

New Christian Growth Series

Topical Study:

Handling Adversity





Instructions:

1. Please fill in the blanks in these lessons and the review booklet, using a King James Version of the Bible.
2. When you are finished, keep this lesson book and **return the completed review booklet** by U.S. mail or e-mail to:

Plowman's Academy

575 US Highway 250

OR

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Greenwich, OH 44837

3. When we receive your review booklet, we will grade it, send it back to you, and send the next course in this volume.
4. When you have completed all 12 books in this course, we will send you a certificate.

Plowman's Academy was started to provide the opportunity for teens and adults to study God's Word more deeply, imitate Jesus more closely, and be more sensitive and obedient to God's Holy Spirit—all through the means of correspondence (communication by letters or mail) courses. Jesus taught us that when we set out to follow Him, we ought to do so with no regrets, no second thoughts, and no turning back. We welcome you to join us as we aim to turn from sin, surrender to God, seek Him until He rains righteousness upon us, and then follow Him faithfully and fully forever. Let us look always to Jesus and live always for eternity, for Jesus Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Thank you for joining us. An academy is a place of study or training in a specific subject or skill. At Plowman's Academy, the subject is Jesus. Put your hand to the plow and do not look back.



And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

~Luke 9:62

Giving Credit and Appreciation to Ray Witmer

Ray Witmer, author of this Bible study curriculum, has given us permission to use his studies taken from the Word of God.

We are very grateful and appreciate Brother Ray's heart for God and his willingness to let us use his resources to spread God's Word among this generation of people.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

~Hosea 10:12

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Instruction Sheet	Page 6
Take Time to Read before Doing Lesson	Page 7
Lesson 1: Advancing Through Adversity (Part I).....	Page 8
Lesson 2: Advancing Through Adversity (Part II)	Page 9
Lesson 3: Advancing Through Adversity (Part III).....	Page 10
Lesson 4: Advancing Through Adversity (Part IV).....	Page 11
Lesson 5: Advancing Through Adversity (Part V).....	Page 12
Lesson 6: Advancing Through Adversity (Part VI).....	Page 13
Lesson 7: Advancing Through Adversity (Part VII)	Page 14
Lesson 8: Advancing Through Adversity (Part VIII).....	Page 15
Lesson 9: Advancing Through Adversity (Part IX).....	Page 16
Lesson 10: Advancing Through Adversity (Part X).....	Page 17
Lesson 11: Advancing Through Adversity (Part XI).....	Page 18
Lesson 12: Walking Through a Valley	Page 19
Lesson 13: How to Handle Our Adversity.....	Page 20
Lesson 14: What to Do About Our Adversity.....	Page 21
Lesson 15: The Believer's Struggle.....	Page 22
Lesson 16: How to Handle Our Rejections.....	Page 23
Lesson 17: How to Handle Our Fears.....	Page 24
Lesson 18: Dealing With Disappointment.....	Page 25
Lesson 19: When We Are Fearful	Page 26
Lesson 20: How to Survive a Satanic Attack.....	Page 27
Lesson 21: Failure: The First Step to Victory.....	Page 28
Lesson 22: How Failure Leads to Victory	Page 29
Lesson 23: Victory in the Battles of Life.....	Page 30
Lesson 24: The Struggle of the Flesh	Page 31
Lesson 25: The Solution to Envy.....	Page 32
Lesson 26: Our Trials.....	Page 33
Lesson 27: An Unseen Battle.....	Page 34
Lesson 28: Review (Part One)	Page 35
Lesson 29: Review (Part Two)	Page 36
Lesson 30: Concluding Reflections	Page 37

INSTRUCTION SHEET FOR BIBLE LESSONS

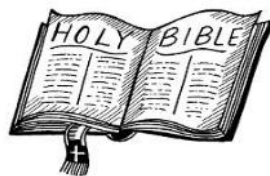
- A. The Bible verses used in this study are taken from the King James Version of the Bible, translated out of the original tongues with the former translation diligently compared and revised.
- B. Before doing each lesson, take time to ask God to open your understanding and show you the truth.
- C. For the best results, do only one lesson each day. Meditate on each day's lesson (there are four weeks of lessons per book).
- D. Keep in mind that these lessons are based on what the Bible says and not on man's opinion.
- E. These lessons are designed to help you to know the truth, to know the Lord in a personal way, and to trust what the Bible says and teaches you.
- F. Remember, it is not what you, I, or any preacher says, but what the Bible says.
- G. You must learn to stand on what the Bible says to "study to show yourself approved unto God, workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)
- H. Who wrote the Bible? (2 Peter 1:21).
- I. All Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16).
- J. Regardless of what man says, the believer (Christian) has direct access to the throne of God and is responsible directly to God. This access is through Jesus Christ and Him only (1 Timothy 2:5).
- K. These studies are to help you have peace of mind (Isaiah 26:3-4).
- L. These studies will help you know if you are going to heaven or hell (Romans 10:13).
- M. These lessons will help you with assurance and security; these are not the same. The securing of the believer is God's work. It is a part of God's great work of salvation depending solely upon His infinite grace. Assurance is the believer's acceptance of the security provided for him in Christ. It is the result of the human soul resting in what God has promised in His Word to accomplish. This is why it is important to know what the Bible says (1 John 5:11-13).



**TAKE TIME TO READ BELOW
BEFORE DOING THIS LESSON**

Meditate on the Scriptures of This Lesson and
Ask Yourself These Questions:

1. What do these verses teach me about God and myself?
2. Is there an example here to follow or avoid?
3. Is there a command, a promise, or a warning that I need to apply?
4. What action do I need to take to align my life with this truth?



The Bible is the Word of God

LESSON 1

ADVANCING THROUGH ADVERSITY (PART I)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 60:12

Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.

The definition of “adversity” is “a state of wretchedness or misfortune.” When a child hurts, your focus is to quickly restore comfort. You move obstacles so that a toddler will have a clear path to walk. For school-age children, you may seek to minimize frustration by “helping” with homework. The underlying message conveyed is that pain and obstacles are to be eliminated. That is a viewpoint you will carry through to adulthood, and it is a harmful one.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us _____ every weight, and the _____ which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,” (Hebrews 12:1).

