attitude toward Him and His message?

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

Tuesday: Hebrews 2:1-4

Key Idea: If we are not very careful, we will drift away from God.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean for someone to “drift” away from God? What does **v.1** say about how we can keep from doing that? Is there anybody who can afford to be careless about serving God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:22.**

Wednesday: Galatians 6:6-10

Key Idea: God cannot be mocked: we will, in the end, reap whatever we have sown.

Questions for Family Growth: What does the word “mock” mean? If we thought we could reap something other than what we have sown, how would that kind of thinking mock God? What is the opposite of mockery?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:23.**

Thursday: Proverbs 28:9

Key Idea: If we do not listen to God obediently, He will not listen to us when we pray.

Questions for Family Growth: What kind of attitude do we have to have about God’s law in order for Him to hear our prayers? Can we live just any way we want to and still stay on speaking terms with God? For a specific application of this, consider **1 Pt. 3:7.**

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:24.**

Friday: 2 Timothy 2:15

Key Idea: Serving God faithfully requires diligence.

Questions for Family Growth: What does the word “study” mean in this verse in the King James Version? According to this text, how can we make sure that God will be pleased with our workmanship when He inspects it?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We should not participate in the sins that are around us in the world

Jesus prayed on behalf of His disciples not that they should be taken out of the world, but that they might not be of the world (**Jn. 17:15,16**). He prayed that His followers might resist the devil. That means that although we cannot totally isolate ourselves from worldly influences, ***we should not participate in the sins that are around us in the world.*** We should live on a higher plane of purity than the world.

God calls us to be holy. Peter wrote, “But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile” (**1 Pt. 1:15-17**). Holiness means being distinctive, special, reserved solely for God’s use. It requires us to be different.

There is no point in being different just to be different, of course. Being unlike others has no inherent value. But if the principles, values, character, and conduct of those around us is out of sync with the virtues of godliness, then being godly requires being different. There is no way around it.

We are to be mindful that we are the temple of God: “For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty’” (**2 Cor. 6:16-18**).

Remaining uncontaminated by the world should not involve self-righteousness on our part. The idea is not that we should look down our noses at those whom we consider morally inferior to us. But while maintaining a proper humility, we should still strive to keep clear of the sins for which the world is noted. Paul wrote that we should “cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God” (**2 Cor. 7:1**). Let’s make this a week of thinking about “bringing holiness to completion.”

Monday: Titus 2:11-14

Key Idea: Christ died not only to forgive us of our sins but to redeem us from sin itself.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.11**, what does Paul say has “appeared”? In **v.12**, what does he say this teaches or trains us to do? In **v.14**, what does the word “redeem” mean? From what does Christ want to redeem us?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 15:26.**

Tuesday: 1 John 2:15-17

Key Idea: We should not love the world.

Questions for Family Growth: Since Christ taught us to love everybody, what does it mean that we should not love “the world.” In **v.16**, what three things are said to be in the world? What do each of these mean?

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

Wednesday: Romans 12:1,2

Key Idea: We should not be conformed to the world.

Questions for Family Growth: How is it that we can present our bodies “a living sacrifice” to God? What is the difference between being “conformed” and “transformed” in our thinking? How do we “renew” our minds?

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

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 7:1

Key Idea: We should cleanse ourselves from sinful deeds.

Questions for Family Growth: In this text what does Paul say we should cleanse ourselves from? In practical terms, how do we go about doing this? What does it mean to “perfect holiness” (NKJV) in the “fear of God”?

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

Friday: James 4:4

Key Idea: We must choose whether to be a friend of God or a friend of the world.

Questions for Family Growth: What is “enmity”? Why can’t we be the friends of God and friends of the world at the same time? How do we really show whether we are God’s friend or the world’s friend?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

God can do things that are greater than we think are possible

Once when Jesus' disciples had expressed concern over the difficulty of a particular aspect of faithfulness to God, "Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible'" (Mt. 19:26). It's always a mistake to assume that a thing can't be done simply because we ourselves can think of no way to do it. When it comes to our work as the people of God, ***God can do things that are greater than we think are possible***. Jeremiah prayed, "Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you" (Jer. 32:17).

God has never required any person to do the impossible. It is a consistent principle in both the Old Testament and the New that if God requires a thing, then He will supply the ability for it to be done. That is the meaning of Paul's wonderful statement in Phil. 4:13: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." That does not mean God will help us to achieve any worldly goal we set for ourselves — it means He will supply the wherewithal for us to accomplish His will and do the things He sets before us as responsibilities. We need never fear being in the position of having to do something for God but not being able to do what is required.

The Bible is full of examples of men and women who placed their faith in God, did whatever they were capable of doing, and then found out — sometimes to their great amazement — that God can bring great results out of unpromising situations. We need only think of the story of David and Goliath to remember that God is stronger than we are, and that it is the person who fights and works in the confidence of God's help who sees problems solved that were thought to be insoluble.

Actually it is an insult to God for us to become discouraged and pessimistic about the work of the gospel. Is it our work? Does it depend on our power? Of course not. And if, as we believe, God has called us to participate in His work, then He will supply the solutions to whatever problems may arise. Paul wrote, "Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3:4,5). This week, let's meditate on the difference that God's help makes.

Monday: 1 Samuel 17:38-51

Key Idea: No problem is too big for God to solve.

Questions for Family Growth: Why were all the soldiers of Israel afraid of Goliath? Judging from v.45, why was David not afraid? Should it not make a great difference for us to know that "the battle is the Lord's" (v.47)? What kind of "Goliaths" might we face today?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 15:31-33.

Tuesday: Joshua 6:1-21

Key Idea: God sometimes accomplishes things in ways that we would not expect.

Questions for Family Growth: What was unusual about the way Israel was given success in conquering the city of Jericho? When our work for God looks too large, what are some things we should remember about God's way of accomplishing His purposes?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 16:1](#).

Wednesday: John 6:1-15

Key Idea: God can do great things, even when He has very little to work with.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus use to provide food for the great crowd of people? What should we do when we think that what we have is not sufficient? Does this mean we should not provide as abundantly as we can for the Lord's work?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 16:2](#).

Thursday: Matthew 9:35-38

Key Idea: The work of spreading the gospel is a big work, but God will help us.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the harvest that Jesus spoke of? Who are the laborers? What did Jesus say we should pray for? Is our work for God bigger than we can manage? What should be our attitude toward the work of evangelism?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 16:3](#).

