

# **SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK**

**God's Words of Wisdom about  
Spiritual Health and Abundant Life**

**A Bible Study with Commentary**

**by Earl Cooper, Ph. D.**

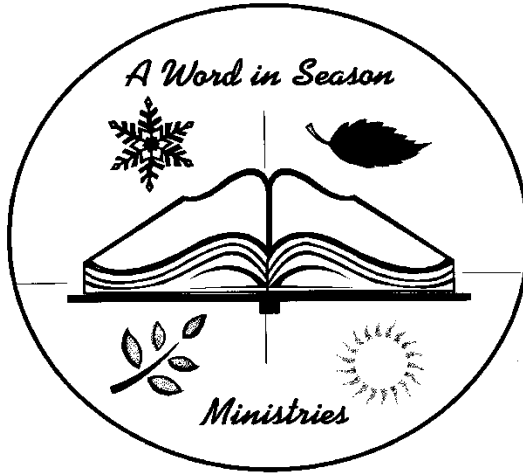
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# **SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK**

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# **SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK**

## **PREFACE**

This study examines what God's wisdom literature says about the Spiritual Health of the heart, the mouth, the eyes, and the feet or paths of life. The Spiritual Health study is followed by an extensive Biblical study on the potential Abundant Life, evidenced in Scripture and promised by Jesus.

### **For Personal Study**

I encourage each participant in these studies to take time to work through each section, preferably during a regular, committed time each day. Begin each personal study time by praying that God will make you sensitive to His leading through His word. Although the Bible texts referred to in the two books of this study, I strongly suggest each reader use their own Bible. The extra time and labour of looking up each verse will provide opportunity to deepen Bible familiarity and allow for personal notes for each text to be added to your Bible margins. (This has been a personal treasure for me throughout my Christian walk.)

There is also space provided throughout the studies to write personal responses to questions or statements. I suggest you have a pen or pencil and an extra note pad on hand for each study time.

### **For Cell Group Study**

This study has been designed specifically for cell group studies within the body of believers of a local church. The intent is to create an environment of Christian caring among those believers who have something uniquely in common such the community they live in, a need which they share, or similar circumstances which affect their lives.

This sense of caring has two God appointed purposes. First, believers are to "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2) as well as stir one another to "love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). The best environment to achieve this is within a closely-

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knit group where friendship can develop and where a strong sense of brotherly care can flourish. Cell groups are able to maintain this relationship level regardless of the size of a church.

The second purpose for developing this sense of caring, particularly within a common geographical community is the impact this has on the unsaved world. Jesus stated: *"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* (John 13:35 NIV)

Love expressed within the body is a great influence in drawing the unsaved to Christ. Cell meetings within small communities that achieve a mutual caring will demonstrate and therefore attract people to Christ.

### Instructions to Participants

The effectiveness of the cell group studies to fulfil their purpose largely depends on the participants coming to each group session prepared to share and worship. The study book is just a tool to bring people into contact with the Word of God in a common theme. To receive the most out of the study the following study habits are suggested.

1. Set aside a time each day to work through three or four questions from each study. (Divide up the number of questions in each lesson keeping the study time prior to the cell group meeting for review.)
2. Pray before you begin, asking God to give you understanding of His Word as well as personal application.
3. Although the texts are provided in the manual, it is recommended that a Bible with clear paragraph divisions be used and that the paragraphs of the text be read in their entirety before answering the related question.
4. Mark any question that is unclear or any area of particular interest for discussion purposes at the meetings and be ready to draw the groups attention to these areas.
5. Try to be as personal and practical as possible especially in the "conclusion" sections where application is emphasized.

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## Instructions for Leaders

This study is designed as a discussion guide, to receive the most benefit from the study in the meeting time the following procedure is suggested:

1. Be sure to complete the studies personally as a participant. (See above)
2. Determine and clarify to each cell group participant the pages to be covered for each meeting. A prepared schedule for the entire cell group study period, distributed to each participant at least 1 week before commencement is recommended.
3. Ask the Lord to give you a sense of your group's special needs as you work through the study. Identify those areas in each lesson that are particularly meaningful to the group.
4. Let the group have input in the areas they wish to discuss before leading your group to discuss the areas you have identified as special. There may be times that your chosen areas are not even covered.

