



**WordPoints**  
Challenging Every Person to Take God More Seriously

# Daily Family Bible Studies

Biblical Themes for Families to Think About Together

## Year 2

Gary Henry

Version 1.1 — January 2017

***Daily Family Bible Studies: Biblical Themes for Families to Think About Together (Year 2)***  
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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](http://WordPoints.com)

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## Right attitudes help us to please God and do His work faithfully

Solomon said long ago, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (**Prov. 4:23**). Nowhere is this advice more important than in the area of our attitudes. The “heart” Solomon spoke of involves more than attitudes, of course, but no one can deny that our attitudes are a significant part of the heart that requires “keeping.” Even those with the best of intentions sometimes find their attitudes beginning to slip out of line. We need to monitor our attitudes closely and at the first sign of deterioration, bring them back to where God wants them to be. If we don’t do that, our lives will turn out to be the kind of lives we never wanted to have.

Just as wrong attitudes hinder us from being what we ought to be, **right attitudes help us to please God and do His work faithfully**. Like the woodcutter who makes his work easier by taking the time to sharpen his ax (**Eccl. 10:10**), we do ourselves a big favor in the Lord’s work by adjusting our attitudes in a good direction. There is no greater advantage we can give ourselves in the work of the local congregation than to make sure our attitudes are correct. Not only does the work get done more effectively, but we enjoy it more when we have the right mental “slant” on it. This is an advantage all of us are capable of giving ourselves.

The problem most of us have, though, is assuming that our attitudes are acceptable, when in reality they may have become detrimental to the work. Attitudes have a way of changing without our noticing. That is why periodic self-examinations (and they need to be honest examinations) are so important. Doing the Lord’s work effectively requires many mid-course corrections.

This week, let’s think about the importance of attitudes and determine to be more careful about our own. Most local congregations are blessed with members who have numerous talents and abilities that are needed in the work that God has given us. Those abilities can’t be productive if the matter of attitude is not given some priority. While there are a number of things in life that we can do nothing about, attitude is something we can always improve. Let’s determine that our work will be helped, and not hindered, by the way we choose to think. Let’s make this a week of significant attitude improvement — and let’s be thankful for the work we can do together.

### Monday: Colossians 1:9-12

**Key Idea:** God wants us to think as we should so we can be fruitful in good works.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What kind of blessings did Paul pray for his brethren in Colossae? What would a “walk . . . worthy of the Lord” be? What attitude is needed if we are to bear fruit “in every good work”?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 19:9.**

## Tuesday: Matthew 22:34-40

**Key Idea:** We need to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What question did the Pharisees ask Jesus? Why did they ask it? What was Jesus' answer? In practical terms, what does it mean to love God? What are some ways that we can increase our love for God?

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

## Wednesday: Romans 12:1-8

**Key Idea:** We need to be humble about ourselves and do our work faithfully.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to think “with sober judgment” about ourselves? Since we are not the only member of the body, how should we think of ourselves in relation to the other members?

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

## Thursday: Philippians 2:1-4

**Key Idea:** We need to put the interests of our brethren ahead of our own interests.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What attitudes toward our fellow Christians does Paul mention in [v.2](#)? Why are these so important in a local congregation? What are “selfish ambition” and “conceit”? What does it mean to look “to the interests of others”?

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

## Friday: 2 Corinthians 9:1-8

**Key Idea:** We need to do our work for the Lord generously and cheerfully.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What was the particular thing Paul wanted the Corinthians to be generous and cheerful about? How does the same principle apply to all of our work in the Lord? Ultimately, who supplies the “sufficiency” for our work?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*



## If we fail to use our abilities in the Lord's work, that is a serious sin

All of us are blessed beyond our comprehension. We have many God-given advantages in this life, but unfortunately, we take many of these for granted. And when it comes to participating in the work of the Lord, we often excuse ourselves as if we had little ability, little opportunity, and little responsibility. In reality, however, God has blessed us greatly, and He is going to call us to account for what we have done with our tremendous blessings. He knows — whether we are willing to acknowledge it or not — that He has showered us with the things we need in order to accomplish His work in this world, and the plain truth is this: *if we fail to use our abilities in the Lord's work, that is a serious sin.*

It is tempting to worry (and maybe even complain) about what we can't do. But God has never asked anyone to do anything that was impossible for that person at that time. His expectations are always within our reach, and the consequence is that His judgment of us will be perfectly just. If we are lost, it will be because we chose not to do what we could have done if we had adopted a better attitude about our opportunities.

**Philippians 4:13** is a passage that takes away most of our excuses. It is the text where Paul says, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." The "all things" that Christ will strengthen us to do are the things that have to do with His will, and what we are being told is that if there is anything we ought to do or need to do in regard to God, He will help us do it. It is an insult to God to say, "Well, I know I should do it, but I can't do it." To the contrary, whatever we should do, God will help us do — and we will answer for what we do or don't do with the help God gives us.

Throughout this week, our Bible studies will concentrate on the importance of (a) identifying the role the Lord wants us to play in His work, (b) being grateful for the blessings that make our work possible, and then (c) rising to meet our responsibilities with courage and confidence. There is no greater work than the Lord's work. We each need to be busy doing our part in the body of Christ. Ultimately, the Lord will judge our workmanship. So let's work so that we won't have to be ashamed of the quality of our efforts (**2 Tim. 2:15**). Think about it!

### Monday: Isaiah 5:1-7

**Key Idea:** God expects us to use the blessings that He has given us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In this text, what had God done for His "vineyard"? What result did He expect? Instead, what actually happened? What was God going to do next to His vineyard? Who were the people represented by the vineyard?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 19:14.**

## Tuesday: Colossians 4:16,17

**Key Idea:** Each of us has a “ministry” (service) that we are expected to fulfill.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What message did Paul want the brethren to give to Archippus? What does the word “ministry” mean? How does a person “fulfill” his or her ministry? What application does this passage have to us today?

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

## Wednesday: Matthew 25:14-30

**Key Idea:** The Lord does not accept excuses for not doing our work faithfully.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did the five-talent and two-talent servants do with their master’s money? What did the one-talent servant do? Did the master accept his excuse? Is there ever any good reason for us not to do what the Lord expects us to do?

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

## Thursday: Matthew 25:31-46

**Key Idea:** Some will miss heaven because of what they did not do.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Christ say to the “sheep” on His right hand? What did He say to the “goats” on His left? What reasons or excuses might the goats have offered for not doing as they should? How would you define sins of “omission”?

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

## Friday: Mark 14:3-9

**Key Idea:** The Lord is pleased when we do what it is possible for us to do.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did the woman do for Jesus? Why were some angry? What did Jesus say in [vv.6,7](#)? What did He say about the woman in [v.8](#)? Is there any higher compliment Jesus could give a person than to say they did what they “could”?

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

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## We must be concerned about whether our fellow Christians are growing

In predicting that Peter would deny Him three times on the night of His betrayal, the Lord said Peter would come through the ordeal with a strengthened faith. Then He instructed Peter: “But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Lk. 22:32). Peter was to receive strength that he might impart that same strength to his fellow disciples — his strength was not merely for his own benefit.

In the Lord’s body, it is not enough for each of us to grow personally — *we must be concerned about whether our fellow Christians are growing*. The body grows and does what God intended it to do when the members of the body grow together, each helping the other to develop and mature in the work. We can’t afford to be unconcerned about this. Christianity is not a thing that is done “solo,” with each person having only a private relationship with God. We must take an active part in the spiritual progress of those to whom we are connected in the body. This has always been an important truth, but it is all the more so now. In our individualistic culture, many people’s concept of Christianity is such that they pay little attention to anyone else’s need for encouragement.

We probably underestimate how much influence we have on one another. For better or worse, we are constantly having an impact on our brethren, whether we realize it while it is happening or not. Our example probably does far more than we realize to either encourage or discourage those around us. We need to make sure our example is one that leads our fellow Christians on the upward path of growth. And beyond example, we need to engage in teaching, admonishing, and prayer on behalf of our brethren in the Lord.

As we go about our various activities this week, wouldn’t it be good for us to turn over in our minds the question of how we can edify one another? Wouldn’t it be good for our congregation if we spent time thinking specifically how we can contribute to the health and growth of our fellow Christians? Let’s make this a week of growth — not just growth personally, but the kind of growth that comes from genuine mutual concern and help. And let’s study with our children how the church is a relationship of mutual edification.

### Monday: Proverbs 27:5,6; 28:23

**Key Idea:** If we are truly friends, we will help each other with our faults.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that “the wounds of a friend” are “faithful”? What does it mean that he who “rebukes” a man will find more “favor” than the person who “flatters” with the tongue?

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

## Tuesday: Luke 22:24-34

**Key Idea:** When God has strengthened us, He expects us to strengthen others.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What great trial of his faith was Peter going to have to undergo on the night of Jesus' betrayal? Did he deny the Lord as predicted? What was he to do after he regained the strength of his faith?

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

## Wednesday: Galatians 6:1,2

**Key Idea:** We should make a sincere effort to restore Christians who have fallen into sin.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is a "transgression"? What does this verse say we should do for those who have been caught in a transgression? With what "spirit" is this to be done? What should we do with the "burdens" of others?

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

## Thursday: Romans 1:11,12

**Key Idea:** Sometimes even very strong Christians need to be encouraged by their brethren.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.11**, why did Paul say he longed to see the Christians in Rome? What did he say in **v.12** about what he hoped to receive from them? How could a man who was as spiritually mature as Paul need this?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 19:22.**

## Friday: Colossians 1:24-29

**Key Idea:** Our goal is to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (NKJV).

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.28**, how do you think the word "perfect" is used in the NKJV? What did Paul say he was doing in order to present every person "perfect" in Christ? Are there ways we can do that for each other today?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 19:23.**

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## We ought to look forward to assembling together in the local church

There has probably never been a congregation where every single member had the right attitude about the assemblies of the church. Seemingly there is always someone who feels at liberty to absent himself from the assembly when he chooses. Consequently, there will probably always be a need for preaching and teaching on the need to be faithful in attendance at the services of the church. We need to be reminded from time to time how good it is for us to meet together as God's people to worship Him and study His word. And we need to be reminded how much we need what the services of the church offer.

There is no doubt a sense in which we should feel an obligation to meet whenever the church assembles, but being present surely can be thought of as more than a mere duty. ***We ought to look forward to assembling together in the local church.*** If we love the Lord and His people, the various assemblies of the congregation will be a joy to attend.

In **Psa. 122:1**, David said, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD!'" Today there is no physical building which is the "house of the Lord" such as the temple was in the Old Testament. In Christ, we ourselves are the dwelling place of God. But should we not have the same attitude about meeting with our brethren that David had about going to the temple to worship? Should we be anything but glad when the time comes to assemble with the saints of God to praise Him and learn from His word?

Of all the people in the world, the Lord's people should be those whom we most look forward to being with. As John wrote, "Whoever loves God must also love his brother . . . and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him" (**1 Jn. 4:21-5:1**).

This week, let's set ourselves the challenge of developing a more positive attitude about the services of the church. Let's work on viewing our weekly assemblies as a joy and a privilege. Given the difficulties of life in this world, it is not likely that we will survive living in it without the edification that we get when we worship together. Think about it!

### Monday: 1 John 4:20,21

**Key Idea:** We cannot love God if we do not love our fellow Christians.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did John say about the person who says he loves God but hates his brother? In what ways might we show that we "hate" our fellow Christians? If we love our brothers and sisters, how important do you think it is that we meet with them for worship?

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

## Tuesday: Hebrews 10:23-25

**Key Idea:** We will assemble with other Christians if we are concerned about them spiritually.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does v.24 say we ought to do for one another? What would it mean to “consider” one another? What does v.25 say we must not do if we are properly concerned about our brethren?

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

## Wednesday: Ephesians 5:18-21; Colossians 3:12-17

**Key Idea:** When we assemble as a congregation, we build up one another spiritually.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In Eph. 5:19, how do Christians “speak” (NKJV) to one another when they assemble for worship? In Col. 3:16, how do they “teach” and “admonish” one another? Can we do these things if we choose not to assemble with the church?

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

## Thursday: Matthew 18:20

**Key Idea:** Christ has promised to be with us when we meet together in His name.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to gather together in the Lord’s name? Knowing that Christ is present with us, how do you think we should conduct ourselves when we assemble as a congregation?

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

## Friday: Psalm 122:1-9

**Key Idea:** We ought to be glad to worship God with His people.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What was the “house of the Lord” in David’s day? What is the Lord’s “house” today? Consider 1 Pt. 2:5. What are some things we can do to help ourselves have David’s attitude about worship?

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

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## We should talk to our friends and neighbors about the Lord

Throughout this week, it will be profitable to consider that *we should talk to our friends and neighbors about the Lord*. Let's make this a week of reflection and meditation on the role we should play in spreading the gospel in our own community. Truly, there is no more important part of the Lord's work than the work of evangelism.

In **2 Tim. 2:2**, Paul told Timothy, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." God has designed the scheme of redemption in such a way that salvation from sin is communicated by a message of salvation — words which must be obeyed in order for people to receive salvation. The truth which makes men free from sin (**Jn. 8:32**) was communicated by God's Spirit to the men chosen by Jesus as His apostles. These apostles, in turn, deposited this truth in written form in the Scriptures which make up our New Testament. The only way anyone can come into possession of this truth today is by reading or hearing this message (**Eph. 3:4; 1 Thess. 2:13**).

Those whom we come in contact with each day need to hear the gospel, and they may not know anyone else who will share it with them. Certainly we have an obligation to talk with others about the Lord, but it is far more than a mere duty — it is a privilege. Having been graciously forgiven of our sins, we should be motivated by gratitude to spend the rest of our lives sharing the good news so that our friends can be forgiven too. It is an honor to be a part of this great work!

Paul said, "For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" (**Rom. 10:13,14**). It is both important and urgent that we speak the saving word of truth to those around us. Our conscience should move us to do so. If it matters to us whether our friends and neighbors go to heaven, how can we not speak to them about the Lord? May we think on these things this week. And may we be able to say, with Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (**Rom. 1:16**).

### Monday: Mark 16:15,16

**Key Idea:** Jesus wants us to spread the gospel.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is the "gospel"? What will happen to those who do not obey it? What does it mean to "preach" the gospel? Is there a sense in which all of us can preach the gospel? What are some ways that each of us could spread the good news of Christ?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 19:29**.

## Tuesday: Matthew 28:18-20

**Key Idea:** Jesus wants us to lead others to become His disciples.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is the basic meaning of the word “disciple”? What is the purpose for which people should be baptized? What does **Ac. 22:16** say? What should we teach people after they are baptized?

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

## Wednesday: Mark 8:34-38

**Key Idea:** We should never be ashamed to speak about Jesus to others.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Jesus say would happen if we are ashamed of Him while we live in this world? What are some ways we can overcome being ashamed or embarrassed about Jesus? How is it that faith (or trust) in God imparts courage to us?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 20:2.**

## Thursday: Ephesians 6:14-20; Colossians 4:2-6

**Key Idea:** We should talk with others in a way that will help them to understand the gospel.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Paul want others to pray on his behalf? How was Paul using the word “bold” here? In **Col. 4:4** what does “manifest” (NKJV) mean? In **vv.5,6**, how did Paul say we should speak to others about Jesus?

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

## Friday: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

**Key Idea:** We should be people who “sound forth” the word of Jesus.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In this passage, what good things did Paul say about the Christians in the church at Thessalonica? Could the same thing rightly be said about us today? What are some ways in which we can sound forth the gospel today?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 20:4.**

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*



## We can depend on God, knowing He will always take care of us

The Hebrew writer said, “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’” (Hb. 13:5,6). It is wonderful to know that *we can depend on God, knowing He will always take care of us.*

Contentment is not an easy thing to learn — but it is a necessary thing if we plan on going to heaven. We can’t be driven by an insatiable desire for more and more of the things of this world and still be devoted to the spiritual concerns of the Lord. Jesus said it is an impossibility: “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Mt. 6:24).

Living in an affluent culture, we are surrounded by worldly possessions that delight us. As desirable as these may be, however, there is more to life than the enjoyment of such things. Jesus said, “One’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

We may never know whether we depend on God as we should until all our visible means of support are taken away. As long as we hold steady jobs and have adequate insurance policies — that is, as long as we can see where the money for our needs is going to come from — we may say we trust God and not know whether we really do or not. But when a different set of circumstances arises and we can see no possible way for our needs to be met, that is when we find out what depending on the Lord is really about.

Let’s not take for granted the blessing of having a Creator who cares for us — a gracious Father who is ready and able to supply our every need. We can live each day in the confidence that we are supported by a power greater than ourselves. The thing most people call “worry” is an emotion we do not need to engage in. So this week, let’s learn more about our dependence on God. Let’s pray and study about the need we all have to grow in our trust in His goodness. May we have a greater gratitude for His care and keeping of us.

### Monday: 1 Kings 17:1-7

**Key Idea:** God is always mindful of the needs of His faithful people.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why did God need to provide food for Elijah? How did God do this? What might have been Elijah’s feelings about this situation? What do you think he might have learned about God in these events?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 20:5.

## Tuesday: 1 Kings 17:8-16

**Key Idea:** If we trust God, we will be willing to risk doing without some things we think we need.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why would it have been hard for the widow to do what Elijah asked her to do? Should we trust God only in situations where we can see how and when He is going to work things out?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 20:6](#).

## Wednesday: Matthew 6:19-21

**Key Idea:** If our treasures are material, our hearts will be on earth and not in heaven.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are “treasures on earth”? What are “treasures in heaven”? What are some ways heavenly treasures are better and more valuable than earthly ones? Where did Jesus say our hearts will be?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 20:7](#).

## Thursday: Matthew 6:22-24

**Key Idea:** We need to be sure that money is not the most important thing in our lives.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Jesus mean when He said “if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness”? What is “mammon” (NKJV)? What are some ways we may serve mammon rather than God?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 20:8](#).

## Friday: Matthew 6:25-34

**Key Idea:** We should put God’s kingdom first and not worry about temporal things.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is anxiety or worry? Why is it sinful? What is the key to overcoming this problem? What are some things we can do that will help us to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness”?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 20:9](#).

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## The day we are baptized into Christ is the day we begin a new life of joy

There are many memorable days in our lives, but some of these are much more important than others. *The day we are baptized into Christ is the day we begin a new life of joy.* With the exception of our childhood days of innocence, it cannot be said that we were truly living before the day of our baptism. That was the day when we “passed from death to life” (**Jn. 5:24**). It was the occasion when God “delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (**Col. 1:13**). Could there be a better day than that — except, of course, the day at the end of life when we go to be with the Lord Himself? The day we put on our Lord in baptism is a day worth remembering forever.

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome about the significance of their baptism, he said, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (**Rom. 6:3,4**). Having been baptized into the Lord, we are truly new people: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (**2 Cor. 5:17**).

The day of our baptism is the day that we begin a process of spiritual growth that will continue until the day when, in heaven, our journey toward God’s glory will be complete. Speaking to Christians, Paul wrote, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (**2 Cor. 3:18**). In Christ, we are on our way toward complete restoration to the glory of God’s image!

We make careful note of birthdays and anniversaries and other memorable days. But how many of us even recall the exact day when we obeyed the gospel of Christ? Do we do anything with our sons and daughters each year to mark the anniversary day of their beginning of the new life? Do we talk with our younger children about how important that day will be in their lives when it arrives? This week, may we each make a point to remember our obedience to the gospel. Let’s make sure the events of that day shall not have been in vain!