Friday: 1 Corinthians 16:5-9

Key Idea: God can open up great opportunities for us to teach His word to others.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul mean when he said, "A great and effective door has opened to me" (NKJV)? Who can open such a door for us in the work of the gospel? Consider [Col. 4:2-4](#). If we trust in God, should we expect only "little" opportunities?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 16:4](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We ought to give of our best to the Master

In everything that pertains to spiritual matters, *we ought to give of our best to the Master*. We may feel that we have little to offer in the work God wants us to do, we may feel that others could do things better than we, or we may feel that it would be better to wait until we have gained more experience. But, really and truly, these considerations are rarely enough to excuse us from helping out in the Lord's work. We need to get involved and do our best at whatever is needed in that work. Whether great or small (as human beings judge things), our contribution to the work is valuable to the Lord Himself, and we owe it to our Master to give Him the very best effort of which we are personally capable.

The words of Paul in regard to the matter of giving financially to support the work of the church are also pertinent to anything else that is our responsibility: "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:6-8). Whatever we need to be doing individually, God will see to it that we are sufficient to the task. When we shirk our work and complain about our lack of ability, we are showing how little faith we have in God's help and how little we appreciate what He has already made us able to do. It is God who makes us adequate and sufficient (2 Cor. 3:5). He promises to supply what we need to serve Him, and we ought not to complain about the quality of His provision.

God never requires us to do the impossible. Whatever He commands us to do, He will help us to do. That is the main point that Paul made in Phil. 4:13 when he said, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." In anything pertaining to the Lord's work, the question is never what we can do, but what God is willing to do through us: "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). That should encourage us!

God deserves the highest and best effort we are able to give Him in every endeavor. This week, let's aim to have Paul's attitude: "As much as is in me, I am ready" (Rom. 1:15 NKJV).

Monday: Exodus 3:1-12

Key Idea: When we have a responsibility, God expects us to do the best that we can do.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Moses say when God told him to go to Egypt and deliver the people of Israel? Do you think Moses was being truly humble or just making excuses? What assurance did God give to him in v.12?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 16:5.

Tuesday: Exodus 4:10-17

Key Idea: God knows all about us and our abilities, and He will help us do His work.

Questions for Family Growth: Was God expecting Moses to do something that Moses could not possibly do? According to [v.14](#), how did God react to Moses' objections? What help did God provide to compensate for Moses' weakness?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 16:6](#).

Wednesday: Mark 14:3-9

Key Idea: We show our love for God when we go ahead and do whatever we can do for Him.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did it take courage for this woman to do what she did? Is there any higher compliment Jesus could have paid than to say, "She has done what she could"? What should we do when we think our best effort in God's work might not be good enough?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 16:7](#).

Thursday: Matthew 25:14-30

Key Idea: God does not accept excuses for doing nothing in His work.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did the "one talent" man fail to do as he should have done? Was his reasoning acceptable to the master? In our work today, what are some excuses we sometimes offer when we fail to use our abilities for God?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 16:8](#).

Friday: Mark 12:41-44

Key Idea: Even when we can't do much in God's work, it's still important to do what we can.

Questions for Family Growth: How much did Jesus say this widow had put into the treasury, compared to others? What should that tell us about the "little" amounts of time, ability, etc. that we could use for God?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 16:9](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Deacons are given to help us in the Lord's work

Sometimes we speak of the office of deacon as if it were an inferior work, only a stepping-stone to greater things. But it is a mistake for us to think of those who serve as deacons as men not quite mature enough to be elders. Similarly, we ought not to relegate the office simply to those who are “on their way up” to becoming elders, as if the work were simply a preliminary work. The work of the deacon is important in its own right, and we need to view the office in a better light.

In truth, *deacons are given to help us in the Lord's work*. The responsibility is a vital part of what has been provided to make the church strong and effective in its work. We cannot neglect this office or diminish its importance without hurting ourselves in regard to the work of the gospel.

It is true, the work of deacons is subordinate to that of elders, and in our power-hungry culture “subordinate” is often equated with “inferior.” But that is not true in the New Testament. If being subordinate makes one inferior, then the Son of God is inferior to God the Father.

The word “deacon” simply means “servant.” Deacons are men who meet certain scriptural qualifications (**1 Tim. 3:8-13**) and are appointed to the work of serving the congregation in its various needs (**Ac. 6:1-7**). The work of the deacon is one of two appointed offices in the local congregation. The apostle Paul addressed the Philippian letter to “all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons” (**Phil. 1:1**). To Timothy, Paul wrote that “those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” (**1 Tim. 3:13**).

It takes a special person to allow himself to be designated as a servant to his brethren, and to carry out the service assigned to him in a hard-working, responsible way. Perhaps in no other part of the Lord's work is the servant attitude of the Christian more important. Those who do this work well ought to receive our appreciation and cooperation. Let's renew our gratitude for those who serve us as deacons, making this a week of meditation on this important aspect of the Lord's church. And let's make our gratitude known not only to the Lord, but to the men themselves.

Monday: Acts 6:1-7

Key Idea: Deacons are appointed to take care of certain responsibilities for their brethren.

Questions for Family Growth: What work in the church in Jerusalem needed to be taken care of by some special servants appointed specifically for that purpose? In **vv.2,4**, why did the apostles say it would be good for them to be relieved of this work?

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

Tuesday: Mark 9:33-37

Key Idea: In Jesus Christ, serving and helping others is an honor.

Questions for Family Growth: In this text, what was it that the disciples were arguing about? What did Jesus say about the way to true greatness? How do we show that we have the right attitude about rendering service to others?

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

Wednesday: Philippians 1:1,2

Key Idea: Deacons were a part of the scriptural organization of congregations in the New Testament.

Questions for Family Growth: To whom did Paul address the Philippian letter? Who are the “saints”? The “bishops” or “overseers”? The “deacons”? What are some examples of responsibilities that might be delegated to deacons in the church?

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

Thursday: 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Key Idea: Christian men must have certain scriptural qualifications in order to serve as deacons.

Questions for Family Growth: What do each of the qualifications (i.e., required characteristics) of deacons mean? In **v.10**, what does “blameless” mean? In **v.13**, what does Paul say those who have served well as deacons gain for themselves?

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

Friday: 1 Corinthians 15:58

Key Idea: Working together, with the help of our deacons, we should abound in the Lord’s work.

