



— FULL — **STEWARDSHIP**

A new commandment I give to you, that you love
one another, even as I have loved you, that you
also love one another. (John 13:34)

Full Stewardship

CONTENTS

The Truth About Relationships	1
Self-Government	11
Family Government	26
Civil Government	37
Church Government	47
Summary	64

Have you ever considered the fact that God's worldview and people's worldview are different? (See Prov 16:25, 21:2; Isa 55:6-11) Popular opinion and religious traditions have influenced everyone except the omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God.

Your reading this indicates that you may have reached a time in your life where you have a teachable spirit and are ready to take a fresh look at the worldview of God. If this is true, you will have fun learning to increase your intimacy and peace with God and others.

Most topics are multifaceted. Though effort has been made to be balanced, certainly not every facet is covered here. This is more of a springboard to stimulate your thinking and motivate you to study the Bible more thoroughly.

You may not agree with everything presented here, but chew on it and keep reading. We welcome your feedback at JesusForKing.com! Please let us know about any errors.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.



© Make copies or download and print for free.

The Truth About Relationships

We love, because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Sin destroys our relationships with God and others (see Isa 59:1-2). If we are not reconciled to God (i.e. repair the relationship), we will remain separated for all eternity in hell. Because we are guilty, this is what each one of us deserves.

Jesus never sinned (see Heb 4:15). He loves us so much that He was willing to trade our sin for His righteousness. Though innocent, He bore the punishment for our sins on the cross (see 1 Pet 2:24). In exchange, we get forgiveness of sins and the gift of His Holy Spirit.

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (Rom 5:6-11)

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor 5:17-21)

Reconciliation to God is the first step to repairing other relationships in our life. As the old things pass away, behold, new things come. God reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. We get to learn exciting new relationship skills that benefit all of our stewardships. Jesus said:

Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

But if that slave says in his heart, "My master will be a long time in coming," and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few.

From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. (Luke 12:42-48)

All the Earth

God has given mankind stewardship over His creation and He has given instructions about how He wants us to manage what He has entrusted to us. Everything we have belongs to Him. Who then is the faithful and sensible steward who will carry out his Master's will? We need to be determined and committed to ruling the world as long as it exists. God will be our judge.

The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. (Psa 24:1)

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Gen 1:26)

The righteous rule themselves and their family, community, and church with a spirit of humility and service, creating high levels of trust. Do the wicked rule God's way? No. They intimidate, manipulate, and force others to serve their selfish desires. They're attracted to power and motivated by position ambition. When the righteous are not faithful stewards, the wicked rule the world – their way!

Not everyone has been given the same responsibilities, but stewardship applies to every person to the degree that they have been given responsibilities. God has told us how He expects us to perform in every area of life. Have you considered the King's desires for your personal conduct, family life, finances, employee/employer relations, citizenship, or serving the body of Christ?

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. (1 Cor 10:12)

Not all stewardships will be covered in detail in this study guide, but most of our God-given responsibilities fall into the four categories we do cover: Personal, family, civic, and church. We'll merely be introducing these stewardships from a biblical perspective, not offering a comprehensive study of each one.

A word of caution is in order because some stewardships have actually been turned into idols by some people, so the Christian must be on guard to prevent that from happening. An idol is anything that displaces God in our affections and priorities. Any form of idolatry will harm the rest of your stewardships and derail your eternity (for a deeper understanding of idolatry and how to avoid it, see the *Transformation* study guide).

We have received a Spirit of power, love, and discipline (see 2 Tim 1:7). We must put that discipline to work controlling fleshly appetites and bringing our life into compliance with the will of God. We are to be imitators of Paul, even as he was of Christ (see 1 Cor 11:1).

I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. (1 Cor 9:23-27)

It will be up to you to discover the depth of God's expectations in each of your stewardships through the continual study of God's word. You are exhorted to identify areas that need improvement and then study and apply God's principles of transformation. In His word is found the true knowledge of everything pertaining to life and godliness. Seek, and you will find.

Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (2 Pet 1:3)

The exciting thing is that God's ways work best – when we passionately practice them in our lives! The principles for successful stewardship found in the Bible produce authentic relational warmth and meaningful fulfillment, and they enable effective evangelism. The greatest joy comes from being a tool that God uses in the process of saving someone's eternal soul.

As faithful stewards, we are to salt the earth, diligently bringing the flavor of Christ into every area of life. Whether it's our family or the community we live in, we are to enlighten our sphere of influence with "the whole message of this life." (Acts 5:20) To preach Jesus we must preach "everything pertaining to life and godliness."

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Mat 5:13-16)

The Meaning of Life

Life and godliness are all about relationships. Regrettably, many people don't realize this until after they've already wasted their life pursuing things of no consequence. Even the Ten Commandments are about relationships: The first four have to do with our relationship with God and the other six have to do with our relationships with people. The most important concern for everyone on earth should be the condition of their relationship with God.

Inasmuch as it depends on you, the condition of your relationship with others is a reflection of your relationship with God. He has entrusted all of us with relationships and He tells us how to intentionally manage them fruitfully. Obedience has rewards and disobedience has consequences – both in this life and in the life to come.

The amount of trust others have in you is one way to measure the health of your relationships. Do your children trust you? Does your spouse trust you? Do your neighbors trust you? Do your brothers and sisters in Christ trust you? Can God trust you?

Feelings are an automatic result of relationships, so God doesn't tell us to have feelings. But He does tell us how to treat each other (and how not to). It is our responsibility to decide to walk by the Spirit (see Gal 5:16) and demonstrate each of the following characteristics:

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Gal 5:22-23)

Are your relationships loving, joyful, peaceful, etc.? Would you like them to be?

Diligently study each of these characteristics and receive a blessing by thoughtfully practicing them (see the *Jesus For King* study guide for Bible study tips). As you study love, for example, think about how to apply it in each of your relationships. Then do the same thing with patience, kindness, goodness, etc.

Though some are shallower and others are deeper, you have some sort of relationship with all of the people you interact with each day. Actively pursue peace with God and others. Deliberately demonstrate self-control and patience with people in public as well as your children. Be thoughtfully gentle and kind to people you work with as well as your spouse. Enthusiastically show faithfulness and goodness to all who depend on you.

Be Blessed

Do you look at relationships as a way to give or as a way to get? Does the room brighten when you enter it or when you leave it? Relationships take intentional investment, but the rewards are worth it. If you want to be happy, you have to consciously choose to love people in a way that will communicate and demonstrate to them that they are valuable to you.

In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)

Blessed means happy. If you want to be happy, be a giver not a taker. Selfishness steals your happiness. Subject yourself to the needs of others. Whether it's with God, family, or coworkers, your relationships determine your everyday and eternal happiness. We're all in this together. Let's make whatever sacrifices are necessary to flourish!

Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (Eph 5:21)

Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mat 20:26-28)

Choose success over failure. You can enjoy loving relationships with God and others; or you can suffer the loneliness of hurt feelings and a scabbed-over heart. We have all tasted some success and also contributed to relationship failures: Happy and sweet or painful and divisive. Choose wisely.

Where you have people, you have people problems. Disagreements, differences of opinion, misinterpretations, hurt feelings, etc. are common in all types of relationships. God shows us how to fix broken relationships: It's through conflict resolution and forgiveness, not conflict avoidance. Our sin ruined our relationship with God; He made a loving sacrifice and offered us His mercy and forgiveness. We can humble ourselves and seek forgiveness in order to reconcile hurting relationships.

For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. (Mat 6:14-15)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34-35)

The love that God commands is not a feeling, it is a decision. Just as you can choose to rejoice always (see Phil 4:4) and energetically spread cheer to others, you can decide to love others and purposely demonstrate it to them every day in many personable and caring ways.

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:12-13)

Relationship to Authority

Jesus is over all and His word authorizes the distinct responsibilities and authority of each form of government: Self-government, family government, civil government, and church government.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. (Isa 9:6-7) 700 BC

Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." (Mat 28:18)

He is the head over all rule and authority. (Col 2:10)

He has delegated responsibilities to each form of government, the primary being the duty to protect those entrusted to it. If one form of government usurps the jurisdiction of another (i.e. assumes authority or responsibilities delegated to the other), the injured government has a responsibility to defend its sovereignty in order to protect the rights of those it is accountable for.

The governed are blessed with security as long they and the authorities follow God's instructions. The whole family, community, or congregation suffers when stewards pervert, neglect, or overstep their role.

It takes wisdom and vigilance to keep each form of government functioning in accordance with the responsibilities and authority God has entrusted to it. When we do, they protect us from evil. When we don't, we become vulnerable to the schemes of the devil.

Satan does everything he can to distort the proper role of each form of government and get them to abuse power and perpetrate evil. He has had much success throughout history. We should do everything we can to prevent any form of government from usurping the role of another.

Like trees that reproduce abundantly when their seeds find the right conditions, godly self-government is produced abundantly when each of the other forms of government perform their God-given role. Those who learn godly self-government can then succeed in other God-given roles of government. You must rightly govern yourself before you can rightly govern others.

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. (Tit 3:1-2)

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. (1 Pet 2:13-17)

God expects us to be in subjection to the authorities He places over different areas of life. We are to obey our parents, husbands, bosses, civil authorities and laws, and church leaders. Rebellion to the authorities is rebellion to God. It has consequences in this life, not the least of which is losing the protection they provide for us, and in the life to come we'll suffer the fate of all rebels.

Through a series of cause-and-effect relationships that God has established, you reap the rewards or consequences you deserve. Blessings or curses – which will you choose? (read Deuteronomy 28)
Those who reject the authorities of God are progressively judged with increasing severity.

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. (Rom 13:1-2)

Responsibility of Government

For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a

minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. (Rom 13:3-4)

This is talking about civil government, but the principle extends to other authorities (e.g. family government is responsible for disciplining wayward children). The purpose of wrath is to deter evil behavior that hurts others and destroys relationships. Government is to bring about justice and facilitate conflict resolution through restitution and reconciliation, which promotes peace. This is proper law enforcement. When the law is not properly enforced, lawlessness abounds and it becomes difficult to lead a tranquil and quiet life. And the price paid on the cross loses value for those unfamiliar with wrath because mercy is meaningless unless contrasted with wrath.

The Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. (Gal 3:24)

But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. (1 Tim 1:8-11)

Those who enforce the law are to do so lawfully, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. Ultimately, all will be judged by God, including the authorities who are to enforce the law. We have been entrusted with the responsibility of proclaiming this glorious gospel.

So that godless men would not rule nor be snares of the people. (Job 34:30)

Responsibility of the Governed

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. (1 Tim 2:1-2)

In many cases you can choose your boss, your spouse, and your civil and church authorities. God's word teaches us how to make wise choices. We can influence existing rulers by appealing to them. The following true-to-life parable about the use of appeals in asking for justice from the authorities teaches us that we especially need to appeal to God, the One Who has all authority:

Now [Jesus] was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.' Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring

about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly.” (Luke 18:1-8)

As Jesus’ parable about the diligent widow illustrates, persistence pays. The squeaky wheel gets the grease. There’s a sense in which everyone suffers under the authority of men because men don’t have perfect knowledge and therefore they make many mistakes. But regardless of the harshness or other imperfections of our authorities, we are still to be respectful and submissive.

No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket and God didn’t create a resurrected army so they could hide out. He has entrusted us with everything pertaining to life and godliness. We need to be involved in our communities leading the way in righteousness and justice.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17)

Jesus said “you’ll know them by their fruit.” Look around the world at those who oppose the truth (e.g. Muslims, communists, Hindus, humanists, socialists, sodomites, atheists), and examine the fruit of their leadership. God has given us exactly what we need to combat evil and inspire righteousness: The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And He has commanded us to preach to every nation.

Limits of Submission

If family, civil, or church authorities are trampling your God-given rights, you have a right to appeal, plea, and petition for God’s laws to be followed, and as a last resort, to disobey them. The apostles found themselves in such a situation:

When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:27-29)

Certain cases may require the use of legal appeals to different authorities whose jurisdiction it falls under, as Paul did when he appealed to Caesar to escape unjust death at the hands of the Jewish authorities (see Acts 25:10-11). In other words, blind submission to any and every use of authority is not biblical.

Illegitimate exercise of authority should be met with resistance. For example, if someone forced their way into your home or homeland and declared themselves the new authority, you would be right to reject such tyranny. Rightful authorities have a duty to protect those entrusted to them.

There are very few biblically justifiable reasons to remove oneself from under the authority placed over you, whether it is family, civil, or church authorities. Before proceeding, one must pray for God’s wisdom and make every possible effort to remain in subjection while following a peaceful appeal process to seek justice, as the early American colonies did in every stage of the

oppression they had experienced under the British crown. Read the Declaration of Independence again or for the first time. Read the list of grievances the American colonies had against Britain and see if you agree with their ultimate decision to declare independence.

Righteousness, Self-Control, and the Judgment to Come (Acts 24:25)

In our personal and public affairs we progressively reap what we sow in our relationships, in the way we govern, and in our respect for those who govern us. We are judged by the way we treat others and the righteousness and self-control we practice in our relationships.

We love, because He first loved us. If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. (1 John 4:19-21)

“Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.” (Isa 1:16-20)

God has given mankind stewardship over the earth. In His word He has given us specific instructions for managing what He has entrusted to us. Who then is the faithful and sensible steward who will carry out his Master’s will? Will the wicked rule the earth God’s way? The righteous need to be faithful stewards and rule the earth – God’s way!