Difficulties are a part of life, but if you don't view them this way, you are probably consistently disappointed. Disappointment, if allowed to remain, can turn you away from God. You can waste time trying to avoid trials when you could be trusting God for the future. You can waste energy and prayer power seeking to get out of tough situations instead of asking God how He wants you to respond and grow through the trials. God does not view adversity as the tragedy you may interpret it to be. As a result, your thinking may become in opposition to His.

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our _____; who for the _____ that was set before Him endured the _____, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of _____” (Hebrews 12:2).

God sees spiritual value in your trials. Jesus' suffering and death on the cross prove the mighty spiritual work God can accomplish through adversity. He uses difficulties to advance your spiritual life and to achieve His great purposes for you. Rather than being setbacks in your life, your struggles are actually opportunities for spiritual advancement.

“For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be _____ and faint in your _____. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against _____. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, _____ thou the _____ of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: For whom the Lord _____ He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He _____” (Hebrews 12:3-6).

None of us enjoys trouble, but in this sin-sick world, sorrow and hardships are guaranteed. Let us surrender our thinking and ask to have the mind of Christ, who trusted God's way even unto death on the cross.

What adversities do you have?

How do you advance through your adversities?

Today's Bible reading is Hebrews chapter 12.

LESSON 2

ADVANCING THROUGH ADVERSITY (PART II)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 60:12

Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.

“Why is this happening to me?” “What is the point of this?” Bewildered by life, we cry out to anyone who will listen. Our thoughts become confused, our emotions chaotic, and our steps slowed. Scripture answers these questions. In response to “why,” it tells us that we live in a world filled with sinful people; it tells us that even the redeemed struggle with sin, and that the “ruler of this world,” Satan, has great influence here. No wonder we go through trials!

“Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up their substance. Although _____ cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; Yet man is _____ unto _____, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:5-7).

But what is the point? It could be that God desires to get your attention because you’ve ignored His other signals, or it could be that God is trying to keep your attention. When the Israelites lived in the desert, it must have seemed like a great trial to have no food left at the end of each day, but God knew that if He provided more than one day’s supply at a time, the Israelites would stop looking to Him; this “trial” kept their attention on their Provider.

“I would _____ unto _____, and unto God would I _____ my cause: Which doeth _____ things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number: Who giveth _____ upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the _____: To set up on high those that be _____; that those which _____ may be exalted to safety” (Job 5:8-11).

Adversity can also be a tool to remind you of God’s great love for you. You can become so used to His love that you don’t appreciate it until you hit a bump. More importantly, hardships can help you to know God in a deeper way. To experience God as your comfort requires that there be a need for comfort or perhaps a need for self-examination.

We tend to ignore our wandering away from God’s ways. When halted by an obstacle, we have time to discover the wrong turns we have made.

“But He _____ the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty. So the poor hath _____, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth. Behold, _____ is the man whom God correcteth: therefore _____ thou the chastening of the Almighty: For He maketh sore, and bindeth up: He woundeth, and His hands make _____” (Job 5:15-18).

Whatever the reason for your trial, believe that God has a purpose in adversity and that He has allowed it for your good.

“And we know that _____ things work together for _____ to them that _____, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Today’s Bible reading is Job chapter 5.

LESSON 3

ADVANCING THROUGH ADVERSITY (PART III)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 60:12

Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.

What can you do to be sure you advance rather than decline through adversity?

- Accept the events of our your life as part of God's equipping of you.
- Decide to follow Jesus' ways of responding to trials.
- Veer neither to the right nor to the left from the path of obedience.
- Expect the Holy Spirit to help you grow through your difficulties.
- Remember how God has helped you in the past.
- Set your face like flint to endure and not to waver.
- Invest additional time in your relationship with God.
- Trust God, especially when you do not understand.
- Yearn to be made ready for the Savior's return.

Adversity will either harden you or soften you. Some people grow hard and resist God during times of adversity, but those who know how to respond are softened and broken by it. In your brokenness, you are prepared, equipped, energized, and empowered as a child of the King.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with _____, that we are the _____ of God: And if children, then _____; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with _____; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:16-17).

Let us take as our position the words from God's Word.

"My brethren, count it all _____ when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh _____. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be _____ and _____, wanting nothing" (James 1:2-4).

What are your plans to draw closer to God through adversities?

Today's Bible reading is James chapter 1.

LESSON 4

ADVANCING THROUGH ADVERSITY (PART IV)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 60:12

Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.

Most likely, you do not enjoy your areas of weakness. We are a generation of problem-solvers; therefore, when we identify an area of deficiency in our lives, we often will stop at nothing to try to correct the problem.

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a _____ in the _____, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be _____ above measure. For this thing I _____ the _____ thrice, that it might depart from me” (2 Corinthians 12:7-8).

Our drive to be the best, or at the very least, “normal,” generally leads us headlong down the path of self-sufficiency. After all, doesn't God want us to solve the problems we encounter?

“And He said unto me, My _____ is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in _____. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my _____, that the _____ of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am _____, then am I _____” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

While it is true that through God dramatic changes can occur in the lives of His children, you yourself must not take credit for the power to change. Your strength is weak and faulty, whereas the strength of God is limitless.

“I am the _____, ye are the _____: He that _____ in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do _____” (John 15:5).

“I can do _____ things through _____ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

“But we have this _____ in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the _____ may be of _____, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

You can trust this statement because of the apostle Paul's credentials in adversity; he had been imprisoned, beaten, shipwrecked, and persecuted. Moreover, he struggled continually with a personal ailment which he called his “thorn in the flesh.”

What weaknesses are present in your life that God may be using to keep your eyes on Him?

Today's Bible reading is 2 Corinthians chapter 12.

LESSON 5

ADVANCING THROUGH ADVERSITY (PART V)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 60:12

Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.

Success is often hard to define in the modern world. Our human eyes see success as the financial gain of a businessman, the fame of a movie star, and the outstanding ability of an athlete. No matter the field, we generally equate success with money and power.

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have _____, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be _____” (Philippians 4:11).

If this is the measure of success, then you could never call the apostle Paul “successful.” Was he famous? In his lifetime, he was actually infamous; he was known among the Jews and Romans as being notorious, troublesome, and strict.

“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in _____ I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through _____ which _____ me” (Philippians 4:12-13).

Was Paul wealthy? As a leader among the Jews, he most likely was; however, when Jesus called him to spread the Gospel of Christ, his financial status changed quickly. He lived the rest of his life as an itinerant preacher, supporting himself on his missionary journeys by making tents.