My prayer is that God will renew each participant's appreciation for His Word and will bless, guide, and strengthen each participant's walk in the Lord by keeping Spiritual Health and finding His Abundant Life.

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## STUDY 1

### GOD'S WORD ABOUT SPIRITUAL HEALTH

#### INTRODUCTION

In 2017, 57.4 percent of Canadians 12 years of age and over, reported that their physical activity per week averaged 150 minutes. The percentage in 2018 dropped to 54.6 percent, which amounted to 621,700 less Canadians committed to regular physical fitness.<sup>1</sup> Is it any wonder that in 2018, total health expenditure in Canada is expected to reach \$253.5 billion, or \$ 6,839 per person. It is anticipated that, overall, health spending will represent 11.3% of Canada's gross domestic product.<sup>2</sup>

It is now apparent, through a recent 'Canadian Bible Engagement Study' conducted by nine cooperating Bible organizations in Canada, that a greater decline of Spiritual Health activity exists among Bible-centred Canadian churches. Here are summary statements from the study:

... since 1996 there's been a dramatic decline in regular Bible reading (from 28% reading at least weekly to just 11%) and weekly church attendance (from 27% to 16%). Specifically, only 5% of Canadians report reading the Bible daily, just 14% read at least once a month, and weekly Bible reading is down by 60%.

...What's surprising – and distressing – is that most Christians either seldom or never read the Bible, a decline evident not only in the historic Protestant and Catholic churches but among Evangelicals too. It was also surprising to discover the decline was even sharper among older people than youth.

... The bottom line, as Murray puts it, is "Church attendance and engagement with the Bible go hand in hand. You will have a healthy church if you have healthy engagement with the Bible, and the reverse is true – a church that has little engagement with the Bible will fall apart."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb11/en/tv.action?pid=1310009613>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cihi.ca/en/health-spending>

<sup>3</sup> <https://everydayfaith.ca/?p=3663>

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Having had the missionary privilege of teaching God's Word in many poverty-stricken developing countries, I have come face to face with Christians who have little human resources and therefore no choice but to live completely dependent upon God. I have witnessed their deliverance from spiritual darkness through 'the light of God's Word' and marvelled at their sacrifices to study God's Truth. Sadly, due to the evident prosperity of America compared to these countries, the church of America has lost its passion for God's Word. It is falling apart! As well, in the past decade of missionary teaching, I have regrettably witnessed the growing prosperity of these developing countries having the same impact on the believers there.

The above Canadian study makes this concluding statement: "So we need to ask the Church at large how you or your congregation can advocate positively for the Word of God and bring the message [of truth] back to our churches."<sup>4</sup> To achieve this the body of Christ must continue to mature in Him. Whether in poor or prosperous environments, believers must, through the enabling of The Holy Spirit and God's Holy Word, develop the godly disciplines of Spiritual Health. Only in maturity can God's people impact this world for Him.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://everydayfaith.ca/?p=3663>

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## SECTION I

### GOD'S SPIRITUAL HEALTH PLAN

THEME: PROVERBS 4:23-27

*Keep your **heart** with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful **mouth**, And put perverse lips far from you. Let your **eyes** look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your **feet**, And let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.*

## PART 1

### DISCOVERING WHAT PROVERBS SAYS ABOUT THE HEART

#### PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

Read the Bible texts and answer the related questions.

1. List the parts of the body mentioned in the previous text.

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2. Name what aspect of life each of the body parts is referring to (Example: ears would deal with what we listen to).

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3. State in your own words what cautions this text brought to your mind.

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HEART CONDITIONS

There are 4 distinct heart conditions suggested by the Proverbs:  
THE DYING HEART vs THE LIVING HEART  
THE TROUBLED HEART vs THE TRIUMPHANT HEART

4. For each of the following texts, in the space provided, state in your own words what the verse is saying about the **heart**. Additional word explanations will help identify the original intent of some passages.