Questions for Family Growth: What do the words “steadfast” and “immovable” mean? What does it mean that our work in the Lord is “not in vain”? In practical terms, what are some ways that we can “abound” in the Lord’s work?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

The message of the gospel is the message of the cross

No sooner had sin entered the world than God began working toward the fulfillment of a plan to provide salvation from the sin of mankind. To the devil God said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (**Gen. 3:15**). This promise looked forward to the time when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would be born of a woman, live a perfect life, and submit to the devil’s weapon of death — all in order to defeat death and bring “life and immortality to light through the gospel” (**2 Tim. 1:10**).

Our salvation could not have been made possible without the cross. It was necessary, first of all, in that it did for us what we could never have done for ourselves (**Rom. 5:6**). But beyond that, the cross was the only way God could bring about our salvation and not violate His own character (**Rom. 3:25,26**). Jesus drank the cup of His suffering because it was not possible for it to be otherwise and our sins be forgiven. The Hebrew writer wrote of Christ: “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (**Hb. 5:7-9**).

But, in theory, might our salvation have been accomplished by God without His Son having to die? It’s an interesting question perhaps, but not a very productive one. The fact is, the cross was God’s chosen means toward our salvation — and this implies that God deemed it the best way.

As we engage in the various activities of this week, let’s be mindful that *the message of the gospel is the message of the cross*. There is a real danger that we will neglect the cross because it is so familiar to us. At least once a week — when we observe the Lord’s Supper — we are invited to remember that our salvation would have been impossible without Christ’s death, a death in which He took the punishment for our sins and bore God’s curse for us. This week, let’s remember the cross every day!

Monday: Matthew 26:36-46

Key Idea: Our salvation could not have been made possible without the cross.

Questions for Family Growth: What was Jesus praying for when He said “if it be possible”? Do you think God would have asked Jesus to die for us if there had been any other way to obtain the forgiveness of our sins?

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

Tuesday: Hebrews 2:9-15

Key Idea: Christ defeated death by dying for us.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.9**, for whom did Jesus “taste death”? In **v.14**, what did Jesus accomplish “through death”? In **v.15**, what benefit do we receive by virtue of Jesus’ death for us? From what slavery does it deliver us?

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

Wednesday: Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:5-10

Key Idea: The blood that Christ shed on the cross cleanses us from sin.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **Eph. 1:7**, what does the blood of Christ make possible for us? In your own words, what does “redemption” mean? According to **1 Jn. 1:7**, what benefit do we have after we become Christians?

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

Thursday: John 3:14-17

Key Idea: God’s love for us is shown by the gift of His Son.

Questions for Family Growth: What does the word “perish” mean in **Jn. 3:16**? What motivated God to give His Son for us? Knowing that He loves us so much, what should be our attitude toward God in return? Consider **2 Cor. 5:14,15**.

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

Friday: 1 Corinthians 2:1,2

Key Idea: We ought to share the message of the cross with everyone.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.1**, what are the “excellence of speech” (NKJV) and “wisdom” that Paul said he did not use? What did Paul say he had determined to preach? What are some ways each of us can help in the preaching of the cross?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We show our interest in God by the way we listen to gospel preaching

Sometimes “little” things reveal more than we think about what is going on inside us. In fact, it may be that little things are the more accurate indicators of our condition, because these are so often unpremeditated and unplanned. To the trained eye and ear of a physician, for example, much information is conveyed about our physical status by the “little” symptoms that we may think are insignificant.

In spiritual matters, a seemingly little thing like our listening habits during the worship service can be a significant indicator of what is in our hearts. The truth is, *we show our interest in God by the way we listen to gospel preaching*. If the sermon seems dry and unappealing, it may be because we have no thirst for righteousness.

How we choose to hear God’s word is a serious matter. On one occasion, Jesus said to His listeners, “Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away” (Lk. 8:18). We need to be like certain ones who heard Jesus teach in the temple, about whom it was said that they “heard him gladly” (Mk. 12:37).

When Cornelius, the Gentile centurion, was instructed by an angel to send for Peter, who would tell him what God wanted him to do, Cornelius eagerly did exactly what the angel said. A few days later, when Peter and his companions arrived, Cornelius was not only ready to hear God’s word, but he had gathered together many of his friends and relatives. He told Peter about the angel’s words to him, and said, “So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord” (Ac. 10:33). Today, we need to have the same kind of readiness to hear God’s word!

This week, let’s take the time to consider improving the attitude and manner in which we listen when God’s word is being presented. Not only for our own sakes, but for the sake of our example to others, let’s listen with true interest to everything that is said in our assemblies.

Monday: Deuteronomy 31:9-13

Key Idea: God wants us to listen with interest when His word is being presented.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Moses command to be done every seven years in Israel? Who all was to be involved in this activity? How long do you think this might have taken? Why was there a need for this to be done?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 16:26.

Tuesday: Acts 20:7-12

Key Idea: If we are interested, we will want to hear more than just a little of God's word.

Questions for Family Growth: What special gathering took place on the first day of the week in Troas? What did Paul do during this assembly? How long did the thing last that Paul did? Why do you think people would object to such a thing today?

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

Wednesday: Acts 10:1-23

Key Idea: God knows whether our hearts are interested in His word or not.

Questions for Family Growth: Who was Cornelius? What kind of man was he? What message from God did an angel bring to Cornelius? What kind of attitude do you think Cornelius had toward hearing God's word?

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

Thursday: Acts 10:24-33

Key Idea: The person who pleases God is the person who is eager to hear His word.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Cornelius do when Peter arrived? What did Cornelius say when Peter asked why he had been sent for? What does **v.33** say about Cornelius and his attitude toward God's word?

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

Friday: Acts 10:34-48

Key Idea: If our hearts are right, we will apply what we hear from God's word to ourselves.

Questions for Family Growth: How did Cornelius' family learn what they needed to do to be saved? How do we today learn the plan of salvation? Will God's word do us any good if we do not apply it to ourselves? Why is it important to obey God promptly?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

God always keeps His promises and fulfills His purposes

Without question, the Bible teaches that God rules over the world He has created. That is true even though God created mankind with a free will which we sometimes use to do things contrary to His purposes. God's wisdom and omnipotence are seen in the way He is always able to weave the sins of mankind into the tapestry of His eternal will so that, in the long run, God's promises and purposes are always kept. This world's events are never "out of control" as far as God is concerned. "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he" (**Deut. 32:4**).

When we are tempted to worry about the uncertainties of a changing world, it helps to remember that the whole universe was created by a God who is eternal. The comforting thing about God's eternal nature is not merely that He exists eternally, but that His character is eternal: God is changelessly faithful to us.

