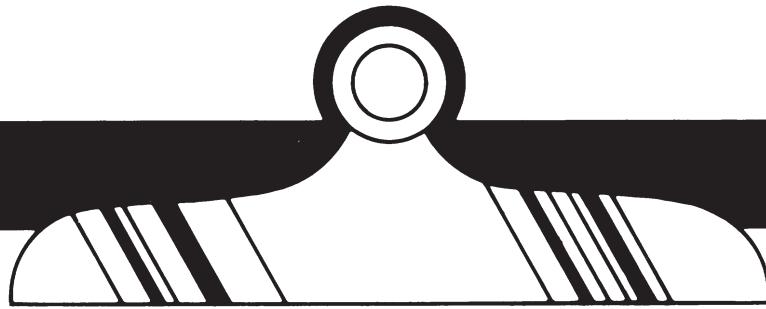




Christian Maturity



Theme Thoughts

Christian maturity comes as a result of taking a realistic, practical, and God-directed approach to both the opportunities and the problems of life. That is why the admonitions found in the Bible are of proven value. They apply to the everyday experiences we face.

How to gain Christian maturity is the thrust of the lessons to be studied during this quarter.

The basic point to remember in considering the precepts of this unit is that submitting to Christ as our Lord and Savior comes first. With this thought in mind, we begin the unit by focusing on the reality of Jesus' presence with us and in us.

The second lesson deals with the subject of Christian growth, establishing that God's Word outlines certain ways and means of spiritual development, and that spiritual growth is necessary.

With these two lessons as the foundation for the quarter, we move into a consideration of specific areas such as decision-making, resisting the devil, avoiding physical and spiritual pollution, self-discipline, and how to deal with personal problems.

Our quarter concludes with a lesson on looking at the outcome, in which we will be encouraged to see the importance of measuring our daily actions by whether these actions will draw us closer to God or move us farther away.

Our goal this quarter is to reach the point where we can say with Paul, ". . . in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

Jesus' Presence With Us and In Us

TEXT: John 15:1-9; Ephesians 3:14-21

KEY VERSE: Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. — John 15:4

Some of Jesus' last words to His disciples were, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Though we cannot see Him today with our physical eyes, we can know we have Him in our lives by the presence of His Spirit in us. We have the daily assurance that He can dwell within each heart. The focus of Paul's writing from which we draw part of our lesson today is the value and the necessity for the believer to have the presence of Christ and His indwelling Spirit as a moment-by-moment reality. The essence of the Christian life for Paul was union with Christ, the basis for our hope of Heaven. Paul expressed it this way: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

1. What is it necessary for us to do in order to have the definite knowledge of Jesus' presence in our lives? See John 14:23, Acts 3:19, and Revelation 3:20.

2. Once Christ's presence is in our lives, we must ensure that He will continue to abide with us. John 8:31 indicates that we must continue in His Word. What do you think the word *continue* means in this context?

3. Name some of the promised blessings Jesus' presence brings to those who continue to love, obey, and follow Him.

John 14:27

John 15:11

Acts 1:8

1 John 5:14,15

4. Paul and John describe our relationship with Jesus in 1 Corinthians 1:9 and 1 John 1:3 as being one of fellowship. How would you describe Christian fellowship?

5. At times when we cannot actually feel the presence of the Lord, what confidence can we receive from God's Word that He is, indeed, still with us? See 2 Corinthians 5:7 and Hebrews 13:5.

6. There is a definite contrast between the circumstances shown in Matthew 18:20 and 2 Timothy 4:14-17, and yet Christ was present in both instances. Describe what is taking place in each case, and what we can learn about Christ's presence from these Scriptures.

7. God has promised to be with us in every situation. Look up the following Scriptures and explain how each verse shows us God will be there: Psalm 46:1; Isaiah 43:2; Mark 13:11; Hebrews 4:15-16.

8. What effect did the presence of the Spirit of the Lord have on those of the Early Church in the Book of Acts (Acts 13:33; 5:12)? What effect did the Spirit have on the lives of the listeners?

9. In order for the Gospel to be spread, the disciples had to move into other parts of the world. What initiated these moves?

10. When we have the reality of Christ's presence with us now, what is our hope for the future? See John 14:3, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, and 1 John 3:2.