“For the _____ that I would I _____: but the _____ which I would not, that I _____. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but _____ that dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:19-20).

Was Paul powerful? In the eyes of the world, he was simply a strange, brash preacher of a new gospel. He was in and out of prison, often unimpressive in his appearance, and suffered an unspecified ailment.

“O, wretched man that I am! who shall _____ me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the _____ I myself serve the law of God; but with the _____ the law of sin” (Romans 7:24-25).

But still, was Paul powerful? In his own strength, Paul was just as weak as any other man. However, Paul had access to the most amazing power the world had ever known: Jesus Christ. In the face of weakness, he exclaimed, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

That very same power is available to you today. Are you using that power? Please explain how you use God's power.

Today's Bible reading is Romans chapter 7.

LESSON 6

ADVANCING THROUGH ADVERSITY (PART VI)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 60:12

Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.

There is a slogan that has worked its way into popular usage: the stalwart cry, “NO FEAR!” Generally, this phrase is associated with an athletic competition; however, can this expression find a deeper meaning for our Christian lives?

“What time I am _____, I will _____ in _____. In God I will praise His word, in _____ I have put my _____; I will not fear what _____ can do unto me” (Psalm 56:3-4).

Clearly, it is impossible to live in this world without facing uncertainty, doubt, confusion, and even honest fear; the Bible does not dismiss these concerns. Instead, the Word is truthful about the adversity that you face. The right response to these hardships is to admit our fears to the Lord and to trust Him to work the situation out for His own good.

“In _____ have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what _____ can do unto me. Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render _____ unto Thee. For Thou hast _____ my _____ from death: wilt not Thou deliver my _____ from falling, that I may walk before God in the _____ of the _____?” (Psalm 56:11-13)

Too many people try to “excuse” God from responsibility when they come up against an apparently immovable obstacle. What we often fail to realize is that God may desire to use hardships to shape us into the people He wants us to be.

“And we know that _____ work together for _____ to them that _____, to them who are the called according to _____” (Romans 8:28).

You see, adversity is an opportunity for God to purify your faith. Because God alone is sovereign in the universe, He desires to be sovereign in your individual life as well. If you place your faith in anything other than God, He is swift to remove those obstructions in your walk with Him.

If you are going through adversity, ask God for the discernment to handle it.

Is this adversity something that God may be allowing to occur in your life in order to bring you closer to Him? What is your opinion?

What are your plans to handle your adversity?

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 56.

LESSON 7

ADVANCING THROUGH ADVERSITY (PART VII)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 40:29

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.

Usually, when we are going through an intense time of adversity, we seem to focus only upon the momentary trouble. We frequently fail to see any value whatsoever in our suffering. God, however, has specific purposes for bringing us through times of hardship.

“The _____ of a good man are _____ by the LORD: and He delighteth in his way. Though he _____, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD _____ him with His hand” (Psalm 37:23-24).

One such reason God may allow adversity in your life is to teach you to hate evil. You may be hesitant to use the word “hate” in any situation, and yet this is exactly what the Word of God instructs you to do: “Hate evil, you who love the Lord.”

“Ye that love the LORD, hate _____: He preserveth the souls of His saints; He _____ them out of the hand of the wicked” (Psalm 97:10).

Too often, we don't act as if we hate evil, do we? Instead, our tendency is to play around with it, keeping it nearby for our amusement and making excuses for its presence in our lives. You may say, “Well, I can't escape evil—it's all around me! The best I can hope to do is try to manage it appropriately.” What a deception this is! You are not commanded to manage or manipulate evil; instead, you are instructed to hate its very presence.

“I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous _____, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever _____, and _____; and his seed is blessed. _____ from evil, and _____; and dwell for evermore. For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not His saints; they are _____ for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off” (Psalm 37:25-28).

When you see evil, you are to turn around and run in the opposite direction! Yes, you live in a world that is permeated by evil, and you cannot avoid it at all times; however, you can remove yourself from particularly tempting situations. God can help you to recognize the evil one's (Satan's) pitfalls in your life! Ask God today for the wisdom and strength to avoid such traps.

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 37.

LESSON 8

ADVANCING THROUGH ADVERSITY (PART VIII)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 40:29

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.

If someone asked you if your life was centered on Christ, you might respond, "Well, sure. I go to church, tithe, read my Bible, pray, talk to other people about Jesus, and more." However, did you know that even if you do every one of those things, it is still possible to live a life that is controlled by self rather than Christ?

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath _____ us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him _____ the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in _____" (Ephesians 1:3-4).

You can read your Bible because you are afraid, you can pray because you have needs, and you can share your faith out of pride. Everything we do can be done just as much for self as it can be done for Christ. If you do good works for the wrong motive, you may be guilty of a very self-centered point of view.

"Having predestinated us unto the _____ of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, To the praise of the _____ of His _____, wherein He hath made us _____ in the Beloved. In whom we have _____ through His blood, the _____ of sins, according to the _____ of His _____" (Ephesians 1:5-7).

The first chapter of Ephesians reveals that God chose you in Him before the foundation of the world, that you would be holy and blameless before Him. This means that He has already taken the initiative in your life; every good thing you have ever done or will ever do has already been appointed by God.

"That we should be to the _____ of His _____, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the _____ of _____, the gospel of your _____: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were _____ with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our _____ until the redemption of the _____, unto the praise of His _____" (Ephesians 1:12-14).

Instead of us getting into God's plan, we often try to get Him into our plans.

Are you currently going through adversity? Is God realigning your focus? Please explain:

Will you pray for the courage to allow God to knock down any emphasis you may be placing on self, and to replace your top priority with Himself? _____

Today's Bible reading is Ephesians chapter 1.

LESSON 9

ADVANCING THROUGH ADVERSITY (PART IX)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 40:29

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.

Have you ever wondered if your present hardships or calamities are coming from Satan or from God? When things go awry, we often wonder if it is devilish opposition or a sign from God that we are on the wrong track. The Bible addresses this quandary when it commands in James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

"We are troubled on every side, yet not _____; we are perplexed, but not in _____; Persecuted, but not _____; cast down, but not _____;" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

Unfortunately, Christians sometimes wind up submitting to the enemy and resisting God. This can happen when you just don't know what to resist and what to submit to. The Bible offers some helpful guidelines to steer you through this dilemma.

