

**Taking charge of
Your Life-style**

**Ungodly life-style is more
dangerous than enemy armies**

Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger

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Forward

Col. 1:13

For he has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and he has brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son.

John 15:19

The world would love you if you belonged to it, but you don't

Christians live in this material world and are subject to all of the same challenges, opportunities, and experiences common to everyone except:

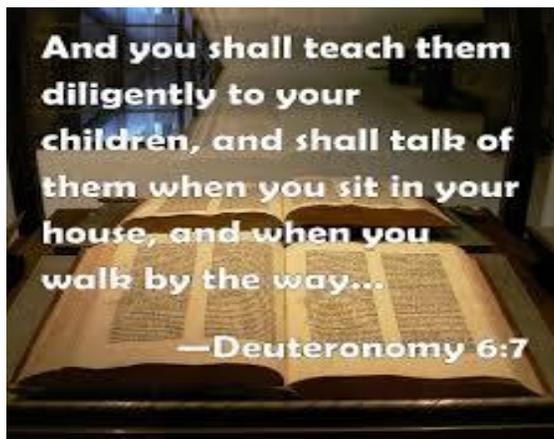
Their object of worship is not self or the things important to self, but rather Jesus Christ, he who offers eternal life.

Life objectives, is what creates the unique Christian lifestyle. It is a lifestyle not marked out by a change in clothing. There is no uniform or special dress needed to be a Christian. Conforming to the world is considered unnecessary.

What life-style do you choose?

As you look into the Holy Scriptures, You will discover what the Word of God teaches concerning life-styles.

Chapter 1



You shall diligently teach your sons

Deuteronomy 6:7-9

"You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The Hebrews were extremely successful at making religion an integral part of life. The reason for their success was that religious education was life-oriented, not information-oriented.

They used the context of daily life to teach about God. The key to teaching your children to love God is stated simply and clearly in these verses.

If you want your children to follow God, you must make God a part of your everyday experiences. You must teach your children diligently to see God in all aspects of life, not just those that are church related.

Receive godly council

Psalm 1:1-6

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The writer begins his psalm extolling the joys of obeying God and refusing to listen to those who discredit or ridicule him. Our friends and associates can have a profound influence on us, often in very subtle ways. If we insist on friendships with those who mock what God considers important, we might sin by becoming indifferent to God's will.

This attitude is the same as mocking. Do your friends build up your faith, or do they tear it down? True friends should help, not hinder, you to draw closer to God.

God doesn't judge people on the basis of race, sex, or national origin. He judges them on the basis of their faith in him and their response to his revealed will. Those who diligently try to obey God's will are blessed. Their happy condition is like healthy, fruit-bearing trees with strong roots (Jeremiah 17:5-8), and God promises to watch over them. God's wisdom guides their lives. In contrast, those who don't trust and obey God have meaningless lives that blow away like dust.

There are only two paths of life before us—God’s way of obedience or the way of rebellion and destruction. Be sure to choose God’s path because the path you choose determines how you will spend eternity.

The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff that the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

You can learn how to follow God by meditating on his Word. Meditating means spending time reading and thinking about what you have read. It means asking yourself how you should change so you’re living as God wants.

Knowing and meditating on God’s Word are the first steps toward applying it to your everyday life. If you want to follow God more closely, you must know what he says.

This “law of the LORD” means all of Scripture: the first five books of Moses, the Prophets, and the other writings. The more we know of the whole scope of God’s Word, the more resources we will have to guide us in our daily decisions.

There is simple wisdom in these two verses—the more we delight in God’s presence, the more fruitful we are. On the other hand, the more we allow those who ridicule God to affect our thoughts and attitudes, the more we separate ourselves from our source of nourishment. We must have contact with unbelievers if we are to witness to them, but we must not join in or imitate their sinful behavior.

If you want despair, spend time with mocking sinners; but if you want God’s happiness, make friends with those who love God and his Word.