Early in the Bible, we hear God promising to deal with the problem of sin. As early as **Gen. 3:15**, we hear God promising Satan that One would be born of woman who, while suffering a minor wound, would defeat Satan completely: "he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

The last book in the Bible, Revelation, assures us of the ultimate victory of God over sin and all its consequences: "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.' Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates" (**Rev. 22:12-14**).

This week, we need to remember this simple fact: ***God always keeps His promises and fulfills His purposes***. Nothing can happen that is capable of altering or obstructing the ultimate goal toward which God is moving history. We need to draw great assurance from the knowledge that "the Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations" (**Psa. 33:10,11**).

Monday: Hebrews 10:23; 11:8-12

Key Idea: God is faithful in keeping His promises.

Questions for Family Growth: What is a promise? Concerning God, what does it mean that "he who promised is faithful"? What are some promises of God that we should trust in? What should we do if, at the present moment, it looks as if God is not keeping His word?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 17:1**.

Tuesday: Hebrews 13:5,6

Key Idea: God has promised to care for us.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some of the ways God helps us and cares for us? What does it mean that God will never “forsake” us? Bad things can certainly happen to us in this world, but why should we not be afraid of what may happen?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:2](#).

Wednesday: Numbers 23:19

Key Idea: God always accomplishes His purposes.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some characteristics and limitations of human beings that sometimes keep us from achieving our goals? Does God have these characteristics or limitations? What are some of God’s purposes for mankind?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:3](#).

Thursday: Psalm 33:10,11

Key Idea: Nothing man can do is able to keep God from accomplishing His purposes.

Questions for Family Growth: Can human beings do things that are opposed to God’s will? In the long run, can these things stop God from accomplishing His purposes? What does [Jn. 16:33](#) teach that should be encouraging to us?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:4](#).

Friday: Romans 8:35-39

Key Idea: Nothing can happen that can separate us from God’s love.

Questions for Family Growth: How would you define “worry”? What are some things that cause us to worry? Are any of these things greater than God? If we choose to be faithful, can anything keep us from going to heaven?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:5](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We can learn to win souls for Christ

Each day this week, let's be encouraged by the thought that *we can learn to win souls for Christ*. There can be no question that the Lord wants us to be busily engaged in the work of sharing the gospel with those around us, but all too often we allow ourselves to be held back from that work by the supposition that we're not able to do that work and never will be able to do it. Discouraged, we give up the effort to rescue those who are lost.

But surely, the thought that we can't win souls for Christ is a lie of the devil, and we ought to try to get it out of our minds. If we are not adequately prepared for the work of soul-winning, God would have us know that He waits, willing and able, to help us prepare. No matter what the realities of our present situation, we need to be emboldened by a vision of what the future can be in regard to our personal participation in spreading the gospel.

From time to time, we need to be reminded that, in anything that has to do with the work of the Lord, it is the Lord Himself who supplies our adequacy. We need to have the same perspective on our own work that Paul had on his: "Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3:4,5).

It takes work, of course, to learn how to communicate the gospel personally to others. And we won't do the work if we don't have the commitment. But with both the commitment and the work that goes along with it, there is nothing that can hold us back. Paul said, "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). And Peter exhorted us to work "as one who serves by the strength that God supplies" (1 Pt. 4:11).

If God says we can, who is to say we can't? That's the very point of Phil. 4:13: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." If there is any work the Lord wants us to do, He will supply whatever is essential to get it done. God never commands us to do anything that He will not help us do. So let's honestly list our deficiencies and not waste any time before we begin to work on removing them. Let's help one another, so that together we can be the powerful influence for good that we ought to be in our community. God is waiting to bless us!

Monday: Matthew 28:16-20

Key Idea: Jesus wants us to make disciples of as many people as possible.

Questions for Family Growth: What is a "disciple"? What is the actual work that Jesus wants His people to do — in other words, how is it that we can "make disciples" for Him? Will Jesus be pleased with us if we fail to make disciples?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:6.

Tuesday: Matthew 18:10-14

Key Idea: Jesus wants us to seek the lost and not wait for the lost to come and find us.

Questions for Family Growth: What evidence is there that God is concerned about those who are lost? What should be our feelings about the lost? What are some practical ways we can “seek” for the sheep who have gone astray?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 17:7.**

Wednesday: Matthew 5:13-16

Key Idea: Jesus wants our lives to be good examples before others.

Questions for Family Growth: How are we like “salt”? How are we like a “city set on a hill”? What are some of the more important ways we can let our “light” shine? Why is it sometimes hard to be a good example?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 17:8.**

Thursday: Matthew 4:18-22

Key Idea: Jesus can show us how to make disciples for Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What are “fishers of men”? Did the apostles know how to do the Lord’s work when He first called them? If they were going to become fishers of men, why was it important for them to spend a lot of time learning from Him?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 17:9.**

Friday: Matthew 10:26-33

Key Idea: Jesus gives us courage and confidence in making disciples for Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus say His disciples should not be afraid of? Why should we not fear to speak about the gospel to others? What will happen to us if we are afraid and decide to keep quiet about Jesus?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 17:10.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Hearing the gospel preached is both a pleasure and a privilege

They say that “familiarity breeds contempt.” If so, that is a most unfortunate thing with respect to the gospel of Jesus Christ. No matter how long we have been hearing gospel sermons and no matter how familiar the words have become, we ought never to let our appreciation for gospel preaching diminish. We ought, rather, to maintain a high level of interest in the proclamation of God’s truth. For us, it always should be true that *hearing the gospel preached is both a pleasure and a privilege*.

It may be that we need from time to time to “count our blessings” regarding the preaching of the gospel. First, we live in a land where we can assemble any time we desire for the purpose of worship and preaching from the Scriptures. Second, we have the financial means to provide comfortable places for preaching to be done. Third, it is easy and inexpensive for us to buy copies of the Bible so we can follow along while God’s word is being proclaimed. And fourth, there is in our country a multitude of men who preach with surpassing devotion and skill so as to engage our interest in spiritual truth. Lest we take these blessings for granted and become lackadaisical about gospel preaching, let us remember that there are brethren in other parts of the world right now who do not enjoy a single one of these good things.

We need to be aware of our need for God’s truth. Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (Jn. 8:32). Without the truth contained in God’s word, we will perish eternally. But we ought to do more than acknowledge our need for the truth. We ought to enjoy hearing it taught. We ought to be able to say with the Psalmist, “Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119:97).