The world is full of toxins, pathogens, and carcinogens seeking to overwhelm our body’s defenses. Anxiety, laziness, and junk food have toxic effects that disrupt our immune system, making us vulnerable. The world is also full of opportunistic charlatans, criminals, and satanic influences looking for gullible and vulnerable people to deceive and take advantage of. Being aware of these threats and being prepared to defend ourselves increases our chances of avoiding them entirely so we can focus on the Lord’s work.

God designed our body to fight off and protect itself from harmful elements. A strong immune system can heal the body of many maladies. It depends on adequate nutrition, exercise, sleep, and the right attitude. God also gave us the ability – and gave men the responsibility – to protect ourselves from those who would deceive us, take advantage of us, or violate our rights. This requires training, proper mindset, and faithful stewardship.

Christians willingly and joyfully sacrifice everything, knowing that we are guaranteed a resurrection (see Mat 16:24-27). We zealously impact society, strengthening our communities and countries with truth and justice. We salt the earth, bringing the flavor of Christ into every area of life. We stay informed and involved in contemporary issues so we can be a light to the world.

When Christians teach, preach, and live the whole message of this life, they are sometimes labeled fanatics. So be it! If our cause isn’t worth being fanatical about and persecuted for, what

is it worth? We have an example to follow that was left by innumerable fanatics. From Elijah to John the Baptist to Jesus and Paul, we see that God's work is not done in a corner.

In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. (1 Pet 4:4-5)

We need to cooperate with God, training His resurrected army to be effective in every area of life. We need to prepare godly leaders for the family, the community, and the church; and then keep encouraging them in obedience to God. We need to diligently influence everyone we can and stand up for righteousness at every opportunity. If not you, who? If not now, when?

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Cor 5:10)

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Pet 3:9)

Be Saved

God wants to forgive you and enjoy eternal fellowship with you. He wants to give you a new start and patiently help you learn to thrive on the truth. He wants you to do the same for others.

Jesus was crucified to pay the price for your sin. He was punished so you could be healed. Once your sins are washed away, you get the refreshing, transforming power of His Holy Spirit.

Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. (Acts 3:19)

Repent and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Eph 4:30-5:2)

If you want to experience peace, make Jesus – the Prince of Peace – the King of your life. Build your relationships on His love and righteousness. Choose to deny yourself and let Jesus reign over all of your relationships and roles in life. Everyone will answer to Him sooner or later.

Self-Government

Christians are not under law (see Rom 6:14-15), but we learn from it and it is part of the gospel (see 1 Tim 1:8-11). The Israelites received the law of Moses, but they did not keep it.

With most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.... Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Cor 10:5-6, 11)

Rights & Responsibilities Based On the Ten Commandments

1-4. I am the Lord your God... You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol... You shall not worship them or serve them... You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain... Remember the Sabbath day...

- The right to worship & serve God
- The responsibility to worship & serve God

5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

- The right to teach your children
- The responsibility to care for your parents

6. You shall not murder.

- The right to life
- The responsibility to protect life

7. You shall not commit adultery.

- The right to marry
- The responsibility to be faithful

8. You shall not steal.

- The right to private property
- The responsibility to labor

9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- The right to due process of law
- The responsibility to tell the truth

10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

- The right to prosper
- The responsibility to be content

In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (Mat 7:12)

If there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom 13:9-10)

Self-government starts with a proper understanding of rights and responsibilities. Human rights are a stewardship from God which comes with distinct responsibilities.

Crime is the violation of God-given rights. A criminal is any individual or government that violates the rights of others. When a criminal attempts to violate your rights, they surrender their own rights because you have the right to defend yourself, your family, your community, and your church. Defense is one of the primary stewardships entrusted to each form of government. But throughout history civil government has almost always been the worst violator of rights.

O My people! Their oppressors are children, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who guide you lead you astray and confuse the direction of your paths. The Lord arises to contend, and stands to judge the people. The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of His people, “It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the plunder of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing My people and grinding the face of the poor?” Declares the Lord God of hosts. (Isa 3:12-15)

Jesus told His disciples to buy a sword (see Luke 22:36). Why would a Christian need a sword? There have always been criminals who prey on others. A sword allows you to defend yourself. Firearms are modern-day “swords” that level the playing field by giving the weak a way to defend themselves against the strong.

Personal responsibility helps keep people free and independent. Satan wants just the opposite. He wants to corrupt and pervert God’s design which is intended for man’s good. Satan wants to enslave, control, and destroy people. He wants to suppress the truth and murder the innocent. We must understand and be alert. Wannabe tyrants must disarm the target population in order to impose tyranny. Free people do not surrender their arms if they want to remain free.

So that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes. (2 Cor 2:11)

Did you inherit a futile way of life from your forefathers? It’s up to you to start a new generation. The Father of light wants His royal family to be imitators of Him and walk as children of light. We’re going to get personal and look at the differences between our old and new ways of life.

If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Pet 1:17-19)

Attitude

Regardless of external circumstances, you decide how you will respond to each situation. Others may be reactionary, but children of light are always rejoicing.

And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain – for He says, “At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I

helped you.” Behold, now is “the acceptable time,” behold, now is “the day of salvation” – giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things. (2 Cor 6:1-10)

You can fill your life with bad influences and your heart with bad thoughts or you can fill your life with godly influences and your heart with godly thoughts. The world has something like a gravitational pull away from God. To pursue godliness requires deliberate effort, intentional alertness, and mental toughness.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:2)

Jesus said we are the light of the world and He taught us how to shine with the golden rule (see Mat 5-7): Treat people the same way you want them to treat you. In order to do this you have to imagine what you would be feeling if you were in their circumstances and then imagine how you’d like people to treat you. This simple mental exercise – practiced habitually – will go a long way towards helping you think of ways to love others. It’s known as empathy.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. (Rom 12:15)

And take action. For example: Greet others with a warm smile. Be helpful. Be hopeful. Be patient. Show gratitude. Listen to what people are actually saying. Use encouraging words. Give. Make peace. Be a good example. Surprise someone with kindness. Redirect a bad conversation by asking questions about godly things. Handle people with care. Give glory to God. Give His grace to others. Be at peace.

[You] have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him... So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. (Col 3:10, 12-14)

It’s been said: If you think you can, you’re right. And if you think you can’t, you’re right. The point is to have a can-do attitude. “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (Phil 4:13) You can know for certain, because of the curse placed upon Adam and Eve, that you will experience pain and difficulties in this life. There will be thorns where you don’t expect them.

Knowing this ahead of time, you can decide now how you're going to respond. You can throw a fit like an untrained child; or you can grin and bear it.

For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. (1 Pet 2:19-20)

Even when suffering unjustly! Do you know anyone who has troubles? Do you ever run into problems? Did you know that God has told us exactly how to respond to difficulties? Not only does He tell us how we should respond, He also tells us why:

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (Jam 1:2-4)

Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world. (Phil 2:14-15)

You can't control all of life's circumstances, but you can control your response to those circumstances. You decide what kind of attitude you're going to have. Some things in life will be difficult and even painful. If you react with a bad attitude, it makes things even worse. If you respond with a good attitude, it lightens the load. Replace worry, anxiety, and stress (which can literally wreck your health) with an attitude of gratitude and contentment. He's in control and everything will work out according to His eternal plan. Even circumstances that may seem to be horrible from our perspective are actually serving a bigger purpose than we often understand. Knowing this allows us to breath a sigh of relief as we put our faith and trust in God.

We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Rom 8:28)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:4-7)

Children often have a lot more peace and joy than adults because they don't have anything to worry about – their parents are in control. Christians can have the same inner peace and joy that children enjoy because we don't have anything to worry about – our heavenly Father is in control. Jesus gave us the cure for anxiety in Matthew 6:25-34. Much of the news media is always looking for the latest outrage to blow out of proportion. Feeding on that kind of drama is literally bad for your health. Instead, love God and joyfully seek His kingdom and His righteousness.

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones. (Prov 17:22)

He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly. A tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion is rottenness to the bones. (Prov 14:29-30)

Self-Control

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city. (Prov 16:32)

But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. (Mat 5:39-42)

Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? (1 Cor 6:7)

Just because you have the right to self-defense does not mean it's always the best course of action. Let's look at both sides of the coin:

Do not resist an evil person.	☞	Whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. (Luke 22:35-38)
Give to him who asks of you.	☞	If anyone will not work, then he is not to eat, either. (2 Thes 3:10)
Why not rather be defrauded?	☞	But if you are able also to become free, rather do that. (1 Cor 7:21)

Common sense tells you that if resistance is futile, it's probably better not to resist. On the other hand, if you are able to defend yourself or others from a criminal, how many future victims might you be helping? But if you are able to respond with love when people treat you wickedly, you might plant a seed of light in their heart that overcomes the darkness.

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom 12:17-21)

The context of this Scripture continues into chapter 13 which reveals that God uses government to "bring wrath on the one who practices evil." The appropriate administration of authority seeks to bring about justice, reconciliation, and peace. It takes self-control to let the proper authorities do their job rather than taking matters into your own hands.

Self-control is one of the most important things to teach children. It will aid them in every other learning discipline. Indeed, as they grow up, it will aid them in every area of their life and every character trait they seek to practice.

If children need to learn self-control, how much more do adults need to practice it? How many relationships would have been saved if both parties exercised self-control? How many families could have been salvaged? How many wars could have been prevented?

So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. (Rom 14:12)

Personal Responsibility

Everyone must labor to provide for themselves and contribute to others. Men labor to provide for personal needs; to pay for the administration of family, civil, and church government; and to share with those in need. Labor is physically good for you and it teaches confidence and independence.

Nonetheless, there have always been lazy people who have tried to avoid labor, some by directly stealing from others and some by doing it through government. Government can't give anything it didn't first take from someone else. Almost all criminal activity would cease if people learned to labor. We shouldn't desire to acquire that for which we have not labored. If you want something worth getting, do the work necessary to get it.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. (2 Thes 3:6-13)

A worker's appetite works for him, for his hunger urges him on. (Prov 16:26)

He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. (Eph 4:28)

It's amazing how much work people will do to avoid work. They want a cushy job and they acquire all kinds of servants (human or electronic) to make life easier. Then their inactivity leads to bad health, so they spend more money to join a health club to work their bodies.

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (Col 3:23-24)

Sleep

Healthy sleep is a key component of top performance. Problems sleeping can come from a variety of sources. The Scripture points to remedies and also cautions against too much sleep. Working your muscles tires you out so you sleep better, whereas overeating is one cause of sleep problems.

How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding....
When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
(Prov 3:13, 24)

The fear of the Lord leads to life, so that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil. (Prov 19:23)

The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much; but the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep. (Ecc 5:12)

It's interesting the way God designed us and our need for regular sleep. Without adequate sleep our health and cognitive abilities are harmed. The opposite is true when we are well-rested every night. Additionally, God created a weekly day of rest for man (see the *Transformation* study guide). We benefit greatly when we set aside a day for rest, relaxation, and physical and spiritual rejuvenation hanging out with saints. There's a time for rest and a time for labor.

"Make hay while the sun is shining!" and "Get while the gettin's good!" are sayings that came into use a long time after Scripture said:

Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, which, having no chief, officer or ruler, prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest. How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest" – your poverty will come in like a vagabond and your need like an armed man. (Prov 6:6-11)

I passed by the field of the sluggard and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense, and behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; its surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest," – then your poverty will come as a robber and your want like an armed man. (Prov 24:30-34)

Healthy Body

If your work doesn't involve much movement (e.g. desk job) and you don't make up for it in other ways, you're on a collision course with low energy and poor health. Modern conveniences and electronic servants have helped ruin many people's mobility and vitality. Chronic conditions and degenerative diseases are closely linked to an unhealthy lifestyle. It may take some work if you need to change course, but learning to take care of your body is your responsibility.

A body in motion tends to stay in motion, and a body at rest tends to stay at rest. If you work at adding more movement to your routine, at first it will be challenging. But you can make it easy by starting small and keeping it painless. Over the course of a few weeks your momentum will

build and it will get easier and easier to do more and more. Not only will your energy levels gradually increase, but your ability to fight off disease and resist sicknesses will also improve. A fun way to get going is to volunteer or find other activities that get you moving and work your body. Getting fresh air and sunshine on a daily basis provides important contributions (such as vitamin D) to your health and well-being.

None of what we're sharing is controversial information. It's simply a matter of choosing to be a good steward of the body and other resources God has given you so that you can be more fruitful for Him and more of a blessing to others. In other words, being a good steward allows you to love more. Love is the great and foremost commandment. Selfishness is the opposite. It says, "I want what I want and I want it now!"

Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. (1 Tim 4:7-8)

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Gal 5:13-25)

The deeds of the flesh are self-destructive lifestyle choices that deceived people fall into. They ruin their health, relationships, and eternity. One of these is sorcery. The Greek word for sorcery is *pharmakeia*, which is where we get our word pharmacy. It means: The use or the administering of drugs; poisoning; sorcery, magical arts, often found in connection with idolatry and fostered by it. Mind altering drugs – legal and illegal – have long been recognized as a gateway to the occult. Not only are they obviously detrimental to your mental capacity for wise stewardship, but they also make people susceptible to demonic influences.

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.
(Prov 20:1)

Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe one with rags.
(Prov 23:20-21)

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long over wine. Those who go to taste mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things and your mind will utter perverse things. (Prov 23:29-33)

Jesus wants to rescue us from Satan's deceptions and give us abundant life – now and forever:

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. (John 10:10)

Food

The Old Testament had many regulations regarding “clean and unclean” food. Also, eating animal sacrifices was an ongoing part of what went on at the temple. These were replaced by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But not before many counterfeit religions – invented by men or inspired by demons – had incorporated the eating of sacrifices into their rituals.

Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited. (Heb 13:9)

Food doesn't make us holy or unholy, clean or unclean. During the Christian age there have been many sects claiming to be Christian that have invented religious food regulations. For example, organizations such as the Catholics advocate abstaining from meat at certain times and Seventh Day Adventists have invented a variety of food regulations. Also, Hindus, Muslims, and others have dietary rules or laws.

But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. (1 Cor 8:8)

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. (1 Tim 4:1-5)

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day – things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind... If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you

submit yourself to decrees, such as, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) – in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. (Col 2:16-18, 20-23)

After Jesus declared all foods clean (see Mark 7:14-23), Christians didn’t have many food concerns except attaining adequate amounts while suffering famine or economic persecution. But many of today’s food corporations add many ingredients that aren’t food and certainly aren’t nutritious – in fact many of them are considered toxins. Food can be medicine or poison.

It should be self-evident that you want to be healthy enough to effectively carry out your other stewardships. Poor health is a distraction from all the good you could be doing. The food you eat can affect your mood, your energy (or lack thereof), your immune system, and every other aspect of your health. Why not use it to your advantage as a good steward?

Don’t fall for manipulative advertisements that appeal to the flesh to create an appetite for their products. It can lead to obesity and all the consequences thereof. Do your own research. Huge numbers of people foolishly subject themselves to continuous media manipulation, letting their fleshly appetite control them. It can lead to quarrels, conflicts, and even murder (see Jam 4:1-4).

For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. (Phil 3:18-19)

We want to challenge you to take responsibility for your health and recognize it is a stewardship from God. There are different schools of thought about the physiological affects of diet, movement, and sleep on health. Many contradict each other in many ways and yet most agree about some basic things. In the areas of agreement you’ll find general principles that apply to successful stewardship. For example:

- Different people require different amounts of sleep, but too much or too little sleep has harmful affects on anyone.
- Insufficient movement and poor nutrition are leading causes of almost every debilitating disease that afflicts man.

Real food contains the nutrients we need in order to maintain a healthy body. Fake food – literally – has been sold as a modern convenience that tastes good. Ultra-processed, prepackaged “food” with artificial ingredients, chemical residues (from fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides), and genetically modified organisms is linked to many health problems in modern man. The same is true of many personal care potions (e.g. is lab-concocted lotion really necessary for dry skin if olive oil has worked well for thousands of years?). As if this weren’t bad enough, drugs with horrible physical, mental, and spiritual side effects have become a regular part of life for millions of people. Here is a description of real food:

God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you... Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you.” (Gen 1:29, 9:3)

Ultra-processed foods come with a label on the package with a list of ingredients, many of which are often unrecognizable; whole foods usually don’t have ingredients (e.g. meat, dairy, fruits, vegetables, herbs). Whole foods are made by God. Ultra-processed foods are made by man and come with a slough of consequences including numerous diseases. A big part of the problem is “refined carbohydrates” (tip: look it up).

Throughout the ages and in the biblical record man has eaten whole foods created by God for us to enjoy. Here are a few basic principles that should be common knowledge – but they aren’t:

- The more processed it is, the more it loses nutritional value (e.g. instant rice vs. brown rice)
- Conversely the closer to the ground it is, the more nutritional value (e.g. fresh ground flour is more nutritious than stale, bleached, white flour)
- The various colors in fruits and vegetables represent a variety of nutrients that we need
- Processed sugars have many harmful effects on our health, as opposed to naturally occurring sugars when eaten as part of the whole food
- Artificial flavor enhancers ruin the appetite for real food; the enjoyment of real food flavors comes back in time after eliminating the artificial
- Synthetically “enriched” food (i.e. stripping nutrients through processing and then adding man-made alternatives) is not as beneficial as the food God designed
- The ratio of herbs, vegetables, fruits, dairy, meats, grains, legumes, etc. has always varied based on geography and seasonal supplies, plus each individual has different needs

Hopefully it’s clear that we aren’t trying to tell you how to eat; only you can decide that. We hope these few principles will prompt you to explore areas where you can improve your health, leading to greater productivity in all your stewardships to the glory of God.

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God... not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved. (1 Cor 10:31-33)

Finances

Understanding our stewardships is important in laying aside any selfish ambitions which plunge men into ruin and destruction. The key to happiness is contentment.

But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. (1 Tim 6:6-11)

I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Phil 4:11-13)

It is foolish and irresponsible to strive after things like wealth that does not enhance your eternal reward. Misaligned desires and fleshly pursuits have resulted in a lot of problems for a lot of people. For example, financial mismanagement is one of the leading causes of marital problems.

A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his own imagination. (Prov 18:11)

Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. (Prov 23:4)

Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion. (Prov 30:8)

He who tills his land will have plenty of food, but he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty. A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished. To show partiality is not good, because for a piece of bread a man will transgress. A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth and does not know that want will come upon him. (Prov 28:19-22)

Flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (2 Tim 2:22)

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. (Jam 1:17)

God doesn't need your money. He is the One Who provides us with all good things. We belong to Him and so do all the resources He's given us stewardship of. We get into trouble if we quit being thankful and content and begin to covet things we don't need. The result is often debt.

Both the Old and New Testaments warn against debt. If we borrow money to buy things, we're presumptuously obligating God – our Provider – to provide the means to make payments on the debt for the length of the terms. We're arrogantly making future obligations with money that we must then spend our time – God's time – working to earn in order to pay off that debt. We lose our freedom to serve as God might have us because now we're stuck in this arrangement with the lender. This makes us a slave to the lender. God tells us not to do this. He wants us to remain free to serve Him.

The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave. (Prov 22:7)

You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. (1 Cor 7:23)

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. (Rom 13:8)

Debt is a snare that can render ineffective those who could otherwise be great servants in the kingdom. Lenders have long taken advantage of covetous people who lack self-control by enticing them to “buy now and pay later.” This promotes unwise purchases and causes a percentage of one’s income to be spent on interest.

A high credit score is a construct: A manipulative goal promoted by those who make big money off borrowers. It’s an invitation to play their game by their rules. If you play, you lose. Many gullible people fall for it and become enslaved by the debt trap. Monthly payments loaded with interest cause the total purchase price to far exceed the amount to purchase something outright. Don’t let the world define what your success should look like! How does God define success?

Psalms 15 describes a righteous man and in verse five it says, “He does not put out his money at interest.” The righteous don’t take advantage of desperate, vulnerable, and covetous people who lack the self-control to save up and purchase the things they need or want. Instead of lending to people for legitimate needs the righteous give, expecting nothing in return. (There’s a difference between legitimate needs [i.e. food and covering] and wants and desires.)

The wicked borrows and does not pay back, but the righteous is gracious and gives. (Psa 37:21)

Light arises in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious and compassionate and righteous. It is well with the man who is gracious and lends; he will maintain his cause in judgment. For he will never be shaken; the righteous will be remembered forever. He will not fear evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. (Psa 112:4-7)

But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. (Luke 6:35)

A simple way to avoid and alleviate many financial problems is to intentionally live below your means. This allows for savings that can be used to make future purchases debt free. You can make payments to your own savings rather than making payments with interest to lenders. You’ll save tons of money by not paying interest – money that can be used for eternal good rather than enriching bankers. It just takes a little planning.

Frugality and minimalist living is a strategy that can position you to be used by God. He can channel resources through someone like this in order to accomplish kingdom goals.

He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? (Luke 16:10-12)

A monthly budget is a useful tool to manage your finances and make the most of them. Basically you just make a list of all of your sources of income and all of your expenses, including

everything you spend money on. Add them all up and compare. It may take a few months of tracking to capture a full picture.

This makes it easy to see exactly where all your money is going, identify any areas that need adjustment, and then set goals and make plans to accomplish your goals. If your income is less than your expenses, you've obviously got problems – you're living above your means. The more you can get your expenses below your income, the more you can save and the more you can give to bless others.

Make The Most Of Your Time

God expects us to be responsible with the money and the time He has entrusted us with. If you're not sure why, review the *Spiritual Warfare* study guide. Wartime conditions require wartime priorities. As you mature in Christ you'll want to make increasingly better use of God's resources.

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Eph 5:15-17)

Goals: In light of godly stewardship, what do you want your life to look like three years from now? How would you describe it in detail? Three years is enough time to make significant changes, but not so long to make your goals seem like a distant dream. Three years is doable.

A written, detailed description makes it even more realistic and likely to succeed. You can review it and pray about it frequently. Pray like it depends on God, because it does, and work like it depends on you, because it does. Keeping it in the forefront of your mind motivates you to consciously and subconsciously make decisions, arrange your life, and come up with solutions to move towards success as if drawn towards a magnet. Small, incremental changes in daily habits have a great cumulative and long-term affect.

Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established. ... The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. (Prov 16:3, 9)

S.M.A.R.T. goals are well-tested, goal-setting guidelines. S.M.A.R.T. stands for:

- Specific – The more clear your goals are the greater the likelihood you will reach them.
- Measurable – Tracking the progress of your goals is an important part of staying motivated.
- Achievable – Goals should be challenging but make sure you can actually envision achieving them.
- Relevant – The 80/20 Rule says that 80% of your results come from 20% of your activities; identify and prioritize the 20%.
- Time-Bound – Good goals need to have a target time attached to them.

Once you've written out your goals, the next step is to make a detailed, step-by-step list of everything that will need to be accomplished in order to achieve your goals. It's helpful to set incremental targets of when you hope to accomplish key steps along the way to success.

Then it's simply a matter of scheduling time to work on the steps. If you've never made a time budget, now is the time to do so. Create columns on a piece of paper or a spreadsheet for each day of the week. Then create rows in 15, 30, or 60 minute increments, depending on how detailed you need to manage your day.

Now fill it in with your normal weekly routine which will allow you to see exactly where you spend your time. This is where you can spot wasted time and begin to prioritize how you want to spend your time. Whenever you say no to one thing you're saying yes to something else, and vice versa.

You can create blocks of time on your time budget to work on specific stewardships, such as working on civics from seven to nine on Tuesday nights or renewing your mind every morning when you're getting ready for the day. You'll want to review the steps needed to achieve your goals and make room for them on your weekly schedule.

Plan, Do, Review: Plan your work, work your plan, review your results and progress. Follow and repeat these steps continually. This will allow you to make adjustments along the way as you identify needed changes. A rocket flying to the moon, a plane flying to a distant city, a boat sailing to a far-off port, and even a car driving down the road all have one thing in common: They are off course 99% of the time. To reach the desired destination, constant course corrections are necessary. So it is when working to accomplish great things for the Lord: Plan, Do, Review!

There are many techniques for managing and making the most of your time and money.* We've shared some ideas to get you started, but find what works for you and do it.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (Col 3:17)

* Zig Ziglar was a speaker and author whose biblical-principle-infused material inspired some of the content in this chapter and is recommended for further personal development.

Family Government

Teaches the Wisdom of God

Praise the Lord! How blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments. His descendants will be mighty on earth; the generation of the upright will be blessed. (Psa 112:1-2)

When God created Adam and Eve, He created the first family. The children came along later. Marriage is the primary relationship that all of society is built upon. They were told to be fruitful and multiply. Human survival depends on it.

Husbands are supposed to take care of their wives and wives are supposed to take care of their husbands. Parents are supposed to take care of their children and children are supposed to take care of their parents. Marriage is a lifelong commitment just like Christianity. We must be faithful until death. God hates divorce and so should we.

The fruit of the union – children – are also a lifelong commitment. Parents are to raise their children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord, help them grow into godly adults, and maybe even take them back in if circumstances require it.

Family is the ultimate, self-perpetuating and efficient unit when it follows the Biblical pattern. Godly individuals build godly families, which are the basis for godly communities and churches. God made husbands and wives with unique abilities. Each one finds the greatest fulfillment when they learn and set their mind on excelling in their God-given roles.

Because of its importance, Satan has come up with all kinds of ways to weaken, attack, and destroy families – immorality being one of the primary means. Those who would replace the family with oppressive civil government use ploys such as confusion of the proper roles of men and women to break up families and create dependency on civil government.

Men: Act Like Men (1 Cor 16:13)

How manly are you? Are you manly enough to lead your family in the way Jesus demonstrated leadership – through self-sacrificing service? Manliness means striving for excellence and virtue in all areas of your life, fulfilling your potential as a man, and being the absolute best brother, husband, father, citizen, and Christian you can be.

This mission is fulfilled by the cultivation of manly virtues such as courage, loyalty, industry, resiliency, responsibility, and integrity. These virtues are manliness. And they can be striven for by any man, in any situation.

Manhood is different from childhood because of inner values. Children tend to be self-centered, fearful, and dependent. A man is bold, courageous, respectful, independent and of service to others. Thus a man becomes a man when he matures and leaves behind childish things. Real men are protectors of their family, community, and church, looking out for the both physical and spiritual safety and well-being of others.

There's nowhere this is more evident than being the head of a household. Loving relationships are what's most important! It's been said that a good marriage is the closest thing on earth to heaven, and a bad marriage is the closest thing on earth to hell. Husbands, lead with a spirit of humility, authenticity, and relational warmth. Be personable, caring, and passionate.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her... So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church. (Eph 5:25-29)

Lay down your life to protect your family. You are the first line of defense against danger. If it became known that the man in every family was prepared to use lethal force if necessary, criminals would largely be deterred from abusing the rights of others and preying on the weak.

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:16-18)

The world has mostly been patriarchal throughout time. It's only in recent years, as a result of godless, socialist propaganda and social engineering that they have "liberated" women, feminized men, and made significant strides in destroying the family. It is an assault on God's design. The overarching goal of socialism is to replace God, family, and country with atheistic, totalitarian, global government. It's satanic to the core. This long-term plan is systematically being put in place all over the world. Men must be aware of and protect against these dangers.