Growth

TEXT: 2 Peter 1:1-11; 3:17,18

KEY VERSE: Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. — 1 Peter 2:1-2

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: 1 Samuel 2:26; 3:1-21

Spiritual growth is possible only by faith in the divine power of God. The precious promises help us toward our goal of being partakers of His divine nature and being a part of the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Diligently using our faith in those promises in every action and decision of life will add growth in the virtues mentioned as God multiplies grace and peace. Growth, victory, and an abundant entrance into eternal life will be the results. What rewards for our effort!

1. In our text the Apostle Peter writes concerning “growing in grace.” From what starting point does spiritual growth begin?

2. What two things mentioned in verse 2 of our text are evident in the heart of one who is born again? How do you think these contribute to our spiritual growth? See Romans 5:1.

3. To grow spiritually, where must we keep our faith focused? What are some ways this can be done? See Hebrews 12:1-2.

4. According to our text, what assistance does God give to help us grow spiritually?

5. List the seven increments of Christian graces that we are to add to our faith, and give a spiritual definition of each.

6. What will be the results of adding these to our lives?

7. If a Christian does not add these graces to his life, what will be the spiritual result?

8. Write a goal that you have for your spiritual growth. One reference that could be used is Ephesians 4:13-15.

Success

TEXT: 2 Chronicles 26:1-15; Psalm 37:3-11

KEY VERSE: This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. — Joshua 1:8

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Success is a word with a variety of meanings. To some, it means “a job, friends, a family, and enough possessions to meet their needs and gratify their desires.” To others, it signifies “recognition for superiority in terms of beauty, intelligence, or athletic or artistic talent.” These latter equate success with popularity, fame, influence, political power, or rare creativity. God’s value system, however, is just the opposite of the worldly viewpoint. God views success from the perspective of eternity, since we are all going to live forever somewhere! He sees us not as evaluated by the world, gauged by our public image or our private enterprise, but instead by the extent of our commitment to Him. Solomon, who sought success in every possible channel of life, finally came to this realization. After pronouncing all of his many worldly successes as vanity (without real meaning), he writes: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

1. Point out two things that Uzziah did early in his reign that brought him good success. How does Uzziah's example apply to us today? See Matthew 7:7-8.

2. God gave Uzziah good success in that He gave him victory over his enemies; He gave him helpful, intelligent associates; He gave him much cattle and vineyards; He gave him weapons of warfare. How can we parallel these things to success in the Christian life today? See Luke 10:19; Ephesians 6:13-17; Philippians 4:19 and 1 John 1:7.

3. David, the author of Psalm 37, had proven God's care in both good and bad circumstances. God gave him success over the lion, the bear, Goliath, and in many other situations because David trusted in Him. Relate an example from your own experience or knowledge of someone whose success came directly through God's help.

4. Later, David endured much persecution and was hunted as if he were a criminal. In what way might this difficult experience have contributed to David's eventual success (Psalm 37:7-11)? How might dismal and disappointing circumstances contribute to our eventual spiritual success (1 Peter 4:12-13; 5:10)?

5. Psalm 37:3-11 may be spoken of as a formula for success—spiritually and materially. Very simply stated, this formula is: Our part performed + God's part guaranteed = success. From these verses, list the phrases which describe our part and God's part.

6. Arrange the following items in priority as to how you think they should be to assure success in your life: education, occupation, home and family life, recreation and social activities, individual spiritual life, church-related activities.

7. What was the Apostle Paul's main goal in life (Philippians 3:8-11)? What assurance did he have that he had attained this? See 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

Decision-Making

TEXT: Judges 6:11-40

KEY VERSE: I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live. — Deuteronomy 30:19

Making the right decisions in spiritual matters will add to one's growth in Christian maturity. The most important decisions may not always be the ones made with great deliberation and forethought. They may be the spontaneous ones made every day. How necessary it is to seek God's guidance in decision-making, because each decision, great or small, leads us either closer to or away from Jesus.

1. What was the decision that Gideon was faced with making? Of what consequence was it if he made the wrong decision? See Judges 7:19-23.

2. Name the four happenings upon which Gideon based his decision to do what God commanded him.

3. Can one know God's will in making a decision? Support your answer with Scripture.

4. What is the spiritual meaning of putting out a fleece? Do you think this is a good way to make a decision? Explain your answer.

5. Why is God concerned with even the lesser decisions we make on a day-to-day basis?

6. What sources are helpful in making good decisions? What sources are harmful in making good decisions? See Psalm 1:1,2.

7. Do you think it is possible to make every decision based upon God's Word? For instance, will God's Word tell a person which school to attend or which friends to associate with or which job to accept? Read Matthew 6:33, and explain your answer.