When Scripture says, “Whatever he does prospers,” it does not mean immunity from failure or difficulties. Nor is it a guarantee of health, wealth, and happiness.

What the Bible means by prosperity is this: when we apply God’s wisdom, the fruit (results or by-products) we bear will be good and receive God’s approval. Just as a tree soaks up water and bears luscious fruit, we also are to soak up God’s Word, producing actions and attitudes that honor God. To achieve anything worthwhile, we must have God’s Word in our hearts.

Chaff is the outer shell (or husk) that must be removed to get at the valuable kernels of grain inside. Chaff was removed by a process called threshing and winnowing.

After the plants were cut, they were crushed, and then the pieces were thrown into the air. Chaff is very light and is carried away by even the slightest wind, while the good grain falls back to the earth. Chaff is a symbol of a faithless life that drifts along without direction.

Good grain is a symbol of a faithful life that can be used by God. Unlike grain, however, we can choose the direction we will take.

Psalm 119:1-5

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

This is both the longest psalm and the longest chapter in the Bible. It may have been written by Ezra after the temple was rebuilt (Ezra 6:14-15) as a repetitive meditation on the beauty of God's Word and how it helps us stay pure and grow in faith.

Psalm 119 has 22 carefully constructed sections, each corresponding to a different letter in the Hebrew alphabet and each verse beginning with the letter of its section.

Almost every verse mentions God's Word. Such repetition was common in the Hebrew culture. People did not have personal copies of the Scriptures to read as we do, so God's people memorized his Word and passed it along orally.

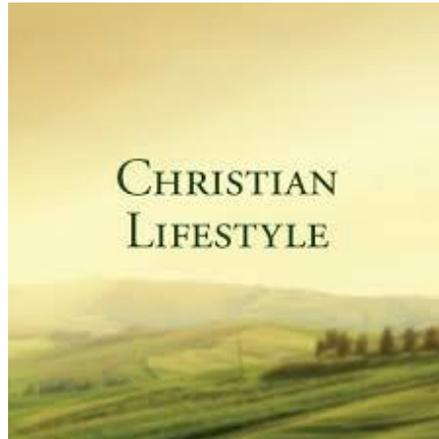
The structure of this psalm allowed for easy memorization. Remember, God's Word, the Bible, is the only sure guide for living a pure life.

Micah 6:8

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

People have tried all kinds of ways to please God (Micah 6:6-7), but God has made his wishes clear: he wants his people to be just, merciful, and to walk humbly with him. In your efforts to please God, examine these areas on a regular basis. Are you fair in your dealings with people? Do you show mercy to those who wrong you? Are you learning humility?

Chapter 2



Active Christian Lifestyles

Proverbs 12:24

The hand of the diligent will rule, but the slack hand will be put to forced labor.

Prudent people have a quiet confidence. Insecure or uncertain people feel the need to prove themselves, but prudent people don't have to prove anything. They know they are capable, so they can get on with their work. Beware of showing off. If you are modest, people may not notice you at first, but they will respect you later.

Psalm 84:11

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

God does not promise to give us everything *we* think is good, but he will not withhold what is permanently good. He will give us the means to walk along his paths, but we must do the walking. When we obey him, he will not hold anything back that will help us serve him.

Psalm 101:2

I will give heed to the blameless way When will you come to me? I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.

David may have written this psalm early in his reign as king as he set down the standards he wanted to follow.

David knew that to lead a blameless life he would need God's help (Psalm 101:2).

We can lead blameless lives if we avoid:

- (1) Looking at wickedness ("I will set before my eyes no vile thing," Psalm 101:3),
- (2) Evil associates ("men of perverse heart," Psalm 101:4),
- (3) Slander (Psalm 101:5), and
- (4) Pride (Psalm 101:5). While avoiding the wrongs listed above.

We must also let God's Word show us the standards by which to live.