When we have set our minds on things above (Col. 3:1,2), we will truly look forward to any occasion when God’s word is going to be discussed. We will have a keen interest in sermons about God when we have acquired a deep thirst for God Himself: “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God” (Psa. 42:1), and “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD!’” (Psa. 122:1).

Monday: 1 Peter 2:1-3

Key Idea: We should be as eager for God’s word as a baby is eager for milk.

Questions for Family Growth: Does a mother normally have to force a newborn baby to drink milk? Why not? In v.3, what does Peter say we can “taste”? In v.2, what does he say the word of God will do for us?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:11.

Tuesday: Acts 10:24-33

Key Idea: Cornelius and his family were eager to hear God's word taught to them.

Questions for Family Growth: In v.24, what people had Cornelius gathered together to hear Peter speak? What attitude did he seem to have? What, in v.33, did Cornelius say he and his friends were ready to hear?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:12.

Wednesday: Acts 13:42-48

Key Idea: In the days of the apostles, some “begged” for more of the gospel to be taught to them.

Questions for Family Growth: Who was it that “begged” that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath? Is it surprising that the Gentiles were more interested in the gospel than the Jews? What do you think might have been some reasons for their greater eagerness?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:13.

Thursday: Acts 20:7-12

Key Idea: If we are truly interested in the gospel, we will not mind if the sermon runs long.

Questions for Family Growth: Why did the Christians in Troas come together on the first day of the week? What else was done while they were assembled? How long did Paul's sermon last? What happened while Paul preached?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:14.

Friday: 1 Thessalonians 2:13

Key Idea: When preaching is from the Bible, it is the word of God and not the word of men.

Questions for Family Growth: When the apostles preached, was it their own message or God's word? How do we know if God's word is being preached today? Regardless of who the preacher is, how should we listen to gospel preaching?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:15.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

The church is healthy and grows when each member does his part

It would be a good thing if we each could realize how important our individual roles are in the body of the Lord. Sometimes we may get to thinking that our part in the work is so insignificant that it would not be missed if we did not do the thing that is ours to do. But that is never really true. As a “body,” the church of the Lord must have the function of every one of its parts or “members.” None are unnecessary; all are vital. We need to be careful that we do not sell ourselves short in the Lord’s work.

Probably none of us wants the body of the Lord to be crippled or diseased. We want to be a part of a group of people who are spiritually vital. But the church as a whole cannot be what it ought to be unless its individual members recognize the importance of each of their roles. It is the clear teaching of the Scriptures (**Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19**) that *the church is healthy and grows when each member does his part*. There is no member who can truthfully say that he has no stake in the health and growth of the body. Whatever each does has an impact — for better or worse — on the body. The whole cannot be greater than the sum of its parts.

It so happens that the Lord’s work, or at least a part of it, is a collaborative work, a *group* effort. We are stronger, and the work prospers more greatly, when we work *together*, and each of us needs to see the extent to which our own part of the work is important to the overall effort.

This week, let’s devote some attention to the matter of our individual involvement in the Lord’s work. As we study the Bible and talk of these things in our families, let’s think of how we can serve more actively and fully in the work which is, after all, the greatest in the world. We are truly blessed to work and worship with fellow members who have much to offer. A harvest of souls awaits in the communities that surround us. We need to bring out the best in one another, for the Lord’s sake. So let’s resolve to find greater joy in our life in the Lord by delving more deeply into the work that He has given us to do. It is simply a fact that “the happy people are those who are producing something; the bored people are those who are consuming much and producing nothing” (W. R. Inge). So how productive are we — individually — in our part of the Lord’s work?

Monday: James 2:14-17

Key Idea: We cannot go to heaven on our faith alone — we must do the Lord’s work.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the difference between “faith” and “works”? What example does James give of a work we might do? Do our works earn or merit our salvation? What does it mean that “faith without works is dead”?

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

Tuesday: Nehemiah 4:1-23

Key Idea: Great works can be accomplished in the Lord if we will work together.

Questions for Family Growth: In Nehemiah's day, what was the work the people of God were engaged in? What problems and discouragements did they encounter? How would working together as a group have helped them?

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

Wednesday: Mark 12:41-44

Key Idea: We should not think that our "little" part in the Lord's work does not matter.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus see happen as He sat in the temple opposite the treasury? What did He say about this deed to His disciples? How is it that the widow did more than all the others had done?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:18](#).

Thursday: 1 Thessalonians 5:14

Key Idea: We need to encourage fellow Christians who are not doing their part.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to be "unruly" (NKJV)? What does "faint-hearted" ("feble-minded" in the KJV) mean? What does it mean to be "weak" spiritually? What does God say we should do for those in these conditions?

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

Friday: 1 Corinthians 15:58

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

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to be "steadfast" and "immovable"? What are some ways we each can "abound" in the Lord's work? What does it mean that our work is not "in vain" in the Lord?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:20](#).

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Jesus died on the cross in order to save us from our sins

The basic fact around which God's entire plan of salvation turns is that **Jesus died on the cross in order to save us from our sins**. Without the perfect sacrifice for our sins which Jesus offered on the cross, nothing else could help us and we would be lost with no hope of salvation. The Hebrew writer said, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery" (**Hb. 2:14,15**).

The word "atonement" describes what Jesus accomplished by His death for us. Since death was the penalty for sin (**Gen. 2:16,17; Rom. 6:23**), our sins could not be forgiven without the taking of life. When Jesus died for us, He took our punishment so that we could be free of the sentence of death. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (**Isa. 53:5**).

A favorite Bible text for many people is **Jn. 3:16,17**. This is the beautiful passage where Jesus spoke of the love which moved God to give His only begotten Son for the sins of the world: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" For Christ, the glory was on the other side of the suffering. If we were to be saved, the cross had to be endured. "But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (**Hb. 2:9**).

It does us good to "survey" the cross of Christ, as the words of the old hymn suggested: "When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride . . . Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small; love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all" (Isaac Watts). Let's think about the cross this week.

Monday: John 3:13-21

Key Idea: Because He loved us, God gave His Son to die on the cross for us.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **v.16**, why did God give His Son? Is there anything He could have done to show greater love? According to **v.17**, does God want anyone to be lost? What did Jesus say in **Jn. 15:13**?

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

Tuesday: Matthew 27:32-50

Key Idea: Jesus' death on the cross was prophesied in the Old Testament.