Men not only lead and protect their families, they also provide for them. By the sweat of his face (see Gen 3:17-19) a man provides for the needs of those who depend on him. His income supports himself, his family, church, and civil government.

Your household may include a spouse, children, grandchildren, parents, and grandparents. When three or more generations pool their resources and pull together as a team, they become such a productive mechanism that they can not only provide for their own, but also help widows, orphans, and others in need. Let us love in deed and truth and be a blessing to others.

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Tim 5:8)

Honor widows who are widows indeed; but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. (1 Tim 5:3-4)

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (Jam 1:27)

Men should strive to be, “temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.” (1 Tim 3:2-5)

Paul instructed Titus to, “Speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance.” (Titus 2:1-2)

Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. (Titus 2:6-8)

Women: Act Like Women

When a man fulfills his role, it enables his wife to fulfill her role. When a woman fulfills her role, it enables her husband to fulfill his role. As long as they each focus on personal excellence rather than controlling the other, their synergy working together can accomplish more than their separate efforts combined.

Most women would not like to have men’s responsibilities, and most men would not like to have women’s responsibilities. This helps them appreciate each other more. There are some things that boys are best taught by men and some things that girls are best taught by women.

Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. (Titus 2:3-5)

If man’s labor is hard, woman’s is probably harder. From the labor of childbirth to the 24/7 labor of serving and caring for her family, a woman’s work is never done. A godly woman plays a critical role in creating a healthy, well-functioning family. She nurtures and supports the family. Everyone goes to her for comfort and care. She makes others feel like they are valuable and important. She is frugal and industrious; she has an eye for detail and a word of wisdom. Read Proverbs 31:10-31 for a great description of a worthy woman. Following is just a glimpse:

An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. (Prov 31:10-11)

Who can find a “Titus 2 Woman” and “Proverbs 31 Woman” all in one? He will be truly blessed. Do we want families that are truly blessed? Just as men must seek to be a blessing to those they serve, so women must do likewise. They are to be submissive to their husbands and influence him through chaste and respectful behavior.

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. (Eph 5:22-24)

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. (1 Pet 3:1-4)

By way of contrast, instead of being a submissive and supportive helper so her husband can be a successful steward – enabling their family to bless others as a team – wives also have the ability to tear their husband down and destroy their marriage and family. Proverbs 31 describes an ideal wife while other Proverbs give examples foolish, immoral, and contentious women who tear their house down with their own hands.

To avoid immorality, Scripture instructs us to get married (see 1 Cor 7:1-6). Along with that comes a responsibility to be faithful. Jesus said it's sinful for a man to look at a woman with lust (see Mat 5:27-32). Women should dress modestly rather than enticing men with revealing or tight clothing.

Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. (1 Tim 2:9-10)

Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; fornicators and adulterers God will judge. (Heb 13:5)

Widows are supposed to be cared for by their families. If for some reason the family is unable to take care of them, other Christians may do so in some cases (see 1 Tim 5:3-16). But Scripture instructs:

Younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach. (1 Tim 5:14)

Marriage

Husbands want to feel respected. Wives want to feel loved. Husbands, if you would like to ruin your marriage, try forcing your wife to respect you. Wives, if you would like to ruin your marriage, try manipulating your husband into loving you.

Husbands, if you would like a blissful marriage, try winning your wife's respect by showing her that you love her. Wives, if you would like a blissful marriage, try winning your husband's love by showing him that you respect him. Try outdoing each other! Like we discussed in chapter one, if you love others, you express it in a way that they will appreciate.

Each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband. (Eph 5:33)

Marriage is a lifelong commitment. It has its ups and downs, but if you're both Christians being transformed into the image of Christ, there will be more ups than downs. Husbands and wives

must be faithful to each other until death just as Christians must be faithful to Christ until death, and for the same reasons.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? (2 Cor 6:14)

“Let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce,” says the Lord. (Mal 2:14-16)

Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” The disciples said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.” But He said to them, “Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.” (Mat 19:8-12)

Paul was able to accept this and he regarded it as a gift:

Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. (1 Cor 7:7-11)

There are advantages and disadvantages to marriage. If you do marry, you shouldn’t divorce; it’s a lifetime deal. But if you remain single, you can later change your mind. Jesus, Paul, and others gained advantages by remaining single. Wartime conditions require wartime strategies.

But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you... One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord. (1 Cor 7:28-35)

In order for two to become one, they will have trouble in this life. Too often, once the deal is sealed, the wooing ends. But this is when the work of wooing your spouse should really begin and never end! Consider having a weekly date night, and take turns planning to woo your spouse.

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. (Phil 4:8)

Dwell on these things if you want to build a beautiful family (focus on faults if you want to tear your family apart). Give grace to each other (see the *Transformation* study guide). Thank God for each other. Love each other enough to learn to communicate with each other through difficulties with a goal of understanding each other. Serve one another.

Everyone gets the same 24 hours each day and 168 hours each week. In the last chapter we talked about making the most of your time and finances. A biblically designed marriage is a phenomenal way to do this. He makes money; she saves money. The income made by the typical wife working outside the home hardly – if at all – compensates for the money that can be saved being a homemaker. Be sure to factor in the healthcare costs that can be saved by taking care of your health or preventative medicine. Many of the steps involved in maintaining your health (e.g. cooking from scratch) is best done by a homemaker.

In addition to food preparation and healthcare, there are all kinds of ways a homemaker can be more economical than a career seeker: Childcare and schooling, elderly care, transportation and clothing cost reductions, thrifty shopping and do-it-yourself household projects (e.g. homemade cleaning products), and much more that can hardly all be measured. But most importantly is all the spiritual benefits enabled by mom being a worker at home and avoiding workplace pitfalls.

Children

Marital responsibilities include the fruit of your union: Children and grandchildren. Romance should be the last thing on your mind until you are prepared to be a lifetime spouse and parent. This should also cause you to cautiously consider the kind of character you want to spend your life with. Will they help you and your children get to heaven?

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep. Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they will not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate. (Psa 127:1-5)

The Old and New Testaments are consistent in delegating responsibility for children – including their education – to family government, parents and grandparents, not to civil or church government.

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 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. (Deut 6:4-7)

Make them known to your sons and your grandsons. (Deut 4:9)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:1-4)

Fathers, you are the one God is going to hold accountable for your children. This should jerk you to attention and bring your responsibilities into the forefront of your brain. It should also motivate you to make sure you are prepared to take on such a responsibility before you do so.

We were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children. (1 Thes 2:11)

Fathers are expected to exhort, encourage, and implore their own children. Moms, grandparents, and others may help. Additionally, you may hire a tutor to help accomplish your goals. But you are the one God is going to hold accountable for the discipline and instruction of your children.

Parents & Grandparents

Multi-generational Christian families have many blessings. If godly grandparents are helping with children, their wisdom gets passed down to the next generation. There are also financial and time-saving benefits and physical and spiritual blessings for all.

Parents and grandparents, the word of God needs to fill your heart, for the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart (see Mat 12:34-35). If the word of God is preeminent in your life, you will teach it diligently to your children and grandchildren. God's word will have preeminence in their life. Their heroes will be Phinehas, Joshua, Ruth, David, Jesus, and other Bible greats; and you.

How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You. With my lips I have told of all the ordinances of Your mouth. (Psa 119:9-13)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. (Prov 1:7-8)

Because men have to work to provide, women in the family naturally do much of the daily teaching of children. Timothy was taught by his mother and grandmother (see 2 Tim 1:5). The most important thing they taught him was the Scriptures. He became one of Paul's greatest helps and a valuable evangelist. Paul's instructions to Timothy also instruct us:

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:14-17)

Resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col 2:2-3)

The Bible is the foundation for all learning; everything pertaining to life and godliness. Teach it to your children and fill their life with it so that it may be well with them and they may live long on the earth. But most importantly, teach it to them so that they may enjoy eternal life. The Proverbs 31 woman:

Opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. (Prov 31:26)

Teach children about faith in Jesus Christ, God's principles of transformation, the realities of spiritual warfare, and successful stewardship. Also teach them health and safety and other basic life skills; and make sure they learn some marketable skills. They will be prepared to lead a responsible life and you will ensure their salvation.

Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it. (Prov 22:6)

Teaching children is really not as complicated as some would like to make it (there's no need to stand in front of a chalkboard for six hours a day). Socialists who want you to turn your children over to them have ulterior motives: They want to steal your child's heart.

Parenting

Children tend to worship just about whatever is put in front of them. We must therefore be careful what influences we place or allow in front of them. For the first decade they pretty much worship their parents. They go along with whatever their parents allow. Whatever parents celebrate and put in front of children is what the children imitate – it becomes their reality.

If you fill their life with the Bible, Bible characters become their heroes. Whether you fill their life with books, cultural entertainment, school, family, business, church, etc. – that's where their heroes will come from. That's who they will identify with and learn their values and virtues from – good or bad. What is the character and worldview of these influences? What are their behavioral standards? Are they immoral blasphemers or respectful and godly?

A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. (Luke 6:40)

Worldly media appeals to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. They train the mind to think like a reprobate. They stir up emotions and get people to identify with criminals and idolaters (e.g. Robin Hood, pirates, princes and princesses). They make a lot

of money on it and are able to spend a lot of money to create a mesmerizing experience that competes with the word of God and family instruction. Celebrities have enormous influence.

Apply biblical principles of transformation to parenting (see the *Transformation* study guide). How will it affect your family's media consumption and entertainment? How will it affect the types of educational material you use and your word choices when teaching, correcting, or exhorting? How will it affect what people, places, and experiences you surround your children with? How will it affect what virtues and values you instill in them? How will it affect your relationship with them? What else will it affect?

Children don't need a sugar daddy. They need a father who imitates their heavenly Father and teaches them to obey Him. They need clear boundaries, which give them confidence and security. Wishy-washy or unenforced rules create insecurity because the child never knows what to expect from day to day. Don't create silly rules to begin with. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Only create rules you are willing and able to actually enforce. If your word doesn't mean anything to them, will God's word mean anything to them?

Parents who allow children to get their own way are setting them up for a lot of disappointment and frustration in life. That's not how the world works for anyone except spoiled kids who have a fit when they don't get their way. How does that work out in the workplace or in a marriage (i.e. in the real world)? Parents who direct their children in the right way are looking out for them.

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. ... Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul. (Prov 29:15, 17)

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him. (Prov 22:15)

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves, that he not be wise in his own eyes. (Prov 26:4-5)

Don't try to reason with a fool or you will be like them. You must simply make children do what they're supposed to do. It's not a discussion, a debate, or an argument. The Ten Commandments and the New Testament both say children are supposed to obey their parents.

What happens when you put a bunch of fools together? Foolishness abounds! Schools are ideal environments for the spread of disease – both the physical and spiritual variety. God doesn't tell us to start schools; He tells parents to instruct their children. The vast majority of those who went to school were robbed of an adequate foundation that is best taught by family because the school model isn't God's model and can't provide an equivalent education. If that's your situation, it means you'll have a lot more learning curves to go through in becoming a godly steward.

It is a joyful and laborious adventure raising spiritual warriors. Chasten those little ones and as they grow, discover the wonder of God's creation together. In the second decade of life children develop a mind of their own and begin to question everything. The fruit of whatever took root in

their heart becomes manifest as they mature. The goal of godly parents is ultimately to lead their children to God. Develop a relationship strong enough to lead them in righteousness. And ultimately, enjoy a lifelong friendship and partnership.

As each family member develops a servant's heart and adds to the productivity of the team, the family becomes the ultimate, self-perpetuating and efficient unit. If your forefathers have strayed far from the word of God, you'll have inherited some challenges to overcome. Grin and bear it with God's help.

The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.
(Prov 18:15)

Love of Learning

Education is simply passing knowledge from one generation to the next. If you made a list of everything you need to know to live life and get to heaven and determined an age-appropriate order of teaching it, this would be the scope and sequence of what to teach your children over the course of two decades. Parents have been doing it for thousands of years! And there is more of an abundance of helpful resources now than ever before – many of them free online.

Your scope and sequence would include the traditional three R's – reading, writing, and arithmetic – and it would include full stewardship (e.g. character, physical fitness, finances, civics, health and safety, etc.). You could have a weekly “daddy night” with special content such as economics, learning games, goal-setting, science experiments, fire safety, first aid, field trips, self-defense, worldview, etc.* “Seat-work” shouldn't take more than a couple hours a day if it's done year-round, which is the way life works. Infrequent breaks for a day or more for life interruptions is normal (e.g. harvest). What's not normal is taking a few months off. This disrupts momentum and requires difficult mental re-engagement.

To develop a love of learning in children you have to model it just like you have to model other forms of wisdom and righteousness. Be a lifelong learner. The “do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do” style of parenting doesn't work. Some people finally mature when they become parents. They see their children act out some of their own behavior and suddenly realize how inappropriate it is.

The war for souls is nowhere more heated than parenting styles and education. Anti-christian socialists want your children to be indoctrinated in their schools (aka. public schools). Home-schooled children are also targeted for subversion in a variety of ways, most obviously through media. But not all curriculum is trustworthy, either. In fact, there has been a deliberate effort to buy up and transform traditionally reliable publishers.

Most Rod & Staff curriculum promotes Mennonitism, but may be the best available for the three R's. Other possibilities include FACE.net and FPEUSA.org. Read their catalogs and benefit from perspectives on education that you may never have considered. Look at their scope and sequence and consider what parts you may want for your family. One of the primary goals of education is to teach children how to think so they aren't easily deceived by any of Satan's schemes.