**heart** – *leb* = mind, soul, spirit, self, i.e., the source of life of the inner person in various aspects, with a focus on feelings, thoughts, volition, and other areas of the inner life<sup>5</sup>

**perverse** – *tāh·pū·kôṭ* = *perverse things*, particularly utterances; but also thoughts, devices<sup>6</sup>

**hate** - *śā·nē* = abhor, detest, loathe, be hostile, have a feeling of open hostility and intense dislike<sup>7</sup>

**instruction** - *mû·sār* = the teaching of a principle or axiom for life<sup>8</sup>

**correction** - *tô·kă·hăṭ* = to speak words which show strong disapproval, with possible actions of punishment to follow<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977). *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (246). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>7</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>8</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>9</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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## THE DYING HEART

Contemptuous:

5:12 *And say: "How I have hated instruction, And my heart despised correction!"*

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Perverse:

11:20 *Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the LORD, But the blameless in their ways are His delight.*

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Hardened

28:14 *Happy is the man who is always reverent, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.*

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Foolish

12:23 *A prudent man conceals knowledge, But the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.*

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Wicked

26:23 *Fervent lips with a wicked heart Are like earthenware covered with silver dross.*

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## THE TROUBLED HEART

Heavy

25:20 *Like one who takes away a garment in cold weather, And like vinegar on soda, Is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.*

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Sorrowful

14:13 *Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, And the end of mirth may be grief.*

**mirth** - sim-khaw' = gladness, joy, gaiety, pleasure

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Envious

23:17 *Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day;*

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Proud

28:25 *He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the LORD will be prospered.*

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Hard

28:14, *But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.*

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### THE LIVING HEART

Trusting

3:5 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;*

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Understanding

8:5 *..be ye of an understanding heart.*

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Reverent

28:14 *Happy is the man who is always reverent:*

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Wise

16:21 *The wise in heart will be called prudent,*

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Pure

22:11 *He who loves purity of heart And has grace on his lips, The king will be his friend.*

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### THE TRIUMPHANT HEART

Merry

15:13 *A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, But by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.*

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Rejoicing

15:30 *The light of the eyes rejoices the heart,*

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Sound

14:30 *A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones.*

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Humble

18:12 *Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, And before honor is humility.*

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## CURBING THE DIET OF THE HEART

Eliminate the Garbage Diet by...

Avoiding Wickedness

6:18 (God hates..) *A heart that devises wicked plans,*

**Devising** - *ḥā·rāš* = plan, devise, cut a furrow into the earth as the first part of the planting process in farming<sup>10</sup>

**Wickedness** - *'ā·wēn* = evil, wickedness, iniquity, i.e., an act. (of many kinds) which is morally evil and corrupt, and damaging to one's relationship to God and others,<sup>11</sup>

Together these two words suggest 'ploughing poison'

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Avoiding Lust

6:25 *Do not lust after her (evil woman) beauty in your heart,*

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Pursue the Good Diet by...

Seeking Knowledge

18:15 *The heart of the prudent acquires knowledge, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.*

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<sup>10</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

act. active voice

<sup>11</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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## Seeking Understanding

2:2 *So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding;*

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## Seeking Wisdom

2:10 *When wisdom enters your heart,*

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## MAINTAINING THE EXERCISE OF THE HEART

Build up the heart by...

### Strengthening the Grip

4:4 *He also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; Keep my commands, and live."*

**retain** - *tā·mǎk* = accept, be faithful to, grasp, embrace

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### Building the Endurance

15:28 *The heart of the righteous studies how to answer,*  
**study** - *hā·gā(h)* = meditate, ponder, give serious thought and consideration to selected information, with a possible implication of speaking in low tones reviewing the material<sup>12</sup>

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## PRACTICING LONG TERM CARE OF THE HEART

### Guard the Heart

4:23 *Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life*

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<sup>12</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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Guide the Heart

23:19 *Hear, my son, and be wise; And guide your heart in the way.*

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NOTES

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## COMMENTARY

In Proverbs chapter 4, we have the Bible text for the foundation of our spiritual health check. God tells us in verse 22 that when people give attention to God's words life and health is found. From these verses, God gives the foundation for this spiritual health check. Verses 23 to 27 are the theme verses for this study:

*Keep your **heart** with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful **mouth**, And put perverse lips far from you. Let your **eyes** look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your **feet**, And let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.*

God begins with the heart. The Bible states that all life's issues come from the heart. So, the first matter of examination is the condition of the heart, beginning with a comparative analysis. Proverbs notes the difference between the dying heart and the living heart, and the difference between the troubled heart and the triumphant or victorious heart.