### Monday: Luke 7:36-50

**Key Idea:** God wants us to be sorry that we have disobeyed Him.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What was the woman in this story crying about? What did Simon the Pharisee lack that Jesus loved in this particular woman? Many things about sin are sad, but what is it about sin that you think we should grieve about the most?

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

## Tuesday: Acts 22:6-16

**Key Idea:** God commands us to be baptized in order to be forgiven of our sins.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to have our sins “washed away”? Do you think God will do that for us before we are baptized? At what point were Saul’s sins washed away? What did Jesus say about salvation in **Mk. 16:16**?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 20:11.**

## Wednesday: Acts 16:25-34

**Key Idea:** We rejoice when we are baptized.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why is being baptized into Christ something to be glad about? The Philippian Jailer believed before he was baptized, but at what point in his obedience does it say that “he rejoiced, having believed” (**v.34 NKJV**)?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 20:12.**

## Thursday: 1 Peter 1:3-9

**Key Idea:** Even when bad things happen in this life, the Christian can still have joy.

**Questions for Family Growth:** When we have been baptized for the forgiveness of our sins, does that mean we will never be sad again? How can we have joy even when things happen that make us sad? According to **v.9**, what will be the outcome of our faith?

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

## Friday: Revelation 21:22-27

**Key Idea:** In heaven, we will have even more joy than we do now.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are the things about being in heaven that we look forward to the most? In **Phil. 2:12**, what did Paul say the Lord’s people ought to do in regard to their salvation? Is there anything we shouldn’t be willing to give up in order to go to heaven?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 20:14.**

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## With God's help, our future can be better than our past

All of us have some good things and some bad things we can remember. In exceptional cases, one person's life may have been so filled with unpleasantness that he is tempted to say life has not been good at all; and in other cases a person's life may have been so joyful most of the time that he cannot identify with the problems others have faced. In the long run, however, most of our lives end up being about equal: we have some sunshine and we have some rain. The trick is to have the proper perspective on both the good and the bad that we have experienced, so that our future is what God wants it to be. We need to believe firmly that *with God's help, our future can be better than our past*. Neither our pleasant memories nor our painful ones should hold us back from the future that God wants us to have.

The apostle Paul was no doubt thankful for the many blessings he enjoyed in his younger years. Still, when he thought about his life prior to becoming a Christian, the thing that seems to have stood out most in his memory was the fact that he had actively persecuted the Lord's church. He said, "For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9). Yet having obeyed the gospel, he had the right attitude: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me" (1 Cor. 15:10). Paul was a man who thought humbly about the past and thought courageously about the future.

We need to learn from the problems we have had, so that they help (rather than hinder) our future progress; and we need to be grateful for the good things that have come our way, without becoming complacent about them. The future will not be what it should be if we fall prey to discouragement about our defeats or to pride about our privileges. Whatever may have gone before, the Lord wants us to press ahead to the better tomorrow that He has in store for us. Today is the day to be working for that tomorrow. This week, let's think about how God wants us to use the past — whether good or bad — to help us become more faithful servants in the days ahead. Let's help ourselves and our children to have the right attitude about the past.

### Monday: Ecclesiastes 7:10

**Key Idea:** It is not wise to let good things in the past hinder us in the present.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why do we usually think "the good old days" were better than today? Why do you think Solomon said it is foolish to think about the past in this way? What should be our attitude toward the good things we have experienced?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 20:15.

## Tuesday: Matthew 27:3-10

**Key Idea:** It is not wise to let bad things in the past hinder us in the present.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Judas do about the sin he had committed in betraying the Lord? What should he have done instead? Is there any sin that God cannot forgive? What should we do once God has forgiven us?

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

## Wednesday: Luke 19:1-10

**Key Idea:** God wants to forgive the mistakes we have made and help us to do better.

**Questions for Family Growth:** If Zacchaeus was a typical tax collector of that day, what kind of man might he have been before he met Jesus? After he met Jesus, what changes did he make? What did Jesus say to him in **vv.9,10**? What did Jesus come to do for the lost?

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

## Thursday: 1 Corinthians 15:9,10

**Key Idea:** When God gives us the opportunity to do better, we ought to take advantage of it.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What had Paul done in the past that he was now ashamed of? What is the “grace of God,” and what had it done for Paul? What did Paul do in return? What was Paul’s attitude about the future?

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

## Friday: Philippians 3:7-16

**Key Idea:** With God’s help, we ought to try our best to make each day better than the last.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to “press on” toward heaven? What can happen if we do not forget the things that are behind? What are some practical ways we can “reach forward” (**v.13 NKJV**) to the things that are ahead?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Repentance is something that everybody needs to do

Sometimes we forget that *repentance is something that everybody needs to do*. God commands us to repent of our sins, and we cannot be saved without obeying that command. If we are fairly “good” people, however, we may think our own sins are not serious enough that we need to repent as others do. We may reserve the word “repent” for murderers, adulterers, drunkards, and the like — believing that we ourselves merely need to “mend our ways” a little or engage in a bit of “self-improvement.” But the Bible is clear: “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” ([Ac. 17:30,31](#)).

Most of us underestimate how many of our problems are the result of sins that we need to repent of. Sin has a way of wreaking havoc in our lives — making us unhappy with ourselves, disrupting our relationships with others, spoiling our work, and much more. We pay a high price for our sins. And as long as we call our sins by some nicer sounding name and avoid doing what has to be done, we will continue to suffer the consequences. The pain will not go away until the cancer is cut out. If only we could see how often our problems would vanish if we would merely have the courage to call our sins exactly what they are . . . and repent of them!

When we wander away from Him, God wants, like a loving Father, to win back our hearts and receive us home again. Knowing that God is on our side and that He patiently awaits our repentance ought to make a difference in our attitudes. As Paul asked, “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” ([Rom. 2:4](#)). We need never doubt God’s love for us or His willingness to forgive. He is eager to accept our repentance and clear us completely of our wrongdoing. But we must have the courage to admit that the command to repent applies to us. As we go through this week, let’s consider this often-neglected command of God. Let’s see what sins we need to repent of, and let’s simply do it!

### Monday: Acts 2:36-41

**Key Idea:** We cannot obey the gospel without repenting of our sins.

**Questions for Family Growth:** When we obey the gospel, what does it mean to “repent” of our sins? What should motivate a person to repent of his or her sins? What are the other steps a person must take to become a Christian?

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

## Tuesday: Matthew 3:1-12

**Key Idea:** All of us have things we need to quit doing in order to enter God's kingdom.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What was the problem with the attitude of the Pharisees and Sadducees? Why do you think they didn't see their need for repentance? What did John mean when he told them to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance?"

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 20:21](#).

## Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 7:5-12

**Key Idea:** Being sorrowful in a godly way is what makes us want to repent of our sins.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How should we feel emotionally when we come to understand that we have disobeyed God? Should painful emotions always be avoided? What are some differences between "godly sorrow" and the "sorrow of the world" (NKJV)?

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

## Thursday: Luke 13:1-5

**Key Idea:** Just because God has not punished us yet, that does not mean that we are free of sin.

**Questions for Family Growth:** When a disaster happens and people are killed, does that always mean they were wicked people whom God was punishing with the disaster? Do other people need to repent any more than we do?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 20:23](#).

## Friday: Luke 15:11-32

**Key Idea:** When we decide to come back to God, He will be happy to forgive us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How do you think God feels, as our Father, when we quit doing something that we shouldn't have been doing? What does [Lk. 15:7](#) say will cause "joy in heaven"? How should we feel when someone else repents?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 20:24](#).

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*



## The Christian has hope because he has been born again

One of the worst things the Christian can do is take the hope of heaven for granted. Most people in the world do not have that hope—and life is bleak indeed when a person has to live in dread of dying. But *the Christian has hope because he has been born again*. If we have been born into the spiritual family of God, we can look beyond the grave to a home in heaven. That hope is a treasure we ought to be thankful for.

Concerning the hope of those born again, Peter said, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Pt. 1:3,4). Owning no greater treasure than his hope in Christ, the Christian ought to cherish that hope and make sure that nothing robs him of its fulfillment.

Since he has been born twice (once physically and once spiritually), the Christian has but one death to anticipate — in other words, because he has been reborn spiritually, he need not fear the “second death” that would otherwise follow his physical death. Christ wrote to the church in Smyrna: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death” (Rev. 2:11).

Knowing that we are alive in God and that we don’t have to fear eternal death is a source of great confidence and strength. It imparts a marvelous stability to our daily living. As the Hebrew writer put it: “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain” (Hb. 6:19).

Let’s make this week a week to think about our new life in Christ and the daily difference that life makes. Let’s consider what being “born again” really means. Let’s count the blessings that come to us because God has made it possible for us to have the hope of heaven. And let’s live like people who have this great hope.

### Monday: John 3:1-15

**Key Idea:** When we obey the gospel, we are born again.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Jesus say a person could not do without being “born again”? What did He mean by being born again? At what point in the Christian’s life does this new birth take place? How can we tell if someone has had that experience?

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

## Tuesday: Hebrews 2:10-18

**Key Idea:** As Christians, we are released from the fear of death.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.14**, what does it mean that Jesus partook of flesh and blood? Why did Jesus have to do that? According **v.14**, who has the power of death? By dying, what did Jesus accomplish for us?

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

## Wednesday: Colossians 3:5-17

**Key Idea:** As Christians, we “put on the new self.”

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to “put off the old self” and “put on the new self”? In **vv.12-14**, what are some things a person will do who has become new in Christ? What did Paul say in **Rom. 6:4**?

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

## Thursday: 1 Peter 1:3-9

**Key Idea:** As Christians, we have a living hope.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is “hope”? Who has made it possible for us to have hope? What does Peter say about the kind of inheritance that is waiting for us? In **v.6**, what difference does it make for us to have hope in Christ?

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

## Friday: Luke 16:19-31

**Key Idea:** Without the hope of heaven, none of the pleasant things in this life matter.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Are those who go to heaven to be with God always the ones who have had the best of everything in this life? Why do some who have had the good things in this life not go to heaven? What should be our attitude about happiness in the here and now?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Our work is sowing the seed of the kingdom

Jesus said the word of God is like seed (Lk. 8:4-15). When “planted” in the heart of an honest and good person, it produces “fruit.” Not every person will respond fruitfully; only those who truly want to obey God. We can’t always know who will and who will not obey the gospel, and even in the case of those who do obey, it is not we, but God who produces the results. Nevertheless, there is work to be done. If the seed is going to be sown in people’s hearts, it is the Lord’s people who must be actively involved. No one else will do it if we do not.

As messengers, our job is to take God’s saving truth to those who need it. ***Our work is sowing the seed of the kingdom.*** Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Cor. 3:6). The division of labor here is not coincidental. God has assigned us precisely the part of the work that He has deemed best. If we wish to measure the effectiveness with which we are doing our work, we would do well to measure it in terms of seed sown, not the size of the harvest, etc. When we have assessed both the quality and quantity of our efforts to broadcast the seed of the gospel, we will have accurately appraised the only thing that is under our control: the sowing of seed. Many things are beyond our control, but it is always possible for us to be busy disseminating truth. We cannot make decisions for other people, but we can see that they have a chance to decide for or against God. That’s our job.

We cannot wait for perfect conditions before we sow, and we cannot fail to sow simply because we’re not sure exactly which method will bring the best results. We must do the best we can, trusting that God will honor diligent effort by bringing to pass something good. Solomon wisely observed: “As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything. In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good” (Eccl. 11:5,6).

We need to understand how important our work is in God’s plan — and we need to be filled with gratitude for the part that is ours to play. This week, let’s focus on remembering what our work is, and not confuse it with God’s work. If we plant and water, it is God who will give the increase.

### Monday: 2 Timothy 2:1,2

**Key Idea:** We ought to pass along to others what we have learned about God.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Is it ever enough for us just to learn God’s word ourselves? What else must we do with God’s word? What does it mean to be “faithful” or “trustworthy” in the matter of sharing the gospel with others?

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

## Tuesday: Luke 8:4-15

**Key Idea:** Different kinds of people will respond to the gospel in different ways.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are the four different kinds of people Jesus tells about in this parable? What determines which kind of heart each of us has? Why do some people obey the gospel while others do not?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 21:1](#).

## Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

**Key Idea:** In the work of the gospel, God does the hard part; we only have to do the easy part.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In [vv.6,7](#), what does it mean to “plant” and “water”? What did Paul mean when he said that God “gave the growth”? Which is more important: what God does or what we do? What point did Peter make about our work in [1 Pt. 4:10,11](#)?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 21:2](#).

## Thursday: 2 Corinthians 3:4-6

**Key Idea:** God can make us able to do whatever we ought to do in sharing the gospel..

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to be “adequate” or “sufficient”? If God wants us to share the gospel with others, do we ever have to be afraid that we can’t do what God expects? What are some ways God can help us?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 21:3](#).

## Friday: James 5:7,8

**Key Idea:** As we sow the gospel seed, we need to be patient while we wait for the harvest.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why is it important for a farmer to be patient? What should a farmer do if his seed does not produce a crop as quickly as he would like? Will God’s seed always produce a harvest? Will the harvest always be what we expect from a human standpoint?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 21:4](#).

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## God should be able to count on our faithfulness

What an encouragement it is to read about a man like Job! He shows that we can be so faithful to God that God Himself trusts us not to let Him down. God asked Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” (Job 1:8). When Satan replied that Job was only faithful because the Lord had blessed him, God allowed Satan to take away Job’s blessings and see for himself that Job would remain true even in adversity. God’s confidence in Job’s steadfast faith was borne out when Job held up against the worst that Satan was allowed to do to him. God knew He could count on Job.

God’s confidence in our faith is a part of what real faith means. It means that **God should be able to count on our faithfulness**. The Bible speaks of the inadequate faith of those who say they believe but are fickle. In Jn. 2:23-25, we read: “Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.” Jesus did not “entrust” Himself to those whose faith was uncertain. He had no faith in their faith.

Being faithful to God is a choice we are capable of making. Jesus’ desire for us to be steadfast in His service is put in the form of a command we can obey: “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). There will be times of difficulty and temptation, but at those times, we can exercise the free will we have been given and, in defiance of the devil, simply say, “No, I am not going to give up. I am going to be a person God can count on.”

This week, let’s spend some time thinking about that. God knows our hearts. He knows how deep our allegiance to Him runs. He knows what it would take for us to deny Him. Let’s strengthen our faith — so that when He knows our hearts, He will know that we, like Job, can be counted on no matter what. Let’s be a steadfast people, a people who would not blink if the devil himself looked us in the eye and tempted us to deny God.

### Monday: John 2:23-25

**Key Idea:** God should be able to count on us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that Jesus “knew all people”? What does it mean that He “did not entrust himself to them”? What are some ways we might disappoint God or let Him down? What kind of person is it that Jesus trusts?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 21:5.

## Tuesday: Job 2:1-10

**Key Idea:** God should be able to count on us not to give in to temptation.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.3**, what did God say He knew about the man Job? What was Satan's accusation against Job? Did God have any doubt that Job would remain faithful to Him, even during hardship?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 21:6.**

## Wednesday: Philippians 2:19-24

**Key Idea:** God should be able to count on us to help His people.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why was Paul going to send Timothy to Philippi? What did Paul say was special about Timothy? How can we show that we are as dependable as Timothy in helping other Christians?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 21:7.**

## Thursday: 2 Timothy 4:9-18

**Key Idea:** God should be able to count on us not to forsake His work.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.10**, what did Paul say Demas had done? According to Paul, why did Demas do this? What kind of faith would you say Demas had? How can we make sure we never do the kind of thing that Demas did?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 21:8.**

## Friday: Revelation 2:8-11

**Key Idea:** God should be able to count on us to be faithful until we die.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.10**, what did Christ say about being faithful? What is the reward for being faithful in this way? What are some practical ways we can strengthen our faith so that God will be able to count on us?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 21:9.**

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Courage is a quality we all can have

Living as godly people and doing God's work in this world are not always easy. Sometimes there are risks involved, and the risks are quite real. This is true simply because the devil, our adversary, tries in every possible way to obstruct us. And the fact is, he may be able to bring about circumstances in which we can be harmed in one way or another (at least in the short term) if we choose to obey God. The Lord urged that we count the cost of following Him — and not become His disciples if we consider the cost too great!

Since obeying God can cost us dearly, it takes courage to do the right thing consistently. But ***courage is a quality we all can have***. Whatever the opposition, whatever the dangers that must be faced, we can steel our wills to act obediently unto our Heavenly Father — and when we do, we can be assured that He is willing and able to give us all the help and protection we need. There is no reason for God's people to be afraid of anything the devil can do.

Fear may be a feeling that creeps into our hearts in certain circumstances, but we always have the resources, in God, to go ahead and do the right thing despite our fear. In the Old Testament, God said to Joshua, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (**Josh. 1:9**). And Jesus said to the brethren in Smyrna, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (**Rev. 2:10**).

To His apostles, Jesus said, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (**Jn. 16:33**).

In the Lord, then, we can be strong. We can teach our children to be strong. We can influence one another, as brethren in the Lord, to be strong. This week, let's give our thought to the matter of increasing our courage. Let's bolster our defenses and stiffen our backbones. Paul said, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil" (**Eph. 6:10,11**). We are children of the King, and as such we ought to be the bravest folks in the world.

### Monday: Psalm 23:1-6

**Key Idea:** If we love and obey God, He will help us and protect us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How is God like a shepherd to us? What are some kinds of evil that we do not have to fear because God is with us? How would you define courage. How can we learn to have more courage?

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

## Tuesday: 1 Samuel 17:41-54

**Key Idea:** If God is with us, we can do more than we think we can.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why did David do what all the soldiers of Israel were afraid to do? In doing our work for God, why are we sometimes afraid to try big things? What “Goliaths” do you need to slay with the Lord’s help?

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

## Wednesday: Daniel 3:1-30

**Key Idea:** Sometimes people will try to stop us from doing what is right.

**Questions for Family Growth:** If our nation ever made a law requiring us to do something that is wrong, how should we respond to that? What did Peter and the other apostles say in [Ac. 5:29](#). Do we ever have to disobey God?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 21:12](#).

## Thursday: Daniel 6:1-24

**Key Idea:** Obeying God is more important than saving our lives.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Might Daniel have been afraid to be thrown into the lions’ den? How long had it been Daniel’s practice to pray every day? Do good habits that we have formed help us at times when we need courage?

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

## Friday: Philippians 4:10-13

**Key Idea:** When we meet difficulties trying to obey God, He will strengthen us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Does this passage say God will help us accomplish any worldly objective we might want to achieve? What are the “all things” God has promised to help us with? What are some ways God gives us help and strength?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 21:14](#).

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*



## We should have a constant will to do what is right

This week, let's take time to think about the fact that *we should have a constant will to do what is right*. Experience has surely taught us that it is sometimes easy to obey God and sometimes it is not. In every situation, however, our duty is clear: we must discipline ourselves to do the right thing, easy or not.

What kind of “faithfulness” would it be if we obeyed our Lord's will only when it was easy? If we did the right thing when all our external circumstances were favorable, if we went along when all those near and dear to us were encouraging us in the right direction, if we acted as we felt physically when we felt like a million dollars, and if we obeyed when there was no sacrifice or pain involved in obedience . . . so what? Do not even the irreligious do the same? The thing that determines whether we really are the Lord's people is what we choose to do when the prevailing winds turn and blow against us.