* Summit.org, NCCS.net, and TuttleTwins.com provide a variety of resources that equip parents to educate their children about important topics such as worldview, government, economics, and more.

Every child's brain development is unique. Children learn at different rates in different subjects at different times. They go through mental "growth spurts" in particular subjects and also experience mental "slumps." Don't stress (you or them) about it. Just keep loving, encouraging, motivating, and leading by example. It's alright to back off or lighten the load in an area for a season. When they get back into it, the results will typically improve.

Teach children to be self-learners. Reading is the foundation for learning. If you can read, you can learn virtually anything – most importantly the word of God. Turn your children into readers by reading to them and letting them see you read to yourself. Students who learn to read with phonics have the ability to sound words out, resulting in competence, confidence, and enjoyment of reading. The whole word (aka. look say) method of reading requires students to memorize what words look like and has resulted in illiteracy, dyslexia, and a dislike of reading. How tragic! But it's never too late to learn to read – especially important to know God's word for yourself.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Prov 9:10)

The word of God is the most important part of learning. It's not about how much you learn or how much you earn. It's about loving God and loving others.

Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. (1 Cor 8:1)

You can easily move in the right direction by spending time each day (even 15 minutes) reading the Bible together as a family and discussing how it applies to your life. Spending meaningful time together is critical to building good relationships, and eating at least one meal together each day is one practical way to do this.

We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children, that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments. (Psa 78:4-7)

There is so much more that can and should be taught about the biblical model for the family. The Bible, especially the book of Proverbs, is loaded with good advice. Seek counsel from Christian families who have good fruit, and learn from the mistakes of others.

Restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse. (Mal 4:6)

Civil Government

Teaches the Justice of God

The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth... gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. (Acts 17:24-27)

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. (Col 1:16)

Jesus told Pilate, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above.” (John 19:11)

God has delegated to civil government the responsibility of protecting the rights of those who are under its jurisdiction. In the chapter on self-government, we showed how rights come from God. If everyone just governed themselves without encroaching on others, there would be no need for civil government. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

Therefore, civil government is necessary among men. Its stewardship is to bring wrath on the wicked so that the righteous may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity, free to carry out their stewardships unmolested. Failure to uphold justice has resulted in terrible consequences for the governed.

The king gives stability to the land by justice, but a man who takes bribes overthrows it. (Prov 29:4)

The exercise of justice is joy for the righteous, but is terror to the workers of iniquity. (Prov 21:15)

Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil. (Ecc 8:11)

Woe to those who enact evil statutes and to those who constantly record unjust decisions, so as to deprive the needy of justice and rob the poor of My people of their rights, so that widows may be their spoil and that they may plunder the orphans. Now what will you do in the day of punishment, and in the devastation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your wealth? (Isa 10:1-3)

God Judges Nations

Through a series of cause-and-effect relationships, God gives people what they deserve. The Bible and secular history both teach us this fact. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”

(Psa 33:12) Likewise, cursed is the nation who rejects the Lord. They are progressively judged with increasing severity and in due course get a ruthless government that perverts justice.

But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and departed. They do not say in their heart, “Let us now fear the Lord our God, Who gives rain in its season, both the autumn rain and the spring rain, Who keeps for us the appointed weeks of the harvest.” Your iniquities have turned these away, and your sins have withheld good from you. For wicked men are found among My people, they watch like fowls lying in wait; they set a trap, they catch men. Like a cage full of birds, so their houses are full of deceit; therefore they have become great and rich. They are fat, they are sleek, they also excel in deeds of wickedness; they do not plead the cause, the cause of the orphan, that they may prosper; and they do not defend the rights of the poor. “Shall I not punish these people?” declares the Lord, “On a nation such as this shall I not avenge Myself?” An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it? (Jer 5:23-31)

Thus says the Lord: At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it. So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds.’” (Jer 18:7-11)

Here are a few of the many examples of God’s judgment:

- God blotted out the violent pre-flood world. (Gen 6)
- God judged the immoral Sodomites. (Gen 19)
- God crushed the pagan empire of Egypt and set the Israelites free. (Gen 15:13, 14; Num 33:4)
- God destroyed the wicked Canaanites at the hand of the Israelites. (Deut 9:3-5; Num 33:51, 52)
- God delivered the idolatrous Israelites into the hand of their enemies. (2 Kings 17:5-23)
- God smashed the ruthless Assyrians and their capital city of Nineveh with foreign soldiers. (Nahum 1-3)
- God demolished the backsliding Judeans and sent them into slavery. (2 Kings 24:1-25:21)
- God destroyed the star-worshipping Babylonians under the Medes and Persians. (Jer 50)
- God put an end to the “god-kings” who forced the people to worship the government. (Daniel 2:44)

When Judgment Comes

In addition to “acts of God” or “natural disasters,” the most common means by which God punishes people is with the wrath of civil government. He lets people have the government they deserve. Sometimes it’s brutal foreign armies who rape, pillage, and plunder the land. Other times it’s led by men who lust for power and engage in whatever wicked tactics are necessary to terrorize people and subject them to absolute control: Mass starvation, prison “work” camps or

“reeducation” camps, torture, intimidation, harassment, humiliation, beatings, midnight raids, murder, etc.

Notice also that the most common reason for God judging a nation is idolatry, or false religion. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” (Hosea 4:6) Mental laziness leads people to do whatever feels good, but it ultimately causes the obliteration of a society.

Repent, for the judgment of God is at hand! Open your eyes and see what comes upon you and your children when your culture rejects the God of the Bible. God has allowed Satan to raise seven world governments in times past. Before He humbled these evil empires, God used them to judge the earth on a grand scale, just as He had done with a worldwide flood in earlier times, and as He will do with fire at the end. God always gives each culture or society what it deserves.

Fourteen hundred years before Christ, God promised the nation of Israel:

If you will diligently obey the Lord your God I will set you high above all the nations of the earth. All these blessings shall come upon you... The Lord will cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you... The Lord will make you abound in prosperity... and bless all the work of your hand... (Deut. 28:1-14)

He then goes on to promise:

But it shall come about, if you will not obey the Lord your God that all these curses shall come upon you... Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord shall send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you. The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, a nation of fierce countenance who shall have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. Moreover, it shall eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. And it shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land... (Deut. 28:15-68)

It goes on to detail all the horrors and terrors that come. And so the Lord judges nations who reject Him. When idolatry, immorality, and violence are exalted by the media, allowed in the home, practiced in the streets, and tolerated by the civil authorities, the Judge of the universe responds.

What To Do

Ignorance is the problem. According to the gospel, God’s law is the only solution. All who are not in Christ are condemned by the law.

The law of the Lord is perfect. (Psa 19:7)

You are therefore to keep all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them, so that the land will not spew you out. (Lev 20:22)

We know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God. (1 Tim 1:8-11)

An encouraging example of what can happen in any country is what happened when God sent Jonah to Nineveh to proclaim God's judgment against its wickedness. (see Jon 1:2) "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown," Jonah cried. Word spread fast and the king proclaimed, "Let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish." When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them and He did not do it (see Jon 3).

Because Nineveh was Israel's enemy, Jonah hadn't wanted to go in the first place. It would have suited him just fine if God had destroyed Nineveh. Afterward he prayed to the Lord and said, "Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and One who relents concerning calamity." (Jon 4:2) I'm sure Nineveh was grateful that God is more merciful than Jonah was. Jesus said:

The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. (Mat 12:41)

God will certainly judge nations that don't repent. But He would delight to bless them if they would turn from their wicked ways, that all the nations of the world might know that He is God.

"Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord God, "rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?" (Ezek 18:23)

Throughout history, God has sent His ambassadors to try and reconcile the world to Himself. The terms of reconciliation that God offers are: Repent, for the judgment of God is at hand! The Bible tells how God's messengers warned Jews and Gentiles, rulers and renegades, to turn from their wicked ways. These messengers destroyed speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. Some people listened and repented, but many others perished. Look at the example of John the Baptist:

With many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people. But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of

all the wicked things which Herod had done, Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison. (Luke 3:18-20)

For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. For John had been saying to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.” Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet. But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod, so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. Having been prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.” Although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests. He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. (Mat 14:3-11)

Herod was the king. How could his actions have been unlawful? God’s law defines right and wrong for all people for all time. Rulers are not above God’s law. They’re subject to the law just like everyone else is. Why was it that although Herod wanted to put John to death, he was grieved when he commanded it? Because he feared the crowd. He was a tyrant, but he was also a politician. All civil authorities rule because the people allow them to.

God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to cultures that would tolerate ungodliness thereafter. Check out this example God recorded for rulers who won’t humble themselves before God:

On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. The people kept crying out, “The voice of a god and not of a man!” And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied. (Acts 12:21-24)

The primary role of civil government is to protect the righteous from the unrighteous, God’s word being the standard. When cultures invent their own standards and allow the unrighteous to rule over them, those cultures experience horrible consequences.

Paul found himself on trial before many a ruler for preaching the gospel. While being subject to the authorities he made the most of each opportunity to preach the gospel to them, discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come (see Acts 24:10-25; 26:1-29). When is the best time to tell rulers the truth? When you have freedom to or when you have to be arrested and put on trial for preaching? Are they always going to listen? Not usually. Does this excuse you of your obligation to do so – even at the cost of your life? No.

Biblical Equation

We are to ask God every day to provide food for us, but we are not to sit in our lazy chair and wait for manna to fall into our lap. God’s equation is that we have to work in order to prosper, but He wants us to be aware of the fact that we are always dependent upon Him.

Pray, then, in this way: "...Give us this day our daily bread..." (Mat 6:11)

For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. (2 Thes 3:10)

We are to ask God every day to provide righteous rulers who will exercise justice so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life, but we are not to sit in our lazy chair and wait for the blessing of freedom to fall into our lap. Again, God's equation is that we have to work in order to prosper, but He wants us to be aware of the fact that we are always dependent upon Him.

If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chron 7:14)

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. (1 Tim 2:1-2)

Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. (1 Cor 7:21-23)

Pray like it depends on God, because it does, and work like it depends on you, because it does.

The hand of the diligent will rule, but the slack hand will be put to forced labor. (Prov 12:24)

When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when a wicked man rules, people groan. (Prov 29:2)

The wicked don't care about people's rights. To them, might makes right; and he who has the biggest guns gets whatever he wants. Since government usually has the biggest guns, many people with evil motives are attracted to that power and the wicked things they can do with it. Because of this, the righteous need to be all the more diligent to rule their communities and countries God's way.

The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor, the wicked does not understand such concern. (Prov 29:7)

Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy. (Prov 31:8-9)

Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. (Dan 2:20-21)

You can become a great minister of God by studying the civil laws of Israel in the Bible and learning how to administer civil justice. God can establish you as a civil servant. He can give you enough wisdom to be able to decide civil cases dealing with matters of this life.

Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? (1 Cor 6:1-6)

Good Government

Civil government only has powers that are delegated to it by God and by the people it serves. The people can only grant powers they themselves possess. For example, since I don't have a right to steal from my neighbor, I can't delegate that right to government. Nor can I legitimately delegate the power to control my neighbor's property because I don't have that power.

However, if I violate the rights of my neighbor, I surrender my own rights. He has a right to defend his property and life using lethal force if necessary. Government becomes useful after a crime has been committed by bringing about justice, preferably the restoration of property and compensation for everyone's trouble.

For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid, for it does not bear the sword for nothing, for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. (Rom 13:3-4)

The preceding Scripture was written to the church in Rome, the capital city of Caesar's empire. The church in Rome was in a unique position to make known the manifold wisdom of God to the rulers and the authorities, especially the Christians who were of Caesar's household (see Phil. 4:22). Did Caesar praise those who did what is good and bring wrath on those who practiced evil? In many cases it was just the opposite. Nonetheless, as Paul exhorted King Agrippa:

I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains. (Acts 26:29)

We are the salt of the earth; the light of the world. The world is run by those who show up and speak up. We can educate the civil government and ask them to pass righteous laws and repeal unrighteous ones. We can seek the opportunity to serve as ministers of justice. We can also listen to the advice of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law:

Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders. (Ex 18:21)

Choose wise, discerning, and experienced men as civil leaders (see Deut 1:12-17). Choose men to administer the justice of God and replace those who don't. Here are a few random examples of biblical justice (the rest of Scripture and the context of the situation must be taken into account):

He shall make restitution in full for his wrong and add to it one-fifth of it, and give it to him whom he has wronged. (Num 5:7)

The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness and he has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you. The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you. Thus you shall not show pity. (Deut 19:16-21)

If a man takes the life of any human being, he shall surely be put to death. (Lev 24:17)

Power Problem

The delegation of certain powers to government does not remove those powers from the people; they are still retained and can be exercised by the people. For example, delegating the power of armed defense doesn't remove the right and responsibility of the people to defend themselves.

The proper role of civil government is to protect the God-given rights of the people. The challenge lies in delegating sufficient power to enable it to perform its duty while not delegating so much power that it can abuse the rights of the people.

Power seems to have an intoxicating affect on people. Countless "good men" have succumbed to its corrupting influence and joined power-seekers throughout the ages in committing terrible crimes in order to acquire and retain power. George Washington is one of the few men in history who found himself in a position of great power and willingly relinquished it – more than once – for the right reasons.

Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mat 20:25-28)

History shows that a well-armed populace with a willingness to use those arms is the surest defense against the abuse of rights. History also shows that in order for the abuse of rights to become unstoppable, the people must be disarmed. The consequences of a people surrendering their ability to defend their rights is horrible. In the 20th century alone, well over 100 million people were murdered by their own government.