## THE DYING HEART

Proverbs gives a very clear picture of the heart that is dying:

**5:12** *"How I have hated instruction, And my heart despised correction!"*

The dying heart is characterized as a contemptuous heart, hating instruction and despising correction. This is a heart that is scornful and sneering at God's instruction. This is the place of all man before they come to know God through faith. They are scorning God and refusing to listen to him.

This dying heart is not only contemptuous, but also perverse:

**11:20** *Those who are of a **perverse** heart are an abomination to the LORD, But the blameless in their ways are His delight.*

**17:20** *He who has a **deceitful** heart finds no good, And he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil.*

The English words 'perverse' and 'deceitful' or 'froward' as in the KJV, is the translation of the Hebrew word יָקַעַשׁ ('*iqqēš*) meaning twisted or distorted. The root 'āqāš and its derivatives are used

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to describe the twisted and perverted acts of sinful men.<sup>13</sup> The word is used in Proverbs seven times, two of which describe the heart or mind, as evident above. In verse 17:20 the statement is a straightforward condemnation of evil, and the line may be rendered, for example, “The Lord hates people who have evil minds” or “... whose hearts are full of evil.”<sup>14</sup>

The dying heart is contemptuous, perverse, and hardened:

**28:14** *Happy is the man who is always reverent, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.*

A man hardens his heart who attends not to the voice of conscience, the restraints of religion, the counsel of friends, the warnings of experience. This man scorns the grace of God, loses His protection, and must come to misery.<sup>15</sup> An excellent illustration of this is found in Exodus 8, when Moses was appealing to Pharaoh. Pharaoh responded with a hardened heart. This expresses the idea of calluses seen on one’s hands after hard work, making hands insensitive. This Proverbs’ text carries the same idea and refers to hearts that have become hard and insensitive to God.

The dying heart is also a foolish heart:

**12:23** *A prudent man conceals knowledge, But the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.*

To proclaim foolishness is the folly of a foolish heart whereby the foolish man cannot help exposing the stupid ideas that arise in his mind, which he considers wisdom.<sup>16</sup> Psalms indicates that those who are fools declare that there is no God (Ps. 53:1) despite a universe of evidence declaring so (Ps. 19:1). How many people in this

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<sup>13</sup> Allen, R. B. (1999). 1684 שָׂרָרָה. In R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (693). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>14</sup> Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs*. UBS Handbook Series (252). New York: United Bible Societies.

<sup>15</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (536). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>16</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (237). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

present atheistic country now say that there is no God? There are very many such fools; even though science has finally acknowledged original intelligent design.

Biologists have long recognized that many organized structures in living organisms — the elegant form and protective covering of the coiled nautilus; the interdependent parts of the vertebrate eye; the interlocking bones, muscles, and feathers of a bird wing — “give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.”<sup>17</sup>

Lastly, this dying heart is described as a wicked heart:

**26:23** *Fervent lips with a wicked heart Are like earthenware covered with silver dross.*

The idea of ‘wicked’ here is to be malignant, to be worse than even the worst. This implies an evil wickedness as surrounding and covering the heart. The text is a unique picture of a dying heart: So-called “silver dross” is litharge, an oxide of lead used to this day to put a glaze on pottery (comp. Ecclus. 38:30). The comparatively worthless article is thus made to assume a fine appearance. Thus lips that seem to burn with affection and give the kiss of glowing love may mask a heart filled with envy and hatred.<sup>18</sup>

Proverbs describes thoroughly the dying heart. This is a hardened heart, without the indwelling life of God. It is a heart not regenerated by the power of God. Jesus addressed this heart when He said a man must be born again (Jn. 3:16). This is the heart of all humanity, without new birth from God, consequently not knowing God. There are no exceptions, this is the heart that all mankind is born with. Without salvation, this is the heart that all die with, being eternally separated from God. This is the heart that leads the world into deeper sin, self-serving war, disrespect, and disregard for life itself.