Feelings are wonderful things. God gave them to us, and life would be dull and dreary without them. But whatever may be the virtues of feelings, stability is not one of them. If our lives and our obedience to God are to have any constancy, they must be built on something more solid than our emotions. Whatever we may feel like — whether our emotions are pushing us toward God or pulling us away from Him — we must exercise our wills to do what we should do. We must get a hold on ourselves and do what God wants us to do.

The devil is a master at manipulating our emotions. In trying to tempt us to go against God's will, he tries to focus our minds on the present moment and its feelings. But there is more to be considered than the present moment. Eternity matters far more!

Life is a long haul, and it is not without difficulty. Thankfully, there will be times when the sun is shining and obedience comes easily. But when the clouds roll in and obedience is the last thing on our minds, we need to hear the Lord say, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” ([Rev. 2:10](#)). We must want to obey God . . . even when we don't want to do what is difficult.

### Monday: Hebrews 12:1,2

**Key Idea:** We need to keep on obeying God and never quit.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is “endurance” (or “patience”), and what does that have to do with obeying God? What are some things that make us feel like quitting? According to [v.2](#), what did Jesus do?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 21:15](#).

## Tuesday: Revelation 2:8-11

**Key Idea:** We should faithfully obey God even when we have hardships.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.10**, what did Jesus say the church in Smyrna ought not to be afraid of? Should we only obey God when it is easy or convenient? What did Jesus say, in **v.10**, about being faithful?

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

## Wednesday: Genesis 22:1-14

**Key Idea:** In deciding what God's will is, we should not trust our feelings alone.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How must Abraham have felt emotionally when God told him to offer his son Isaac? Why did Abraham pay so little attention to his feelings? Is it always right to do what we want to do or prefer to do?

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

## Thursday: Job 2:1-13

**Key Idea:** We should faithfully obey God even when we do not feel like it physically.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What kind of mood do you think Job was in during his suffering? Would feeling terrible have made it alright to say and do things that were not proper? In **v.10**, what sin is Job said not have committed?

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

## Friday: Matthew 26:36-46

**Key Idea:** Jesus always obeyed God even when He did not feel like it.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How do you think Jesus may have felt during His ordeal in the Garden of Gethsemane? Did He decide to die on the cross for us because of how he felt, or was it because of what He knew was right?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## God wants us to get rid of our bad habits

There is an old, familiar saying that tells us, “Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.” Our characters, and ultimately our destinies, are being formed each day, little by little, as we make the choices that become the habits of our lives. For that reason, it is of utmost importance that we form good habits and uproot the bad ones from our daily practice.

Our habits are not a matter of indifference to our Heavenly Father. **God wants us to get rid of our bad habits.** If we are to be “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pt. 1:3,4), sinful ways of thinking and acting must be removed from our character. This involves not only divine help on God’s part, but also repentance on ours. We cannot go to heaven as we are — some changes have to take place. Hence Paul says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2).

The longer a habit has been in our lives, of course, the harder it will be to break. Whether it is a pattern of thinking or an action that we’ve repeated many times, a habit is a strong force in our lives. When something becomes habitual, it has a certain momentum that keeps it going. This momentum is hard to resist, and we shouldn’t underestimate the diligent work that will be required if we are to break these long-standing thoughts and actions.

But as long as we are alive, we still have a will that is free. We can choose our actions, and if we choose good ones, God will help us. We may have become enslaved to our habits, but God will help us break their bondage. In Phil. 4:13, Paul said, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” If something is necessary for our salvation, we need not worry about its being impossible. Whatever is necessary, God will enable us to do it.

So before it’s too late, we need to repent of the sinful traits that have crept into our character. If we do not, they will follow us into eternity. Throughout this week, let’s think about that fact. Let’s quit making excuses for unacceptable conduct, repent of our wrongdoing, and make up our minds that we’re going to accept the help God wants to give us to be faithful to Him.

### Monday: Colossians 3:1-17

**Key Idea:** God wants us to get rid of our bad habits.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that we are to “put off the old self” (v.9) and “put on the new self” (v.10)? What does Paul say are some of the thoughts and actions we must get rid of (vv.5-9)?

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

## Tuesday: John 12:1-8

**Key Idea:** We may be disciples of the Lord and still have sinful attitudes we need to get rid of.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In this account, what was it that Judas complained about? According to **v.6**, why did he do as he did? Even though outwardly he was a disciple of Jesus, what was wrong with Judas inwardly?

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

## Wednesday: Genesis 4:1-16

**Key Idea:** A sinful attitude will grow worse if we do not exert control over it.

**Questions for Family Growth:** According to **1 Jn. 3:11,12**, why did Cain kill his brother? Why is even a little bit of envy, anger, etc. a very dangerous thing? What warning did God give to Cain in **Gen. 4:7**?

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

## Thursday: Acts 8:9-24

**Key Idea:** A sinful attitude will cause us to be poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What sinful thing did Simon do? According to **v.21**, what was his real problem? What did Peter mean by the “gall of bitterness” and the “bond of iniquity” (**v.23 ESV**)? What will a sinful mind do to us?

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

## Friday: Galatians 5:16-26

**Key Idea:** God wants us to enjoy the benefits of thinking as He does.

**Questions for Family Growth:** According to **v.21**, what will happen to those who let evil remain in their lives? What does Paul say are some of the good things we must put into our hearts and lives (**vv.22,23**)?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## If we truly want to obey God, He will help us find out what we should do

Sometimes it is not easy to know the right thing to do. Even when our hearts are right, the correct course does not always make itself obvious. It often takes wisdom, courage, and hard work to discern the Lord's will. The more we mature spiritually, of course, the easier it becomes (**Hb. 5:14**) — but it is not always easy to “understand what the will of the Lord is” (**Eph. 5:17**), even for those who have grown deeply in godly wisdom.

There is one thing, however, that we ought to bear in mind: *if we truly want to obey God, He will help us find out what we should do.* We need to have the confidence that, if we have the right attitude about both knowing and doing the truth, God will lead us toward the truth that we need. Without a genuine will to obey, truthful answers to our questions may elude us, but if our intent is to obey every bit of truth as we discover it, then God promises that we'll come into possession of the truth we are looking for.

Gaining wisdom involves diligent effort. Solomon instructed his son, “Incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding” (**Prov. 2:2 NKJV**). Then he observed, “If you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God” (**Prov. 2:3-5**). Paul prayed for his brethren that “the eyes of your understanding [might be] enlightened” (**Eph. 1:18 NKJV**). Gaining the wisdom to discern God's will requires, among other things, recognition of the need for growth beyond our present understanding.

Whether we recognize the truth when we encounter it depends mainly on what our intentions are with regard to obedience. Jesus said, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority” (**Jn. 7:16,17**). Our motives, then, are crucial to our understanding: the question is not merely whether we want to know the truth, but what we plan to do with the truth once we find it. So this week, let's think about whether our basic disposition is to obey all of the truth we know to obey.

### Monday: John 8:42-47

**Key Idea:** If God is truly our Father, we should desire to do whatever He wills.

**Questions for Family Growth:** According to what Jesus said in **vv.43,44**, why did the Pharisees not understand the truth about Jesus? Who was their “father”? Why was this so? What makes some people “of God” (**v.47**), in other words, are some people born that way and others not?

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

## Tuesday: 1 John 2:15-17

**Key Idea:** We must make a choice between loving the world and loving God.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Can anyone love the world and love God at the same time? Why not? How can we tell whether we love God more than we love the world? In [v.17](#), who is it that “abides forever”?

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

## Wednesday: Matthew 26:36-46

**Key Idea:** We must make a choice between obeying our own will and obeying God’s will.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Was it easy for Jesus to decide to go to the cross? Why did He decide to do it? What did Jesus say about His Father’s will in [Jn. 6:38](#)? Can we make the same choice that Jesus did?

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

## Thursday: John 7:10-24

**Key Idea:** If we truly want to do God’s will, we will understand what God’s will is.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What kind of person did Jesus say would know whether His teaching was from God? Is the person who says he loves God the same as one whose “will is to do God’s will” ([v.17](#))? Consider [Lk. 6:46](#) and [1 Jn. 5:3](#).

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

## Friday: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

**Key Idea:** If we have an obedient attitude, God will give us a chance to correct our mistakes.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What great mistake was Paul making before he learned the truth about Jesus? Did God excuse Paul’s sins merely because he did not know any better? What did God grant Paul a chance to do?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Apart from God, life is empty

However happily we may get along without God in the short run, we always find in the long run that life without God is a tiresome, unsatisfying business. The unavoidable truth is that **apart from God, life is empty**. Separated from our Creator — alienated from Him by sin — the thing that we call “life” is hardly worth the name. With Paul, we may well be moved to cry, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (**Rom. 7:24**).

After exploring every thinkable avenue of worldly fulfillment, Solomon summed it up frankly when he said, “Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun” (**Eccl. 2:11**). If we are as honest as Solomon, we are eventually forced to admit that it is God who makes life in this world worthwhile. “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil” (**Eccl. 12:13,14**). Only in a right relationship with Him can we truthfully claim that life has been good.

That is not to say that faithful Christians are the only ones who enjoy life. It is possible to disregard God and still enjoy many of the pleasant things that this life has to offer. But without a recognition of God the problems of this world have no adequate explanation — and without God the best that we can do is “eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (**1 Cor. 15:32**).

As Christians, we may be guilty of taking the goodness of life for granted. We may have forgotten how oppressive life can be apart from the blessings we enjoy in Christ. We need periodically to pause and remember the “aimless conduct” (**1 Pt. 1:18 NKJV**) from which Christ rescued us. We must never lose the ability to empathize with the man outside of the Lord who, “having no hope and without God in the world” (**Eph. 2:12**), is still bogged down in a life without ultimate profit.

This week, as we rise to meet each new day with joy and anticipation, let’s remember the millions in the world, many of whom live right around us, who are lost and struggling to believe that life is worth living. Let’s show by the way we live that Jesus Christ came “that they may have life and have it abundantly” (**Jn. 10:10**).

### Monday: Luke 12:13-21

**Key Idea:** We can come to be rich in material things and still have an empty life.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Jesus say our life does not consist of? If a person “lays up treasure for himself” but is not “rich toward God,” how would you describe that person’s wealth? His success? His happiness?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 21:31**.

## Tuesday: Romans 6:15-23

**Key Idea:** As Christians, we can see that the life of sin is a dead end street.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does Paul mean by the question, “But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed?” (v.21)? What is the “end” of those things? What contrast is drawn in v.23?

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

## Wednesday: Ecclesiastes 12:13,14

**Key Idea:** Nothing in life matters very much if we do not reverence and obey God.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What should be our most important goal in life? If we leave out that priority, does it limit how good life can be for us in the short term? What about the long term? What is the “judgment” spoken of in v.14?

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

## Thursday: Psalm 127:1,2

**Key Idea:** If God does not allow it, nothing we can do on our own will achieve success.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why can't we achieve the kind of life we want by our own efforts, without any help from God? How can we explain the fact that some people seem to be able to do this? What advice do we get in Jas. 4:13-17?

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

## Friday: 1 Corinthians 15:58

**Key Idea:** When we do God's work, we are accomplishing something that is eternally good.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is the “work of the Lord” that Paul speaks of and why is it “not in vain”? Do you think that doing the Lord's work helps us to get more out of all the other activities of life? How so?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*



## We ought to love one another as Christ has loved us

Most folks recognize the importance of loving others. The question is: in what manner should we love others? The point is especially important for those who are Christians. This week, let's meditate on the truth that *we ought to love one another as Christ has loved us*.

If anybody might be expected to demonstrate an exceptional quality of love, should it not be those who claim to be the people of Jesus Christ? Too often, however, we demonstrate something other than that. At times, we find ourselves tending toward self-righteousness and disdain for those who are "sinners." On one occasion, Jesus was in the home of a Pharisee named Simon. This man was critical of Jesus for allowing a woman with a sinful reputation to kiss his feet and anoint them with fragrant oil. So Jesus asked Simon, "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" (Lk. 7:41,42). Concerning this woman's love for him, Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven — for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little" (Lk. 7:47). We need to work on eliminating from our hearts the problem the Lord discussed with Simon.

Loving others as Christ has loved us is never more important than when we need to forgive others. The matter is put plainly in Mt. 18:21-35, where Jesus told the story of a servant who was forgiven a gigantic debt by his king but refused to forgive a much smaller debt owed to him by a fellow servant. In condemning this servant to prison, the king asked, "Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (Mt. 18:33). If we do not forgive others, God will not be willing to forgive our sins against Him (Mt. 6:14,15).

Christians are to share a special love and a unique devotion for each another. Let's think about the relationship we should have as those who are in the Lord. Especially since we have a responsibility to evangelize the community in which we live, we need to remember what the Lord said about the effect believers' love for one another can have on those who are not yet believers: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:35).

### Monday: 1 John 4:7-12

**Key Idea:** God is love.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does the word "love" mean as it is used in the New Testament? What does it mean that "God is love"? How is this different from saying that "love is God"? Can we be like God without being people of love?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 22:5.

## Tuesday: John 13:34,35

**Key Idea:** Jesus commanded us to love one another.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Since love is as old as the world, what was “new” about Jesus’ command for His disciples to love one another? What did Jesus say people would know if His disciples loved one another?

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

## Wednesday: 1 John 2:9-11

**Key Idea:** If we do not love one another, we are in darkness.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are the “darkness” and the “light” that are spoken of in this passage? What things might we be able to tell about a person’s relationship with God by observing his relationship with fellow Christians?

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

## Thursday: 1 John 3:16-18

**Key Idea:** If we love one another, we will make sacrifices for one another.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Jesus do that showed His love for us? Should we be willing to go this far for one another? Other than this, what things should we be willing to sacrifice? How should we love one another: in “word” or in “deed”? What is the difference?

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

## Friday: 1 John 4:20-5:2

**Key Idea:** If we love God, we will love God’s family.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is said about the person who says he loves God but does not love his fellow Christians? In [4:20](#), in what sense is it easier to love our fellow Christians than it is to love God Himself?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Our hearts should be in heaven

Anyone who has ever been genuinely homesick knows how the Christian ought to feel when he thinks about his or her home in heaven. It does not matter that we have never been there. We are like children born to American parents living abroad and raised hearing Dad and Mom talk about going back “home.” Home is not necessarily where a person has spent all his life: it is simply where that person’s heart is. And for those of us who are God’s people, there is no doubt that *our hearts should be in heaven*.

Heaven ought to mean a great deal more to us than it sometimes does. We live in a land of such material plenty, where life has grown so comfortable and enjoyable, it is increasingly difficult to envision anything better, much less long for it. Heaven comes to hold such little attraction for us that we are willing to trade it away for the most trifling temporal pleasures. But we ought to try to keep a better perspective on things. We ought to look at this world and its life in the light of eternal values. We ought to cherish the prospect of going to a place that truly is much better in every important way. The hope of heaven ought to be our greatest possession. Paul said it succinctly: “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” ([Col. 3:2](#)).

Peter spoke of our hope as a “living” hope: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” ([1 Pt. 1:3-5](#)). The most valuable possessions we own are those reserved in heaven for us. A day ought not to pass without our thinking of what will be ours when the Lord returns.

If only for the sake of our kids, we need to talk about heaven more than we do. We need to pray about it and sing about it. The prospect of going there should be something they can see is important to us beyond all else. There is little reason to believe that our young will put much stock in heaven if they do not see us truly valuing it. This week, let’s see if we cannot make it more real to ourselves, and hence more real to our children.

### Monday: Genesis 5:21-24

**Key Idea:** If we obey God, we can look forward to being with God.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What do you think it means that Enoch “walked with God”? Did Enoch please God? Consider [Hb. 11:5,6](#). What happened to Enoch? What would have been the best thing about what happened to him?

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

## Tuesday: Philippians 1:19-26

**Key Idea:** Going to be with Jesus is better than living in this world.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to “depart and be with Christ” (v.23). Why did Paul say that was “far better” than continuing to live in this world? As long as we live here, what is the work we should continue to do?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 22:11.

## Wednesday: John 14:1-7

**Key Idea:** Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why did Jesus say we ought not to be troubled? Whom did Jesus say we would be with in the place He was going to prepare for us? If Jesus is preparing a place for us, what kind of place must it be?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 22:12.

## Thursday: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

**Key Idea:** One day Jesus will return to take us to heaven.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How did Jesus leave the earth? Look at Ac. 1:9-11. How will He return for us? Should we be afraid of the day Jesus will come or should we look forward to it? What does 1 Thess. 4:17,18 say?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 22:13.

## Friday: Revelation 22:1-5

**Key Idea:** In heaven we will be with God, our Heavenly Father.

**Questions for Family Growth:** According to these verses, whose face will we see in heaven? Why will there be no need for any lamp or light of the sun? What should be our most important reason for wanting to go to heaven?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

## It is truth that breaks the power of evil

Throughout the coming week, let's meditate on the fact that *it is truth that breaks the power of evil*. All of the bad things in the world (and there are very many of them) are the result of some lie that Satan has persuaded someone to believe. He began trying to destroy the human race by using the weapon of deceit on Eve (**Gen. 3:1-7; 2 Cor. 11:3**), and since then he has used nothing but variations of that same weapon. Jesus said that Satan "does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (**Jn. 8:44**). Untruth is the basic tool with which the devil does his work.

Since deceit is central to the devil's character, when we lie we display a kinship to the devil himself. Just as the habit of godliness means that we're "of God," the habit of falsehood means the opposite: we are "of the devil." Jesus rebuked certain ones of His day in precisely those words: "If God were your Father, you would love me . . . Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He . . . does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires" (**Jn. 8:42-44**).

As important as truth is, it needs to be emphasized that truth must be handled carefully and with humility. It has been said that maturity consists in the balance of courage and consideration. That means we must demonstrate not only the courage to "tell it like it is" but the consideration to tell the truth in a way that is fair to the feelings of other people. We must always strive to speak "the truth in love" (**Eph. 4:15**).

God, the very embodiment of truth, fights the lying tactics of Satan with the glorious power of truth. Satan has no defense against the simple, pure, and awesome might of truth. Whenever and wherever truth's light pierces the darkness of his deception, the devil slinks away like the coward that he is. It does not take physical strength or carnal tactics to win the battle over sin. It only takes the courage of the person who will refuse to settle for anything less than what is true. Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (**Jn. 8:32**). Let's think about that!

### Monday: Genesis 3:1-7

**Key Idea:** The devil gets us to disobey God by telling us things that are not true.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Which does the devil really want: to make us happy or to destroy us? What did Jesus say about Satan in **Jn. 8:42-44**? What should we do when someone tells us we can get something good out of disobeying God?

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

## Tuesday: 1 Kings 13:1-34

**Key Idea:** When we know what God has said, we should stick with that no matter what happens.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In this story, why did the man of God lose his life? What if an angel appeared to us and said it would be all right to disregard instructions that had been given by God in the Scriptures? What did Paul say in [Gal. 1:6-9](#)?