8. Reflect back over the past year concerning any major decisions you have had to make. What were the processes you went through in order to make those decisions? Were there times when you should have done something differently?

Avoiding Pollution

TEXT: 2 Timothy 2:19-26; Psalm 15:1-5

KEY VERSE: Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. — Philippians 4:8

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Ephesians 5:27; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 1 Peter 1:22,23

In our world today, we hear of air pollution, noise pollution, water pollution, etc. The contamination of our environment is an important concern, but of far more serious nature is the onslaught of moral, physical, and spiritual pollution which is attaching itself to the human race at an increasingly rapid rate. These forms of pollution, if the Christian allows them to be attached to his life, will have a devastating effect—the eternal loss of his soul.

1. Our spiritual foundation, as stated in 1 Corinthians 3:11, is Jesus Christ. According to our text, what are the two sayings on the seal of the foundation?

2. If you are a born-again Christian, you are a part of Christ's church in the world today. In reference to Ephesians 5:27, what characteristics is Christ looking for in His church? What does this mean in terms of the kind of life we live?

3. In our introduction, we are warned to beware of physical pollution. What are some of the things in our world which would contaminate a person physically? What must we do to avoid these pollutions?

4. What do you think are the meanings of the expressions, “vessels of honor” and “vessels of dishonor”?

How can one change from being a vessel of dishonor to a vessel of honor?

5. A definition of *lust* is “overmastering desire.” This could include a lust for power, fame, or money, as well as unlawful sexual gratification. According to our text, what is the antidote for youthful lusts? Why are lusts harmful? See 1 Peter 2:11.

6. James 3:16 discusses two pollutants that can assail the Christian. What are these, and how can they be avoided?

7. What does the Bible say is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10)? Why is this pollutant so subtle?

8. Listed in our text in Psalm 15 are eleven qualifications for heavenly citizenship. Make a list of all the conditions you can find.

Dealing With the Devil

TEXT: Matthew 4:1-11

KEY VERSE: Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. — James 4:7

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 6:1-18

Satan, the devil, is a very real being and is the prince of the darkness of this world. He contends with the Lord and with the Christian. We must be aware of his power, but always take confidence in the fact that the God we serve has supreme power, and that Satan's eventual doom is sure. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

1. The devil has been causing men to sin all through the years of time. What tactics did he use with Eve in the Garden that will likely be similar to those he will use with the inhabitants of the world after the Millennium (Genesis 3:4-5; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14; Revelation 20:7-8)? How do they compare with his tactics today?

2. What deception did the devil, as a serpent, use on Eve to cause her to sin (Genesis 3:1,4)? In a similar vein, what temptation did the devil use to try to overcome Jesus in the wilderness?

3. In what forms will Satan come to us today in an attempt to overthrow our faith in God?

2 Corinthians 11:14

1 Thessalonians 3:5

1 Peter 5:8

Revelation 12:10

4. God has promised to give us victory over the temptations of Satan. However, His promises are conditional. He expects us to take action. Using the following Scriptures, what action must we take and what is God's specific promise as we do so?

Ephesians 6:11

James 1:12

1 Peter 5:8-10

5. What spiritual qualities must we have and exhibit in order for us to be victorious in our fight with the devil? Luke 10:19-20 and Revelation 12:11 list two very important qualities. Tell what these are, and then mention some others.

6. 2 Corinthians 2:11 tells us we are not ignorant of Satan's devices, and he need not get an advantage over us. How can we determine if a trial or test or thought is from the devil or from the Lord? See James 1:13.

7. Satan is called the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2) and his realm is one of spirits, not one of flesh and blood that can be seen (Ephesians 6:12). What lessons can we learn from the story of Job regarding the debate between God and Satan over men's souls? See Job 1:7-10; 2:3-10.

8. Jesus said that He has all power in Heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18). He defeated the devil every time he came against Him, even to being victorious over death through His Resurrection. Since we receive our spiritual power from Jesus, what confidence can we have in our encounters with the devil?

Taking a Stand

TEXT: Numbers 13:17-33; 14:22-24

KEY VERSE: If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. — John 15:19

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Matthew 16:24-27; Romans 12:1-2

Who should we believe? Which report is true? Who should we follow? These questions must have been heavy on the minds of the Children of Israel when they heard the conflicting reports from the twelve men who had returned from spying out the land of Canaan. Their trust in God's promise had been overcome by doubt and fear. We, too, are faced each day with the challenge of distinguishing between right and wrong. And, many times, the consequences of wrong decisions are as grave as they were for the Children of Israel. Let's not forget God's promises to us.