As the Bible verses above state, you are afflicted in every way but not crushed or despaired; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.

With amazing practicality, precision, and insight, the Bible draws a clear distinction between what God allows and what the devil designs.

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the _____ also of _____ might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for _____ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made _____ in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:10-11).

The Bible is saying that affliction is of God; being crushed, on the other hand, is the devil's work; therefore, resist it.

Despair is of the devil, but God allows perplexity. You may be persecuted, but the idea that you have been forsaken by God is of the devil.

You may often be struck down or upset by various opponents until you feel as if you are finished. The Bible says that you are not destroyed.

WE MUST RESIST THE DEVIL!

Are you crushed, in despair, persecuted, forsaken, or destroyed? How do you plan to fight these afflictions?

Today's Bible reading is 2 Corinthians chapter 3.

LESSON 10

ADVANCING THROUGH ADVERSITY (PART X)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 40:29

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.

At medical checkups, children periodically need immunization. Youngsters may not understand that shots protect them; from their point of view, they are experiencing pain while someone who loves them is allowing it! Such an experience affords a little insight into God's dealings with His children. It answers one of the questions we often ask when painful things happen to us: Where is God?

"In all their _____ He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence _____ them: in His _____ and in His pity He _____ them; and He bare them, and _____ them all the days of old" (Isaiah 63:9).

You may remember your earthly father or mother restraining you so that the doctor could administer your injection. Perhaps you recall him or her commenting that the experience hurt him or her more than it did you. That is exactly what God is describing in this Bible passage. To a childish mind, it is an utterly incomprehensible concept, but when we grow to have children of our own, we grasp it clearly.

"Surely He [Jesus] hath _____ our _____, and _____ our _____: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:4).

We then begin to understand what kind of a Father we have. He Himself entered into all your agony, and He has tasted the last drop in your own cup of suffering.

"But He was _____ for our _____, He was bruised for our _____: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are _____" (Isaiah 53:5).

As you face adversity, look into the Savior's tear-stained face—you won't see anything but love.

"All we like _____ have gone _____; we have turned every one to his _____; and the LORD hath laid on Him the _____ of us _____" (Isaiah 53:6).

If we would follow Jesus, we must bear the fellowship of His suffering.

"He was _____, and He was _____, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a _____ to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His _____" (Isaiah 53:7).

You must go where He is; the cross is one of the sweetest places to find Him.

Has there been a time in your life that you have asked Jesus into your heart to save you and help you with your adversity?

Today's Bible reading is Isaiah chapter 53.

LESSON 11

ADVANCING THROUGH ADVERSITY (PART XI)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 40:29

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.

One of the hardest things for Christians to understand is how to find joy in suffering. We think it is admirable to endure hardship without complaining, but to go beyond that and find joy in it seems unattainable. Yet the Bible tells us:

“My brethren, count it all _____ when ye fall into divers temptations [various trials]; Knowing this, that the _____ of your _____ worketh patience” (James 1:2-3).

And the Bible also adds this:

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's _____; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be _____ also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:13).

Jesus has this to say about suffering for His sake:

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your _____ in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:12).

What is this all about? The Bible offers a clue in Philippians:

“That I may _____ Him, and the _____ of His resurrection, and the _____ of His _____, being made conformable unto His death; If by any means I might attain unto the _____ of the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11).

We all desire to know the power of God's resurrection, the sweetness of God's grace, and things of that nature, but the Bible is after more than that. The Bible's objective is for you to know Christ and to know Him thoroughly. If the Lord is a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, then how can you know Him while ignoring these attributes?

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already _____: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, _____ those things which are _____, and reaching forth unto those things which are _____, I press toward the mark for the _____ of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14).

When viewed as windows into the heart of our Savior, hardships become friends to be welcomed rather than enemies to be avoided.

Have you had hardships that became a blessing to you?

Today's Bible reading is Philippians chapter 3.

LESSON 12

WALKING THROUGH A VALLEY

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 40:29

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.

Journeys through the valley are both inevitable and painful, but they are also meant to be profitable. For example, trials can be times of discovery about God. When feelings of helplessness overtake you, He provides strength to sustain you.

“O God, Thou art my God; _____ will I _____ Thee: my soul _____ for Thee, my flesh _____ for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see Thy _____ and Thy _____, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary” (Psalm 63:1-2).

When despair tries to close in, He invites you to experience His peace and promised rest.

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are _____, and I will give you _____. Take My yoke upon you, and _____ of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is _____; and My burden is _____” (Matthew 11:28-30).

In the midst of the clamoring pain, He offers Himself as your Comforter and Protector.

“...When I remember Thee upon my bed, and _____ on Thee in the night watches. Because Thou has been my _____, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I _____. My soul _____ hard after Thee: Thy right hand _____ me. But those that seek my _____, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes” (Psalm 63:6-10).

Discoveries you make in severe crises have to do with yourself. Terrible times test your faith and reveal your true character. When a crisis first hits, most of us will respond with alarm. Then, if our relationship with the Lord is weak, fear will increase. As the pressure continues, some of us will panic, some will ask ungodly counsel, and others will blame people or God for the problem. Instead of standing firm and looking to the Lord, we try to find a way out on our own. These are signs of spiritual immaturity.

“I will _____ the works of the LORD: surely I will remember Thy wonders of old. I will _____ also of all Thy work, and talk of Thy _____. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? Thou art the God that doest _____: Thou hast declared Thy strength among the people” (Psalm 77:11-14).

You should seek out the Lord through prayer and the Bible, remembering His help in the past.

“Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou has caused me to _____. This is my _____ in my affliction: for Thy word hath quickened me” (Psalm 119:49-50).

Explain what you do when the pressures of life seem greater than you can bear:

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 23.

LESSON 13

HOW TO HANDLE OUR ADVERSITY

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 40:29

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.

When life hits you and sends you sprawling, your response is a measuring stick for discovering how mature you are in your relationship with Christ. A response that demonstrates total and complete trust in the Lord is what He desires to see.

“Let love be without dissimulation. _____ that which is evil; cleave to that which is _____. Be kindly affectioned one to another with _____; in honour preferring one another; Not _____ in business; _____ in spirit; _____ the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in _____; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality” (Romans 12:9-13).