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

## Wednesday: Acts 5:1-11

**Key Idea:** Just as God always tells us the truth, He wants us always to tell the truth to Him.

**Questions for Family Growth:** For what reasons might Ananias and Sapphira have tried to deceive their fellow Christians about the price of the land they sold? What does the word “confess” mean, and what does it have to do with telling the truth?

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

## Thursday: Acts 17:10,11

**Key Idea:** When we listen to teaching, we should study the Bible to see if the teaching is true.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What attitude or disposition did the Bereans possess to a greater degree than the people in Thessalonica? What does it mean to “search” ([v.11 NKJV](#)) the Scriptures? Can we learn what is true about the Bible without working at it?

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

## Friday: Philippians 4:8

**Key Idea:** To resist the devil’s influence, we should meditate on truth rather than falsehood.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are some things that may happen if we fill our minds with things that are not true? How can we know what is true? How can we keep our minds off of things that are not good to think about?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Choices are the stuff out of which life is made

Little things are sometimes more important than they appear. What seems today like a slight indiscretion may tomorrow turn out to have great consequences — particularly when all of our “little” choices begin to stick to one another and the “snowball effect” sets in. The plain truth is, **choices are the stuff out of which life is made**. We are what we are today because of the accumulation of all the choices we have made in the past. Every time we stood at a fork in the road and chose one path instead of the other, we set in motion a chain of events that has helped shape the total situation in which we find ourselves right now. The choices we made yesterday have made our lives today either easier or harder.

Choices are often more important than we’re willing to admit at the time we make them. And our lives as God’s people would be greatly enhanced if we would take a more responsible attitude toward our decisions. It doesn’t do any good to argue that God gave us a free will if we do not use that freedom wisely in the making of our own choices.

When a person describes what he thinks his problems are, he makes a powerful comment on his character. For example, if a person dwells mainly on things for which he denies any responsibility, we will know something about his view of life. But if he tends to be more concerned about matters in which he himself could be doing better, then we will make a somewhat different judgment about his character. With some folks, everything bad that happens is always the fault of someone else. Others, however, are more willing to accept responsibility for their lot in life. So as Christians, what about our own character? Do we take responsibility for our choices and focus on the things we are actually able to do something about?

This week, let’s consider that, although people’s external circumstances differ drastically, the thing that truly separates the wise from the foolish — and the godly from the ungodly — is what we choose to do with our circumstances. Our eternal destiny will depend on what we did when we were called upon to make choices in the midst of difficult circumstances. Do we realize the importance of our choices? Are we willing to take responsibility for them? And most important: are we ready to begin making better choices?

### Monday: Genesis 1:26-31

**Key Idea:** God made us able to choose between good and evil.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that we are made in the “image” and “likeness” of God? How does our freedom of will set us apart from the animals? What is sin, and why is it not possible for an animal to sin?

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

## Tuesday: Joshua 24:1-28

**Key Idea:** God wants us to choose what is right.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.15**, what choice did Joshua call upon the people to make, and which path did he say his own family would choose? Does it make any difference to God which choice we make? What does **Jn. 3:16,17** say about God's love for us?

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

## Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 10:12,13

**Key Idea:** On any occasion when we have sinned, we could have chosen otherwise.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is "temptation"? Do we ever have to say yes to temptation? If we do something we should not do, whose fault is it? Will God help us with our problems if we blame them on others?

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

## Thursday: 1 Samuel 15:1-23

**Key Idea:** When we make bad choices, God does not want us to make excuses.

**Questions for Family Growth:** When Saul disobeyed God, what excuse did he make in **vv.20,21**? Did God accept Saul's excuse? Today, what are some excuses we sometimes use to avoid blame for the bad things we have done?

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

## Friday: Luke 16:19-31

**Key Idea:** The lost will be lost because they chose to be.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Does it seem that Lazarus felt sorry for himself because he had it rough in life? Who was to blame for the problems the rich man had? Did the rich man go to hell by necessity or by choice?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*



## If we are not careful we may become unfaithful to God

It is amazing how far things can get out of line when we're not paying attention. If we become complacent, even the most important things in life can slip away from us. In regard to the gospel, we need to know that *if we are not careful we may become unfaithful to God*. None of us is immune to temptation and apostasy. All of us are capable of falling, so we need to exercise caution constantly and strengthen ourselves to make sure it does not happen.

Wise people suggest that we should “never say never.” Indeed, the Christian who says he would “never” commit a particular sin or lapse into a certain apostasy is speaking thoughtlessly. Under the right conditions, each of us is capable of anything. On the night of the Lord's betrayal, Peter, that stalwart disciple of Jesus, emphatically asserted that he would never forsake the Lord. “Even though they all fall away, I will not,” he said (Mk. 14:29). “And Jesus said to him, ‘Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ But he said insisted, ‘If I must die with you, I will not deny you.’ And they all said the same” (Mk. 14:30,31). It was not more than a few hours later that the soldiers arrested Jesus and led Him away to the mockery of His trial. And just as the Lord had said, Peter, along with the others, ran for their lives. “And they all left him and fled” (Mk. 14:50). Truly, we should never say never! Instead, “Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

Certainly we should not live our lives in the fear of falling away. As long as we choose to stand with the Lord, He will supply all we need to remain faithful to Him. God is “able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy” (Jd. 24). But if we should not be fearful, neither should we be foolish. We can't afford to be over-confident and take our salvation for granted.

The Hebrew writer said, “Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” (Hb. 2:1). This week, let's make it a priority to check up on ourselves. Are we growing closer to God from day to day? If not, we may be growing the other direction without realizing it. Let's make sure, at whatever cost, that we do not lose our salvation.

### Monday: Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

**Key Idea:** Some people do not remain faithful after obeying the gospel.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What kind of person was represented by the rocky ground? What kind of person did the thorny ground represent? Does God make us the way we are, or do we decide what kind of heart we're going to have?

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

## Tuesday: Hebrews 2:1-4

**Key Idea:** Becoming unfaithful is often a slow, gradual process.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to “drift away” from the gospel? What does it mean to “give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard” (NKJV)? According to **vv.2,3**, what will happen if we abandon the Lord?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 23:9.**

## Wednesday: 2 Peter 2:20-22

**Key Idea:** Turning away from the Lord is worse than never becoming a Christian at all.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are the “pollutions of the world” (NKJV)? What if, having escaped these, we go back to them? Does the Bible support the “once saved, always saved” doctrine? What are some ways we can keep ourselves from going back to the world?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 23:10,11.**

## Thursday: 2 Corinthians 13:5,6

**Key Idea:** We need to constantly check to make sure we are obeying the Lord.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How does a person “examine” or “prove” himself to see whether he is “in the faith”? Is it safe to simply assume we faithful to God? How can we be sure we are in a right relationship with the Lord?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 23:12-14.**

## Friday: 1 Corinthians 10:11-13

**Key Idea:** We need to be careful that we do not become unfaithful to God.

**Questions for Family Growth:** According to Paul in this passage, why were the Old Testament stories written for us? If we think we stand, what does it mean that we should “take heed”? When we are tempted by the devil, how can we avoid falling away from God?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 23:15,16.**

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Sometimes we suffer effects of our sins even after we are forgiven

There is one thing we can always be sure of: God is unfailingly interested in what is good for us in the long run. Because He is, there are times when He allows events to unfold in such a way that we, and those around us, learn from our mistakes the hard way. God having forgiven us, we might prefer Him to protect us from any of the painful results of our sins, but the fact is, *sometimes we suffer effects of our sins even after we are forgiven*. These consequences do not mean God has not forgiven us, but rather that there are some lessons still to be learned by us — and perhaps by others also — from the mistakes that we made.

One reason God sometimes brings upon us temporal consequences of our sins, despite our repentance, is that He knows the unbelieving world is watching. When those who claim to be loyal to God act with dishonor toward His word, the cause of truth would be hurt if God appeared to care so little about His own honor that He let His followers “get away with” showing disrespect to Him. Often, God’s chastening of His children is His way of saying to the world: unacceptable conduct will not be accepted.

This was clearly involved in the consequences of David’s sin with Bathsheba. He repented, but Nathan told him: “Because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die” (2 Sam. 12:14 NKJV). Since David was in a position of great influence, it needed to be made clear to all who were watching his example that God did not approve of the sin he had committed.

As most of us have discovered, the lessons learned in the “school of hard knocks” are some of the most important lessons in life. But looking back, most of us probably wish that we’d been willing to learn from the experience of others without having to endure such painful consequences in our own lives. By our sins, we made our much lives harder than they had to be.

So this week, let’s meditate on the fact that sin is a hard taskmaster. If we don’t want to be educated by painful experience, then we need to stay away from sin in the first place!

### Monday: Numbers 20:1-13

**Key Idea:** God sometimes brings upon us temporal consequences of our sins.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does “temporal” mean? What did Moses do that displeased God? As a consequence, what did God say Moses would not be allowed to do? What lesson should Moses have learned from this? Should the people have learned anything from it?

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

## Tuesday: 1 Samuel 15:17-31

**Key Idea:** Sometimes we must suffer consequences even after we are sorry for our sins.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Saul do that displeased God? What did Saul's actions indicate about his attitude? What did God say would be the result? Did the fact that Saul was sorry change God's mind about the consequences of his sin?

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

## Wednesday: Proverbs 1:20-33

**Key Idea:** There comes a time when it is too late to listen to good advice.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is "wisdom"? What are several different places where we can gain wisdom? What does this passage say will happen if we refuse to listen to wisdom while we have the opportunity?

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

## Thursday: Proverbs 13:15

**Key Idea:** The way of sin is a hard way to go.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are some reasons why the "way of the unfaithful is hard" (NKJV)? If we follow the devil, is he interested in doing good things for us in return? What is the devil's true intent with respect to our happiness?

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

## Friday: Hebrews 12:3-11

**Key Idea:** God chastens us for our sins because He wants us to do better.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is "chastening" or "discipline"? Why do parents chasten their children? Why does God chasten us? In practical terms, what do you think are some ways that God might chasten us?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Prayer should be an important part of our everyday lives

We all know that we should pray, and we do pray at certain times. But most of us need to pray more. **Prayer should be an important part of our everyday lives.** Communion with our Heavenly Father in prayer should be a part of the very fabric of our way of living. Our practice should be, as Paul said, to “pray without ceasing” (1 **Thess. 5:17**), or, as the Lord Himself taught, to “pray and not lose heart” (**Lk. 18:1**). We should not have a need or a concern that we do not talk to God about. And, of course, we should continually offer thanksgivings to Him for the many good things He has already done.

For many of us, the problem comes down to a problem of time. To pray as we ought would require the rearrangement of our schedules. Perhaps, like the Lord, we would have to sacrifice some sleep in order to pray, either getting up before anyone else or staying up after others have gone to bed. Whatever may be the case, we need to make the time to pray more than we do. Whatever the activities that keep us from praying, few of these come close to being as important as prayer.

We will not have the depth of spiritual maturity we desire if we spend no more time alone in intimate communion with God than most of us do. Growing strong and wise in the Lord requires regular prayer. Spiritual giants like David and Daniel were men of constant communication with God. When Daniel was commanded, on pain of death, not to pray to God anymore, the text says that “when Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously” (**Dan. 6:10**). As he had done previously! In other words, Daniel’s habits were his helpers on this difficult day. He just continued to pray as he had been doing every day for many years.

Prayer needs to be a daily custom with us, just as it was with Daniel. Yes, it will require self-discipline and a certain amount of sacrifice. But the rewards are more than worth it, and the consequences of too little prayer are not the consequences we want for ourselves or our loved ones. This week, let’s make prayer a priority in the way we live each day.

### Monday: Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 6:12

**Key Idea:** Jesus found the time to pray often and long.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Jesus do to make time for prayer? How busy was Jesus? Consider **Mk. 6:31**. If we are so busy that we have little time to pray, what are some practical things we could do to address the problem? Compared to other things, how important is prayer?

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

## Tuesday: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

**Key Idea:** We should pray “without ceasing.”

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to pray “without ceasing”? According to **v.18**, what should be one thing we emphasize in all of our praying? What should we do at times when we find that praying has become an unwelcome chore?

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

## Wednesday: Luke 18:1-8

**Key Idea:** We should be persistent in prayer.

**Questions for Family Growth:** According to **v.1**, what is the main point of the story that Jesus told? What does the word “faint” (KJV) mean? What other translations of this word can you find? Why do you think God want us to be persistent in our praying?

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

## Thursday: 1 Thessalonians 1:2,3; 2:13; 3:9,10

**Key Idea:** We should pray often for our fellow Christians.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Paul mean by “constantly mentioning you in our prayers” (**1:2**)? How often does it seem that Paul prayed for the Thessalonians? What does it mean to pray “most earnestly” (**3:10**)?

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

## Friday: Acts 12:5,12

**Key Idea:** The church should pray about its work and its needs.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **Ac. 12**, what was the problem the church in Jerusalem was praying about? Were the brethren merely praying individually in their own homes about this? What size group had met to pray for Peter?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## We need to be very careful in learning from God's word

Many of us have been raised in homes where the Bible was a familiar thing. And since there is nothing particularly new or unusual to us about the Bible, we may be guilty of taking it for granted. We may handle it too casually. The Bible, however, is nothing less than the word of the Eternal God, our Creator. Accurate knowledge of the Bible and diligent obedience to it are necessary for our salvation. ***We need to be very careful in learning from God's word.*** It would be eternally disastrous to do otherwise.

Consider what Peter said about the writings of Paul: “as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:16). Some parts of the Bible are “hard to understand.” Those who are “ignorant and unstable” tend to “twist” these passages, misusing them and making them teach what they do not actually teach. Peter’s words ought to make us more careful about studying the Bible. If we “twist” the Scriptures, we do so to our own “destruction.”

It ought to be our goal to “rightly divide” (NKJV) God’s word — that is, to handle it accurately. Being able to do so requires hard work. Paul exhorted Timothy: “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). Workers who do not need to be ashamed are those who know how to handle their tools. As God’s workers, our tool is the Bible!

As with other tools, it takes experience to handle the Bible skillfully. We get better at understanding the Bible by studying it over and over, developing our powers of understanding and discernment by using them repeatedly and learning from our mistakes along the way.

This week, let’s strive for a more sober attitude about the Scriptures. Rather than haphazardly tossing around opinions about the Bible, let’s think about the fact that our souls, and very likely the souls of others, depend on how carefully we study God’s word.

### Monday: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

**Key Idea:** If we study the Bible properly, it will show us how to be saved.

**Questions for Family Growth:** For what can the Scriptures make us “wise”? What does it mean when we say that the Bible is “inspired”? What is the Bible “profitable” for? What kind of works does it “equip” us for? What does **Psa. 19:7-11** say about the value of God’s word?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 24:7.**

## Tuesday: 2 Peter 3:14-18

**Key Idea:** If we do not study the Bible properly, it may cause us to be lost.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What would it mean to “wrest” (KJV) the Scriptures? What are some ways we might do that? Is everything about the Bible easy to understand? What kinds of passages should we be most careful about in our Bible study?

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

## Wednesday: Matthew 15:1-9

**Key Idea:** We should never let the traditions of men take the place of God’s word.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How would you define the word “tradition”? Are traditions always bad? If not, when would they be bad? Why would anyone ever teach and do the “commandments of men” rather than God’s commands?

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

## Thursday: Acts 17:10-12

**Key Idea:** We have to “search the Scriptures” to decide if the teachings we hear are true.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to “search” (NKJV) the Scriptures? What other translations of this word can you find? Why did the Bereans search the Scriptures? What does it mean that they were “noble”? What steps should we take if we want to be like these people?

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

## Friday: 2 Timothy 2:14,15

**Key Idea:** We must try to use God’s word as He intended it to be used.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How do we “rightly divide” (NKJV) the word of God? What will happen if we do not do that? Does God’s word simply mean anything we want it to mean? How can we be sure what it does mean?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*



## God wants us to consider carefully what we say about others

To say that we ought to control our tongues is to say the obvious. But actually doing something about the problem is not easy. James wrote that the tongue is “an unruly evil” (**Jas. 3:8 NKJV**), harder to tame than a wild animal. Just when we think we are making a little progress along these lines, we slip up and say something we know we should not. God knows that we struggle, but He has also provided that in every situation there will be a “way of escape” (**1 Cor. 10:13**) from temptations like the urge to say improper things. Our Father can help us do the right thing, but He expects us to make the choice to be careful.

It is said about the Lord Himself that people “marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth” (**Lk. 4:22**). And Paul wrote that we ought to say only that which “may give grace to those who hear” (**Eph. 4:29**). We can hardly claim to be a people like the Lord if our speech is characterized by a lack of graciousness.

We obviously live in a world filled with strife. Perhaps we can do little to stop the wars that rage between nations, but we can do something to make our own relationships more peaceful. Since careless words are one of the main contributors to strife, we can make great improvements in the peacefulness of our relationships by refraining from words that create needless discord.

Although it is hard, it is not impossible to keep from gossiping and talebearing. We can do it, and we need to concentrate this week (and every week) on the fact that **God wants us to consider carefully what we say about others**. So many things we say about other people are things we would refrain from saying if we simply stopped to think for a moment. After we have indulged in harmful talk it does little good to say, “Well, I just wasn’t thinking.” Before we speak, God expects us to think — and we can do this if we train ourselves to do so.

Let’s make this week one of growth in the quality of our conversations with others. If we can diminish the problem of gossip in our daily speech, we will help ourselves and we will help the congregation of which we are members.

### Monday: James 3:1-12

**Key Idea:** It is not easy to control our tongues, but God will help us to do so.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does James mean in **v.8** that the tongue “is a restless evil, full of deadly poison”? What is the problem James mentions in **vv.9,10**? What practical steps can we take to help control the tongue?

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

## Tuesday: Proverbs 11:13; 20:19

**Key Idea:** We do not need to tell everything we know about others.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **11:13**, what is a “talebearer” (NKJV)? How do you think the motives of a person who “reveals secrets” (**20:19**) might be different from those of one who “keeps a thing covered” (**11:13**)? What does it mean to be “trustworthy in spirit” (**11:13**)?

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

## Wednesday: Proverbs 26:20-22

**Key Idea:** Gossip is often the thing that keeps quarrels going.

**Questions for Family Growth:** To what is gossip compared in **vv.20,21**? What is said about it in **v.22**? Why do you think it is so hard to keep from saying things about others that should be kept private? What are some things we could do that would help us in this matter?

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

## Thursday: Proverbs 12:17-22

**Key Idea:** It is wrong to make ourselves feel good by saying bad things about others.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.18**, what does it mean that “there is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword” (NKJV)? Is it right to say things just for fun that hurt other people’s feelings? In **v.18**, what does the tongue of the wise do?

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

## Friday: Matthew 12:33-37

**Key Idea:** We will answer to God for every idle word we speak.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Jesus mean when He said that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”? In **v.36**, what are “idle words” (NKJV)? By what did Jesus say we will be either justified or condemned?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## God's word is our guide

Anyone who thinks it is always easy to know what is right has probably not had much experience making decisions. For every clear-cut situation covered by an explicit commandment of God, there are many more situations where the right thing to do is not clear, and these situations tax the wisdom of even the most sincere person.

When those tough situations arise, we sometimes consult every source of authority except the right one. We consider what our own previous practice has been. We look at what others have done in the past or are doing now. We ask the “experts.” We check what our family believes. We investigate what position “the church” has taken.