Questions for Family Growth: Did God know that His Son was going to be killed by His enemies? What are some things that were foreshadowed in **Psa. 22:14-18** about the death of Christ? What did Jesus say in **Lk. 24:44-46**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 17:22**.

Wednesday: Mark 15:21-39

Key Idea: Jesus' death on the cross was by His own choice.

Questions for Family Growth: Did Jesus try to resist when the soldiers put Him on the cross? Why not? Do you think it was an easy thing for Jesus to decide to die for our sins? What important point is made in **Hb. 5:7-10**?

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

Thursday: Luke 23:32-49

Key Idea: Jesus' death on the cross opened the way to heaven for us.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **v.45**, what happened to the veil of the temple when Jesus died on the cross? What two rooms in the temple did the veil separate? What does **Hb. 6:19,20** say about this?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 17:24**.

Friday: John 19:17-30

Key Idea: Jesus' death on the cross was the reason He came to earth.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **v.30**, what did Jesus say just before He died? What had Jesus said to His Heavenly Father when He prayed in **Jn. 17:4**? What did Jesus come to earth to do, according to **Mt. 20:28**?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

There is a difference between temporal wealth and true riches

Of all the many good things God has created and of all the many pleasant things He makes possible, some are more long-lasting and more fulfilling than others. In this world, the good things we can acquire and the good activities we can engage in are not even to be compared to the good things of the life to come. And, the truth is, if we do not give priority to our eternal blessings, our blessings in the here and now will give us grief in the long run.

The members of the church in Laodicea illustrate what can happen if we do not keep our priorities straight. The Lord said, “For you say, ‘I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked’” (Rev. 3:17). Even though they were very prosperous materially, these individuals were spiritually destitute. And what is truly sobering is that they were completely out of touch with the reality of their situation. They were ignorant of just how poor they were in the things of the spirit.

The problem is not that worldly wealth is inherently evil. It is simply that treasures of a temporal nature tend to draw our attention away from God. The more comfortable we are in this world, the less we tend to think about God. Thinking we’re secure, we let enjoyment become our primary focus and our thinking begins to drift away from spiritual priorities. Paul said it simply: “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction” (1 Tim. 6:9).

Jesus taught about a certain rich man who gave no thought to spiritual matters. “But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’” (Lk. 12:20). Jesus concluded, “So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God” (Lk. 12:21).

In the Bible, we are urged to “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Mt. 6:20). *There is a difference between temporal wealth and true riches.* Let’s think about the difference this week — and learn from our thinking!

Monday: Luke 12:13-21

Key Idea: A person may be rich physically but poor spiritually.

Questions for Family Growth: What was it about this man that was so foolish? What is “covetousness”? In v.15, what did Jesus say our lives do not “consist in”? If that is not what life is about, then what is the main thing in life?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 17:26.

Tuesday: Luke 16:19-31

Key Idea: A person may be poor physically but rich spiritually.

Questions for Family Growth: If possible, which kind of life would most people choose: the one Lazarus had or the rich man's life? If a person had to choose between the two lives, which would be the better life? What would your choice say about the kind of person you are?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 17:27,28](#).

Wednesday: 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Key Idea: It is possible to be rich both physically and spiritually.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Paul say the physically rich person should be warned about? Should we set being materially rich as a goal? What does [1 Tim. 6:9,10](#) say? What should those who already have physical riches do? What do [vv.18,19](#) say?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 18:1](#).

Thursday: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Key Idea: Physical riches would disappoint us if we were not also rich spiritually.

Questions for Family Growth: What made Solomon qualified to give advice about wealth and pleasure? What did he say he had found out about these things? What is the best thing to get out of life? Consider [Eccl. 12:13,14](#).

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 18:2](#).

Friday: Matthew 6:19-34

Key Idea: God wants us to put our treasures and our hearts in heaven.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some of the problems that go along with treasures in this world? How do we go about laying up treasures in heaven? What is it that, above all, God wants us to seek? See [vv.32-34](#).

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

We need to check ourselves constantly to see if we are doing God's will

It's a dangerous mistake to assume that our lives are pleasing to the Lord simply because we've been baptized into the Lord's family. The fact is, we may be guilty of doing things that do not have His approval. If so, the sooner we find out about that and make the necessary changes, the better off we will be. Paul wrote, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves" (2 Cor. 13:5). Life requires numerous "mid-course corrections," and the people who have the honesty to make those adjustments are the people who will get where they want to go. **We need to check ourselves constantly to see if we are doing God's will.** If we do not, it's likely that we'll veer off our intended path . . . and be lost.

"Drift" is a danger in many of life's endeavors. Certainly it is so in spiritual matters. Slight alterations, hardly even noticeable at the time, can take us progressively farther and farther away from our intended course. Hence, the Hebrew writer cautioned: "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard" (Hb. 2:1-3).

Those who believe that once they're saved, they can never lose their salvation are tragically mistaken. Paul, whose writings are often used in an attempt to teach once-saved-always-saved, said, "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). And he urged his brethren in Philippi: "As you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

We can't be too careful about our relationship to God. Like any other good relationship, it requires tending and maintenance. If we actually love God and want to go to heaven, we will always be on the lookout for changes we need to make in our attitude and conduct so we can be more fully pleasing to the Father. This week, let's remind ourselves how important it is to be honest about our religion — and to keep ourselves faithful to God.

Monday: Proverbs 14:12

Key Idea: It is possible to be mistaken about whether we are doing right.

Questions for Family Growth: Is everybody actually right who thinks he is doing what pleases God? What are some things that could cause us to be mistaken about what God wants us to do? When we find that we've been mistaken, what should we do?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 18:4.

Tuesday: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Key Idea: It is the Bible that can show us what we ought to do.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Paul say the Scriptures are “profitable” for? Does the Bible contain the answer to every question we need to know in order to obey God faithfully? Can we know God’s will without studying the Bible?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:5.**

Wednesday: Colossians 3:12-17

Key Idea: We ought to do only those things that meet with Christ’s approval.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to do something in someone else’s “name”? How can we do things in Christ’s name? How can we know whether or not Christ approves of a particular thing we are doing?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:6-8.**

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 13:5

Key Idea: From time to time, we need to check whether we are doing right.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Paul mean when he says we ought to “examine” ourselves? How do we “prove” (NKJV) ourselves? What does it mean to be “in the faith”? What should we do if we find that we are not pleasing God?

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

Friday: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Key Idea: We need to be willing to change when we learn we have been doing wrong.