If you are careless, the tragic events that unfold in your life can leave you jaded. Forgetting who God is and the role He plays in your life will lead to the wrong response. When you sink away from a passionate pursuit of God in the midst of adversity, you react in a way that goes against God's Word.

“Bless them which persecute you: _____, and curse not. _____ with them that do rejoice, and _____ 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 _____” (Romans 12:14-16).

You might blame others or God for your current situation. You might search for an escape through drugs, alcohol, anger, or bitterness. You might pity yourself or just give up. However, turning to the Lord in difficult situations reinforces where your strength and hope resides.

“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things _____ in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live _____ with all men. Dearly beloved, _____ not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; _____ will repay, saith the _____” (Romans 12:17-19).

Paul, who experienced more than his share of adversity following his conversion, gives us great direction as to how we should respond during adversity, beginning with this advice: “Cling to what is good” (Romans 12:9).

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, _____ him; if he thirst, _____ him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome _____ with _____” (Romans 12:20-21).

As you enter the storms in your life, clinging to the Lord reveals where your heart is. Clinging is an action of determined grip, unwilling to let go no matter what the cost. You know that with Him, you will be able to endure anything. What adversity is in your life that you are able to endure by clinging to Jesus?

Today's Bible reading is Romans chapter 12.

LESSON 14

WHAT TO DO ABOUT OUR ADVERSITY

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 9:9

The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

Just as pressure turns coal into beautiful diamonds, adversity can become a starting point for God to do something beautiful in your life. He can transform your heart, change your attitude, and teach you what it means to trust Him.

“I will praise Thee with my _____: before the gods will I sing praise unto Thee. I will worship toward Thy holy temple, and _____ Thy name for Thy _____ and for Thy _____: for Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name” (Psalm 138:1-2).

Instead of growing embittered and distrustful toward God, you must look beyond the present struggle and recognize what God is doing. Adversity is God's choice tool for building character and equipping you for future ministry.

“In the day when I cried Thou _____ me, and strengthenedst me with _____ in my soul” (Psalm 138:3).

Not only does adversity sharpen your relationship with Christ, but it also enables you to minister to those who you will meet in the future who have gone through a similar experience.

“Though I walk in the midst of _____, Thou wilt revive me: Thou shalt stretch forth Thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and Thy right hand shall _____ me. The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy _____, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of Thine own hands” (Psalm 138:7-8).

Adversity hits you in your weakest areas because God desires to strengthen you. God has a design and purpose behind every adversity in your life.

Even when the enemy attempts to destroy you or your faith through an attack, God can take the situation and bring Himself glory from it. Instead of hardening your heart toward adverse situations, you must seek to discover what God desires for you to do in your heart and give Him full authority to do so.

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me yet might have _____. In the world ye shall have _____: but be of good cheer; I have _____ the world” (John 16:33).

What tribulation has the world given you, and what are you doing to allow God to transform you through it?

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 138.

LESSON 15

THE BELIEVER'S STRUGGLE

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 9:9

The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

If Jesus is your Savior, you have every provision required for living a godly life and everything necessary in order to be a delight to God. Though godliness is a constant and difficult exercise, God, who calls you to it, helps you.

“For to be carnally minded is _____; but to be spiritually minded is _____ and _____. Because the carnal mind is _____ against God: for it is not _____ to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh _____ please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the _____, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Romans 8:6-9).

Remember, those controlled by the sinful nature, cannot please God. You, however, are not controlled by the sinful nature, but are led by the Spirit (if the Spirit of God lives in you).

“And if Christ be in you, the _____ is dead because of _____; but the _____ is _____ because of _____. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead _____ in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His _____ that dwelleth in you” (Romans 8:10-11).

Before having a relationship with Christ, you had no capability of doing anything that the Lord would accept. However, now you have the Holy Spirit, whom God has given you to guide you and help you achieve a holy life. Also, that which displeases God—the sinful nature—no longer controls you.

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the _____, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall _____; but if ye through the _____ do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall _____. For as many as are _____ by the _____ of God, they are the _____ of God” (Romans 8:12-14).

God provides the Holy Spirit and destroys sin's control because He desires fellowship with you.

“Likewise the Spirit also _____ our infirmities: for we know not what we should _____ for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh _____ for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that _____ the _____ knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26-27).

God's desire is to have a deep, abiding relationship with you. As you struggle toward the high standard of holiness, remember that it was never meant to be a measure of personal achievement.

Is there sin in your life that prevents you from pleasing God? Please explain how you will get this sin out of your life:

Today's Bible reading is Romans chapter 8.

LESSON 16

HOW TO HANDLE OUR REJECTIONS

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 9:9

The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

At some point, each of us will experience some form of rejection. While we have to deal with rejection, we must keep in mind that we are not the ones being rejected. God deemed our lives so precious and valuable that He sacrificed His only Son for us, guaranteeing acceptance by Him forever (should we choose to make Him Lord of our lives).

“And you, that were sometime alienated and _____ in your _____ by wicked works, yet now hath He _____ In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and _____ and unreprieveable in His sight:” (Colossians 1:21-22).

The Bible says that although you were formerly alienated, hostile in mind, and engaged in evil deeds, He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death on the cross.

In combating feelings of rejection, you must remember what God says about you:

“But as many as _____ Him, to them gave he _____ to become the _____ of God, even to them that _____ on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of _____” (John 1:12-13).

You have worth. Regardless of what others may tell you, God says that you have worth because of Christ who lives inside of you; that's what counts!

You are capable. With the Holy Spirit living inside of you, you have the power to accomplish whatever God calls you to do.

“I can do _____ through _____ which _____ me” (Philippians 4:13).

Name three ways you are valuable to God:

Today's Bible reading is Colossians chapter 1.

LESSON 17

HOW TO HANDLE OUR FEARS

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 9:9

The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

In nearly no time at all, fear can strike furiously. You may fail to see a certain ill circumstance coming, but as soon as it has arrived, you will most certainly have serious questions as to how you will avoid its impending consequences. When you are grounded in your faith, confidence emanates from your life, and in the presence of confidence, there is no fear. When you exude certainty, the outcome is never in question—you can know that God will prevail.

“And when the disciples saw Him [Jesus] walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a _____; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not _____. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come _____ on the water” (Matthew 14:26-28).