It's hard to imagine how people who are Christians could do this, but even those of us who are Christians often forget that **God's word is our guide**. That is the only authority that will never fail us, and we need to meditate on the importance of letting the Bible make our decisions for us.

Generally speaking, most of us spend too much time comparing our own practice to that of other people. Rather than soberly studying the Scriptures, determining what is right, and then taking a courageous stand on our convictions, we keep at least one eye cocked in the direction of the other fellow. We want to know how he is doing, and whether his practice compares favorably or unfavorably to our own actions.

And as if that were not bad enough, we tend to go to two extremes with our comparisons. Either we judge that our neighbor is doing better than we are and we become jealous, or we judge that we are doing better than he is and we become proud. In all of these comparisons, we tend to forget that the only thing that really matters is what God's word says.

Whether we or anybody else has been doing right or wrong up in the past, we can be sure that the Scriptures reveal the infallibly right course of action for everybody right now. Steering by an uncertain, error-prone standard will not get us to the destination we desire. Only the perfect authority of God's truth will do that. Before it's too late, let's resolve that, whatever anybody else may be doing, we will search the Scriptures to settle matters of right and wrong.

### Monday: Jeremiah 10:23

**Key Idea:** What people think is right may turn out to be wrong after all.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that “the way of man is not in himself”? What can happen to us if we always go by what someone else thinks is right? Consider **Prov. 14:12**. What is the safe standard to go by in every circumstance?

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

## Tuesday: Genesis 4:1-16

**Key Idea:** We should not compare ourselves to others and then become angry about it.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What would you say was the problem Cain had when he compared himself to his brother and then became angry about the comparison? If someone else obeys God and we do not, what should be our attitude about that?

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

## Wednesday: Luke 18:9-14

**Key Idea:** We should not compare ourselves to others and then become proud about it.

**Questions for Family Growth:** When the Pharisee compared himself to other people, what was his attitude about the comparison? How was the attitude of the tax collector different? If we obey God and someone else does not, what should be our attitude about that?

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

## Thursday: Matthew 15:1-9

**Key Idea:** The commandments of men are not a safe standard to go by.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is a “tradition”? If a group of people has been doing something in worship to God for a long time, does that make it right? Does that make it wrong? What are some things that might make a particular tradition displeasing to God?

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

## Friday: Psalm 119:9-16, 33-40, 97-104

**Key Idea:** No matter what others are doing, God’s word is always good and right and reliable.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In [v.9](#), what does it mean for a young person to “cleanse his way” (NKJV)? How does God’s word help us do that? Why should we appreciate God’s commandments, and even go so far as to love them?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## We must worship and serve God in both spirit and truth

In **Jn. 4:23,24**, it is recorded that Jesus said, “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” Surely it is important for us to be the kind of people that God is “seeking . . . to worship him.” If that is what we desire then, according to these verses, ***we must worship and serve God in both spirit and truth.***

To worship in “spirit” means that we worship genuinely and from the heart. Jesus elsewhere spoke of being “pure in heart” (**Mt. 5:8**), that is, having a heart of single-minded devotion to God. If the things we do in worship and service to God do not spring from hearts that genuinely love and desire to please Him, then we accomplish little. There are many possible “ulterior motives” for doing what God has commanded, none of which produce true worship, even when the thing that is done may be correct in its outward form. God wants the sincere involvement of our hearts.

What, then, does it mean to worship in “truth”? Would it not mean that we worship on the basis of God’s truth, doing only what He has commanded? Just as it is important to act in the right “spirit” before God, it is no less important for the action itself to be what God has said pleases Him.

God is our Creator. It is His prerogative to set the terms of our relationship with Him, and He has the right to say how we may worship and serve Him. The Bible contains more than one example of people who did things God had not commanded and received His condemnation, even though the things were done with sincere motives. King David’s first attempt to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem is a case in point (**2 Sam. 6:1-11**).

Neither of these elements of true worship — spirit and truth — can be ignored without dreadful consequences. Let’s consider that principle this week. As we live and work and study our Bibles, let’s remember to do the right thing, but let’s also remember to do it with the right heart. Those who worship God must worship “in spirit and truth.”

### Monday: Acts 10:24-26

**Key Idea:** Being sincere, while doing the wrong thing, is not enough to please God.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Cornelius do that was wrong? Why do you think he did it? What do you think his attitude was? Did God accept his action just on the basis of his attitude? What did Peter say to him?

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

## Tuesday: Revelation 2:2-5

**Key Idea:** Doing the right thing, while having the wrong attitude, is not enough to please God.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What good things did the Lord say about the Ephesians? What was wrong with this church about which so much good was said? How important is it to love God genuinely? Consider [Mt. 22:37,38](#).

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 25:4,5](#).

## Wednesday: Philippians 1:9-11

**Key Idea:** We must have all three: love, knowledge, and discernment.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is “discernment”? What is the difference between knowledge and discernment? Are there people who have love without knowledge or discernment? What does [Hb. 5:14](#) say about the training of our discernment?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 25:6,7](#).

## Thursday: Ephesians 4:15

**Key Idea:** We should speak the truth, and we should speak it in love.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What happens if we speak the truth but we have no love? What happens if we have love but we don't communicate the truth clearly? Practically speaking, how can we learn to have both truth and love?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 25:8-10](#).

## Friday: John 4:19-26

**Key Idea:** We should worship in spirit, and we should worship in truth.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is “worship”? What is the difference between worshipping in “spirit” and worshipping in “truth”? What kind of worshipers did Jesus say worship in both spirit and truth? How can we improve our balance between spirit and truth?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 25:11,12](#).

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Jesus wants to forgive us — and help us outgrow the need to be forgiven

It is a great mistake for us to think of God's plan of salvation as a mere insurance plan. We should never think God gave His Son simply to protect us from the consequences of our sins. The fact is, Jesus lived and died to save us from our sins themselves. *Jesus wants to forgive us — and help us outgrow the need to be forgiven.*

Just as God delivered Israel from physical bondage in Egypt, God delivers us from spiritual bondage to sin. We could not have delivered ourselves; it had to be God who redeemed us from our slavery to sin. That is why the Bible uses the word “salvation” to describe what has happened to us in Christ. We have been “saved” in the sense of having been “rescued.” Thanks to God, we have “escaped” the bondage in which we were held. Peter speaks of this when he says we have “escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire” (2 Pt. 1:4).

We need to understand, however, that God redeemed us with a definite goal or purpose in His mind. In the verse cited above, Peter wrote that we have been given “precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature.” God set us free from sin that we might be free to become conformed to His own character. Our Father's purpose is nothing less than the complete renovation of our being. He desires to heal the damage done by sin and make us, once again, the pure and holy beings He created us to be.

It is through God's power that we have been redeemed from our past sins, and it is also through His power that He intends to redeem us from sin in the present. Paul said, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age” (Tit. 2:11,12).

The plan God has devised to save us is for the purpose of renewing us in His own image, as well as rescuing us from our punishment. As Christians, we are involved in the process of being transformed “from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18). It's important that we make progress toward that glory right now. Let's think about that this week.

### Monday: Romans 6:1-7

**Key Idea:** When we are baptized, we are raised to walk in newness of life.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is baptism a picture or representation of? What is the “old self” (v.6) that is crucified with Christ? What does it mean to “walk in newness of life” (v.4)? What if we do not, as Christians, live that kind of life? What did Jesus say in Mt. 7:21?

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

## Tuesday: Romans 6:8-14

**Key Idea:** We should not let sin control us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does Paul mean when he says, “consider yourselves dead to sin” (v.11)? Is it possible in this life to be sinlessly perfect? If not, is it possible for us to keep sin from “reigning” (v.12) in us? How can we do that?

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

## Wednesday: Romans 6:15-18

**Key Idea:** We should let righteousness control us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In v.16, how can we tell whose “slaves” we really are? In vv.17,18, what change takes place when we obey the gospel? As Christians, can we continue to live any way we wish?

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

## Thursday: Romans 6:19-23

**Key Idea:** We should let ourselves be set free from sin.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does Paul mean by saying “present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification” (v.19)? If we were to continue to live in sin, what would we get out of it, according to v.21?

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

## Friday: Romans 8:5-11

**Key Idea:** We will think and act righteously if Christ lives in us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In v.5, what is the difference between the righteous and the sinful? What does it mean that “the Spirit of God dwells in you” (v.9)? According to vv.10,11, what will happen if God’s Spirit dwells within us?

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

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com



## Doing the right thing does not have to be burdensome

Nobody likes a complainer. And when we hear people complaining about doing the things God wants us to do, we are tempted to tell them that if they can't do what God asks without complaining, then they ought to just forget about doing it at all. Sometimes that advice might be appropriate — but we need to be careful not to leave a false impression. It is not as though the only two alternatives are either (1) doing the right thing and disliking it, or (2) not doing the right thing at all. There happens to be a third alternative, and God expects us to pursue it.

***Doing the right thing does not have to be burdensome.*** We can learn to do what God wants and do it with the right attitude. We can be cheerful rather than grudging about obeying God's commands. We do not have to be at the mercy of our feelings. We have it within us to subject our feelings to God's will, so that we grow in our ability to love the things God wants us to do.

One measure of maturity is the ability to subordinate our feelings to our values. We understand, for example, the immaturity of the person who hears his alarm clock go off, rolls over in bed, and says to himself "If I can't get up and enjoy it, then I just won't get up at all." It is no less immature spiritually to do only those things that we feel like doing. Sometimes our values tell us to do things that are worth doing, even if we don't feel like it at the moment.

Certainly, the example of Jesus' submission to His Father's will should help us with our own obedience. Going to the cross was neither easy nor pleasant. Speaking of His death, He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!" (**Lk. 12:50**). But even when it was difficult, Jesus took delight in doing the will of His Father. "My food," He said, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work" (**Jn. 4:34**).

This week let's think of ways we can improve our thinking in regard to our feelings. Let's remember that feelings may fluctuate for many reasons, but our determination to obey God should remain steady. Because we love Him, we must say yes to His will — not only when it is easy, but also when it is hard.

### Monday: Matthew 11:28-30

**Key Idea:** Jesus wants to make our burden lighter, not heavier.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that Jesus is "gentle and lowly in heart"? What did Jesus mean when He said, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light"? If we obey God, will life be easier or harder? In what ways is it easier? What are some ways it might be harder?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 25:18.**

## Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

**Key Idea:** We should obey God cheerfully, not grudgingly.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to do a thing “grudgingly” (NKJV) or “under compulsion” (ESV)? Is it hypocritical to do what is right when we don’t feel like it? If we don’t feel cheerful about doing God’s will at a particular moment, what should we do?

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

## Wednesday: Psalm 119:14-16, 33-35, 46-48

**Key Idea:** God’s commandments ought to give us joy.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How can we learn to “rejoice” and “delight” in God’s laws? If God’s commandments seem unpleasant to us, where does the problem lie? Has God given us laws and restrictions on our behavior just to make us unhappy?

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

## Thursday: Psalm 40:8

**Key Idea:** Obeying the will of God ought to give us joy.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did David mean when he said, “Your law is within my heart”? What did he say about doing God’s will? What are some ways we can learn to find joy in doing what God wants us to do?

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

## Friday: 1 John 5:3

**Key Idea:** If we love God, His commandments will not be burdensome.

**Questions for Family Growth:** According to this verse, what will we do if we love God? What does “burdensome” mean? If God’s requirements sometimes seem burdensome, what should we do? How does our love for God keep His commandments from being burdensome?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Our relationships with fellow Christians should be Christlike

For Christians, Jesus is the supreme example to follow, no matter what area of life we are considering. When we study His life, we should be eager to find out how He conducted Himself in the many situations He encountered, and when we study His teaching, we should be looking for information about how we should deal with whatever we have to deal with.

This week, let's look at the Lord's life and teaching with a specific goal in mind. Let's see what we can learn about how we should relate to one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord's family. In everything else, we should want to be Christlike, so it stands to reason that *our relationships with fellow Christians should be Christlike*. We need to think about what's involved in that.

For this study, let's think of Jesus' fellow Jews as His "brethren" and the Gentiles as those who would have been "unbelievers" to Him. Granted, the Jewish people were going to have to repent, just like the Gentiles, in order to enter the kingdom, so from that standpoint, all the people that Jesus dealt with were unbelievers. But Jesus was a Jew, and the Jewish people were on the inside of a covenant with God that the Gentiles were not a part of, so from that viewpoint we can think of the Jews as Jesus' brethren. How He related to the Gentiles would be a good study for another time, but for this week, let's see what we can learn about how Jesus dealt with His "brethren" — and what He taught about how we should relate to our brethren in His church today.

What we will find is that Jesus calls us to have a different kind of relationship with one another than people in the world have among themselves. Love may be the most obvious example, since Jesus taught that we should love one another as He has loved us. But there are other applications we can think about as well. In each case, Jesus calls us to higher ground. In the way we relate to our brethren, we are to show the world a different way for human beings to relate to one another.

Ultimately, there is nothing that impacts our work of spreading the gospel any more than the way Christians treat each other. So let's spend this week learning how we can better relate to our "siblings" in the Lord's family. The Lord Himself has some wonderful things to teach us about this.

### Monday: Luke 4:16

**Key Idea:** Just as Jesus went to the synagogue, we should be eager to study and worship together.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What do we learn from this text about the frequency with which Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath? Although the Jewish practices of Jesus' day are no longer in effect, in what ways should His example serve as an example for us today?

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

## Tuesday: John 13:34,35

**Key Idea:** We should love one another with the kind of love that Jesus exemplified.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What was “new” about the commandment the Lord gave to His disciples? How was the love He taught them to have for one another different from the kinds of love that are known in the world? What did Jesus say would result from their showing this love?

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

## Wednesday: John 8:3-11

**Key Idea:** We should encourage one another, especially when someone has fallen into sin.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Did Jesus condone or minimize the seriousness of what the woman had done? In [v.11](#), what word did He use to describe her deed? In regard to this woman's future, what encouragement did He give to her?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 25:26](#).

## Thursday: Ephesians 4:31,32

**Key Idea:** We should eagerly and generously forgive one another.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In this passage, what motivation are we given to forgive our fellow Christians? Also read [Col. 3:12,13](#). Just as Jesus' concept of love is different, how is His concept of forgiveness different than what is known in the world?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 25:27](#).

## Friday: John 17:20,21

**Key Idea:** For the Lord's sake, we should strive for unity with our fellow Christians.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What was Jesus' prayer for those who would believe in Him through the teaching of the apostles? In [v.21](#), what did He say would result from the unity of His followers? Without this unity, what can we expect to happen to the work of evangelism?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 25:28](#).

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## God blesses those who turn their hearts toward Him

In **Psalm 1**, we have a delightful description of the godly person's life. He is "like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers" (v.3). In contrast, "the wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away" (v.4). In this psalm, which was very likely intended to introduce the entire Book of Psalms, we should be impressed with the fact that the path of righteousness and the path of wickedness lead to very different consequences. The choice of our path is a very important decision.

As **Psalm 1** teaches, along with many other texts throughout the Bible, **God blesses those whose hearts are turned toward Him**. Having given us a will that is free to accept Him or reject Him, God will not make our choice for us. The decision is ours. But what great things hinge on our decision! If we say yes to God, we open ourselves up to His blessings, both in this life and in eternity, but if we say no, we cut ourselves off from those very same blessings.

The other side of God's goodness toward the obedient is His severity toward those who persist in rebellion. Those who refuse His offer of fellowship will not only suffer the deprivation of certain blessings in the here and now, but they will face eternal condemnation at the judgment. "Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish" (vv.5,6).

It is foolish for us to suppose that God is too gracious to punish sin or that His love is ultimately going to save everybody. No, God's grace toward the penitent is matched by His condemnation of the impenitent, those who reject the terms of God's pardon. We need to strive for a comprehensive and balanced concept of God in our minds, never minimizing the seriousness of what is going to happen if we don't respond faithfully to His goodness.

This week, let's think about the importance of life's greatest decision: will we submit to God or reject Him? Let's be warned by the picture of the wicked in **Psalm 1**, but in that same passage, let's be encouraged by the blessing and happiness of the one whose "delight is in the law of the LORD."

### Monday: Romans 11:22

**Key Idea:** God's character contains within it both "goodness" and "severity."

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is the meaning of God's "goodness" (NKJV)? How would we define His "severity"? What determines which aspect of God's character we see in our personal relationship with Him? What did Paul teach in **Rom. 2:4,5**?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 26:1**.

## Tuesday: Romans 2:4-8

**Key Idea:** Our hearts respond to God with either reverent obedience or rebellious self-will.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In regard to God's will, what are the only two choices we can make? Is our choice determined for us by God or did God give us the freedom to choose for ourselves? In [vv.6-8](#), what are the eternal consequences of our choice?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 26:2](#).

## Wednesday: Psalm 1:1-6

**Key Idea:** We will have lives of blessedness or emptiness, depending on our decision about God.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In this text, what kind of life does the "blessed" man have? What choices has he made in regard to God? Do the blessings of godliness only have to do with this life or do they also have to do with eternity? What does Paul say in [Gal. 6:7-9](#)?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 26:3-12](#).

## Thursday: 2 Corinthians 5:10

**Key Idea:** In the end, we will be judged by God and receive a destiny consistent with our decision.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Whom did Paul say must appear before the judgment seat of Christ? At that time, what is it that will be judged: our intentions or our actual deeds? What did Paul mean when he said that each one will receive "what is due"?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 26:13-16](#).

## Friday: Deuteronomy 30:19,20

**Key Idea:** As we make life's great decision, God urges us to choose the way of life and not death.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In this text, who was speaking and who was the audience? What was the occasion? Judging from [vv.19,20](#), does it make any difference to God whether we say yes or no to Him? What did Jesus urge His hearers to do in [Mt. 7:13,14](#)?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 26:17](#).

Gary Henry — [WordPoints.com](#)

## We should be grateful for the spiritual help that others give us

Sometimes we resent it when others try to help us do better. Instead, *we should be grateful for the spiritual help that others give us*. None of us is objective enough to see every weakness we have, and we need the perspective that our friends and loved ones can provide, so we can become aware of problems that need to be fixed. It is a good thing — a thing to be thankful for — anytime someone cares enough about us to try to help us be closer to God.

In fact, it is a good thing (for us, anyway) when even an enemy tells us the truth about ourselves. If what is said is true, we can profit by it even if it was said maliciously. A person handing out criticism may, despite his evil intent, be telling the truth. Indeed, a person will sometimes tell us more of the truth about ourselves when he is mad (and throws caution to the wind) than when he is not.

But whatever the source of the criticism, as God's people we will always want to be looking for any help that we can profit by. As far as the good that we may receive is concerned, valid criticism is valid criticism, period. We need to be big enough to admit the truth wherever it comes from. Several of the proverbs make this point. One such passage is **Prov. 27:5,6**: "Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." The help that a friend gives may sometimes feel more like a "wound," but we would be foolish not to receive it humbly and profit from it.

As Christians, we are more fortunate than we know to have people who love us. In God's family, we are blessed to be surrounded by brothers and sisters who will not only try to help us, but who will attempt to do it in the very best way possible. Rather than resenting the "meddling" others do in our lives, why can't we try this week to have a nobler attitude? Why can't we focus our attention on the advantage that others give us by helping us to see ourselves as we really are.

Let's make this a week of significant spiritual growth, one in which we seek out the help and advice of those who know us well. Together, we can do a better job in the Lord's work than we could individually. God has made help available to us in a variety of ways. Let's be glad for it!