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York, NY: Norton, 1986), 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (502). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.



## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

### THE LIVING HEART

In contrast to this dying heart, Proverbs also describes the living heart. This is not a heart changed by self-effort; rather, it is a heart having life from the living God as evidenced by unique characteristics.

**3:5** *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;*

The life of the living heart is a life of faith or trust in God: *‘The just shall live by faith’* (Hab 2:4, Ro. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, Heb. 10:38). This repeated truth characterizes the believer’s walk throughout Scripture; that walk commencing throughout time, by accepting God’s provision of salvation by faith alone.<sup>19</sup> It is the offer of new life in Christ received by faith. Scripture states: *faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God* (Ro. 10:17), and the resulting salvation is new life: *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life* (Ro. 6:4).

Faith has been the operating principle of believers: *without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him* (Heb. 11:6). This text points to Enoch. His experience of being *taken from this life, so that he did not experience death* was the sign that he was *commended as one who pleased God*. Gn. 5:22 and 24 insists that he ‘walked with God’ and Hebrews takes this to mean that his life was characterized by faith.<sup>20</sup> The phrase ‘by faith’ is repeated thirty-seven times in the New Testament, also clearly indicating the operating principle of the walk of those with new life in Christ, in the abundance of these texts.

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<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.newcovenantbaptist.org/100-bible-verses-on-salvation-by-faith-alone/>

<sup>20</sup> *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition*. 1994 (D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer & G. J. Wenham, Ed.) (4th ed.) (1347). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

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The living heart that trusts in the Lord is an understanding heart:  
**8:5** *O you simple ones, understand prudence, And you fools, be of an understanding heart.*

Paul challenged the Corinthian believers to follow God's wisdom not man's wisdom. It is evident in Paul's epistle that only God's people have the ability to understand the things of God: *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (1Co 2:14). Only in those who have received the gift of salvation does the Spirit of God reside. John states that the anointing we have from God, which is His Spirit, is our teacher (1 Jn. 2:27). This is the privilege of all who have been born again, who have, by new birth, received a living heart. The indwelling Spirit of God gives the understanding of God's Word.

Therefore, the living heart has the potential to be a wise heart.  
**16:21** *The wise in heart will be called prudent, And sweetness of the lips increases learning.*

Prudent – *byn* = to understand, perceive, consider, bring insight, instruct.

The living heart is a prudent heart that lives wisely not wastefully, and instructs others to do so: *The sweetness of the lips increases learning.* True wisdom is recognized and acknowledged as such... People listen to instruction at the mouth of one who speaks well ... for he learns by teaching.<sup>21</sup>

As well, this living heart has reverence.

**28:14** *Happy is the man who is always reverent, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.*

Always - תמיד (*tā-mîd*) = continually, unceasingly, perpetually

Reverence - *pāhad* = fear, tremble, revere

Men run because of fear, humanity does not enjoy being in a place of fear. However, there is a place of fear where all people should be. This is the place of reverential fear, by which people stand in awe before the great and glorious God.

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<sup>21</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (313–314). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

With fourteen separate references, the book of Proverbs speaks much about the fear of the Lord. Proverbs teaches that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (9:10), and the beginning of knowledge (1:7). By the fear of the Lord the knowledge of God is found (2:5), life is prolonged (10:27), confidence is gained (14:6), and victory over sin is gained (16:6). Therefore, the living heart that is completely different from the dying heart. Instead of being overcome by evil, the new heart resides consistently in the fear of God.

In the newness of life, this living heart also desires to be pure of heart.