Psalm 143:8

Let me hear Your loving kindness in the morning; For I trust in You;
Teach me the way in which I should walk; For to You I lift up my soul.

David was losing hope, caught in paralyzing fear and deep depression. At times, we feel caught in deepening depression, and we are unable to pull ourselves out.

At those times, we can come to the Lord and, like David, express our true feelings.

Then he will help us as we remember his works (Psalm 143:5), reach out to him in prayer (Psalm 143:6), trust him (Psalm 143:8), and decide to do his will (Psalm 143:10).

David's prayer was to be taught to do God's will, not his own. A prayer for guidance is self-centered if it doesn't recognize God's power to redirect our lives. Asking God to restructure our priorities awakens our minds and stirs our wills.

Bind kindness and truth around your neck

Proverbs 3:3

Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart.

Love and faithfulness are important character qualities. Both involve actions as well as attitudes.

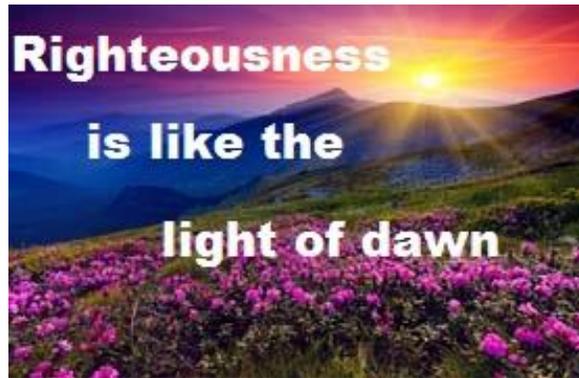
A loving person not only feels love; he or she also acts loyally and responsibly.

A faithful person not only believes the truth; he or she also works for justice for others.

Thoughts and words are not enough—our lives reveal whether we are truly loving and faithful.

Do our actions measure up to your attitudes?

Chapter 3



Righteousness is like the light of dawn

Proverbs 4:18-19

But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter until the full day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

Look straight ahead at the path before you

Proverbs 4:25-27

Let your eyes look directly ahead and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. Watch the path of your feet and all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right nor to the left; Turn your foot from evil.

Our heart—our feelings of love and desire—dictates to a great extent how we live because we always find time to do what we enjoy.

Solomon tells us to guard our heart above all else, making sure we concentrate on those desires that will keep us on the right path. Make sure your affections push you in the right direction.

Put boundaries on your desires: don't go after everything you see. Look straight ahead, keep your eyes fixed on your goal, and don't get sidetracked on detours that lead to sin.

Ecclesiastes 8:15

So I commended pleasure, for there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and to drink and to be merry, and this will stand by him in his toils throughout the days of his life which God has given him under the sun.

Solomon recalls the remedy for life's unanswered questions. He recommends joy and contentment as encouragement for us along life's pilgrimage.

We must accept each day with its daily measure of work, food, and pleasure. Let us learn to enjoy what God has given us to refresh and strengthen us to continue his work.

Ecclesiastes 10:3

Even when the fool walks along the road, his sense is lacking and he demonstrates to everyone that he is a fool.

Ecclesiastes 10:4

If your boss is angry with you, don't quit! A quiet spirit can overcome even great mistakes.

This proverb has implications for employer/employee relationships. Employees should ride out the temper tantrums of their employer. If we quietly do our work and don't get upset, the employer will probably get over his or her anger and calm down.

Jeremiah 6:27

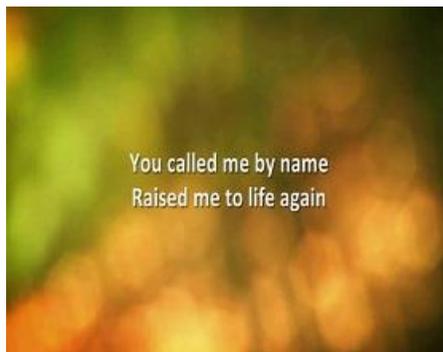
"I have made you an assayer and a tester among my people, that you may know and assay their way."