The focus of your life must be set upon God in order for you to defeat fear. Even removing your eyes from Him (Jesus) for a moment can send you trembling into fear, forgetting the power that rests with the One who loves you completely.

“And He [Jesus] said, _____. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he _____ on the _____, to go to Jesus. But when he [Peter] saw the wind boisterous, he was _____; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying Lord, _____. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little _____, wherefore didst thou _____?” (Matthew 14:29-31).

On the turbulent water of the Sea of Galilee, Peter leaped over the side of the boat toward his Savior. While a sense of doubt existed in Peter's mind, he decided it would disappear if he, too, could walk on the water.

“And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and _____ Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the _____ of _____” (Matthew 14:32-33).

For a short period of time, Peter was right. He began walking on the waves just like Jesus. But then he began to focus on the waves and wind instead of Jesus. Peter became frightened and began to sink. He cried out, “Lord, save me!”

By placing your focus upon the Lord, you demonstrate where your faith rests.

What fears are you facing now that you need to turn over to God's control?

Are you lacking faith like Peter?

Will you now ask God to help you, and will you trust Him?

Today's Bible reading is Matthew chapter 14.

LESSON 18

DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Try to remember a time in your life when you felt utterly disappointed. Did it affect your expectations for the future? Did you get mad, or did you quietly sit back and sulk for a while?

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the _____. Then Joseph her husband, being a _____ man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily” (Matthew 1:18-19).

Disappointment hurts. It is painfully ironic that your level of disappointment is directly proportional to the level of how much you want something to happen. In today's lesson, Joseph is seen as being extremely disappointed, and why should he not be? He was engaged to a young woman through a legal bond strong enough to require a divorce to end it; yet she stood before him, admitting to a pregnancy that neither could fully comprehend.

“But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a _____, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, _____ to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a _____, and thou shalt call His name _____: for He shall _____ His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20-21).

God called Joseph to a higher level of acceptance. Explaining the supernatural conception, the Lord called upon Joseph to rise up and overcome his feelings of fear and disappointment. Furthermore, God entrusted Joseph with an awesome responsibility: the parenting of the Savior of the world, God's only Son.

“Now all this was done, that it might be _____ which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a _____ shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name _____, which, being interpreted is, _____” (Matthew 1:22-23).

How differently this story would have ended if Joseph had refused to lay aside his disappointment!

Can you see how God is using your disappointment? Explain.

Explain how you are dealing with your disappointment:

Today's Bible reading is Matthew chapter 1.

LESSON 19

WHEN WE ARE FEARFUL

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

All throughout the Bible, God encourages you not to be afraid or anxious, because as His child, you have no basis for fear. Of course, there are reasons for you to be very, very cautious about what you do and where you go, but God's people are not to live in a state of anxiety.

“Fear thou not; for I am _____ thee: be not _____; for I am thy God: I will _____ thee; yea, I will _____ thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10).

At least six fears are basic to and shared by all mankind. They are the fears of:

- | | | |
|--------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Criticism | 3. Old age | 5. Poverty |
| 2. Illness | 4. Death | 6. Losing a loved one |

Although these are universal worries, they are, in reality, symptoms of something deep inside that fuels your fears:

“For I the LORD thy God will _____ thy right hand, saying unto thee, _____; I will help thee” (Isaiah 41:13).

A basic sense of inadequacy: Because of distorted thinking, you may frequently feel incompetent to tackle some challenges or feel incapable of accomplishing certain tasks.

The tendency to set unrealistic standards for yourself: You can go through life trying to measure up to lofty expectations that are self-imposed rather than set by God.

An innate sense of unworthiness: It is amazing how many people will not succeed in life because they just do not feel that they deserve it.

“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will _____ them. I the God of Israel will not _____ them” (Isaiah 41:17).

In the midst of your fears and anxieties, you need to remember God's promises. It is important that you look up at Him and not around at your circumstances.

Please explain what you fear most:

Can you say, “God is my Helper, I fear not?” _____

Today's Bible reading is Isaiah chapter 41.

LESSON 20

HOW TO SURVIVE A SATANIC ATTACK

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

The Word of God is full of descriptive terms for the devil. These terms include “accuser,” “serpent,” “roaring lion,” “adversary,” “angel of light,” “father of lies,” and others; these are but a few of the cloaks worn by this master of deceit. As Christians, we would like to think that we have what it takes when it comes to discerning the activities of the devil. Some people even find fault with Eve for succumbing so easily to his wiles; after all, who would not be suspicious if he encountered a serpent telling lies?

“Love not the _____, neither the _____ that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the _____ is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

Yes, it is easy to be critical of Eve for not perceiving the serpent's craftiness, but the truth is that none of us would have done any better had we been in her position. If we think otherwise, then we are already candidates for the snare of the devil. You can not afford a know-it-all attitude when it comes to managing your spiritual life. That is why the Bible said this in its teaching about resisting the devil:

“But He giveth more _____. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the _____, but giveth grace unto the _____. _____ yourselves therefore to _____. _____ the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your _____, ye double minded” (James 4:6-8).

“_____ in the sight of the Lord, and He shall _____ you up” (James 4:10).

Explain your plans for resisting the devil:

Today's Bible reading is James chapter 4.

LESSON 21

FAILURE: THE FIRST STEPS TO VICTORY

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

The thought of failing can stir up feelings of anxiety and fear in a person's heart. We wonder to ourselves, "If I fail, what will others think of me? If I am defeated, how will that reflect upon my life?"

"But know that the LORD hath _____ him that is godly for Himself: the LORD will _____ when I _____ unto Him. Stand in awe, and _____: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still" (Psalm 4:3-4).

Failure, however, is sometimes engineered by God to bring about a stark revelation: we need to trust God in every aspect of our lives. Whether your failure relates to a particular sin that seems impossible to conquer, a venture within ministry, a business, or a relationship, it helps to understand that you need to depend totally upon God.

"Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your _____ in the LORD. There be many that say, Who will shew us any _____? LORD, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us" (Psalm 4:5-6).

There are times in our lives when we strike out on our own, possibly even while attempting to do something for God; but when we try these things in our own strength, failure is imminent. David understood failure and success, experiencing both in many different areas of his life. It was through his defeats that he recognized how desperately he needed God to permeate every place in his heart.