Questions for Family Growth: What kinds of things had Paul done before he became a Christian? What was his attitude when he found that he was wrong? In **vv.13,16**, what did Paul say he had received from God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:10,11.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

The best things in life are the things that make us more like God

Different people have different ideas about what would make them happy. Unfortunately, most people find that their pursuit of happiness does not lead them where they want to go — they discover after a while that the things they've been pursuing aren't really the things that provide true happiness. The Christian, however, ought to realize that *the best things in life are the things that make us more like God*. To the extent that we begin to conform ourselves to the mind of God, we will find life getting better.

It is an interesting fact that many of the things we would define as “good” because they draw us closer to God are those that the world would define as “bad.” For example, difficulty and pain can have a beneficial spiritual effect on us, but to say that these things are good is to say the opposite of what the world would say. James wrote, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” ([Jas. 1:2,3](#)). Seeing things from God's perspective often causes us to “evaluate” things quite differently.

The “blessed” person, according to Jesus' description in the Beatitudes in [Mt. 5:1-12](#), is not blessed because of his bank account, his importance in life, or his power over other people. He is blessed because he is a certain kind of person. He seeks to think and act as God would think and act. The blessedness of those in Christ's kingdom is a blessedness that comes from within the heart, and it has little to do with what is going on in the externals of a person's life. In fact, a person who enjoys the blessedness of godly character can say, “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content” ([Phil. 4:11](#)).

This week, let's strive for a keener sense of what is most important in life: investing in character growth, rather than accumulating the paraphernalia the world considers essential for the good life. Let's try to set a better example for our children, showing them (by our deeds as well as our words) that our priorities are straight and that we are wanting, above all, to be the kind of people on the inside that please God and receive His blessings. Let's live as those who understand what the truly “good life” is.

Monday: John 17:1-5

Key Idea: Eternal life means coming to “know” God.

Questions for Family Growth: What is “eternal life”? What did Jesus say about it in [v.3](#)? Is knowing a lot about the Bible all that is involved in knowing God? In [Jas. 2:20-24](#), why was Abraham called “the friend of God”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 18:12](#).

Tuesday: 2 Peter 1:3,4

Key Idea: God will help us to become partakers of His own “nature.”

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.4**, what does the gospel make it possible for us to escape from? In **v.3**, what does Peter say God’s power has granted to us? What do you think it means to be “partakers of the divine nature” (**v.4**)?

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

Wednesday: Romans 12:1,2

Key Idea: To please God and be happy we must learn to think differently from the world.

Questions for Family Growth: What should we present to God as a “living sacrifice”? What does it mean that this is our “reasonable service” (NKJV)? Instead of being “conformed” to this world, what should we be?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:14.**

Thursday: Philippians 2:1-11

Key Idea: We should strive to think as Christ thought.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some of the attitudes mentioned in **vv.1-4**? What does it mean “let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus” (**v.5 NKJV**)? In practical terms, how do we go about doing that?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:15.**

Friday: Matthew 5:1-12

Key Idea: We are “blessed” if we adopt the character qualities taught by Jesus.

Questions for Family Growth: Name the different characteristics Jesus said will make us “blessed.” What does it mean to be “blessed”? How are these characteristics different from those that are prevalent in the world?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

Faith means trusting God's faithfulness

Most of us understand that we cannot be saved without faith. But we may sometimes fail to include in our faith everything that ought to be there. We might need to say the same thing to God that a certain man said to Jesus: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (**Mk. 9:24 NKJV**).

For one thing, *faith means trusting God's faithfulness*. That is to say, faith involves a trust (on our part) that God (on His part) will do everything He has ever promised. We must not only accept God's dependability as an intellectual proposition, but we must actually depend on God in the practical way we live our lives. Peter wrote to saints who were suffering hardship for their faith: "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good" (**1 Pt. 4:19**). Jesus Himself did this very thing. When He faced difficulty, He "continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly" (**1 Pt. 2:23**).

Our trust should rest firmly on God's trustworthiness, i.e., His worthiness to be trusted. Moses described God as the God who can be trusted when he said, "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations" (**Deut. 7:9**).

Too often our faith in God resides only in our head and not in our heart. Intellectually, we believe the arguments for God's existence are convincing, but sometimes our belief doesn't give us the confidence in God we ought to have. Do we really believe what we say we believe? If so, we need to work on internalizing that faith, making it real in the everyday realm of our words and deeds. Our faith needs to grow beyond mere belief and become real trust in God.

This week, let's seek to learn more of God's trustworthiness and train ourselves to rest in that trustworthiness. Throughout history God has shown that He keeps His word, and He has promised that the painful, difficult history of this world will one day culminate in the glorious victory of truth and right. We need to believe that and let it guide our thoughts and actions. God can be counted on not only to provide our individual needs, but to direct the affairs of nations toward the goal He has purposed for the world. May we trust in the God who changes not — and teach our children to trust Him too!

Monday: Hebrews 11:1-7

Key Idea: We must believe that God really will reward those who seek Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What does faith have to do with "things hoped for" and "things not seen"? What does it mean that we must "believe" that God exists and that He rewards those who seek Him? Does "faith" mean we can't really be sure that God exists?

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

Tuesday: Hebrews 6:13-20

Key Idea: The certainty of God's promise is what gives us hope.

Questions for Family Growth: What should serve as the “anchor” of our souls? What does “sure and steadfast” mean? How can we be sure God will keep His promises to us? Has He kept His promises in the past?

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

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 10:12,13

Key Idea: God will never allow us to face temptations that are too great for us.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to “take heed” lest we fall? What should our attitude be toward temptation? If we know God is faithful to us, what difference should that make when we are tempted?

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

Thursday: 2 Timothy 1:8-12

Key Idea: God is able to keep safe everything we entrust to Him.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some of the things Paul had suffered for Christ's sake? Why did he say he was “not ashamed”? What did Paul say he was convinced that God would do? What is the “Day” spoken of here?

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

Friday: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Key Idea: We can count on God always to help us.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul want his brethren to pray on his behalf? In **v.3**, what does it mean that the Lord is “faithful”? Also in **v.3**, what two things did Paul say God would do for the Christians in Thessalonica? What was Paul's prayer in **v.5**?