**22:11** *He who loves purity of heart And has grace on his lips, The king will be his friend.*

Purity - טָהוֹרָה (*tā·hōr*) = pertaining to the feature of an object virtually not having foreign particles or impurities<sup>22</sup>

Purity of heart means having “integrity,” “pure motives,” or “sincerity.”<sup>23</sup> A man of a pure heart will speak a pure language; a good man will talk of good things; a wise man of wisdom, and a gracious man of the grace of God; of the doctrines of grace he has received; of the blessings of grace bestowed on him; of the promises of grace applied unto him; of the experiences of grace he has been favoured with; of things grateful and acceptable to others, which minister grace, and are to the use of edifying... should be regarded by princes; as Hushai the Archite by David; and Daniel even by Nebuchadnezzar<sup>24</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The difference between the living heart and the dying heart is the difference between spiritual life and spiritual death. It is the difference of faith in God or rejection of God. There is deliverance

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<sup>22</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>23</sup> Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs*. UBS Handbook Series (468). New York: United Bible Societies.

<sup>24</sup> Online Bible Desktop, (John Gill’s Expositor) <Pr 22:11@24984> {Commentary} (39/57).

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

from a dying heart. In Proverbs 23:26 God makes this appeal: "*my son, give me your heart.*" A new heart is the true reality and potential for every person.

In John chapter 3, when Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus, He said "*you must be born again.*" Nicodemus was confused, he asked "*can a man be born when he is old?*" Jesus said something very surprising to Nicodemus, He said "*you are a teacher of the law and you don't know that you must be born again?*" Nicodemus had the book of Proverbs, he had the book of Isaiah, he should have known that it was necessary to be transformed from a dying hard to a living heart.

The key has always been salvation provided by God, received by faith. Both the Old Testament and New Testament teach this. In the Old Testament God provided an animal sacrifice only as a covering, which pointed toward the perfect sacrifice of Christ. This is so clear in Isaiah 53 where it says: "*he was wounded for our sins he was bruised for our iniquities and the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed.*"

In this same chapter, the Word states that it pleased God to bruise the Son, the Messiah, when He made His soul and offering for sin. The text promises that God will see Messiah's days continue after that death. God here declared that death could not hold the Messiah. Christ's resurrection secured redemption. The covering of sacrifice for sin in the Old Testament appropriated by faith, became redemption for sin, by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His resurrection. In the New Testament this redemption is received as a gift from God also by faith (Ro. 6:23).

Good works have never been a means of salvation from God's judgement upon sin (Eph. 2:8-9). Humanity, born with a dying heart has remained, since Adam, helplessly bound by sin. Being baptized will never take away sin, joining a church will never take away sin, giving money to the poor will never take away sin. Sin is an offence to Holy God and only those who by faith receive a new living heart are liberated.

The writings of the apostle Paul in the New Testament repeatedly declare the term *in Christ* (79 references). Paul was talking about having a living heart by faith in the sacrifice and resurrection of

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Christ, in which, by the indwelling Spirit of God, believers are new in Christ. As Paul stated: “*if any man be in Christ he is a new creation, old things are passed away and all things are become new.*” (2 Cor.5:17). This is the transition from the dying heart to the living heart, which by God’s transforming power, produces the above endearing qualities.

Along with truth about the dying heart and living heart, Proverbs also says much about the troubled heart and the triumphant heart.

### THE TROUBLED HEART

Proverbs states that the troubled heart is first a heavy heart.

**25:20** *Like one who takes away a garment in cold weather, And like vinegar on soda, Is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.*

Heavy - רָעַ (rā‘) = troubled, miserable, distressed, i.e., pertaining to an attitude or emotion of anxiety and worry<sup>25</sup>

Here a heavy heart is compared to a man whose garment has been taken away in very cold weather. The man is left without warmth from the elements. The heavy heart is like vinegar being poured on soda, all evaporates with no effect, no benefit. It is like singing to an individual with a heavy heart, the song has no effect. All experience times of a heavy heart. The text implies the depth of misery and anxiety a heart may fall into can become humanly beyond recovery.

The troubled heart is also described as a sorrowing heart.