There must be a way to keep government constrained or limited to the exercise of only those powers that have been delegated to it. The best way that has been found to do this is with a written document like a contract between the people and their government. It must clearly define the powers that are delegated and it must not be easily changeable by majority whims or power-

hungry politicians. But even this system only works if the people are diligent in replacing any politician that violates it.

The most common way that rulers have been replaced throughout history is with violence and it usually results in replacing one tyrant with another. Frequent elections combined with the rule of law – written to govern the government and limit it to its proper role of protecting the God-given rights of the people – has proven to provide the most secure and peaceful system as long as it has the active participation of a sufficient number of moral people.

Is there any better example of this than the U.S. Constitution of 1787? Specific powers were delegated to three branches of government and anything not specifically authorized was retained by the states and the people – the parties that granted powers to the U.S. government to begin with. “If it’s not specified, it’s not authorized.” The federal government only possessed the powers that were specifically delegated to it in the Constitution. The Constitution couldn’t be changed by the federal government alone. It required a super-majority of states in order to make changes. This system enabled a greater amount of freedom and prosperity for a greater number of people than any system ever devised by man (watch [Overview of America](#)).

A legal system that protects private property enables improvement. When people are free to keep the fruit of their labor, they are creative, industrious, and prosperous. Systems that don’t protect private property disincentivize improvement because the fruit of your labor makes you a target. If the thugs in the government don’t take it from you, the thugs on the streets do. Instead of protecting God-given rights, nanny states strangle producers through confiscatory taxation and regulation. You don’t have a right to do that to your neighbor, therefore you can’t delegate that power to government.

Taxes

You may not be interested in government, but government is interested in you – especially in your money. Of course we should pay taxes to provide for government ministers.

For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (Rom 13:6-7)

But how much does the civil government need to perform its limited role? When the people of Israel rejected God from being king over them, they asked Samuel to appoint a king for them like all the nations had (see 1 Sam 8:1-18). Among other consequences, Samuel warned them that the king would “take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants... He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants.” Ten percent was regarded as excessive.

During seven years of famine in Egypt, the Egyptians sold themselves to Pharaoh. Joseph said, “I have today bought you and your land for Pharaoh; now, here is seed for you, and you may sow the land. At the harvest you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be your own for seed of the field and for your food.” (Gen 47:23-24) Twenty percent was regarded as slavery.

When government is limited to its proper role, taxes are very low. Wicked people reject God's righteous standards and select leaders who will use the power of government to take from others and give to them. Here's their deal: You supply the domestic and industrial welfare and subsidies, and we won't rebel. We'll keep funding your election campaigns and voting for you. Nations who go this route destroy themselves, as happened to Rome. When people use the force of government to steal the fruit of their neighbor's labor, taxes continually rise as more and more laborers quit producing to stand in line at the government trough.

In addition to lenders (as discussed in an earlier chapter), wicked people in government often promote financial dependency that enslaves people. It doesn't take long for a nation that develops a system of welfare dependency to become impoverished and enslaved. It subverts God's standard: "If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat." It cripples the productivity of the people and renders them helpless against oppression. It also allows aspiring tyrants to rob the public treasury to buy supporters.

We've already established that you have a right to property and to prosper. Nobody has a right to steal what you have rightfully earned. If you have a covetous neighbor who claims it's unfair for you to earn more than him, what he's actually advocating is socialism. Socialism is theft – you're going to surrender the fruit of your labor or we're going to bring our guns and force you to – it's armed robbery. Socialism is slavery – you're going to do as you're told or we're going to bring our guns and force you to – it's tyranny.

As long as this world exists, there will be a struggle between good and evil. The battleground is the people of each nation: Individuals, families, communities, and churches. Satan craftily manipulates the culture with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life (see 1 John 2:16). He enslaves people with the fear of death (see Heb 2:14-15).

Deliver those who are being taken away to death, and those who are staggering to slaughter, oh hold them back. If you say, "See, we did not know this," does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work? (Prov 24:11-12)

Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin. (Jam 4:17)

The church is to disciple the nations, teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded. We are not to be religious police or nitpicking busybodies, trying to run everybody's life. We are to enlighten individuals so they can govern their own lives! We are not to raise people's children for them with a bunch of socialist programs. We are to equip parents and grandparents to build strong families. We are not to take our own vengeance upon those who practice evil. We are to equip men to be wise civil rulers, administering biblical justice.

You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you. (Deut 16:19-20)

Church Government

Teaches the Love of God

Let's use an illustration of an imaginary first century congregation. We'll pick up the story when they had seven members. Let's introduce them. Their names were Mercy, Lead, Give, Exhort, Teach, Service, and Prophecy. As their names suggest, they all had special gifts which they used to express their love for God and others.

God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. (1 Cor 12:18)

Mercy was compassionate, always looking to cheer everyone up. Lead saw great potential in everyone. He was an example of good deeds and diligently encouraged everyone to excel still more. Give was a liberal sharer, having been blessed with wise financial skills. He reminded everyone that you have to be productive in order to have something to share. Exhort was always enthusiastic and had a way of getting others excited about the work of the Lord. Teach was really good at helping everyone understand things more clearly. Service paid attention to details and always made sure the details were taken care of. Prophecy seemed to know all mysteries and he judged everything spoken to make sure it was correct.

They loved serving one another and fulfilling Jesus' mission of seeking and saving the lost (see Luke 19:9-10). They all went about preaching the word (see Acts 8:4). Preaching means evangelizing – which means telling others the good news.

When they assembled, each man shared a Scripture reading, exhortation (see 1 Tim 4:13), psalm or teaching (see 1 Cor 14:26-40). The variety of specialized perspectives that were shared helped everyone appreciate each other more. It also helped new members quickly discover their gift and how to express their love for God and others. All things were done for edification so that all could learn and all could be exhorted.

This highly relational group of servant leaders created an empowering environment that was constructive, friendly, and welcoming. They led with a spirit of humility and authenticity, developing high levels of trust. They were resolutely committed to helping others grow spiritually by getting them engaged with the body of Christ and involved in evangelism.

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Rom 12:4-8)

Christianity

The Christian's way of life is radically different from the worldly culture's way of life. Children of light bear the fruit of the light which consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth. We

learn and teach God's principles of transformation; how to be effective spiritual soldiers; and how to serve our family, neighbors, and brothers and sisters in Christ.

So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Pet 2:9)

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (Heb 5:12-14)

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Mat 28:18-20)

God expects Christians to mature. One of the ways He designed for you to do so is by teaching others. There are at least seven different gifts of grace. Not all of them are mouths. But this is important: Your personal learning is taken to the highest level when you plan on teaching others. As you do so, the putting aside of the flesh and the putting on of the Spirit is necessary in order for you to become effective.

Men of flesh need spiritual milk to drink. Milk is best served in personal Bible studies where individual needs can be met, or in special presentations geared for the lost. Whereas the assembly of the the saints is for equipping the saints with meat, not for winning the lost. If "inviting people to church" is the standard method of evangelism, milk always gets served instead of meat. Babies can't mature if they're only served milk, and neither can Christians.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? (1 Cor 3:1-3)

Christianity isn't a spectator sport. Evangelism is the primary mission of the church. Properly fulfilling this mission is the difference between Christians maturing or stagnating. Go make disciples. As soon as you have an interested student, begin training them to evangelize. And then continue teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded, laying a solid foundation.

Day by Day

When the church first started, a large and growing congregation of several thousand met for public proclamation at the temple, but they kept right on teaching in smaller groups from house to house.

And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. (Acts 5:42)

I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ... I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. (Acts 20:20-27)

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common. They began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:41-47)

Mature Christians guide their disciples to maturity, which multiplies the number of mature Christians who can make more disciples. Just like children, disciples learn by observation, imitation, and participation. The level of maturity achieved depends on their involvement and commitment to spiritual growth. Ultimately, it depends on their love for God and others.

As in all of life, servant leaders become evident. They are individuals who recognize needs and have a heart to serve. They figure out what needs to be done and how to do it. They take initiative and lead by example. And they are able to guide and encourage others.

Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. (Phil 3:17)

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. (Heb 13:7)

The process a disciple goes through to become a mature Christian is compared to the process a baby goes through to become a mature adult. Babies need milk daily for a while before they can handle meat. The milk that disciples need starts with a proper foundation: Faith that Jesus is Lord and Christ. Once they can handle it, solid food helps them really grow. After laying the foundation, disciples need to be taught many life-changing realities: Everything pertaining to life and godliness.

Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Rom 10:17)

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation. (1 Pet 2:1-2)

Wisdom is needed to discern between teaching mere facts and teaching the love of God. “Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.” (1 Cor 8:1) We need to always remember that the goal of our instruction is not just knowledge (see 2 Pet 1:3-11).

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Tim 1:5)

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb 3:13)

House to House

The first Christians continually devoted themselves to studying, praying, fellowshiping, and breaking bread. During the Passover feast Jesus had instituted the Lord’s Supper (see Mat 26:26-29). Jude called it a love feast. It was a meal together with other saints that included unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine as a memorial of the loving sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for us.

Where did the first century church eat the love feast? The same place they took their common meals together. “Breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.” Years later, an immature church was rebuked (the same one that was told they were “walking like mere men”) because factions had developed that were eating the Lord’s Supper at different times. It seems some were making excuses to eat before everyone else, but they could have simply eaten enough at home to survive until it was time. They were supposed to wait for one another and eat together (see 1 Cor 11:17-34).

Study, prayer, and fellowship went on throughout the week, but the first century church gathered for the breaking of bread on the first day of the week:

We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days. On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. (Acts 20:6-7)

Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 20:16)

If Paul was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost, why would he wait seven days at Troas? Apparently, he had a message he really wanted to deliver to all of them, which he did when everyone gathered together to break bread on the first day of the week (what we call Sunday). He prolonged his message until midnight, intending to leave the next day.

Under normal circumstances, house-size groups are the ideal setting for disciples to learn by observation, imitation, and participation. Each member gets more opportunities to serve and

exhort in small groups than is possible in large assemblies which create more of a spectator environment.

The Bible describes Christians congregating in public places for outreach and assembling in homes for encouragement, but it doesn't say the church (*ekklesia*: an assembly or congregation), as a body, owned buildings. We are nowhere instructed to purchase, own, or control property on behalf of God's kingdom (Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world). That doesn't make it sin but if that was God's ideal plan for us, wouldn't He have told us? Imagine the billions of dollars invested in church real estate today that could be spent on evangelism without enriching bankers who hold the mortgage on many expensive buildings that sit empty most of the week.

The introduction of church property ownership in the fourth century radically changed the dynamics of the body of Christ and produced numerous consequences. The buildings were modeled after Roman government buildings (which is what some actually were) which were designed for people to gather and hear the proclamation of the official. For the first few centuries the church enjoyed face-to-face edification around meals in a relaxed home environment and mutual ministry by saints who were all priests. Buildings transformed the church into a politicized organization that owned and controlled property with hierarchical clergy jostling for positions of power, prestige, and pay. The bulk of the people in each congregation were turned into a body of spectators.

There are many advantages to meeting in homes where saints get to practice hospitality and interact like a family in a real life environment. Growth results in additional church plants with stewardship dispersed to each group. We are to help disciples grow up in all aspects into Christ. Growth happens when saints are equipped for works of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (see Eph 4:12-16). Christian men are supposed to spend time thinking about how they're going to encourage and stimulate the brethren to love and good deeds every time they assemble.

Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Heb 10:24-25)

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, ferently love one another from the heart. (1 Pet 1:22)

There are never any generational divisions of the congregation recorded in Scripture (Sunday School and children's church are modern inventions). Families met together. It is evident that in some cases men and women met separately for prayer and exhortation (see 1 Cor 11:5). This makes sense because they each have special roles. Specific instructions about those roles are best given and received by the same sex. Men are exhorted to act like men (see 1 Cor 16:13). Older women are exhorted to teach the younger women (see Tit 2:3-5) about things specific to their role.

Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman

must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet [see also 1 Cor 14:34-38]. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. (1 Tim 2:8-15)

Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. (1 Thes 5:11-15)

Stewards of Grace

Every Christian is given spiritual stewardship. A home church is the ideal environment for giving each member an opportunity to serve and for integrating new disciples into the body. In order to discover and practice gifts of grace, Christians need to have ongoing opportunities and they need to be challenged to continue growing so they don't become sluggish. We should give one another grace and help each other discover our gifts.

Have you noticed a need that is not being met – maybe something neglected by others? If so, you may have discovered your gift. Each one has been given a stewardship of serving one another. You simply need to take the initiative of finding a need and taking responsibility for it. Others should welcome your contribution and help guide you into effective service!

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet 4:10-11)

Jesus said: I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. (John 15:1-2)

It is sad to say that not everyone who starts will finish. Just like branches on a vine, not everyone bears fruit. Some never take initiative. Others are not given the opportunity or encouragement to develop their gift, or their enthusiasm was squelched by the response they got when they tried.

Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. (1 Tim 4:12-13)

Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. (1 Tim 4:15-16)

The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after. Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed. (1 Tim 5:24-25)

Holy Priests

Throughout Scripture Christians are called saints, which means holy. This is not on account of ourselves; the Holy Spirit sanctifies us. That is, He purifies us, separates us from profane things, sets us apart, and dedicates us to God for His holy use. We have a high calling!

One of the unique things about Christianity is the lack of an earthly hierarchy. Every Christian is a priest and shares responsibility for the stewardship God has given the church. Some get appointed for specific tasks, but that doesn't absolve others of the responsibility of holding them accountable. Jesus is our high priest according to the eternal order of Melchizedek (see Heb 5-10), and every Christian serves as a priest under Him.