The northern kingdom, Israel, had fallen to Assyria, and its people had been taken into captivity. The tragic lesson of their fall should have caused the southern kingdom, Judah, to return to God, but Judah paid no attention. Jeremiah urged Judah to return to God to avoid certain disaster.

This message came between 627 and 621 B.C., during Josiah's reign. Although Josiah obeyed God's commands, his example apparently did not penetrate the hearts of the people.

If the people refused to repent, God said he would destroy the nation because of the evils of Josiah's grandfather, King Manasseh (2 Kings 23:25-27).

Chapter 4



Those who are faithful shall live

Hosea 4:10

They will eat, but not have enough; they will play the harlot, but not increase, because they have stopped giving heed to the LORD.

The chief Canaanite gods, Baal and Asherah, represented the power of fertility and sexual reproduction.

Not surprisingly, their worship included rituals with vile sexual practices. Male worshipers had sex with female temple prostitutes, or priestesses, and young women wishing to bear children had sex with male priests. But God said their efforts to increase fertility would not succeed.

The outcome of sin is death

Romans 6:21

Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.

It is impossible to be neutral. Every person has a master—either God or sin. A Christian is not someone who cannot sin, but someone who is no longer a slave to sin. He or she belongs to God.

God sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh

Romans 8:3-4

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Jesus gave himself as a *sacrifice* (“sin offering”) for our sins. In Old Testament times, animal sacrifices were continually offered at the temple. The sacrifices showed the Israelites the seriousness of sin: blood had to be shed before sins could be pardoned (see Leviticus 17:11).

But animal blood could not really remove sins (Hebrews 10:4). The sacrifices could only point to Jesus’ sacrifice, which paid the penalty for all sins.

Chapter 5

For to set the mind on the flesh
is death,
but to set the mind on the spirit
is life and peace.
Romans 8:6

Those of the spirit, mind the things of the spirit.

Romans 8:5

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Paul divides people into two categories—those who let themselves be controlled by their sinful natures, and those who follow after the Holy Spirit.

All of us would be in the first category if Jesus hadn't offered us a way out.

Once we have said yes to Jesus, we will want to continue following him, because his way brings life and peace.

Daily we must consciously choose to center our lives on God. Use the Bible to discover God's guidelines, and then follow them. In every perplexing situation ask yourself, "What would Jesus want me to do?"

When the Holy Spirit points out what is right, do it eagerly.

Men should not think too highly of themselves

Romans 12:3-21

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation:

He that gives, let him do it with simplicity; he that rules, with diligence; he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Bless them that persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another.

Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men.

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Healthy self-esteem is important because some of us think too little of ourselves; on the other hand, some of us overestimate ourselves.

The key to an honest and accurate evaluation is knowing the basis of our self-worth—our identity in Christ.

Apart from him, we aren't capable of very much by eternal standards; in him, we are valuable and capable of worthy service.

Evaluating yourself by the worldly standards of success and achievement can cause you to think too much about your worth in the eyes of others and thus miss your true value in God's eyes.

Chapter 6



Lay aside the works of darkness

Romans 13:12-14

The night is almost gone, and the day is near Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

The *night* refers to the present evil time. The *day* refers to the time of Christ's return. Some people are surprised that Paul lists dissension and jealousy with the gross and obvious sins of orgies, drunkenness, and sexual immorality.

Like Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Paul considers attitudes as important as actions. Just as hatred leads to murder, so jealousy leads to strife and lust to adultery. When Christ returns, he wants to find his people clean on the inside as well as on the outside.

How do we clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ?

First we identify with Christ by being baptized (Galatians 3:27). This shows our solidarity with other Christians and with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Second, we exemplify the qualities Jesus showed while he was here on earth (love, humility, truth, service). In a sense, we role-play what Jesus would do in our situation (see Ephes. 4:24-32; Col. 3:10-17).