1. The history of the Children of Israel, no doubt, would read differently if the people had followed Caleb and Joshua rather than the other ten spies. Explain the reason why it makes a difference to us whom we follow in our day.

2. It is not always easy to make the correct differentiation between truth and error, especially when the pressure is great from those around you to pursue a course other than the right one. For example, would it have been easy for you to make the right choice between the conflicting reports given by the twelve spies in our text? On what should the Children of Israel have based their decision?

3. Ten men said Israel couldn't take the land, while Joshua and Caleb insisted that it could be done. Because they took their stand for what was right, they were the only two of their generation who entered the Promised Land. What spiritual lesson can we learn from this?

4. Imagine the feelings of Joshua and Caleb when they realized that the people were siding with the other ten spies. There may be situations in our lives which cause us to be uncomfortable but force us to take a stand. For example: In a high school science class, the question is asked if anyone believes in the Biblical account of creation. No one raises his hand—but you believe. Will you raise your hand? Your face turns red, your palms are sweaty, beads of perspiration are on your brow, and you raise your hand. You hear a ripple of laughter. The teacher rolls his eyes. Give another similar situation that could necessitate standing up for the Lord. Name some emotions that might accompany taking this stand, and give possible reactions to it.

5. It is important to remember scriptural promises in these times when we must take a stand. Read Philippians 4:13 and explain how this verse could help.

6. Define the word *world* in the context of 1 John 2:15-17. What are the consequences of daring to be different from the world?

7. How can we obtain the spiritual strength to take a stand for what we know is right? See Psalm 27:1 and Isaiah 40:29-31.

8. Give a Biblical example of a person who took a stand even though opposed by those around him.

Willing Service

TEXT: Acts 26:1-20

KEY VERSE: If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. — Isaiah 1:19

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: John 21:15-17

Paul, even though having been in prison for a long time, was not hesitant to do service for God by giving his testimony. As he stood before King Agrippa, the account of his conversion and how he answered God's call gives us a beautiful example of a complete change, total dedication and sacrifice. We are called by the same Christ to the same Gospel. Willing service for the salvation of souls in every phase of the Lord's work brings eternal reward.

1. Paul told King Agrippa that at an earlier time in his life, his ambition had been to put the followers of Jesus into prison, see them persecuted and even put to death. His attitude had been one of anger toward the followers of Jesus. Explain what brought about the change in his attitude, and tell why you think Paul was so willing to give his testimony before the King. Refer to Acts 9.

2. The word *surrender* means "to give up claim, or to yield to another." How do you think this word relates to service for God?

3. There are some important principles established in Scripture concerning the call of God. Read Romans 11:29 and 1 Corinthians 9:16-17, and note what points you find in these verses.

4. Reading verse 16 in our text, we find part of Paul's call was to "witness." What spiritual experience will help us fulfill this part of our call? See Acts 1:8.

5. When Jesus sent His disciples into the cities, they were told that the conditions they would face might not always be pleasant. They were sent as lambs among wolves. They were to carry no provisions. They were not guaranteed a welcome. Why were they sent? How did things turn out for them? What was their attitude upon their return to Jesus? See Luke 10:1,17 and 22:35.

6. Willing service to God is more an attitude than an obligation. If the question is posed, "Are you willing?" what is your response? If the response is, "If I have to . . ." or "I guess I can . . ." the attitude is saying, "I really don't want to." In today's society we are told not to commit or box ourselves in because life is too short. But this is a trick of the devil to keep us from serving the Lord. Psalm 40:8 contains a key word which reflects a certain attitude that we should maintain as we serve the Lord. Note the word, and describe how you think it applies to our Christian service. Then briefly describe how an opposite attitude might affect our service.

7. The magnitude of needs in the spreading of the Gospel, may sometimes seem almost overwhelming. We need to be aware that our duty is not universal, but rather personal and individual. God does not command us to "Go and do everything," but He marks out a special path for each of us. Once we have committed ourselves fully to Christ and have told Him we are willing to do whatever He gives us to do, how can we know just what that service should be? Proverbs 3:5-6 will give you some direction in noting your answer.

8. In today's society we often find that those in lesser circumstances are in a position of serving those who are more affluent. Matthew 23:11 establishes a Biblical perspective which is somewhat different. In your own words, elaborate on true greatness as brought out in this Scripture.