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ... But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Pet 2:4-5, 9)

As our high priest Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. As His priests we offer up spiritual sacrifices such as holy lives (see Rom 12:1-2), disciples (see Rom 15:16), love (see Eph 5:2), gifts (see Phil 4:18), lips that give praise and thanks to God, doing good and sharing (see Heb 13:15-16).

Jesus said: If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. (Luke 9:23)

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth. (1 Pet 2:21-22)

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. (Gal 5:13-15)

Accountability

Mutual ministry involves mutual encouragement and accountability. We have a responsibility to remove unrepentant Christians from our fellowship, not even to eat with such a one (see 1 Cor 5:9-13, 2

Thes 3:6-15). Satan gets people to think that love means accepting everyone just as they are. We are to preach to everyone just as they are and call them to repentance. Then we must hold each other accountable without biting and devouring one another.

We're not supposed to be nitpicking religious police acting like busybodies always trying to take the speck out of our brother's eye while a log is in our own. Jesus laid out a loving, three-step process in order to rescue a brother's soul from hell. If it's not serious enough to take it to step three, consider it prayerfully before you take step one.

Jesus said: If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst. (Mat 18:15-20)

The unloving thing to do would be to ignore the sin of your fellow Christian so he ends up in hell. By following Jesus' process you're trying to help your brother understand the seriousness of his sin. Separation from the body of Christ is a reflection of his present separation from Christ as a result of his unrepentant heart. The goal is to bring him to repentance and restore him to Christ and the church. This takes wisdom.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise wins souls. (Prov 11:30)

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. (Gal 6:1)

God gave us an example right at the beginning of the church showing how serious He is about removing unrepentant brethren.

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it. The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put

the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well.” And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things. (Acts 5:1-11)

Others Christians were also selling property in order to share the proceeds during a time of great need in the church, but Ananias and Sapphira lied and tried to make themselves appear more generous than they were by pretending they gave the whole price instead of just a portion of it. Man only sees the outward appearance, but God sees the heart. Our heart is what God is most concerned about. This is why it takes a lot of wisdom to hold one another accountable. We’re not going for outward conformity, we’re going for the heart.

Another lesson from this example is that Sapphira shouldn’t have been submissive to her husband in this matter. Christians shouldn’t obey family, civil, or church authorities if doing so requires disobedience to God.

Servants/Ministers

By God’s grace we each contribute to a thriving, maturing, united body of self-sacrificing soldiers who march in obedience to our Lord’s commands! Rather than hoarding responsibilities or trying to control everyone, Jesus wants us to lead by example and teach others to love and serve. He led by example in being a servant and not lording it over anyone.

We started this chapter discussing seven gifts that illustrate different roles in the body and we’ve talked about the process by which disciples mature. All of the leaders in the first century church started as a baby Christian and developed through subjection to the body of Christ. Jesus instructed us to avoid titles (see Mat 23:8-12) and simply serve others.

Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mat 20:26-28)

Being a servant, or minister (both words are translated from the same Greek word), is a humble act of Christian love we are all called to. It is not a hierarchical title. In the New Testament some devoted themselves for ministry and others were appointed by Jesus, the Holy Spirit, apostles, or the church. Godly character traits were required in order to be appointed for a specific task.

Jesus said you’ll know them by their fruit. Those who take the initiative to serve become responsible for their ministry. Their progress is evident to all. When you take responsibility for your stewardship, there is a subsequent authority and ongoing accountability to the saints and to God.

Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints), that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors. (1 Cor 16:15-16)

The apostles of Jesus started the first century church in Jerusalem and oversaw its development. Many who heard their message believed, and the number of men came to be about five thousand. Some Christians were selling their property so the proceeds could be used to provide for the needs of those converted while visiting Jerusalem so they could stay and continue learning from the apostles. By Acts chapter six things had reached the point that the apostles needed help.

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6)

These seven men probably didn’t serve tables for thousands of people every day at every meal without help, but they were “put in charge of this task.” When you’re feeding this many people, you simply have to have some who are in charge. Otherwise chaos breaks out. Those who want to do great things for the Lord become the servant of all, which is what these men did.

The Greek word used here for serve is *diakonein*, the verb form of the noun *diakonos*. It means to be a servant or attendant, i.e., to wait upon. In its different forms *diakonos* is most commonly translated as serve, service, servant, minister, and ministry. It is used to describe Jesus, apostles, elders, all Christians, government, and others. Paul used it to describe himself and his fellow workers whom he or churches sent to and fro for the gospel. There’s one place a woman is called a *diakonos* of the church (see Rom 16:1-2). (In two places, Phil. 1 and 1 Tim. 3, most versions of the Bible transliterate *diakonos* as deacon instead of translating it as servant or minister. This is because the Catholics created an unbiblical hierarchy with one title called deacon, and those two Scriptures are the best proof text they have for it.) In addition to having a good reputation:

~~Deacons~~ Servants likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. ~~Women~~ Wives must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. ~~Deacons~~ Servants must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. (1 Tim 3:8-13)

In Acts six, “After praying, they laid their hands on them.” When the church puts someone in charge of a specific or ad hoc task, it is made official with the laying on of hands. It’s fantastic when everyone just takes the initiative to do whatever needs to be done. There are also benefits

to officially appointing them to be in charge of a task. When everyone knows who's in charge it increases efficiency and any squabbles that arise can be quickly dealt with. It also creates accountability for those who have been appointed.

Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." (Col 4:17)

At least two of the seven from Acts chapter six were instrumental in the continuing spread of the gospel. They served well and obtained for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith. The rest of Acts chapter six and all of chapter seven tell of the great things done by Stephen; and chapter eight tells of the successful work of Philip, who is later called an evangelist (see Acts 21:8).

Besides Acts chapter six and the evangelist and elder roles we discuss in the next two sections, there's not many examples of servants being appointed for specific tasks. Most were sent out to help spread the gospel. There were also messengers, or couriers. This is how the New Testament letters, or epistles, were delivered and also how gifts were sent. There's not currently a big need for these services.

Jesus and His apostles were "going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God." Many people "were contributing to their support out of their private means" (see Luke 8:1-3). Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus, was in charge of the money box (see John 12:6, 13:29). After his death he was replaced by another man. Being treasurer is a way to serve. Evangelism teams undoubtedly had treasurers. But there's no example beyond Jerusalem of congregations having treasurers. Without buildings, salaries, and programs there isn't a lot of need for a treasurer. Individual Christians can give to anyone anytime they want.

Evangelist/Preacher/Apostle/ Fellow Worker

An apostle is a messenger. Jesus Christ was an apostle from God. He selected 12 apostles to be His eyewitnesses. Other apostles were sent by churches to preach, teach, and evangelize. Those who were sent weren't greater than those who sent them. They were working together to obey Jesus' instructions to make disciples of the nations. Those sent were most frequently called fellow workers, but also apostles, preachers, teachers, and evangelists.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. (John 13:16)

Again, laying on of hands is used to appoint men for a specific task. In the church that was at Antioch, prophets and teachers fasted and prayed and laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul and sent them out. In Timothy's case, it was the presbytery (elders) who performed the laying on of hands.

Members of evangelism teams supported each other by working as they went and sometimes they received gifts from churches. They made disciples – not dependents – and equipped them for service. They provided an example for the saints and planted churches that became self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-correcting.

How do we know that the church is supposed to send out evangelists? As seen in the following Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, through prophetic utterance, designed the pattern for preachers to be sent out by churches.

The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest. (Mat 9:37-38)

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. (Acts 13:1-3)

Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you [see Eph 4:7-8, 11], which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. (1 Tim 4:14)

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!” (Rom 10:14-15)

Do a study on the words evangelist, preacher, and apostle and you’ll find they are used interchangeably by Scripture to describe the same role. The Greek word for evangelist comes from the same Greek word as gospel, which means good news. An evangelist is a proclaimer of the good news. A preacher is a herald. An apostle is a delegate, messenger, or one sent forth. Because Jesus sent out 12 witnesses of His ministry and resurrection (see Luke 6:13; Acts 1:21-22), in modern times the term apostle has typically been reserved for His 12 and those sent out by congregations have often been called missionaries. This is not the case in Scripture (see Acts 14:4, 14), which never uses the term missionary. But don’t think of titles, think of roles.

The goal of every congregation should be to send out evangelists/preachers/apostles. When you study it out, you’ll see once again that it was those who were known by their good fruit who were chosen (see Acts 11:22-26; 16:1-2). You’ll also see that they were typically sent in teams, and the team members were called fellow workers or helpers (see Acts 13:5).

So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. (Acts 13:4-5)

On their first adventure, which lasted no more than two or three years, Barnabas and Saul (also called Paul) preached to many cities and planted churches in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14-52), Iconium (Acts 14:1-7), Lystra (Acts 14:8-19), and Derbe (Acts 14:20-21). They wouldn’t have spent any more than about six months at any one location. The congregation of seven we introduced to you at the beginning of this chapter could have been one of the churches that Paul’s team planted in a matter of months.

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Tim 2:2)

Faithful men are hard to find but easy to identify: Time will either expose you or promote you. After letting their new congregations practice serving each other and seeking and saving the lost by themselves for about six months or so, they went back and appointed elders (more about elders in the next section, but basically they are mature Christians who are able to guide their disciples to maturity). Then they returned to report to those who had sent them out.

After they had preached the gospel to [Derbe] and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (Acts 14:21-23)

They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia. When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished. When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they spent a long time with the disciples. (Acts 14:24-28)

In a matter of two or three years they had established several mature, self-sufficient congregations. Not that these congregations never saw them again...

After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord.” ...Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with him. (Acts 15:36-16:3)

Churches established just a few years earlier were already sending out their first apostle, Timothy, to go preach with Paul and Silas. After strengthening the existing churches, these three ventured on to Macedonia to plant more churches.

It appears that the longest amount of time Paul spent preaching at any one location was three years (see Acts 20:31-35). He would typically go back and check up on things, or send one of his fellow workers to do so. Paul exhorted Timothy to do the work of an evangelist and fulfill his ministry (see 2 Tim 4:1-5), and he gave Titus similar instructions:

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you. (Tit 1:5)

In addition to planting new churches, apostles wrote and visited those churches to reprove, rebuke, and exhort; help them mature (see 1 Cor 4:17); strengthen them; set things in order; and appoint elders. There is accountability involved in bestowing responsibility on someone. Paul instructs Timothy:

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin. (1 Tim 5:19-22)

Evangelists obviously have influence with the disciples they make. Not only do they appoint elders through the laying on of hands, but they also help hold those elders accountable.

Elder/Overseer/Shepherd

Just as the meaning of servant/minister describes a role and the meaning of evangelist/preacher/apostle/fellow worker describes a role, the meaning of elder/overseer/shepherd also describes a role. Elder, overseer, and shepherd are used interchangeably to describe the same stewardship. They lead by example in all the areas that Christians have expectations placed on them by Scripture.

In the last section we saw that evangelists were to appoint elders and elders laid hands on Timothy, so it goes both ways. Laying on of hands to appoint someone for a task is consistently accompanied by prayer and fasting.

In Israel elders were rulers. A Christian elder is an older, spiritually mature, Christian man who serves the saints and seeks and saves the lost. Another name for shepherd is pastor. It involves feeding, guiding, and protecting the flock. An overseer is a superintendent. The definition implies inspection. The Greek word for overseer is transliterated as bishop in some Bible versions (another Catholic hierarchical title).

Elder, shepherd, pastor, and overseer are not hierarchical titles. They are descriptions of the role of shepherding the flock of God. There are no examples of someone filling this role alone; there are always two or more. They must ensure their congregation and its apostles hold to biblical patterns. As we've described in this chapter, all Christians are responsible for this to some degree or another.

Paul warned the elders at Ephesus:

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw

away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. (Acts 20:28-31)

Interestingly, when Judas Iscariot was replaced, Peter quoted Psalm 109:8, “Let another man take his office” (Acts 1:20). The Greek word translated as office is translated elsewhere as overseer and is nowhere else in the New Testament translated as office. The apostles all served the role of overseers. Peter and John both referred to themselves as elders. Peter wrote:

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (1 Pet 5:1-5)

Following are fantastic descriptions of a mature Christian! These are qualities that every Christian man should aspire to. (The words “office of” are not in the Greek text.)

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to ~~the office of~~ overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1 Tim 3:1-7)

When Paul instructed Titus to “set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,” he continued:

...namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. (Tit 1:5-9)

Pay Your Leaders?

Getting paid for Christian ministry appears to have been more the exception than the rule. For example, when Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the church in Antioch with John Mark as

their helper, were they sent with two or three years worth of living expenses in gold and silver? If they were sent with anything, it wouldn't have been more than living expenses.

We know that evangelism teams sometimes received some financial support (see the *Spiritual Warfare* study guide). The same is true regarding elders:

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (1 Tim 5:17-18)

The Greek word for honor used here has two main meanings. One meaning is a value (i.e. money paid) and the other is esteem. The word is used numerous times in Scripture. Both meanings are frequently used with context showing which meaning is intended. The context of the above verse certainly appears to be talking about money paid, especially when compared with 1 Corinthians 9:6-11.