We also must not give our desires any opportunity to lead us into sin. Avoid those situations that open the door to gratifying sinful desires.

Walk in a manner worthy of your calling

Ephesians 4:1-3

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

God has chosen us to be Christ's representatives on earth. In light of this truth, Paul challenges us to live lives worthy of the calling we have received—the awesome privilege of being called Christ's very own.

This includes being humble, gentle, patient, understanding, and peaceful. People are watching your life. Can they see Christ in you? How well are you doing as his representative?

“There is one body,” says Paul. Unity does not just happen; we have to work at it. Often differences among people can lead to division, but this should not be true in the church.

Instead of concentrating on what divides us, we should remember what unites us: *one* body, *one* Spirit, *one* hope, *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God! Have you learned to appreciate people who are different from you?

Can you see how their differing gifts and viewpoints can help the church as it does God’s work? Learn to enjoy the way we members of Christ’s body complement one another. (See 1 Cor. 12:12-13 for more on this thought.)

No one is ever going to be perfect here on earth, so we must accept and love other Christians in spite of their faults. When we see faults in fellow believers, we should be patient and gentle. Is there someone whose actions or personality really annoys you? Rather than dwelling on that person’s weaknesses or looking for faults, pray for him or her. Then do even more—spend time together and see if you can learn to like him or her.

To build unity is one of the Holy Spirit’s important roles. He leads, but we have to be willing to be led and to do our part to keep the peace. We do that by focusing on God, not on ourselves.

You are taught of God to love one another

1 Thess. 4:9-12

But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for you are taught of God to love one another.

And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren that are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

There is more to Christian living than simply loving other Christians. We must be responsible in all areas of life. Some of the Thessalonian Christians had adopted a life of idleness, depending on others for handouts.

Some Greeks looked down on manual labor. So Paul told the Thessalonians to work hard and live a quiet life.

You can't be effective in sharing your faith with others if they don't respect you. Whatever you do, do it faithfully and be a positive force in society.

Do not be haughty in mind

Romans 12:16

Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly Do not be wise in your own estimation.

In this day of constant lawsuits and incessant demands for legal rights, Paul's command sounds almost impossible. When someone hurts you deeply, instead of giving him what he deserves, Paul says to befriend him.

Why does Paul tell us to forgive our enemies?

- (1) Forgiveness may break a cycle of retaliation and lead to mutual reconciliation.
- (2) It may make the enemy feel ashamed and change his or her ways.
- (3) By contrast, repaying evil for evil hurts you just as much as it hurts your enemy.

Even if your enemy never repents, forgiving him or her will free you of a heavy load of bitterness.

1 Cor. 13:1-13

If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody.

If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged.

It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear. Now we know only a little, and even the gift of prophecy reveals little! But when the end comes, these special gifts will all disappear.

It's like this: When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity.

All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now.

There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

In 1 Cor. 12 Paul gave evidence of the Corinthians' lack of love in the utilization of spiritual gifts; 1 Cor. 13 defines real love; and 1 Cor. 14 shows how love works. Love is more important than all the spiritual gifts exercised in the church body.

Great faith, acts of dedication or sacrifice, and miracle-working power produce very little without love. Love makes our actions and gifts useful. Although people have different gifts, love is available to everyone.

Our society confuses love and lust. Unlike lust, God's kind of love is directed outward toward others, not inward toward ourselves. It is utterly unselfish.

This kind of love goes against our natural inclinations. It is possible to practice this love only if God helps us set aside our own desires and instincts, so that we can give love while expecting nothing in return. Thus the more we become like Christ, the more love we will show to others.

God gives us spiritual gifts for our lives on earth in order to build up, serve, and strengthen fellow Christians. The spiritual gifts are for the church.

In eternity, we will be made perfect and complete and will be in the very presence of God. We will no longer need the spiritual gifts, so they will come to an end.