Personal Problems

TEXT: Genesis 37:3-36; Psalm 105:16-22; 1 Peter 4:12-19

KEY VERSE: For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. — 2 Corinthians 4:17

Receiving salvation is not a guarantee that the Christian will face no difficulties. In fact, the Apostle Paul exhorted early Christians to continue in the faith, cautioning them that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). But for those who remain true to God there is a deliverance and an answer to every troublesome problem. In this lesson we see how the hand of the Lord was over Joseph and moved in his behalf though he faced hard trials and personal difficulties. His story has been an example to Christians through the ages.

1. After reading the Genesis portion of our text, list the problems that were facing Joseph at this time in his life.

2. The problems faced by Joseph seemed to revolve, for the most part, around his relationships with other people—just as the problems facing us often do. The Scriptures give us many guidelines which direct our responses and reactions to others. Look up the following verses and note the attitudes we should maintain toward others to alleviate or minimize differences.

Romans 12:10

Romans 12:14

Galatians 5:14

Galatians 6:1

Colossians 3:13

3. What was Joseph's response when his father asked him to journey to Shechem to inquire after his brothers' welfare? In view of the fact that his brothers hated and envied him, what was notable about Joseph's answer and what lesson can we learn from it?

4. In Genesis 37:15, we find Joseph facing a completely different type of problem. Identify his difficulty, and explain how a solution was provided.

5. Verses 19 and 20 reflect the contempt Joseph's brothers felt for him. As Christians today, we must sometimes face contempt for ourselves and for our beliefs. How are we to react to this and what will occur if we follow the admonition given in Scripture? See Matthew 5:11-12 and 1 Peter 2:19-20.

6. God, in His infinite wisdom, may allow trials to come for various reasons. Looking at Psalm 105:16-17, for what reason did Joseph have to go to Egypt?

7. Hebrews 12:11 brings out another reason we may need to go through some times of trial and testing. Identify the reason and explain what benefit it will bring.

8. In 1 Peter 4:19 there is a qualifying phrase which defines to whom this instruction is given. What is the phrase and why is it important?

Reaction to Stress

TEXT: 1 Kings 18:17-46

KEY VERSE: I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. — Psalm 91:2

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Daniel 3:8-30; 1 Peter 2:19-21

Were the heroes of faith in the Bible any different from the present-day child of God? Scripture tells us in James 5:17 that Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are. He was an example of how a Christian, even today, can react in times of stress and pressure.

1. As we read the story of Elijah, what are some of the stressful situations in which he found himself?

How did he handle each of them? Particularly note 1 Kings 17:1,3,7,17; 18:17-24.

2. What did God promise Elijah when he faced Ahab after the 3-1/2 years of drought (1 Kings 18:1)?

What did Elijah do when this didn't happen immediately?

3. What attributes were shown by the three Hebrew children when they refused to obey the king's edict to bow down to his idol? See Daniel 3:16-18.

4. What did Jesus do when He was falsely accused and reviled for doing good? Since He was the Son of God, do you feel the stress and pressure He went through was any less serious than what we may feel? See Hebrews 4:15 and 1 Peter 2:21-23.

5. How do most people react when they are reproved for something and realize they may have deserved it? How do most people react if they are accused of something of which they are completely innocent? Justified or unjustified, reproof can cause stress. In what way should a Christian react to stress? See 1 Peter 2:18,20.

6. What are some of the situations that may arise in our present-day society that can induce stress and tension in one's life?

7. What are some ways people have tried to combat stress in their lives, as compared with what a Christian can do?

8. What does the Bible instruct us to do when the cares, anxieties, and pressures of life come upon us? See Matthew 6:25; Philippians 4:6,7 and 1 Peter 5:7.

9. What kind of Christian witness are we displaying when we meet the crises and tests of life as God would have us meet them?

10. The outcome of giving in to stress can be physical distress and in some cases a total breakdown. According to Philippians 4:7-8, there is something we can do to counteract the pressures and stresses of this life. List several stressful-type situations that might come to us and, using this Scripture, explain what you could do to lessen the stress.

Being a Faithful Steward

TEXT: Luke 19:12-28

KEY VERSE: As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. — 1 Peter 4:10

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: 1 Chronicles 29:1-17

Jesus told the parable about the nobleman who was to go away, become a king, and return. This was one of Jesus' last teachings to His disciples, taking place just before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and less than a week before His crucifixion. Christ's purpose was to educate His disciples regarding His departure to Heaven, their responsibility to carry on His work after He went away, and His eventual return. Our study will concentrate on our responsibility as Christ's disciples to be faithful in using what He has given us for His service.