**14:13** *Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, And the end of mirth may be grief.*

Sorrowing - כָּאֵבָה (kā’āḇ) = be in physical pain, be in mental anguish<sup>26</sup>, figuratively applied to a sorrowing soul,

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<sup>25</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>26</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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A deep sorrow in the heart can never find true joy or merry laughter. Usually caused by personal loss such as a death of a loved one or emotional hurt such as a betrayal of friendship, this deep sorrow leaves one, even months after, in a state of continuing pain. The evidence is a spontaneous sobbing, like a small child sobs when separated from a parent. This is the experience of a sorrowing heart, and the sorrow seems never to go away.

Proverbs also reveals that this trouble heart can be an envious heart.

**23:17** *Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day.*

An envious heart is a heart never satisfied with its situation. This is a heart that says, “God you are not good to me!” It could be the heart of a Christian who looks at the unsaved world with envy saying: “Just look at the prosperity of the unsaved, they are rich and I am poor, they have a life of ease, I must work too hard.”

A heart of envy is like having chains that hold a person down. While sharing this among African pastors, many broke into smiles and laughter at this point, realizing how much Proverbs truly does portray the envious heart. Envy or jealousy can become very prominent among pastors.

Dwight L. Moody once told the fable of an eagle who was *envious* of another that could fly better than he could: One day the bird saw a sportsman with a bow and arrow and said to him, “I wish you would bring down that eagle up there.” The man said he would if he had some feathers for his arrow. So the jealous eagle pulled one out of his wing. The arrow was shot, but it didn’t quite reach the rival bird because he was flying too high. The first eagle pulled out another feather, then another-until he had lost so many that he himself couldn’t fly. The archer took advantage of the situation, turned around, and killed the helpless bird. Moody made this application: if you are *envious* of others, the one you will hurt the most by your actions will be yourself.<sup>27</sup>

The trouble heart is different from a dying heart. The dying heart is a heart separated from God. When Christ is accepted as

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.family-times.net/illustration/Envy/200905/>

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Saviour a new living heart is received. Thoreau wrote "There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil, to one who is striking at the root." John the Baptist said, "The axe is already at the root of the trees" (Matthew 3:10), and he introduced Jesus, who attacked evil at its root - the hearts of men.

Nevertheless, even a living heart can be a troubled heart. A living heart can be heavy; God's people can be overcome by sorrow. God's people can become envious, even of other believers. Pastors can become envious of other pastors. Proverbs informs us that the troubled heart can be a proud heart.

**28:25** *He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the LORD will be prospered.*

It is evident that the proud heart stirs up strife. Sadly, many of God's people lose their ministry because of pride. This is the very reason that Paul urged Timothy not to lay hands suddenly on a new believer for church leadership (1 Tim. 3:6). In other words, the church is cautioned against putting new believers or immature believers in positions of authority in the church. The danger is to open the door to distractive pride. This was the condemnation of Satan.

### THE TRIUMPHANT HEART

From Proverbs a clear definition of a troubled heart is found. As well, Proverbs presents the triumphant or victorious heart. Instead of it being heavy, this is the merry heart:

**15:13** *A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, But by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.*

The best examples of this are those beautiful Christians who simply bring joy by entering into a room. It is not that these people have escaped the troubles of life. No! It is that they have truly learned to be merry in God! The merry heart of such folks is the feeling or attitude of joy, happiness, or contentment, with a possible focus of making an outward expression of that joy,<sup>28</sup> which is independent of circumstances.

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<sup>28</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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The evidence of a triumphant heart in a man or woman is the cheerful countenance seen in the glow or sparkle of the eyes. This is the triumphant heart. It is the troubled heart that has been delivered. All of the heaviness and sorrow pride and envy has been overcome with joy and peace.

According to Proverbs, this merry heart is contagious. *The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, And a good report makes the bones healthy* (15:30). The beaming glance that shows a pure, happy mind and a friendly disposition, rejoices the heart of him on whom it is turned. There is something infectious in the guileless, joyful look of a happy man or child, which has a cheering effect upon those who observe it.<sup>29</sup>

The triumphant heart is also described in Proverbs as the sound heart.