Peter exhorted his fellow elders not to shepherd the flock of God for sordid gain. Paul's evangelistic journeys are more extensive than anyone else's recorded in Scripture. God could have highlighted anyone's ministry, but we're given Paul for an example. He reminded the Ephesian elders about the example he set for them:

I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Act 20:33-35)

Paul had spent three years preaching the gospel in Ephesus where "a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries" (1Co 16:8-9). From there he wrote to the church in Corinth:

To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure... (1Cor 4:11-12)

The kingdom of God is not about making money. It's not about collecting a salary. And it's not about securing a retirement. The goal is not to have paid professionals. The goal is love. It might make sense in some cases to pay elders or evangelists for their work – especially if it will enable more work! – but if they are able to do it without being paid, why not rather do that and set an example like Paul did? Getting paid may not be the most advantageous way to serve if you're trying to set an example. It can also attract people to ministry for the wrong reasons (can you think of any modern examples of that?).

For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each

one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (1 Thes 2:9-12)

Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need. (1Thes 4:9-12)

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. (1Thes 5:12-13)

When you hear about Paul being hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, roughly treated, and homeless while preaching the gospel, doesn't your heart open up with a desire to help if you could? We esteem him very highly in love along with all those who take up their cross daily and sacrifice worldly pursuits in order to devote themselves to rescuing people from hell. Those who take the initiative to serve the body of Christ and seek and save the lost obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Jesus.

Jesus said: By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35)

Summary

But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?
(Jam 2:20)

We began this study guide talking about love and we're ending it talking about love. That's what godly stewardship is about: Sacrificing yourself for others. While the world around us turns sensuality and entertainment and money into idolatry, we pursue the glory of God. There's an old saying, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." Those who pursue godly stewardship have no time for idleness.

Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. (2 Tim 2:21)

For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1Cor 6:20)

There can be a time and a place for some of the pleasures of life: Christians can have a blissful marriage, enjoy their children and grandchildren, and be successful stewards of all that God has given them without turning any of those things into idols. There's a sense of fulfillment, of accomplishment, and of satisfaction that comes with working hard for the Lord. There's great joy in glorifying God and returning a measure of the love with which He loved us.

Love doesn't give the minimum. Love gives the maximum! The wise steward designs his life so that he can be a blessing to others rather than pursuing selfish ambition. He is thankful for the way God made him and he smiles at the future. He suffers without complaint and pursues rewards he can share with others. He develops better relationship, time management, and financial stewardship skills, and he takes care of his health and vitality.

The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?" Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?" So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.
(Luke 12:16-21)

Seasons of Life

The average human lifespan varies from country to country, but excluding unnatural, premature deaths, the average hasn't changed in thousands of years.

As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone and we fly away. Who understands the power of Your anger and Your fury, according to the fear that is due

You? So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom. (Psa 90:10-12)

Using round numbers we can divide life into four, roughly 20-year “seasons.” The first one is supposed to consist of learning directed by parents and assisted by grandparents. The second season requires personal responsibility and practical application of what was learned in the first season, and the opportunity to raise your own children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord. In the third season you reap the rewards and consequences for the way you lived in the previous one. In the final season of life you may be blessed with the joy of passing your wisdom onto your grandchildren, assisting and being assisted by your children.

Thinking through your future like this puts life in perspective so you can set the right priorities in designing your life for the Lord. Life is fleeting and it’s only what’s done for Christ that will last. A helpful mental exercise is to imagine standing in line on Judgement Day reminiscing about your life. What do you want to look back and see? What do you want your priorities to have been?

Those who set goals are more likely to be successful in any area of life than those who don’t set goals. And among those who set goals, those who write their goals down and frequently review them are more likely to be successful than those who don’t. Wouldn’t now be a good time to increase your success? What do you hope to achieve for Jesus during your stay on earth?

There are also circumstantial seasons of life that temporarily require greater focus on one area – to the detriment of other areas – such as when you take on a new role and have to get through the initial learning curve. Understanding this is helpful and explaining it to those who may be affected can reduce tensions as long as you work to get things back on track as soon as possible.

Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:13-14)

The goal of parenting and grand-parenting is not to raise good kids. The goal is to raise godly adults. You must model it. You must be consistent. Mean what you say and say what you mean. Keep your word. Follow through. Seek forgiveness for mistakes. Stay involved. Dads must especially play an active role in helping their children transition to successful adulthood, whether it’s daughters getting married or sons getting a career.

We want such joyful, loving, and peaceful family relationships that there is a stark contrast on the occasion that correction is necessary. This stark contrast serves as a powerful motivator to pursue the fruit of the Spirit and to keep out the deeds of the flesh.

Physical & Spiritual Lessons

A body in motion tends to stay in motion, and a body at rest tends to stay at rest. This is a powerful principle to understand and use to benefit your spiritual growth and maturity. Take advantage of every little bit of momentum and build upon it as you take on responsibilities and implement changes in your life. Busy people get things done, and we have a lot to do for the Lord.

The physical act of wasting time and money on poor lifestyle choices such as slouching around in front of a screen or being a consumer of junk food may not be a sin, but it certainly says something about one's priorities – and there are other lessons to be learned. Long-term back pain as a result of habitual poor posture and teeth falling apart as a result of habitual poor nutrition is similar to the way sin deceives people. The minor, short-term consequences of sin seem less important than the supposed benefits the deceived one thinks he will gain. This short-sighted view results in long-term pain and suffering that far outweighs any supposed short-term benefits.

If you cut out junk food that is lacking in nutritional content, you will soon develop an appetite for real food that is full of nutritional content. Eventually cravings for junk food will go away, especially if you quit consuming advertisements for it. Replacing sinful habits with godly habits works the same way. Lustful and covetous thoughts are much easier to eradicate if you quit feeding your mind media that focuses on or even glorifies sin.

God designed your body to self-regulate itself in amazing ways that keep you healthy as long as things like your immune system are not disrupted. It's similar to the way civil justice works when following biblical principles. Every society has a percentage of criminals and perverts but when the justice system works well, bad actors are punished and crime is kept to a minimum. Lawlessness multiplies when the justice system is disrupted by bribery, corruption, socialism or other abuses of power. The justice system is strengthened by the active participation of godly citizens in civil government implementing biblical principles.

Just as every society has a percentage of criminals and perverts, every human body has a percentage of things like cancer cells and pathogens. When the immune system works well, these bad elements are kept in check or eliminated from the body. Bad actors multiply and cause disease when the immune system is disrupted by poor diet, inactivity, insufficient sleep, stress and other causes of toxin buildup. The immune system is strengthened by proper nutrition, plenty of movement, restful sleep, the peace of God, and healthful herbs as needed.

Ultimately, nobody on earth is responsible for your physical and spiritual health and well-being except you, and you are dependent on God. Your physical and spiritual families can be a big help and a real blessing, but the civil government has no role here. It has no way to help with physical needs without forcibly and unjustly taking from others to help you. The proper role of government is to protect our God-given rights and bring wrath on those who violate our rights.

Godly Stewards

With responsibility comes authority and with authority comes responsibility. The two go hand-in-hand. We've given an overview of the responsibility and authority delegated by God to church, civil, family, and self-government, and what duties Christians have in each of these areas. No government should usurp any responsibilities or authority that God has delegated to another, nor should they violate people's God-given rights. Those who try should be opposed.

Family government should oppose civil or church government abuses of power and vice-versa, all the way around. No individual in his right mind should let his personal stewardships be usurped by others. Each government should intercede and protect those under its jurisdiction. An

example of this is when the parents of Moses disobeyed Pharaoh by refusing to kill their son (the Hebrew midwives interceded for many other sons).

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. (Heb 11:23)

When many people think of stewardship, they think of financial stewardship because that's the extent of what most institutional churches teach (they take many Scriptures out of context to convince people to give to their organizations). All of the giving recorded in the New Testament was for specific needs. Church buildings, staff salaries, slick programs: None of this existed in the New Testament church and they are certainly not needs. Financial stewardship is a personal stewardship of the finances God blesses you with.

God isn't just the God of Sundays. He didn't leave us as orphans the other six days. He's the Creator of the universe, the Lord of every aspect of life. His word addresses everything pertaining to life and godliness. We must be good stewards of every blessing from above.

Some of the content in this study guide is based on best practices from man's experience, which is often a matter of good, better, and best. You must discern between what Scripture says and what men have found. We're not trying to win people to men. We're trying to win people to the Lord Jesus Christ. There's no room for dogmatism when we're simply talking about best practices. You or someone else might find better practices and that's great!

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (Gal 5:1)

We don't win our salvation by keeping a list of do's and don'ts and religious ceremonies. We've been given the free gift of salvation for which a great price was paid. Therefore, "We love, because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19) His love motivates us to love those He loves; those He died for. The point is that we're not working our way to heaven or earning our salvation by being good stewards. We're saved by the blood of Jesus. He paid the complete price for our sin. We respond to His love by loving God and loving others. That's what godly stewardship is about. We don't want to be foolish because that hurts our ability to be a blessing to others. Instead, we want to bless and glorify our awesome God!

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 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. (Rom 8:1-4)

Those outside of Christ have no hope beyond this world. They are terrified of death, whereas Christians should have no fear of death because we will be raised with a body of glory. For many, the preservation of their lives is their biggest idol. We can learn from their discoveries (e.g. movnat.com: build movement skills, fitness, and real world capability – strong to be

helpful) without becoming idolaters like them. Don't allow anything to become an idol. This world is not where it's at. Jesus left us an example of sacrificing everything for others – motivated by love. We must take up our cross and follow Him. If it costs us our time, money, health, career, family, friends, freedom, or anything else, including our life, He's worth it!

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. (Mark 8:35)

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven. (2 Cor 4:16-5:2)

Leadership

God appointed Christians to be the light of the world, bearers of good news, ambassadors of Christ. We glorify Him when we practice love, joy, peace, and wise stewardship. We shame Him when we act selfishly, have bad attitudes, are quick to quarrel, and are irresponsible with our stewardships.

Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Mat 5:14-16)

So that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. (Eph 3:10)

The cross comes before the crown. Those who truly love the brethren and the lost will make whatever sacrifices are necessary. True leaders take initiative to serve others, and their fruit is evident to all. They give lots of feedback to their disciples, especially babes in Christ, providing direction and accountability. To become a good leader, you must first be a good follower. Do you give your leaders joy? Do you deliberately add to the momentum of the building up of the body of Christ?

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. (Heb 13:17)

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the

knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:11-13)

These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you. (Titus 2:15)

Conclusion

We have given an overview of a lot of topics in this study guide. What if you've already violated some or many of the biblical principles we've discussed? Let's let Jesus answer that question. A woman caught in adultery (it doesn't get much worse than that) was brought to Jesus for His judgment. He told her, "Go. From now on sin no more." (John 8:3-11) This is our answer as well.

Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin. (Jas 4:17)

It's important to keep everything in perspective and don't be surprised when circumstances that are out of your control disrupt your best intentions. The great and foremost commandment is love. Keep love as your highest priority and everything else will work itself out. You can be sure of it.

We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Rom 8:28)

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8:35-39)

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? (Mic 6:8)

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim 1:17)

A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, “Do business with this until I come back.”

But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, “We do not want this man to reign over us.”

When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done. The first appeared, saying, “Master, your mina has made ten minas more.”

And he said to him, “Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.”

The second came, saying, “Your mina, master, has made five minas.”

And he said to him also, “And you are to be over five cities.”

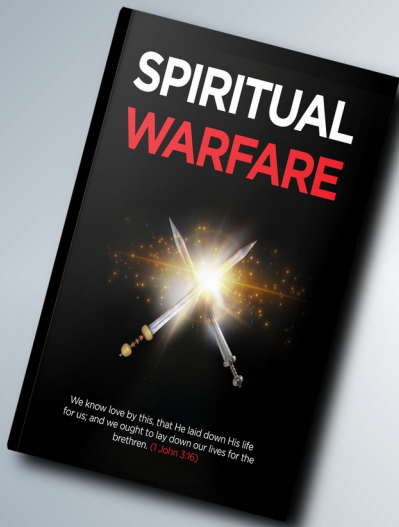
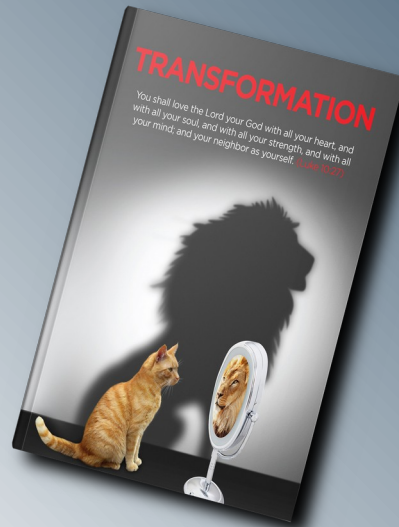
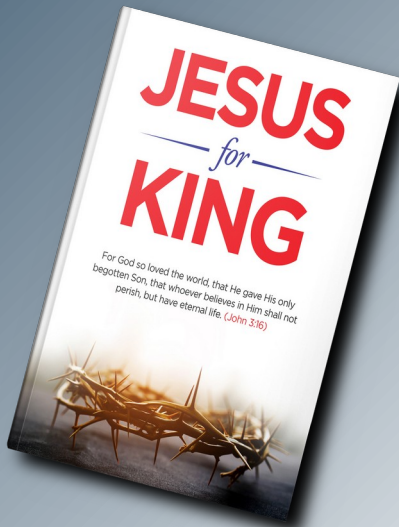
Another came, saying, “Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.”

He said to him, “By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?”

Then he said to the bystanders, “Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.”

And they said to him, “Master, he has ten minas already.”

“I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.” (Luke 19:12-27)



Bible Study Guides

If you are a Christian or a truth seeker, this four-part Bible study series will help you learn more about Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, and His desire for you.

Visit JesusForKing.com for these and more resources to achieve extraordinary victory in essential areas of your life and impact the world for Christ. They can be downloaded and printed free of charge and can be used by individuals, families, churches, small group studies, and more.

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)