1. The word *nobleman* means "person of noble blood, usually princely." Give evidence as to whom you think the nobleman represents in this parable. See Hebrews 12:2.

2. The word *servant* is translated from the Greek word *doulos* which can mean "slave, bondman, or servant of a king." In the New Testament epistles, *doulos* often denotes "one who gives himself up wholly to another's will, or dominion." With these facts in mind, identify whom the servants in this parable represent.

3. The nobleman had ten servants. Each servant was given one pound. List the various gifts or talents which you think the pounds might represent. Refer to 1 Corinthians 12:4-11,28.

4. Paraphrase the nobleman's statement to his ten servants, "Occupy till I come."

5. Who are the citizens referred to in verses 14 and 27 of our lesson? How would you support this conclusion?

6. Verse 15 tells us that having received his kingdom and returned, the nobleman called his servants to determine how much each man had gained by trading. Describe some of the "gains" one can experience in working for the Lord.

7. Verses 20-26 deal with the other servant and his great error. Identify this error and interpret its meaning.

8. The nobleman, in verse 17, pronounced the servant whose pound had gained ten pounds as "faithful." Consider and note several actions which we could take to ensure a reward in eternity as a faithful steward of Jesus Christ.

Self-Discipline

TEXT: Philippians 3:7-15

KEY VERSE: He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

— Proverbs 25:28

Without a willingness to discipline oneself, and bring thoughts and actions into conformity with the Word of God, one cannot be a disciple of Jesus. Self-discipline, then, must be practiced not only by ministers and missionaries, but by everyone who desires to make Heaven his home. This means more than just forsaking sin and sinful pleasures. It includes a willingness to develop oneself spiritually and to make sacrifices for the Lord and His work.

1. Just as the physical heart is endangered by excessive fat from overeating, so is the spiritual life endangered by overindulgence in the affairs of this life. Explain how this could happen. See Luke 21:34.

2. How do the goals of Christians differ from those of non-Christians? What verse in our text indicates that Paul had realized this?

3. Referring to question 2, how do the means of reaching these goals differ? How are they alike?

4. Why did Paul say, “forgetting those things which are behind”? What do you think this has to do with self-discipline?

5. In the first half of verse 15, Paul directs his words to “as many as be perfect.” He writes, “Let us therefore . . .” (referring back to verse 3). Who were these people with whom he included himself? See 1 Corinthians 2:6 and 2 Timothy 2:5.

6. What assurance does Paul give to the Christian that God will be faithful to each individual and will help him align his life to the will of God?

7. In your own words, describe the condition of an individual who allows himself to yield to every whim and fancy. Use Ephesians 4:14 as a reference.

8. Self-discipline is a necessity if one is to succeed in attaining any kind of goal. Give your definition of self-discipline and then cite some examples showing why it is vital for spiritual success.

Looking at the Outcome

TEXT: Colossians 3:17-25; Romans 14:21; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 6:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; James 4:15

KEY VERSE: And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers.

— Deuteronomy 6:18

Every day of our lives should be lived in the center of God's will. Measuring our daily actions by the Word of God will show us whether we are drawing closer to God or moving farther away. If we daily ask God to show us His will, and then follow His will, we can be sure of God's blessing, and that He will be honored by the outcome of our lives.

1. According to our text in Colossians 3:17,23, what is supposed to be the motivating factor in a Christian's life? In what manner is this to be accomplished?

2. Any act on our part that would cause a brother to stumble spiritually or to become offended is not good. See Romans 14:21. Scripture indicates that an opposite course of action is the responsibility of the Christian, and that conduct of this kind will bring about the outcome desired by God. What is this opposite course of action? See Romans 14:19.

3. In 1 Corinthians 6:12, we read the phrase, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." The word *expedient* means "useful, or helpful to attain some end." In light of this definition, how does the phrase apply to a Christian's life?

4. Name some ways one might be “unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

What would be the likely adverse outcome of a Christian’s putting himself into such a situation?

5. After reading 1 Thessalonians 5:22, explain what a Christian should do about evil. Name several ways this can be accomplished.

6. The Bible says, “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good” (Romans 12:9). Make a list of things that are evil which a Christian encounters almost daily. How should we go about avoiding the evils that have been listed?

7. In your own words explain how James tells us to plan for tomorrow (James 4:15). Why is this important?

8. Knowing that 2 Corinthians 5:10 is true, why is it so important to look at the outcome of our daily living?