Paul offers a glimpse into the future to give us hope that one day we will be complete when we see God face to face. This truth should strengthen our faith—we don't have all the answers now, but one day we will. Someday we will see Christ in person and be able to see with God's perspective.

In morally corrupt Corinth, love had become a mixed-up term with little meaning. Today people are still confused about love. Love is the greatest of all human qualities, and it is an attribute of God himself (1 John 4:8).

Love involves unselfish service to others; to show it gives evidence that you care. *Faith* is the foundation and content of God's message; *hope* is the attitude and focus; *love* is the action. When faith and hope are in line, you are free to love completely because you understand how God loves.

Chapter 7

■ *“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love...”*

Ephesians 4:1-2 (NASB)

Walk in humility, gentleness & Patience

Ephesians 4:1-2

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Is there someone whose actions or personality really annoys you? Rather than dwelling on that person's weaknesses or looking for faults, pray for him or her. Then do even more—spend time together and see if you can learn to like him or her.

2 Corinthians 10:2

I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.

Paul's opponents questioned his authority. From 2 Cor. 7:8-16 we know that the majority of Corinthian believers sided with Paul.

However, a minority continued to slander him, saying that he was bold in his letters but had no authority in person. 2 Cor. 10-13 are Paul's response to this charge.

Ephesians 4:22-24

That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Our old way of life before we believed in Christ is completely in the past. We should put it behind us like old clothes to be thrown away. This is both a once-for-all decision when we decide to accept Christ's gift of salvation (Ephes. 2:8-10) and also a daily conscious commitment.

We are not to be driven by desire and impulse. We must put on the new role, head in the new direction, and have the new way of thinking that the Holy Spirit gives.

Think on things that are honorable and right

Philippians 4:8-9

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

What we put into our minds determines what comes out in our words and actions.

Paul tells us to program our minds with thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.

Do you have problems with impure thoughts and daydreams? Examine what you are putting into your mind through television, books, conversations, movies, and magazines.

Replace harmful input with wholesome material. Above all, read God's Word and pray. Ask God to help you focus your mind on what is good and pure. It takes practice, but it can be done.

It's not enough to hear or read the Word of God, or even to know it well. We must also put it into practice. How easy it is to listen to a sermon and forget what the preacher said. How easy it is to read the Bible and not think about how to live differently.

How easy it is to debate what a passage means and not live out that meaning. Exposure to God's Word is not enough. It must lead to obedience.

An elder must live a perfect life.

1 Tim. 3:2-7

For an elder must be a man whose life cannot be spoken against. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exhibit self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home and must be able to teach.

He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, peace loving, and not one who loves money.

He must manage his own family well, with children who respect and obey him. [5] For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?

An elder must not be a new Christian, because he might be proud of being chosen so soon, and the Devil will use that pride to make him fall.

Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not fall into the Devil's trap and be disgraced.

When Paul says that each overseer should have only one wife, he is prohibiting both polygamy and promiscuity. This does not prohibit an unmarried person from becoming an elder or a widowed elder from remarrying.

The word *overseer* can refer to a pastor, church leader, or presiding elder. It is good to want to be a spiritual leader, but the standards are high. Paul enumerates some of the qualifications here.

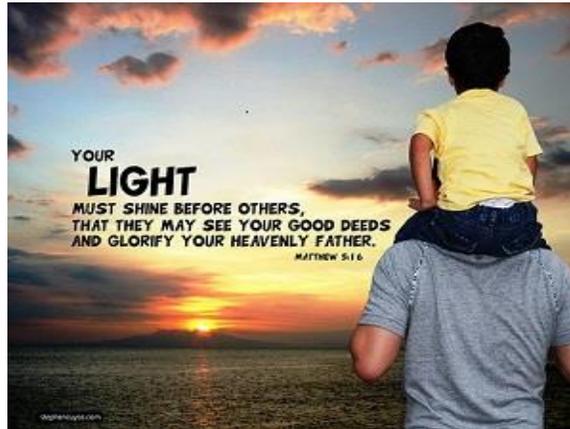
Do you hold a position of spiritual leadership, or would you like to be a leader some day? Check yourself against Paul's standard of excellence. Those with great responsibility must meet high expectations.