### Monday: Hebrews 12:9-11

**Key Idea:** Parents who help us see and overcome our faults are a blessing.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does this text teach us about the attitude we should have toward our parents' discipline? What is the purpose of correction and chastening? What are fathers commanded to do in passages like **Eph. 6:4**?

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

## Tuesday: Hebrews 13:7,17

**Key Idea:** Elders who help us see and overcome our faults are a blessing.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that elders “are keeping watch over your souls” (v.17)? How can we make their work a joy? What are some reasons why our elders in the local congregation might be the very best people to get constructive criticism from?

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

## Wednesday: Acts 20:17-20

**Key Idea:** Preachers who help us see and overcome our faults are a blessing.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In v.20, what did Paul say he had “kept back” (NKJV) from his fellow Christians in Ephesus? Did people always appreciate Paul’s words or take his advice? What question did he ask the Galatian Christians in [Gal. 4:16](#)?

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

## Thursday: Proverbs 27:5,6; 28:23

**Key Idea:** Friends who help us see and overcome our faults are a blessing.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In 27:6, why would a friend ever “wound” us? Which is better: a friend who always tells us what we want to hear or one who tells us what we need to hear? Why do you think it is so hard to accept the criticism of a friend?

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

## Friday: Galatians 6:1,2

**Key Idea:** We all ought to care enough about each other to help one another obey God.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is a “trespass” (NKJV)? In practical terms, how do we go about trying to “restore” a person who has disobeyed God? What can we do if we try to restore someone and they tell us to mind our own business?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*



## We ought to learn from the example of God's faithful people in the Bible

It's always interesting and enjoyable to think about the characters who are portrayed in the Bible. The more we learn about them, the more fascinating they become. But the point of studying these heroes of the faith is not merely to enjoy the stories; it's to profit from their teaching. ***We ought to learn from the example of God's faithful people in the Bible.*** These people can actually help us to do a better job of serving God.

The Hebrew writer gives us this encouragement: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (**Hb. 12:1,2**). In this text, the "cloud of witnesses" refers to all those faithful people in the past who have lived obediently before God and gone on to their reward. What they did, we can do also — and they are urging us to keep going forward.

It should help us to understand that the people in the stories of the Bible were real people, and not just imaginary heroes in a fictional presentation. These people lived long ago, but they lived in the same world we live in. They were not perfect, and many of them struggled with serious problems in their lives, but they learned to make the choice to serve God faithfully — and there is no reason why we can't make the same choice.

One thing we learn when we study the individuals in the Bible is that God's will is possible — it is "doable." To be sure, God often requires things that involve some difficulty, for He loves us too much to protect us from hard experiences. But the men and women we read about in the Bible show us that we can do God's will if we take it one step at a time, as they did.

As we go through this week, let's pause from time to time and think how we can use the stories of God's faithful people long ago to strengthen our faith as we live in the present day. If we faithfully obey the Lord as they did, one day we will go to be with the Lord as they have!

### Monday: Genesis 22:1-14

**Key Idea:** Abraham is a great example of faith.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In this story, what was it that God told Abraham to do? Even though he did not understand everything about God's command, why did Abraham trust God? How can we learn to trust God more when we face tough decisions?

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

## Tuesday: Genesis 45:1-15

**Key Idea:** Joseph is a great example of forgiveness.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What had Joseph's brothers done to him? What do you suppose Joseph's feelings might have been concerning his brothers' treatment of him? What does it mean to forgive someone? Why is it hard to forgive others?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 27:1](#).

## Wednesday: Exodus 3:1-12

**Key Idea:** Moses is a great example of leadership.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What was the great work God wanted Moses to do? Did Moses want to do it at first? Why do you think he decided to do it anyway? Thinking about the characteristics of Moses, what kind of person makes a good leader in God's work today?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 27:2](#).

## Thursday: 1 Samuel 17:31-54

**Key Idea:** David is a great example of courage.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How would you define courage? Why did it take so much courage for David to do what he did? What was the thing that gave David his great courage? What are some situations that require us to have courage today?

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

## Friday: John 13:1-20

**Key Idea:** Jesus is our perfect example in all things.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Jesus do for His disciples in this particular story? What practical lesson was He teaching? If we want to follow Jesus' example, what are some ways we can serve others? Consider [Gal. 6:2](#).

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## God wants us to be lights in the world

This week, let's think about the fact that *God wants us to be lights in the world*. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, 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. 5:14-16). And Paul wrote that we should be "blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).

If we let our light shine as we should, God will be glorified (1 Pt. 4:11). There is an inherent attractiveness to the truth, and if we live and practice God's truth, others will be drawn to its goodness. If we serve others in the strength that God supplies, those who are served will be moved by love and gratitude to glorify God.

Someone has aptly said, "A Christian is someone who has met one." The power of a truly Christ-like life is a considerable force. Confronted with the desirability of the life of a person who is genuinely walking with the Lord, many people would be pulled in the direction of obeying the gospel themselves. But sadly, most people in the world have never personally encountered anything but inferior examples and cheap imitations of what a Christian ought to be. They see nothing in the life of such "Christians" that they cannot do without. But if they ever met a real Christian, the story might be different. It is up to us to see that none of our acquaintances arrive at the judgment day without having seen an example of the very best that life in Christ can be.

Sometimes we fail to set the right example because we think our actions are so "little" they won't make any difference. But that is looking at it in the wrong light. No matter how "little" our actions may be, God can use them for good. Our example may have more impact than we think.

We need to meditate on the power of the gospel, and the power of a life that really takes the gospel seriously. Let's remember how critical our example can be in the spread of the gospel and let our lights shine. If we are the people we should be and can be, others will be drawn to the Lord and souls will be saved by Him.

### Monday: Genesis 6:5-22

**Key Idea:** We can be faithful to God even if the world around us has forgotten God.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How evil had the world become in Noah's day? In contrast to those around him, what kind of man was Noah? In 2 Pt. 2:5 it says that Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (NKJV). What does that mean?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 27:5.

## Tuesday: Matthew 5:13-16

**Key Idea:** Jesus taught us to be an influence for good in the world.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are the purposes served by salt? In what ways should our actions be the “salt of the earth”? What are some ways that we can be the “light of the world”? What will be the result when others see our good works?

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

## Wednesday: Matthew 9:35-38

**Key Idea:** We need to be laborers in God’s work.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is the “harvest” that Jesus spoke of? What do we as “laborers” do in this harvest? In **v.36**, what attitude did Jesus have toward the many people who needed the gospel?

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

## Thursday: 1 Peter 2:11,12

**Key Idea:** We should live honorable lives that are above reproach.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that we are “sojourners and exiles” in the world? What does it mean to have our “conversation honest” (KJV)? What should we do about accusations made against us?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 27:8.**

## Friday: Acts 8:1-4

**Key Idea:** Even if we are persecuted, we should still spread God’s word.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why did many of the Christians have to leave Jerusalem? Where did they go? In **v.4**, what did these Christians do wherever they went? What is the application of this to us today?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 27:9.**

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## It is better to do what is right than to do what is easy

Here is a good thought for the week: *it is better to do what is right than to do what is easy.* Sometimes, of course, a thing may be both right and easy — but very often the right thing is not easy to do, and at such times a choice has to be made. When difficult choices arise, we need to be people who have disciplined our wills to do as we ought, however hard that may be.

Like water which seeks a lower level, we all seem to have within us a drive for comfort and ease. When we do “what comes naturally,” we often find that what comes naturally is the thing that is easiest and requires the least discomfort. Doing the easy thing is not wrong in itself, but always following the urge to be comfortable is a dangerous thing. We need to be capable of enduring discomfort for the sake of righteousness. Sometimes real goodness and growth require us to move out of our comfort zone.

Jesus, of course, is our supreme example. To say that He had a “difficult” job to do would be an understatement. We can hardly imagine the difficulty of His ordeal in Gethsemane, the mockery of His trials through the night, and then His crucifixion the next day. But presented with challenging circumstances, Jesus chose to do His Father’s will — and we can make the same choice.

Self-discipline is the consistent ability to choose the best course of action, and it is an ability most of us could use more of. Sometimes we have to choose between good and outright evil. But more often our choice is between good, better, and best. A commitment to the lordship of Christ means we must choose the best, even over the good and the better.

In the long run, of course, doing the Lord’s will always turns out to have been the easiest thing. God’s commands are “not burdensome” (1 Jn. 5:3). Doing anything other than what the Lord wants always ends up being more difficult than obedience would have been. Despite his lying promises of ease and joy, the devil is a hard taskmaster, but Jesus was telling the truth when He said, “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mt. 11:30). When we side with the devil in this debate, we are being very shortsighted.

### Monday: Genesis 6:11-22

**Key Idea:** We can obey God, even when it is not easy.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What was the thing God commanded Noah to do, and why would it have been difficult to accomplish? What do you think people might have said about Noah while he was building the ark?

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

## Tuesday: Genesis 22:1-14

**Key Idea:** We can make sacrifices for God, even when it is not easy.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What sacrifice did God tell Abraham to make, and why would that have been difficult to comply with? What should we do when we do not understand why God wants us to do a particular thing?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 27:11](#).

## Wednesday: Genesis 39:1-23

**Key Idea:** We can resist temptation, even when it is not easy.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What was the temptation that Joseph faced, and why would it have been difficult to resist? How old might Joseph have been when he faced this difficulty? Why did he do as he did in this situation?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 27:12](#).

## Thursday: Daniel 6:1-24

**Key Idea:** We can stand up for what is right, even when it is not easy.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What right thing did Daniel have to stand up for, and why would it have been difficult to do so? What is the worst punishment any human being could bring upon us, and how does that compare to God's punishment? Consider [Mt. 10:28](#).

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 27:13](#).

## Friday: Matthew 26:36-46

**Key Idea:** We can give of ourselves for others, even when it is not easy.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Jesus do for mankind, and why would that have been difficult? Did Jesus have to do what He did or did He do it voluntarily? Consider [Phil. 2:8](#) and [Hb. 5:8](#). How did Jesus find the strength He needed?

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

Gary Henry — [WordPoints.com](#)

## By studying what Jesus said and did, we can learn what God is like

In **Jn. 1:18**, the Scripture says, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” Our God is an unseen God, and a God who is in many ways higher than our understanding. His character and will would be unfathomable to us if He did not reveal Himself to us. But that is precisely what He has done. Beginning long ago with the prophets and continuing down to the time when He sent His Son into the world, God has been disclosing Himself to mankind.

In His Son, Jesus Christ, God has given the full and final revelation of who He is and what He wills for us. Jesus is “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (**Hb. 1:3**). According to **Jn. 1:18**, Jesus has “declared” (NKJV) God. The Greek word here for “declare” is the same word from which we get our word “exegesis” (an explanation or interpretation). It is Jesus Christ who “explains” God to us in terms we can understand. The ESV brings out the meaning well: with regard to God, Jesus has “made him known.”

In **Jn. 14:8-10**, Philip, one of the apostles, asked Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus replied, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.”

**By studying what Jesus said and did, we can learn what God is like.** This is an astounding thought. We can learn our Creator not only in theoretical terms, but also in very personal terms. We can come to know Him and love Him. We can emulate Him and mold our characters to His. We can learn to think and act as He would if He were in our situation.

Perhaps we have believed these truths for so long they have become familiar and ordinary. If so, we need to go back and study Jesus with fresh eyes. It is marvelous that the God who created us has come into our world and revealed Himself! It will do us good to meditate on that this week.

### Monday: John 1:1-18

**Key Idea:** God shows Himself to us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Who is the “Word”? Why would He be called that? What does it mean that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (**v.14**). If no one “has ever seen God” (**v.18**), how can we get to know Him?

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

## Tuesday: John 5:19-29,30

**Key Idea:** Jesus did only what God wanted Him to do.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Jesus mean when He said, “I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me” (v.30)? Judging from this statement, why is it so important for us to study the examples of what Jesus did in His life?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 27:17.

## Wednesday: John 14:18-24

**Key Idea:** Jesus taught only what God wanted Him to teach.

**Questions for Family Growth:** According to v.24, when we hear Jesus’ teaching whose word are we actually hearing? According to v.23, what will we do if we truly love Jesus, and what will Jesus and His Father do?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 27:18.

## Thursday: John 14:1-11

**Key Idea:** When we read what Jesus was like, we learn what God is like.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In v.9, what did Jesus say about the question that Philip had asked? In v.6, what did Jesus mean when He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”?

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

## Friday: John 13:1-20

**Key Idea:** Jesus gives us a perfect example to follow.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why were the apostles surprised that Jesus would wash their feet? What did Jesus mean when He said, “I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you” (v.15)?

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

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## Like Jesus, our aim should be to serve, not to be served

In **Mt. 20:28**, Jesus said, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” *Like Jesus, our aim should be to serve, not to be served.* The important thing in life is not whether we are getting what we think is our due from others, but whether we are emptying ourselves in meeting the needs of those around us. Life is about giving, not getting. Did not Jesus say “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (**Ac. 20:35**)?

The goal of life is not to see how well rested we can be at the end. It is not to see how many of our resources we can have in reserve when life is over. Certainly, we must be good stewards of our resources, using them wisely so as to get the most out of them for the longest time. But God blesses us as He does in order that we might use His blessings in service. Paul said, “I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls” (**2 Cor. 12:15**).

Selfishness is at the very heart of sin. Contrary to the dictates of love, which always prompt us to act in the best interests of others, selfishness turns our attention inward. It urges us to concentrate on getting others to do what we prefer them to do. In a completely sinful world, life would be one long struggle to bend everybody else to our own will.

In the world around us, competition is the norm, and often the competition is vicious. The main thought in the minds of many people is that they must get what they want — by any means necessary — because there is only so much of what people need in this world and a person can't afford to let someone else get his share. Whatever “it” may be, if you get “it” then I will have to do without. And that is unthinkable. So I must look out for myself first, and you must take what is left over.

But Jesus came to redeem us from that kind of selfish seeking. He taught us that we do the Father's will by denying self and stooping to make servants of ourselves for the sake of the other person's needs. All through this week, let's consider the importance of servanthood. Paul wrote, “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (**Gal. 6:2**). Let's look for ways to bear someone else's burden.

### Monday: Matthew 20:20-28

**Key Idea:** The important thing in life is serving others, not being served.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What request did the mother of James and John make on their behalf? What was wrong with this request? According to Jesus, what is true greatness? Why did Jesus say He came to earth?

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

## Tuesday: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

**Key Idea:** It is a privilege to render service as a follower of Christ.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.12**, what does the word “ministry” (NKJV) mean? What did Paul mean when he said, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (NKJV)?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 27:22**.

## Wednesday: Matthew 7:12

**Key Idea:** We ought to do for others whatever we would want them to do for us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why do you think this verse is sometimes called the “Golden Rule”? To whom should we render service: is it only the people we like as friends? What did Jesus say about love in **Mt. 5:43-48**?

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

## Thursday: Mark 6:30-44

**Key Idea:** Other people’s needs are more important than our own comfort.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why had Jesus and the disciples gone across the Sea of Galilee? What did they find when they arrived at the place where they were going? What was Jesus’ attitude about the needs of the multitude?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 28:1**.

## Friday: Luke 10:25-37

**Key Idea:** We show love for others by serving their needs.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why did Jesus tell the story of the “Good Samaritan” to the lawyer? What question had this man asked Jesus? What was the point of the story that Jesus intended the man to get? How can others tell if we truly love our neighbor?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 28:2**.

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Many good blessings come from truly believing in God

We need to believe that believing is in our best interests. *Many good blessings come from truly believing in God*, and we can be thankful that God’s plan of salvation involves such things that make this life better, as well as give us the hope of heaven. Unfortunately, we sometimes think we can be happy now or happy in eternity, but not both. Yet Paul said that “godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). God’s plan gives us the best life in this world and an even better one in eternity.

The apostle Peter wrote concerning our faith: “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). The salvation of our souls is, of course, the ultimate “outcome” of our faith. But even before we get to heaven, real faith results in the ability to “rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.” Clearly, good things come from believing.

Most people observe sooner or later that “trust” (which is what “faith” means) is a necessary part of the character of the joyful person. The cynic, the doubter, and the distruster never drink very deeply of the goodness of life. It’s only those who are willing to open up and trust others that experience joy. If that is true in human relationships, how much more important is the willingness to trust God.

As we make our way through the various activities of this week, let’s observe how many ways faith can help us. Let’s look for projects that we will do a better job on if we have genuine faith in God. True belief in God is a wonderfully practical thing — there are benefits of faith that we have never tapped. Let’s learn more this week about how the faith God wants us to have is productive of the good life.

### Monday: Romans 15:13

**Key Idea:** Joy and peace come from true faith.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does Paul say God can fill us with “in believing”? What is joy? How would you say that joy is different from happiness? What is peace? How does faith help us to have these things?

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

## Tuesday: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4

**Key Idea:** Diligence in our work comes from true faith.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why did Paul say he was thankful for in the Thessalonians' lives? What three things did he say he remembered about them? What do you think the "work of faith" would be?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 28:4](#).

## Wednesday: Hebrews 11:24-26

**Key Idea:** A willingness to sacrifice comes from true faith.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Moses do "by faith"? What are some reasons why would it have been hard for Moses to give up what he did? What was most important to him? How did Moses' faith help him to sacrifice for God?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 28:5](#).

## Thursday: Hebrews 11:32-40

**Key Idea:** Strength and courage come from true faith.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In this passage, what are some of the amazing things people did in the Old Testament? What does it mean that they did these things "by faith"? How does faith help us to have courage?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 28:6](#).

## Friday: Ephesians 3:11,12

**Key Idea:** Confidence before God comes from true faith.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does this expression mean: "boldness and access [to God] with confidence"? Should we be afraid of God? Why not? What does [1 Jn. 4:17-19](#) say? How are love and faith tied together?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 28:7](#).

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## The local church is where Christians worship and work together

In addition to the individual aspect of Christianity, there is a “together” part that is no less a component of God’s design. It is important for us to understand and practice the truth of God’s word with respect to the local church, the congregational relationship that God has provided for our edification (**Hb. 10:24,25**). Being a Christian is not merely a status to be enjoyed; it is a work to be done. Some of this work is done individually, but some of it is done collectively. *The local church is where Christians worship and work together.*

In the familiar words of **Mt. 16:18**, Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The church in this sense is made up of all the saved and is not limited to any particular place or time. This is the Lord’s church in a “universal” sense, and Christ only promised to build one such church. Having built it, He is the head of it (**Eph. 1:22,23**).

But when we turn to passages like **Phil. 1:1**, we find Paul the apostle writing to “all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons.” Here is a group of Christians meeting for worship and working together in a particular locality. These saints constituted the local church in Philippi. And like all such groups elsewhere, these Christians needed to understand God’s will for the “together” aspect of their lives in Christ. As a local church, they needed to understand the nature of their relationship as God intended it — and then practice the truth about that relationship.

Paul commended the saints who made up the church in Thessalonica for their “work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (**1 Thess. 1:3**). They were Christians devoted not only to the Lord individually; they had a serious commitment to their responsibilities as a local church. Paul said that “the word of the Lord sounded forth” (**1 Thess. 1:8**) as a result of their work. So it should be with every local congregation today.