"Thou hast put _____ in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in _____, and sleep: for Thou, LORD, _____ makest me dwell in _____" (Psalm 4:7-8).

As you place your dependence upon God, an incredible freedom and peace will begin to rest in your heart.

List the things for which you are going to depend upon God:

List the failures you have had for which you will ask God for victory:

Will you pray and ask God for wisdom in how to handle your failures? _____

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 4.

LESSON 22

HOW FAILURE LEADS TO VICTORY

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

Our pride deceives us into thinking that failure makes a person weak and that it is not for us. We assume that God is working through our successes, and not our weaknesses; but what does God's Word say?

“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is _____. Now then it is no more I that do it, but _____ that dwelleth in _____. For I know that in me (that is, in my _____), dwelleth no good thing: for to _____ is present with me; but how to _____ that which is _____ I find not” (Romans 7:15-18).

In relation to failure, this verse explains that when you fail, God works through it for His glory.

“For the _____ that I would I do not: but the _____ which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, _____ is present with me. For I _____ in the law of God after the inward man:” (Romans 7:19-22).

God's ultimate goal is to transform you into His image, so you more vividly reflect His glory. He will do whatever is necessary to achieve that within your heart. Sometimes, failure in your life is essential for God to bring about a greater purpose.

“But I see another law in my members, _____ against the law of my _____, and bringing me into _____ to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall _____ me from the body of this _____? I thank God through _____ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7:23-25).

You may wonder why failure is happening in your life. You may ask yourself, “What am I doing wrong? Doesn't God love me? Doesn't He want me to be a success?” More than being a success, God wants to transform you into His likeness.

When you fail, self-reflection occurs. You look upon your heart and wonder what you could have done differently. Are you willing to ask God what He is trying to teach you through your failures?

Do you recognize that the failures that God has given you can transform your heart to totally trust God with control of your life? Please explain:

Today's Bible reading is Romans chapter 7.

LESSON 23

VICTORY IN THE BATTLES OF LIFE

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

Have you ever failed at something simply because you did not plan it well and all the way through? Sadly, this practice is very common—among believers and non-believers alike.

“And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a _____, and he a man of _____ from his youth” (1 Samuel 17:32-33).

If you want to achieve victory in your pursuits, you must be willing to plan. It is not always enough to see a matter through to completion; you must also demonstrate the wisdom to consider all steps leading up to the challenge and all potential results that might follow; then, you'll have a complete view—you'll begin to see things from God's perspective.

“And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a _____, and a _____, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and _____ it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and _____ him” (1 Samuel 17:34-35).

When David confronted Goliath, he knew that he was entering into more than a simple wartime dispute. He was keenly aware of the nature of the conflict; that is, the very name of God was at stake because all of the other nations would be watching to see what happened. Failure at this important juncture would have shown the world that Israel's God was not all that powerful.

“Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defiled the armies of the _____. David said moreover, The LORD that _____ out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will _____ out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be _____ thee” (1 Samuel 17:36-37).

More than understanding the nature of the conflict, David walked into battle knowing the outcome. He knew that God would empower him to do what he had been called to do: defeat Goliath and provide an unshakable testimony to the power of God. If your pursuits keep falling short, ask yourself, “Am I looking at the whole issue, or have I lost perspective?” If your point of view is too limited, commit the matter to God and allow Him to show you what He is able to do through your efforts.

What have you failed at that God has given you victory over?

Today's Bible reading is 1 Samuel chapter 17.

LESSON 24

THE STRUGGLE OF THE FLESH

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

Modern culture encourages you to do whatever comes naturally, without any regard for the consequences. But the Bible says that those who live with the Holy Spirit—all believers—are at war with “the flesh.” Although you’ve been given a new spirit and a new heart, you are still in your old human body, with all of your old wants, feelings, needs, and behavior patterns. This means you are still susceptible to temptation with regard to desires outside of the Lord’s will.

“This I say then, Walk in the _____, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the _____. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are _____ the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be _____ of the _____, ye are not under the _____” (Galatians 5:16-18).

Unfortunately, some Christians have the idea that victory over the flesh is a one-time deal. Back when I was a boy learning about biblical principles, no one explained to me that believers conquer sin moment by moment. Upon hearing talk about sanctification and “doing away with sin,” I thought that one day when I was older, I’d have some kind of spiritual experience which would rid my life of wrong desires and thoughts. Some people’s faith never grows past waiting for that “magic” event, and in the meantime, they are frustrated by their failure to be good Christians.

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; _____, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, _____, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, _____, seditions, heresies, _____, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not _____ the _____ of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Even after three years in Jesus’ constant company, the disciples couldn’t live the Christian life on their own. Knowing they were too weak in the flesh to faithfully preach the Gospel or set a godly example, Jesus commanded them to wait for a Helper; He was referring to the Holy Spirit, who provides strength, guidance, and wisdom.

“But the _____ of the _____ is _____, _____, peace, longsuffering, _____, goodness, _____, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the _____ with the affections and lusts. If we _____ in the Spirit, let us also _____ in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, _____ one another, _____ one another” (Galatians 5:22-26).

Apart from God’s Spirit, you as a believer cannot overcome fleshly desires and live in God’s will. Have you overcome desires of the flesh? How did you do it?

Today’s Bible reading is Galatians chapter 5.

LESSON 25

THE SOLUTION TO ENVY

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

Envy complains about what God has not provided and it objects to the way He has blessed another person. Its influence is pervasive and cannot be hidden for very long.

Three main causes of envy are:

Insecurity: Uncertainty over his kingship's future led Saul to view David, the giant-killer, as competition. A sense of inadequacy can lead to envy over another person's success.

Selfishness: Saul resented the crowd's praise of David for his battlefield successes. We fall into the same trap when we compare our situation to someone else's. Envy can arise when we see a person who has a better marriage, family, job, or financial position.

Pride: Saul's ego would not let him be glad about David's accomplishments. Pride will make us highly critical of another's success. Our mouths will speak words to justify our own situation and to belittle the object of our envy.

“Delight thyself also in the _____: and He shall give thee the _____ of thine _____.
Commit thy way unto the LORD; _____ also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:4-5).

To be free of envy, you must confess your emotional state to God and acknowledge His right to bless someone else more abundantly than you; you must thank Him for what He's doing in that person's life. You must ask God to give you a love for that individual and request that He bless him or her even more.