The lists of qualifications for church office show that living a blameless and pure life requires effort and self-discipline.

All believers, even if they never plan to be church leaders, should strive to follow these guidelines because they are consistent with what God says is true and right.

The strength to live according to God's will comes from Christ.

Chapter 8



Be subject to every good deed.

Titus 3:1-2

Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

Apparently lying was commonplace in Crete (Titus 1:12). Paul made it clear at the start that God does not lie. The foundation of our faith is trust in God's character.

Because God *is* truth, he is the *source* of all truth, and he cannot lie. Believing in him leads to *godliness*, living a God-honoring life-style (Titus 1:1).

The eternal life that God has promised will be ours, because he keeps his promises. Build your faith on the foundation of a trustworthy God who never lies.

The last days will be very difficult times

2 Tim. 3:1-5

You should also know this, Timothy that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel and have no interest in what is good.

They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God.

They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. You must stay away from people like that.

Beneath the surface of the routine of daily life, a fierce struggle among invisible spiritual powers is being waged. Our main defense is prayer that God will protect us from the evil one and that he will strengthen us.

The following guidelines can help you prepare for and survive satanic attacks:

- (1) Take the threat of spiritual attack seriously;
- (2) Pray for strength and help from God;
- (3) Study the Bible to recognize Satan's style and tactics;
- (4) Memorize Scripture so it will be a source of help no matter where you are;

- (5) Associate with those who speak the truth; and
- (6) Practice what you are taught by spiritual leaders.

If we suffer, we will also reign with him.

2 Tim. 2:12-15

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abides faithful: he cannot deny himself. Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Paul urged Timothy to remind the believers not to argue over unimportant details (“quarreling about words”) or have foolish discussions (“godless chatter”) because such arguments are confusing, useless, and even harmful.

False teachers loved to cause strife and divisions by their meaningless quibbling over unimportant details (see 1 Tim. 6:3-5).

To handle the word of truth correctly, we must study what the Word of God says so we can understand what it means.

Because God will examine what kind of workers we have been for him, we should build our lives on his Word and build his Word into our lives—it alone tells us how to live for him and serve him. Believers who ignore the Bible will certainly be ashamed at the judgment. Consistent

and diligent study of God's Word is vital; otherwise we will be lulled into neglecting God and our true purpose for living.

Grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

By the time of Peter's writing, Paul's letters already had a widespread reputation. Notice that Peter spoke of Paul's letters as if they were on a level with "the other Scriptures." Already the early church was thinking of Paul's letters as inspired by God.

Peter and Paul had very different backgrounds and personalities, and they preached from different viewpoints.

Paul emphasized salvation by grace, not law, while Peter preferred to talk about Christian life and service.

The two men did not contradict each other, however, and they always held each other in high esteem.

The false teachers intentionally misused Paul's writings by distorting them to condone lawlessness.

No doubt this made the teachers popular, because people always like to have their favorite sins justified, but the net effect was to totally destroy Paul's message.

Paul may have been thinking of teachers like these when he wrote in Romans 6:15: “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?”

By no means!” Peter warned his readers to avoid the mistakes of those wicked teachers by growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. The better we know Jesus, the less attractive false teaching will be.

Peter concludes this brief letter as he began, by urging his readers to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—to get to know him better and better.

This is the most important step in refuting false teachers. No matter where we are in our spiritual journey, no matter how mature we are in our faith, the sinful world always will challenge our faith.

We still have much room for growth. If every day we find some way to draw closer to Christ, we will be prepared to stand for truth in any and all circumstances.

May the lifestyle that you have chosen be one that glorifies God.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

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Additional comments and charts are taken from:

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