This week, as we study God’s word, let’s remind ourselves of the importance of the church of Jesus Christ, both universally and locally. Let’s enjoy working and worshipping together!

### Monday: Matthew 16:18

**Key Idea:** Jesus Christ promised to build just one church.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Upon what “rock” did Jesus say He would build His church? What did He say would not prevail against His church? What does the word “church” mean? In your own words, what is the church which the Lord built?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 28:8.**

## Tuesday: Ephesians 1:22,23

**Key Idea:** Jesus Christ is the head of the church, which is His body.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Who is said to have put all things under Christ's feet? What does it mean that Christ is "head over all things to the church"? What is Christ's body? How many bodies does Christ have? See [Eph. 4:4](#).

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 28:9](#).

## Wednesday: Romans 16:16

**Key Idea:** Groups of faithful saints in various localities are known as "churches of Christ."

**Questions for Family Growth:** How can we speak of "churches of Christ" when Christ said that He would build only one church ([Mt. 16:18](#))? What are some things involved in truly being a church or congregation that is "of Christ"?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 28:10](#).

## Thursday: Acts 11:26

**Key Idea:** A local church assembles together.

**Questions for Family Growth:** With whom did Barnabas and Paul assemble for a whole year? What else does this verse say they did? What results when Christians assemble together as God intends? Consider [Hb. 10:24,25](#).

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 28:11](#).

## Friday: 1 Thessalonians 1:3

**Key Idea:** A local church does the Lord's work.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How did Paul describe the "work" and the "labor" of the Thessalonians? Looking down to [v.8](#), what had happened as a result of the Thessalonians doing the Lord's work? In [Tit. 3:8,14](#), what are we to "maintain"?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 28:12](#).

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## The things God has created show His glory

The word “magnificent” is hardly adequate to describe the universe in which we live. Astronomers and others who study the cosmos are awed not only by its vastness but by its beauty. People may disagree about the origin of the universe, but very few would deny that it is “glorious.”

Throughout history, thoughtful people have seen that the magnificence of the world is hard to explain except on the grounds that it was created by a Creator — a Creator who was both immensely powerful and wise. The Scriptures begin with the simple affirmation that in the beginning “God created the heavens and the earth” (**Gen. 1:1**), and this simple truth has commended itself to millions of people for thousands of years. No more reasonable explanation for the world has ever been given.

But the heavens and the earth tell us not only that God exists; they also give us some hints as to the kind of God the Creator is. *The things God has created show His glory.* David, who as a young shepherd would have had many opportunities to look at the night sky, said it this way: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (**Psa. 19:1**).

The apostle Paul used some strong language when he said that those who deny God are making a mistake that is “without excuse.” Anyone who has looked at the world around him has seen plenty of evidence for God. “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse” (**Rom. 1:19,20**). When the time comes for our judgment before God, there will be no one who can say, “I had no way of knowing there was a God.”

As we meditate this week on the glory of God and His creation, let’s think seriously about these things. Rather than let the wonders of the universe go by unnoticed, let’s stop and look intently. Not even the most powerful evidence for God can convict us if we don’t give it a chance to sink in. So let’s allow ourselves to be impressed with the beauty and majesty of what God has made. It truly is an amazing habitat in which God has placed us. In every sense of the term, it is “glorious.” This week, let’s respond rightly to the glory of its Maker.

### Monday: Genesis 1:1

**Key Idea:** God created the heavens and the earth.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Is it reasonable to think that the world just happened to come into being, without any creator? In **Hb. 11:3**, what is meant when it says that “by faith” we understand the creation of the universe by God?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 28:13.**

## Tuesday: Proverbs 8:22-31

**Key Idea:** Wisdom was with God when He created the world.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How would you define “wisdom” as it relates to God? What are some things about the world that show the wisdom of its Creator? Is it important for us to use wisdom in our stewardship and use of God’s creation?

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

## Wednesday: Isaiah 40:21-26

**Key Idea:** God is the sovereign Ruler of His creation.

**Questions for Family Growth:** As inhabitants of a world that God has made, do we have the power to do anything that would overthrow God’s rule? What does the word “reverence” mean? Does God have the right to tell us what we may do and not do?

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

## Thursday: Romans 1:18-21

**Key Idea:** Through God’s creation, we can learn of His power and His deity.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why did Paul say that those who deny God are “without excuse”? In [v.20](#), what two things about God can be inferred from His creation? In [v.21](#), in what two ways did the disobedient fail to respond to God?

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

## Friday: Psalm 19:1-6

**Key Idea:** The heavens and the earth declare the glory of God.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In what ways do the heavens “declare” God’s glory? Why do you think the starry heavens at night make such a powerful impression on us? Do you think it would help us to observe the heavens more often and more thoughtfully?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*



## When we bear one another's burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ

In our lifelong effort to grow toward greater maturity in Christ, we do well to pay attention to the things of fundamental importance. Prone as we are to getting lost in the details, we need to re-focus frequently on principles that are close to the heart of the matter. As with any other endeavor in life, the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

From Paul's words in [Gal. 6:1-5](#), we learn that one activity of basic importance in Christ's body is the bearing of one another's burdens. According to Paul, *when we bear one another's burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ*. And his words on this subject remind us of [Jas. 2:8](#), which says, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well."

The world in which we live is a harsh one, at least at times. Sin has grossly marred the world that God made, such that pain, suffering, and difficulty are never far from any of us. As the people of the Lord whose hope is in heaven, we desperately need one another in the here and now. The Christian who says he doesn't need anybody else's help is just not facing life realistically. There is an Irish proverb which says, "It is in the shelter of each other that the people live." If that is true in the world at large, it is no less true in the church.

If this week is typical, there will be many opportunities for each of us to help a brother or a sister to bear a burden. There will be kindnesses we can show, good deeds we can do. If we are at all serious about doing the work of the Lord, we will exert ourselves to do what He Himself did. Peter preached that Jesus "went about doing good" ([Ac. 10:38](#)). Mutual burden bearing is an important part of what it's all about in Christ.

As we try to navigate our work and our many other activities this week, let's be mindful of this aspect of our discipleship. Let's pause a few times each day, lift our thoughts out of our own troubles, and ponder how we might help some fellow Christian, even if it is only by an encouraging word. The truth is, we all carry a heavy load. Let's help one another to bear our burdens well.

### Monday: James 2:8

**Key Idea:** The "royal law" requires us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In practical terms, what does it mean to love our neighbors as ourselves? Who is our "neighbor"? Consider the story that Jesus told in [Lk. 10:29-37](#). What do you think is the main point of the story?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 28:18](#).

## Tuesday: Galatians 6:1-5

**Key Idea:** When spiritual problems come up, we ought to help one another.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.1**, how should those who have erred be restored? Can any Christian afford to be unconcerned about the problems of his brethren? What do we learn from passages like **1 Cor. 12:26** and **2 Cor. 11:29**?

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

## Wednesday: Romans 15:1-3

**Key Idea:** The strong ought to help bear the weaknesses of the weak.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that “Christ did not please himself”? What kinds of sacrifices might the strong have to make for the weak? What does it mean to “please” our neighbor, with the result that he or she is built up?

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

## Thursday: Philippians 2:1-4

**Key Idea:** We ought to look out not just for our own interests but for the interests of others.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that each should “count others more significant than yourselves”? How does this way of thinking and living differ from the ways that are common in the world?

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

## Friday: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

**Key Idea:** Love demonstrates a patient, steadfast concern for others.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What aspects of love are mentioned here that have to do with helping others bear their burdens? What do you think is meant by the statement in **v.7** that love “bears all things”?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## The Christian's outward quality of life is the result of godly character in the inner person

Philosophers have for centuries debated the *summum bonum* (“the chief good”). What is the highest good that can be achieved in life, the best thing a human being can pursue? It’s an old question, of course. Solomon wrestled with it: “What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?” (**Eccl. 1:3 NKJV**). All of us, philosophers or not, want to “love life and see good days” (**1 Pt. 3:10**). We want the truly “good life.”

Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be the Christ, nothing less than the Son of God. Today, those who reject Jesus’ claim often portray the life of His followers as a drab, dreary existence devoid of any good quality that would make life pleasant. Unfortunately, Christians themselves sometimes slip into thinking they must do without any real happiness in this life so they can go to heaven and be happy there. We may catch ourselves thinking of God’s do’s and don’ts as unfortunate limitations that keep us from “living it up” as other folks are free to do.

The truth, however, is just the reverse. It is sin that prevents us from enjoying all the goodness that we were created to experience. To the extent that we respect God’s boundaries on our conduct, we will find life becoming better and better. And this is true even if life hands us some painful experiences. It is the Christian who can truly rejoice in the deep-down goodness of what life is really about. Speaking of the hope that Christians possess, Peter wrote to some who had difficult lives in this world, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials” (**1 Pt. 1:6**).

The “lifestyle” of the Christian is as good as it gets! And the reason is obvious when we think about it for a moment: the very best things in life are the things that come from good character in our hearts. The outward “fruit” of our lifestyle is borne by a tree that has “roots” in our inmost being. Since nothing makes more beneficial changes in a person’s heart than obedient faith in Jesus Christ, no one can have a better lifestyle than the faithful Christian. This week, let’s remember that *the Christian’s outward quality of life is the result of godly character in the inner person*. The better the roots, the better the fruits.

### Monday: Luke 6:43-45

**Key Idea:** A quality life is not possible without a quality character.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What kind of tree bears good fruit? What comes out of the “treasure” our hearts? What happens when we try to get good things by taking shortcuts? What principle does Paul mention in **Gal. 6:7**?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 28:23**.

## Tuesday: James 1:27

**Key Idea:** The Christian's life is positively good, and not merely the negative absence of sin.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How does this verse show that there is both a positive and a negative side to true religion? Does following God's requirements result in a burdensome life? Consider the points made in [1 Jn. 5:3](#) and [Mt. 11:28-30](#).

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

## Wednesday: Romans 12:1,2

**Key Idea:** The Christian's way of life is a triumph of Christ-like character over circumstance.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How is it possible for the Christian to have a quality life when his external circumstances in the world may be unpleasant? What advantage is it for the Christian to have a "transformed" mind?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 28:25](#).

## Thursday: Philippians 3:8

**Key Idea:** The Christian enjoys a lifestyle that is truly "excellent."

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean for one thing to "excel" another? In the NKJV, how does Paul use the word "excellence" in [Phil. 3:8](#)? What was the thing for which Paul was willing to suffer the loss of everything else?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 28:26](#).

## Friday: Matthew 5:6

**Key Idea:** Those who hunger and thirst for righteous will be filled.

**Questions for Family Growth:** If we find life "empty," what is the problem? Is the problem in the world or in ourselves? What happens when we learn to seek the highest and best things? In addition to [Mt. 5:6](#), consider [Mt. 6:33](#).

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 28:27](#).

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## God wants us to be modest people and to dress accordingly

The question of modesty in clothing is a controversial topic. Most religious people have firm opinions about it, one way or the other. Even the mere reading of **1 Tim. 2:9,10** is often enough to provoke heated discussion: “likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness — with good works.”

We need to be careful with Bible subjects like this not to throw them into a totally subjective realm where everything is mere opinion. God would not have commanded us to dress modestly if it were impossible to do anything more than have an opinion about what modest dress is. Surely it is possible to understand what God’s will is on this subject, just as with any other.

One thing we need to bear in mind is that modesty starts in the heart. It is essentially a quality of character. Peter touches on this when he says, “Do not let your adorning be external — the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear — but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious” (**1 Pt. 3:3,4**). When our hearts possess the quality of modesty, we will dress modestly, assuming our consciences are not misinformed on the subject. But while the condition of the heart is the primary consideration, both inner and outer modesty are important. In truth, *God wants us to be modest people and to dress accordingly.*

Unfortunately, we live in an age when lasciviousness is considered to be a matter of very little importance by society at large. Any significant sense of shame with respect to nakedness has vanished. During the warmer months of the year, we are surrounded nearly everywhere we go by individuals dressed immodestly. There is nothing much we can do about this — except determine that we ourselves are going to dress in a manner that our Lord would approve of. This is a part of what is involved in being “blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (**Phil. 2:15**). As we go through this coming week, let’s consider (or reconsider) the importance of modesty.

### Monday: 1 Peter 3:1-6

**Key Idea:** As Christians, we are to be chaste and modest in our character and also our conduct.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is “chaste conduct” (NKJV)? How does a person “adorn” the “hidden person of the heart”? What is meant by the “gentle and quiet spirit” which Peter says is “very precious” in the sight of God?

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

## Tuesday: 1 Timothy 2:8-10

**Key Idea:** As Christians, we are to clothe ourselves modestly, with propriety and moderation.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How might we define “modest apparel” (NKJV)? What are “propriety and moderation” (NKJV), and what do they have to do with clothing? How is it possible to know what is “proper” for those who “profess godliness”?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 29:1](#).

## Wednesday: Galatians 5:19-21

**Key Idea:** Lasciviousness (licentiousness) is sinful.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How does the dictionary define the word “lasciviousness” ([v.19](#) in the KJV)? What words are used here in the NKJV, ESV, etc.? Are these totally subjective terms? What does Paul say will be the eternal destiny of those who practice the works of the flesh?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 29:2](#).

## Thursday: Romans 12:1,2

**Key Idea:** No longer worldly people, we are to be transformed and renewed in our thinking.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How do we present our bodies a “living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God”? What is the difference between “conformed” and “transformed”? How do we “prove” (NKJV) the will of God?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 29:3](#).

## Friday: Colossians 3:17

**Key Idea:** In whatever we do, we are to do that which meets with the Lord’s approval.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In practical, everyday terms, what does it mean to do things “in the name of the Lord Jesus”? Are we to do the Lord’s will just in congregational matters (such as the worship of the church), or are personal, individual matters also to be within the Lord’s will?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 29:4](#).

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Bible study should help us see changes we need to make

Vigilance is the quality of watchfulness. To be vigilant is to be careful about what is happening, to pay attention to possible problems. We need this quality in our daily lives as we walk with the Lord and serve Him as His disciples. If we don't pay close attention, harmful things can creep into our conduct and we can drift away from God without realizing what has happened. The Hebrew writer said, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it" (**Hb. 2:1**). And Paul wrote, "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (**1 Cor. 10:12**).

Not only are there spiritual dangers to watch out for, but there are also improvements in our character that we would do well to make. In our present condition, none of us can say that we are perfect. There are always changes for the better waiting to be made. God gave us His word to guide our daily growth and this growth ought to be the purpose for which we study. *Bible study should help us see changes we need to make.*

It is interesting to study the Bible, no doubt. It is a fascinating book. However, our interest in what God has revealed ought not to be the mere accumulation of facts and information. Our intent ought to be a higher level of obedience, a better quality of service to the God who gave us the Bible. As we study, we are always looking for "obeyable" information. And ultimately, it is this desire to obey that determines whether or not we recognize the truth when we see it (**Jn. 7:17**).

We make progress toward heaven when we honestly apply to ourselves what we have learned in our Bible study. When we let the "light" we have learned shine into our heart and illuminate what is really there, we gain insight into how God sees us. With that insight, we can then make changes for the better. This is what "repentance" is all about. It is a matter of seeing, with the help of God's word, things that need to be changed — and then having the courage to change them. Throughout this week, let's apply our Bible study to the great work of self-examination. Becoming those who think and act like God requires that we be willing to take frequent inventories of ourselves. This week, let's be glad for the daily opportunity God gives us to grow!

### Monday: 2 Corinthians 13:5

**Key Idea:** We should examine our own spiritual condition from time to time.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to be "in the faith"? Is it possible to think we are in the faith and not really be so? What does Paul mean when he says, "Examine yourselves"? In practical terms, how do we do that?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:5.**

## Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 10:12,13

**Key Idea:** We should take heed lest we ourselves fall.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Why is it so dangerous to be overconfident about our spiritual condition? What are some precautions we should take to keep from falling? What does it mean in **v.13** that God is “faithful”? Consider **Jd. 24,25**.

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

## Wednesday: Psalm 19:7-11

**Key Idea:** God’s word is good because it warns us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.7**, what is meant by the expression “converting the soul” (NKJV)? According to **v.10**, how valuable is God’s word? Why should we be thankful that we are “warned” (**v.11**) by God’s word?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:7**.

## Thursday: 2 Timothy 3:16,17

**Key Idea:** God’s word is useful for reproof and correction.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does the word “profitable” mean? For what four things is God’s word said to be profitable? What should be our response to the reproof and the correction we receive from the Scriptures?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:8**.

## Friday: Deuteronomy 29:29

**Key Idea:** God gave His word so that we might obey it.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Did God reveal to us everything He knows? Why did He reveal the things that He did reveal? Look at **Ezra 7:10**. What three things did Ezra do with respect to God’s word? Should we do those same three things today?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:9**.

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*



## Gratitude for grace is our most powerful motivation

In nearly everything we do, there is some kind of motivation. There is some “motive” behind our actions, something that “moves” us to do what we do. And the truth is, some motivations are more powerful than others. For most people, the more important an activity is, the more powerfully they would like to be motivated. Now think for a moment: if obedience to Christ is the most important activity in life, what would be the most powerful motivation to engage in that activity?

After many years of pondering this question, I believe the scriptural answer is clear: **gratitude for grace is our most powerful motivation**. When a person is keenly aware just how serious his sins are — and realizes that God is willing to forgive those sins anyway, based on Christ’s death on the cross — there is nothing that person wouldn’t do to show his gratitude for God’s forgiveness.

As Christians, when our motivation to obey the Lord begins to die down, what is the problem? In theory, we all realize we are indebted to God’s grace for the forgiveness of our sins, but at the practical level, our gratitude for God’s grace may not be what it ought to be. For one thing, we may see ourselves as having been good enough during most of our lives that it was no big deal for God to forgive us when we slipped up. Or (and here is the real problem, it seems to me), we simply don’t see the seriousness of our sins, whether they be many or few.

In the story in [Lk. 7:36-50](#), the difference between Simon the Pharisee and the sinful woman who anointed the Lord’s feet was not that she had committed “big” sins but Simon had only committed “little” ones. The difference was that she saw the seriousness of her sins, but Simon did not see the seriousness of his. Consequently, she loved the Lord more than Simon and would be more powerfully devoted to Him. Jesus summed it up when He said, “He who is forgiven little, loves little.”

So let’s work on godly sorrow for our sins, grieving their seriousness. And then, having received the Lord’s forgiveness, we’ll be powerfully motivated to love Him, serve Him, and remain faithful to Him — all out of joyful gratitude. No one will have to twist our arm to get us to do what is right. We’ll be looking for every possible way to thank our Father for having forgiven us.

### Monday: 2 Corinthians 6:1

**Key Idea:** It is possible to receive the grace of God in vain.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In your own words, how would you define God’s “grace”? Is there any choice on our part in whether we receive God’s grace or not? What would it mean to receive the grace of God “in vain”?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 29:10](#).

## Tuesday: Hebrews 6:6; 10:29

**Key Idea:** There could hardly be a worse sin than showing contempt for Christ's death for us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How is it possible to crucify again the Son of God and hold Him up to contempt? Can one who is a Christian do that? In **10:29**, what should we do when we realize we have “trampled underfoot the Son of God” and “outraged the Spirit of grace”?