“_____ in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him: _____ thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from _____, and forsake _____: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil” (Psalm 37:7-8).

God will honor your prayers, and in doing so, He will replace your spirit of envy with one of love and thankfulness. To prevent future bouts of envy, you must stay focused on Him and what He is doing in and through you.

“For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that _____ upon the _____, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the _____ shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall _____ themselves in the _____ of _____” (Psalm 37:9-11).

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 37.

LESSON 26

OUR TRIALS

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.

Obviously, we do not enjoy times of trial or conflict. Despite our assurance that God will always be by our side through any and every circumstance, it is still natural to fear and bemoan such occurrences.

“Let your conversation be without _____; and be _____ with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never _____ thee, nor _____ thee” (Hebrews 13:5).

In these hardships, however, we often forget the very words of Christ. We should hear and certainly recognize the first part of His instruction.

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have _____. In the world ye shall have _____: but be of _____; I have _____ the world” (John 16:33).

We have all faced enough problems to know that it is not possible to avoid them altogether. In fact, Jesus takes it a step further by asserting that our faith in Him will actually lead to more attacks and criticism.

Truly, it is impossible for a devoted Christian to live trouble-free in a world that is hostile toward God.

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated _____ before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have _____ you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also _____ you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also” (John 15:18-20).

What we often miss in Jesus' statement, however, is the second half of John 16:33. After delivering the “bad” news, He offers a word of hope: “But take courage! I have overcome the world.” Notice that He didn't say, “I will overcome,” but rather, “I have overcome.” In Christ, the victory has already been won. Even the world's greatest threat, death itself, has already been defeated by Jesus Christ.

“Wherein ye greatly _____, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in _____ through manifold _____: That the trial of your faith, being much more _____ than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto _____ and _____ and _____ at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye _____; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet _____, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your _____, even the _____ of your souls” (1 Peter 1:6-9).

Life is certainly not easy. However, we have a loving God who not only understands our suffering, but who also chose to experience it Himself. Because He did, we can now claim participation in the ultimate victory over every trial of life.

Today's Bible reading is 1 Peter chapter 1.

LESSON 27

AN UNSEEN BATTLE

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.

Satan does exist—our broken society testifies to his reality. Those who ignore him do so at their own peril; this is especially true of Christians, because they are at war against him and need to be aware of his presence.

Spiritual warfare is personal; Satan creates specific attacks for each individual.

Though he cannot steal believers' spirits from God, he can and does harass them physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Every ambush and frontal attack is meant to defeat their witness so that they cannot live a victorious, Christ-centered life.

“Finally, my brethren, be _____ in the _____, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole _____ of God, that ye may be able to _____ against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the _____ of this world, against _____ in high places” (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Our foe is not omniscient, but he is crafty. He observes our strong and weak points in order to determine the best areas for attack. As soon as you become comfortable and least expect trouble, the adversary springs a trap.

The enemy is always Satan and his legion of demons.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to _____ in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with _____, and having on the breastplate of _____; And your feet shod with the preparation of the _____ of _____; Above all, taking the shield of _____, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephesians 6:13-16).

The first rule of warfare is to know one's enemy. Thanks to the Bible, we can. The Bible also contains an important assurance. The combined forces of hell cannot equal the supernatural power of a single believer.

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because _____ is He that is in you, than he that is in the _____” (1 John 4:4).

We have the power of Christ living within us. Christ was not only triumphant on the cross, but His final victory over Satan is prophesied in Revelation. Through Him, we can conquer Satan and win our unseen battles.

Today's Bible reading is Ephesians chapter 6.

LESSON 28

REVIEW (PART ONE)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.

Multiple Choice

Read each question carefully, then mark the correct answer. There is only one correct answer to each question. The questions are based on Scripture and the lessons in this book.

1. Let us run with patience the:
 - a) Race that is set before us
 - b) Fastest we can
 - c) Race of life
2. Looking unto Jesus, the:
 - a) One who is gone
 - b) Author and finisher of our faith
 - c) One who doesn't care
3. My son, despise not:
 - a) Your money
 - b) Your wife
 - c) Thou the chastening of the Lord
4. Happy is the man whom God:
 - a) Lets live
 - b) Correcteth
 - c) Cares for
5. We know that all things work together:
 - a) To them that do good
 - b) To them that love God
 - c) To them that give their money
6. I can do all things through:
 - a) Christ which strengtheneth me
 - b) My own strength
 - c) The prayers of others
7. I thank God through:
 - a) My pastor
 - b) Jesus Christ our Lord
 - c) My church
8. In God, I will praise
 - a) His Word
 - b) His angels
 - c) Myself
9. The steps of a good man:
 - a) Are ordered by the Lord
 - b) Are ordered by his church
 - c) Are ordered by his pastor
10. We have redemption through:
 - a) Acceptance of Jesus
 - b) The act of baptism
 - c) Jesus' blood
11. Jesus bore our grief and:
 - a) Our sorrows
 - b) Our pains
 - c) Our problems
12. Come unto Me, all ye:
 - a) That need help
 - b) That are heavy laden
 - c) That need money

Today's Bible reading is Matthew chapter 11.

LESSON 29

REVIEW (PART TWO)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.

True or False

Read each statement below carefully, then enter "true" or "false" in the blank. The statements are based on Scripture and the lessons in this book.

1. Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." _____
2. David said in the Psalms, "Thou art the God that doest wonders." _____
3. Do not be kind and affectionate to one another. _____
4. If your enemy hungers, look the other way. _____
5. If you walk in the midst of trouble, God will revive you. _____
6. To be carnally minded is death. _____
7. If you live after the flesh, you shall die. _____
8. He gave some people the power to become the sons of God. _____
9. Mary, a young lady, became with child from the Holy Spirit. _____
10. Jesus said, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee." _____
11. The Lord your God will hold you by your left hand. _____
12. Love the world, and the things that are in the world. _____
13. God giveth grace unto the humble. _____
14. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. _____
15. David said, "Thou God hast put sadness in my heart." _____
16. David gave the Lord credit for delivering him from the lion. _____
17. Three fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, and peace. _____

Today's Bible reading is Galatians chapter 5.

LESSON 30

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.

Put into your own words how you plan to handle adversity:

“Hell is the highest reward that the devil can offer you for being a servant of his.”

~Billy Sunday



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