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

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It is presumptuous to make up special religious observances which God has not commanded

What kind of religion would you make up if you were going to make one up? What sort of observances and special days would you include? What manner of worship would you think best? It is interesting to think about. No doubt we would come up with something quite different from the religion God has actually given to us in Christ. God has good reasons, no doubt, for every aspect of the work and worship He has required — but we may not always understand God’s rationale for setting things up as He has. There might be instances where we think things should be done differently, places where we would add, subtract, or modify something in the Lord’s plan. We might include some “good ideas” that the Lord seems to have overlooked.

In fact, it has not been uncommon in the religious world for people to do just that. And the religious observance of Christmas is a good example. Most folks simply assume that even though God has said nothing about it, it surely must be acceptable because it seems like such a good idea to us. How could God possibly object to a thing that we think is so praiseworthy? Who could object to a special day to remember the birth of Christ?

Yet, however much it may go against our opinions, the truth is this: *it is presumptuous to make up special religious observances which God has not commanded.* Whether the question is Christmas or anything else, we have no way of knowing whether God approves of it except by His written word, the Scriptures. If the Scriptures are silent about a thing, the only safe conclusion we can draw is that it is no part of what God wants us to be doing in worship to Him. It is God’s prerogative, not ours, to let us know what pleases Him. We must be content with what He has revealed.

This week is a delightful week. It is a wonderful holiday season when families enjoy the good things of togetherness. But this week, let’s take the opportunity to think about the error that is committed when we turn such an occasion into a religious observance. Let’s teach our children that the Bible is to be our guide in the matter of “special days.”

Monday: Colossians 3:15-17

Key Idea: In all aspects of our obedience, we must respect the Lord’s authority.

Questions for Family Growth: In practical terms, what does the word “authority” mean? What does it mean for the “word of Christ [to] dwell in [us] richly”? What does it mean to do all that we do “in the name of the Lord Jesus”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:22.**

Tuesday: Leviticus 10:1-20

Key Idea: It displeases God when we presumptuously do things we have not been commanded.

Questions for Family Growth: What kind of fire did Nadab and Abihu offer before the Lord? What was wrong with it, according to the last part of v.1? What happened to them as a result? What is the lesson or application for us today?

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

Wednesday: 1 Kings 12:25-33

Key Idea: We must not devise in our hearts our own way of worshiping God.

Questions for Family Growth: What were some of the things that Jeroboam did that were wrong when he became king? What does v.33 say about how he came up with the date for his feast? What was wrong with that?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 18:24.**

Thursday: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Key Idea: The Scriptures teach us completely what God wants.

Questions for Family Growth: How long had Timothy known the Scriptures? In v.16, what does the word “inspiration” (NKJV) mean? What is God’s word “profitable” for? What does God’s word “equip” us for? How can we be “complete”?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 19:1.**

Friday: Revelation 1:9-11

Key Idea: The Lord’s Day is the special day designated for us to remember the Lord.

Questions for Family Growth: What happened to John on “the Lord’s Day”? What day of the week is the Lord’s Day? What special things happened on that day in the New Testament? What are we to do on the Lord’s Day today? How do we know what God wants us to do on this day?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 19:2.**

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We should study the Bible every day

Most of us recognize the need for regular Bible study. Our spiritual health requires regular nourishment from God's word. But in our private lives we often do not study as regularly as we should. This week, let's remind ourselves that *we should study the Bible every day*.

It is easy to overestimate how well we know the Bible. Many of us have heard the Bible preached and taught all our lives. Certain phrases, passages, and stories are so familiar they are second nature to us. But the familiarity with which we recognize certain things as being from the Bible is not the same thing as an actual working knowledge of the Bible itself. No matter how familiar the sound of certain things is to us, if we are not able to use the Bible daily in the ways God wants us to use it, then we need to study it more.

Paul spoke about "rightly dividing the word of truth" (**2 Tim. 2:15 NKJV**). "Rightly dividing" means more than correctly distinguishing the Old Testament from the New. It means being able to use the Scriptures accurately and skillfully to meet the needs of real life. The Bible is not a museum relic to be put on a shelf and admired. It is a working utensil meant to be used every day. Time spent each day developing our working knowledge of God's truth is time very well spent.

High-quality study of the Bible is as pleasurable as it is profitable. Just as a hungry person relishes good food, the person who deeply feels his need for God — that is, the person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness (**Mt. 5:6**) — finds meditation on the word of God deeply satisfying. To the one who loves God deeply, the precepts of God are more to be desired than "gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb" (**Psa. 19:10**). The Scriptures are not only for "reviving the soul" (**Psa. 19:7**), but they are for "rejoicing the heart" (**Psa. 19:8**).

Life is rough. The negative pressures on our spiritual lives are heavy almost beyond our ability to bear. We need the Bible — and we need to see our need for the Bible! In our families, there is no greater work than helping our children form strong habits of daily Bible study. They will not be likely to develop those habits, however, if they do not see their fathers and mothers engaged in the work of digesting the Scriptures. This week, let's make it our aim to study the Bible more, recognizing not only the importance but the blessing of doing so. Bible study is good for us.

Monday: Hebrews 5:11-14

Key Idea: If we do not study and grow in the faith, we will not be able to teach others.

Questions for Family Growth: Why does it take time to become a teacher of God's word? What did the Hebrew writer say his readers had not done? What is the difference between "milk" and "solid food" in God's word?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 19:3.**

Tuesday: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Key Idea: God's word is what equips us to do good works.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to “continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed”? In this passage, what different things are the Scriptures said to be “profitable” for? What does it mean to be “equipped for every good work”?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:4](#).

Wednesday: Psalm 119:9-16

Key Idea: God's word helps young people live godly lives.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean for a young person to “keep his way pure” ([v.9](#))? What does the writer mean when he says, “With my whole heart I seek you” ([v.10](#))? How do we “delight” ([vv.14,16](#)) in God's word? Why is this especially important for young people?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:5](#).

Thursday: Psalm 19:1-14

Key Idea: God's word is more valuable than gold.

Questions for Family Growth: What comparison does David make between God's word and things like gold and honey? According to [vv.7-9](#), what can God's word do for us? What should be true of our words and the meditations of our hearts?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:6,7](#).

Friday: 1 Timothy 4:15,16

Key Idea: To make progress in our spiritual lives we need to study God's word diligently.

Questions for Family Growth: How do we “meditate” ([v.15 NKJV](#)) on something? Why is meditation on God's word important? What does Paul mean when he says “give yourself entirely to them” ([v.15 NKJV](#))? How do we “take heed” ([v.16 NKJV](#)) to ourselves?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 19:8](#).

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