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

## Wednesday: 1 Peter 4:10

**Key Idea:** We should see ourselves as “stewards” of God's grace.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is a “steward,” and how should we be “good stewards of God's varied grace”? In **2 Chron. 32:24,25**, what does it mean when it says Hezekiah “did not respond appropriately to the kindness shown him [by God]” (NLT)?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:12.**

## Thursday: Luke 7:36-50

**Key Idea:** Our love for God is greatest when we're most honest about our own sins.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **vv.37,38**, what did the woman in this story do? What did the Lord say about her in **v.47**. Why is it that we love the Lord more when we realize the horribleness of our own sins against Him? What happens when we don't see the seriousness of our own sins?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:13.**

## Friday: 1 Corinthians 15:10

**Key Idea:** Paul's sacrificial service to God was motivated by his deep gratitude for God's grace.

**Questions for Family Growth:** After Paul's conversion to Christ, what kind of life resulted from his recognition of the magnitude of God's forgiveness of him? Why did he work as hard as he did in the Lord's work? What did Paul say about himself in **1 Tim. 1:15,16**?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:14.**

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## Godly young people set an example that all believers can profit from

Paul wrote to his young friend Timothy: “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). A congregation of Christians has no greater blessing than its godly young people. These youthful saints contribute in many ways to the Lord’s work, not the least of which is their example. ***Godly young people set an example that all believers can profit from.***

The Bible is filled with stories of youths who showed those around them what it means to live a life of devotion to God: Joseph, David, Josiah, Mary, Timothy, and many others. It is simply not true that one has to wait until his later years to “get serious” about God. Too many young people have done it — and demonstrated for the rest of us how it’s done.

One of the remarkable things about youth is the courage that so often characterizes young people. Tests that older Christians might fail are often met by the young with considerable bravery. When a choice has to be made between right and wrong, godly youths “dare to stand like Joshua.” We need to be encouraged by the willingness of our young people to take a bold stand for the Lord.

One thing young people learn when they take their faith seriously and walk with God closely is that being truly devoted to God does not diminish the joy of life; it increases it. Solomon urged the enjoyment of life by the young: “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity” (Eccl. 11:9,10).

As we study the Bible, may we be reminded of the goodness of being young and the special opportunity it affords for good works that glorify God. Young people are not “second-class citizens” in the kingdom of God; they are valuable contributors. When they set for us an example “in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity,” let’s express our appreciation. We are fortunate to have those who are younger in years, but already wise in the Lord!

### Monday: Ecclesiastes 12:1

**Key Idea:** God should be remembered in the days of youth.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean to “remember” our Creator? Why is it so important to do that in the days of our youth? Unless we die prematurely, what kind of days lie ahead, after our youth has passed?

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

## Tuesday: 1 Timothy 4:12

**Key Idea:** Young people gain respect when they lead godly lives.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean for one person to “despise” the youth of another person? How can a young person keep that from happening? What different things are young people to be an example in?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 29:16](#).

## Wednesday: Ecclesiastes 12:13,14

**Key Idea:** Young people benefit when they remember the main purpose of life.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Solomon say was the “conclusion of the whole matter” (NKJV)? What happens if we do not keep this truth in mind? How do you think will God “bring every deed into judgment”?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 29:17](#).

## Thursday: Psalm 119:9-16

**Key Idea:** God’s word can help young people make their lives more godly.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean for a young man to “keep his way pure”? How does God’s word help a young person to do that? What attitude did the Psalmist apparently have toward the word of God?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 29:18](#).

## Friday: Ecclesiastes 11:9,10

**Key Idea:** When they are godly, young people can truly rejoice in their youth.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What is meant by Solomon’s statement, “let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth”? What caution does Solomon offer to young people as they enjoy their lives? What does it mean that “youth and the dawn of life are vanity”?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 29:19](#).

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## The “churches of Christ” are those that submit to His lordship

Paul conveyed greetings to the Christians in Rome when he wrote: “All the churches of Christ greet you” (**Rom. 16:16**). This statement meant that, at the time Paul wrote, there existed somewhere some other churches, or local congregations, that could properly be called the “churches of Christ.” What were these churches? And is it possible for a congregation today to be what they were?

In the most general sense, of course, the “church” is simply the people of Jesus Christ. The church belongs to Christ. He said, “I will build my church” (**Mt. 16:18**), and Paul said the church is that “which he obtained with his own blood” (**Ac. 20:28**). “All authority” (**Mt. 28:18**) has been given to Jesus Christ, and He is “head over all things to the church” (**Eph. 1:22,23**). The “church” envisioned in these passages is, of course, the universal body of Christ, consisting of all those individuals everywhere who have obeyed the gospel and who live faithfully before the Lord. Membership in this church is a result of being baptized into Christ. “In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith,” Paul wrote to the Christians in Galatia. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (**Gal. 3:26,27**).

But what about a “local church,” a congregation or assembly of Christians in a specific locality? When a group of individuals, each of whom has been added to the Lord’s body in the universal sense, have the common purpose of working and worshiping together, what will make them one of the “churches of Christ”?

The answer is simple: *the “churches of Christ” are those that submit to His lordship*. A congregation cannot be “of Christ” without obeying Him any more than an individual can be a disciple without following His teaching. For that reason, it is urgent that congregations both hear and obey Christ’s word: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (**Rev. 3:22**). This week, let’s study the Lord’s authority over His churches — and the dire consequences if we disregard His will. Any congregation can say that it is “of Christ.” But let’s make sure that being “of Christ” (both individually and collectively) is more than a matter of mere words.

### Monday: Ephesians 1:22,23

**Key Idea:** Christ is the head over all things to the church, which is His body.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Who gave Christ the authority that He has over the church? Is there anything about the church that Christ does not have authority over? How is the church “the fullness of him who fills all in all”?

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

## Tuesday: Ephesians 5:23,24

**Key Idea:** It is Christ's will for the church is to be subject to Him.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that Christ is “head of the church”? What does it mean for someone to “submit” to someone else? How does the church show that it submits (or is subject to) Christ?

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

## Wednesday: Romans 16:16

**Key Idea:** Local churches exist that can rightfully be called the “churches of Christ.”

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Paul say about the “churches of Christ”? When applied to a congregation, what does the expression “of Christ” mean? Is the term “churches of Christ” the name of a denomination? If not, what is it?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 29:22](#).

## Thursday: Revelation 2:5

**Key Idea:** Churches that do not heed the word of Christ are eventually disowned by Him.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What, according to [v.4](#), was the problem in Ephesus? What did Christ command the church there to do? What does it mean that Christ would “remove your lampstand from its place”?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 29:23](#).

## Friday: Ephesians 1:1

**Key Idea:** To belong to Christ, a church must be comprised of those who are “faithful in Christ Jesus.”

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are “saints”? Is everyone a saint who claims to be one? What does it mean to be “faithful in Christ Jesus”? Concerning faithfulness, what admonition is given in [Rev. 2:10](#)?

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

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## The devil is our great spiritual adversary

There is a war going on. As much as we might not wish to think about it, we are all caught up in a great struggle between good and evil. It is a conflict of cosmic proportions, involving not only the people in this physical world, but also the forces of good and evil in the spiritual realm. Paul wrote, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (**Eph. 6:12**). The power of God is greater than these forces, so we should not be overwhelmed with fear. But even so, we should not underestimate what we’re up against.

At the head of all these wicked powers, of course, is Satan. Because his intent is to destroy us, **the devil is our great spiritual adversary**. In the Bible we are warned to take his threat seriously and arm ourselves in the strength of God to stand against his warfare. The worst thing we can do is remain complacent and assume that all will be well. The warning we are given in the Scriptures is clear: “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (**1 Cor. 10:12**). We ought to be extremely sober-minded when we think about the reality of evil.

The devil is not a physical being we can see with our eyes, but he is very real nonetheless. He tried to tempt the Lord (**Mt. 4:1-11**), and we can be sure he will try to tempt us. He is energetic and shrewd in his effort to overthrow our souls. Peter likens the devil to a “roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (**1 Pt. 5:8**). He does not want anything good for us — he wants to kill us.

Obviously, we need to take courage in the strength of God to overcome our adversary, the devil. In **Eph. 6:10,11**, Paul gave this admonition: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” If we think we can defeat the devil on our own, we are going to be tragically disappointed.

This week, it will be good for us to think about the fact that we have a spiritual adversary who will destroy us if we do not place ourselves faithfully within God’s safety. Those in Christ are those “who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (**1 Pt. 1:5**). There is an abundant, glorious hope of victory over the devil, but it is only in God. May we learn to trust Him more completely with every step we take!

### Monday: 1 Peter 5:6-11

**Key Idea:** The devil’s intent is to destroy us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What attitude or frame of mind does Peter say we need to have concerning the devil? What are some ways the devil might “devour” us? In **v.9**, what are we encouraged to do? In **v.10**, what is God able to do?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:25**.

## Tuesday: Matthew 25:41

**Key Idea:** Hell is a place prepared for the devil and his angels.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Will God punish eternally those who have rebelled against Him? Does this include the devil and his angels? According to **vv.42-46**, why will some have to “go away into eternal punishment”?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:26.**

## Wednesday: Hebrews 2:14,15

**Key Idea:** Through the gospel of Christ, we can be freed from our fear of the devil’s power.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In **v.15**, what is it that Christ delivers or releases us from? According to **v.14**, how did Christ “destroy the one who has the power of death”? What are some ways we can show our appreciation for what Christ has done for us?

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

## Thursday: 1 Corinthians 10:12,13

**Key Idea:** God will faithfully help His people to resist the devil’s temptations.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What caution is given to us in **v.12**? What does it mean that “God is faithful”? What will He not allow to happen? Will we ever face a temptation that others have not met and successfully resisted?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 30:1-4.**

## Friday: Revelation 12:9,10

**Key Idea:** God will completely triumph over the devil.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How is the devil described in **v.9**? What is said about God in **v.10**? According to **1 Jn. 5:18-21**, whose power is greater, God’s or the devil’s? What other passages can you think of that bear this out?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 30:5,6.**

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*



## We should forgive others as Christ has forgiven us

**M**any Christians would agree that God's expectation that *we should forgive others as Christ has forgiven us* is one of the most challenging aspects of being a disciple of His.

Jesus could not have been clearer when He said, "If you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt. 6:15). It's only fair that we should not expect God to forgive us if we've been unwilling to forgive others. But we need to be careful. Making sure God forgives us must not be our primary motive. If in forgiving others we had no higher motivation than to secure God's forgiveness for ourselves, that would be a selfish motive.

Nevertheless, it is a fact that a failure to treat others rightly (including forgiving them when they have wronged us) is detrimental to our relationship with God. Our prayers and our worship will mean nothing to God as long as we do not treat others as we should (Mt. 5:24; 1 Pt. 3:7; etc.). Broken relationships with those around us will break our relationship with God if we do not take the initiative to mend those relationships as He would want us to (Mt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18; etc.).

Too often, even when we say we've forgiven someone who wronged us, our forgiveness falls short of what we hope for from the Lord when we come to Him for forgiveness. So the challenge before us is this: have we not only said the words "I forgive you," but have we let Jesus teach us by His example what forgiveness really looks like? In need of reconciliation, would we be content to get no more from Him than what we extend to others when we say we have forgiven them?

A good friend of mine (who has now gone home to be with the Lord) once said, "In order to forgive us, God had to give up on the idea that we would ever understand how deeply we had hurt Him." Where would any of us be if God made His friendship as hard to get back as we often make our own?

As this year winds down and we look to the beginning of a new year, this will be a good time for us to ponder this area of our growth in Jesus Christ. Let's think — and discuss — ways we can improve our willingness to forgive others, as well as the manner in which we extend that forgiveness.

### Monday: Matthew 6:12,14,15

**Key Idea:** If we have not been forgiving toward other people, God will not be forgiving toward us.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are the "debts" Jesus spoke of in v.12? In practical terms, what does it mean to cancel a debt or forgive a sin? Is there ever a time to forgive someone when they have not asked us for forgiveness? What did Jesus say about our prayers in Mk. 11:25?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 30:7-9.

## Tuesday: Matthew 18:21-35

**Key Idea:** God has forgiven each of us of far more than we will ever have to forgive in others.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How many times did Jesus say we should forgive others? How do our sins against God compare to those that others have committed against us? In **v.32**, what word did Jesus use to describe the unforgiving servant? What does “from your heart” (**v.35**) mean?

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

## Wednesday: Ephesians 4:32

**Key Idea:** God’s forgiveness of our own sins should be a motivation for us to forgive others.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that we are to forgive others “as God in Christ forgave you”? In the first part of the verse, what are the two character traits that are linked to a forgiving spirit? How does the principle in **Phil. 2:4** apply to the forgiveness of others?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 30:11-14.**

## Thursday: Colossians 3:12-15

**Key Idea:** Forgiveness of others is an outgrowth of love, humility, and other Christian virtues.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In addition to “forgiving each other,” how many other character traits or virtues can you find in this text that are related to our forgiveness of others? What does the “bond of perfection” (**v.14 NKJV**) mean? What is the goal set before us as Christians in **v.15**?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 30:15,16.**

## Friday: Luke 7:36-50

**Key Idea:** As in all things, Jesus is our example in the matter of forgiving others.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How was Jesus’ treatment of the woman different from Simon’s? What can we learn from this story about the manner in which our forgiveness to others should be extended? What does Paul say in **Gal. 6:1,2** about the spirit in which we should help the fallen?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 30:17.**

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us

There is no person who does not need the grace of God's forgiveness. We all sin from time to time, and to say otherwise is to deceive ourselves (1 Jn. 1:8). But forgiveness is what the gospel of Christ is about. Jesus Himself summarized the gospel when He told His apostles they were to preach "repentance and forgiveness of sins" (Lk. 24:47) in His name. Whatever secondary benefits may be found in Christ, the forgiveness of our sins is at the center of our hope in Christ.

And yet, there are times when we feel distant from God. We feel that our sins may be too great or too frequent to be forgiven. At such times, we need to remember that *if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us*. This is the point of the passage in 1 Jn. 1:9 where the apostle assures us of God's willingness to forgive and cleanse us: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The story of the Prodigal Son in Lk. 15:11-32 is a wonderful illustration of God's steadfast love. Like the father in the story, who eagerly received back his wayward son when he returned home penitently, God is our spiritual Father, and He waits eagerly to reaffirm His love for us when we honestly confess our sins and turn to Him for forgiveness.

As the Prodigal Son made his way back home, his father saw him while he was still a long way off "and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him . . . [And] the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate'" (Lk. 15:20-23).

As we make our way through the various activities of the coming week, let's be mindful of God's forgiving nature. He is not a reluctant forgiver who must be begged to pardon us against His will, but rather a Father who finds joy in the restoration of His children. Let's not only be encouraged by this thought, but also learn to be more thankful for our forgiveness. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3). The God whom we worship is a God of mercy and of comfort!

### Monday: 1 John 1:9

**Key Idea:** God will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**Questions for Family Growth:** Upon what condition does this verse say God will forgive us? Does this apply to those who have never obeyed the initial requirements of the gospel? In this verse, do you see a difference between "forgive us our sins" and "cleanse us from all unrighteousness"?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 30:18,19.

## Tuesday: 2 Peter 3:9

**Key Idea:** God does not will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean that God is “longsuffering” (NKJV)? Where does the responsibility lie if a person ends up perishing eternally because of sin? For His part, what is God’s will in this matter? What point is made in **Deut. 30:19** and **Ezek. 18:32; 33:11**.

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

## Wednesday: John 3:16,17

**Key Idea:** God gave His Son that we might be forgiven of our sins.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What moved God to give His only begotten Son to die for our sins? Who are those who will have eternal life? Did God send His Son to condemn the world or to save it? Why, then, will some be condemned?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 30:21-23**.

## Thursday: Luke 15:11-32

**Key Idea:** God is eager to forgive us and restore us to His fellowship and friendship.

**Questions for Family Growth:** If God is represented by the father in this story, what does this tell us about the way God thinks of us when we depart from Him? If we are living in sin, what would we have to do to come back home to God? How will God treat us after we come back?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 30:24-28**.

## Friday: 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17

**Key Idea:** God will comfort our hearts and establish us in good works.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does **v.16** say God and His Son have done for us? What are some ways God can comfort our hearts and establish us, thus giving us hope? In **v.17**, what will God establish us in?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 30:29-31**.

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com*

## We need to spend more time thinking about the “end” or “goal” of life

So many things distract us each day, we may sometimes feel we have no control over the train of our thoughts. Yet as long as our will is free, it is still possible for us to choose the direction of our thoughts. In regard to life in this world, we can decide what our outlook or perspective will be, and the quality of our life is greatly influenced by the choice we make. Those who see life as little more than a problem will experience life in one way, while those who see it as an opportunity, will experience life in another, and much better, way.

One of the basic decisions all of us have to make is whether to spend our time looking backward or forward. Do we think more about the past or about the future? There’s nothing wrong with wholesome nostalgia, and it’s certainly helpful for us to remember the mistakes we’ve made in the past. But life doesn’t move backward, it only moves forward, and if we’re Christians, it’s important that we give most of our attention to what is ahead of us. *We need to spend more time thinking about the “end” or “goal” of life.*

Listen carefully to Paul’s words to the Philippians: “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (**Phil. 3:12-14 NKJV**). We dare not be content with anything less than the “prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

If we truly believe in God, we believe that life has a meaning and that history is moving toward a purposeful conclusion. What happens in this world is more than a random, meaningless sequence of events — God is directing history toward a goal that will involve the culmination of His glorious purpose in Christ. If having obeyed the gospel, we live faithfully unto Christ, we can look forward to that grand finale. “The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (**Rom. 8:18**). We can be among the triumphant ones who march in the victory procession of the King!

### Monday: Ecclesiastes 7:8

**Key Idea:** It is more useful to think about life’s end than its beginning.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Solomon mean when he said the end of a thing is better than its beginning? In what sense is this true of life as a whole? In general, should we look at life as a problem or an opportunity? What kind of life results from each of these outlooks?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 30:32,33.**

## Tuesday: Romans 6:20-23

**Key Idea:** For the Christian, life in this world is moving toward something worth reaching for.

**Questions for Family Growth:** According to v.22, what is the “end” awaiting those who have been set free from sin? Consider also **1 Pt. 1:3-9**. What encouragement is given to us in **Hb. 3:6,14**? What did John say in **1 Jn. 3:2**?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 31:1-3**.

## Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

**Key Idea:** We can choose to direct our thinking and focus our attention on the goal of life.

**Questions for Family Growth:** To what extent can we control the focus of our thinking? Concerning his past sins, how did Paul choose to think in **1 Cor. 15:9,10**? What does it mean to “discipline” our thoughts? What direct command is given to us in **Col. 3:2**?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 31:4-7**.

## Thursday: Philippians 3:12-14

**Key Idea:** We need to reach forward and press toward the goal.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In what sense are we to “forget” the things behind us? What does it mean to “reach forward” (v.13 NKJV)? What are some other translations of this phrase? What did Paul teach us to do in **Gal. 6:9**? What was Paul’s attitude in **2 Tim. 4:7,8**?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 31:8,9**.

## Friday: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

**Key Idea:** The frustrations we meet along the way will strengthen us if we’re reaching forward.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Paul say our “light momentary affliction” is doing for us? What did he say about our sufferings in this present life in **Rom. 8:18**? What exhortation is given to us in **Hb. 12:1,2**?

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

Gary Henry — *WordPoints.com*