**14:30** *A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones.*

**Sound** - שמחה (*mār·pē'*) = calmness, composure, i.e., a peaceful, contented emotional state or attitude, not angry or worried<sup>30</sup>

The idea of soundness is rooted in tranquility or quietness and meaning a peaceful contented emotional state expressing gentleness or mildness. This heart enjoys the peace that God promised when Jesus said my peace I give you, my peace I leave with you. This heart draws close to the living God every day and experiences a true life in Him. The sound heart gives the heaviness and the sorrows to God, who by His grace deals with them Himself.

The triumphant heart is a humble heart.

**18:12** *Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, And before honor is humility.*

The triumphant heart humbles itself before God, giving all cares to God in faith, and therefore receives the peace that passes all understanding (Php. 4:6-7). The triumphant heart has found newness

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<sup>29</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (296). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>30</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.



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in God. It is a living heart by faith in Christ, and it is a triumphant heart by continued faith in Christ. It humbles itself and gives itself every day to God in order to live by God's strength: *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* (Php. 4:13).

### CONCLUSION

No believer is exempt from a troubled heart, even though they have a living heart. But there is deliverance from a troubled heart in God. This is accomplished by the working of God in a person's life, to make Christians more like Jesus Christ as they yield their life to Him: *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord* (2 Cor. 3:18).

The troubled heart becomes the triumphant heart. God has two dwelling places. God dwells in heaven, and God also dwells in the hearts of His children. Furthermore, all His children have the promise that in the future, they will dwell with Him forever.

Before you carry on with this study, examine your own heart. Is your heart characterized by the description of a dying heart or a living heart? Only you know whether you truly have put your faith in Christ as Saviour. If you have not personally accepted Christ as your own Saviour it does not matter what position you have in the church, nor what labours you give for the betterment of mankind, you have a dying heart! Turn to Christ. Through a prayer of faith, confess your sinful nature and receive by faith, the sacrifice of Christ for sin and His victorious resurrection to life. Accept His gift of a new, living heart.

It has been said that a person can miss heaven by 18 inches, the distance between the mind and the heart. A person can have all the information available in Scripture for salvation and still miss the necessary step of faith. As Paul taught: *with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation* (Rom. 10:10).

You may have accepted Christ's gift of new life, but does your heart demonstrate the nature of a troubled heart or triumphant heart? As stated earlier, it is possible to know God, to have a living heart and yet be burdened by a troubled heart. God can turn a trou-

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

bled heart into a triumphant heart. In prayer give your troubles to Him and find His peace. Paul taught: *“be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passes understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* (Phil. 4:6-7).

A troubled heart could be caused by the sin of pride or jealousy. Or, it could be a heavy heart because of circumstances or sorrow of loss. Be reminded of Peter’s recommendation: *casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you* (1 Pet. 5:7). Instead of keeping those cares from God, turn them over to Him. God’s children are encouraged to do this with thanksgiving, knowing by faith that His will, His plan, is the very best thing (Php. 4:6-7).

By personal experience being diagnosed with cancer, I found the peace that passes understanding as I gave the situation into God’s hands. I did not know whether the cancer would take me into His presence, or I would recover for continued service. This I did know: His will was best, and what I desired. He gave me peace, all worry was gone, and I was in His perfect care.

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## SECTION I GOD'S SPIRITUAL HEALTH PLAN

THEME: PROVERBS 4:23-27

*Keep your **heart** with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful **mouth**, And put perverse lips far from you. Let your **eyes** look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your **feet**, And let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.*

### PART 2 DISCOVERING WHAT PROVERBS SAYS ABOUT THE TONGUE

#### PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

1. For each of the following texts, in the space provided, state in your own words what the verse is saying about the tongue (lips, speech). Additional word explanations will help identify the original intent of some passages.

#### THE CORRUPTED TONGUE

16:27 *An ungodly man digs up evil, And it is on his lips like a burning fire.*

Its Evil Nature: (From texts throughout Proverbs)

**Lying** - *sheh'ker* = deception, disappointment, falsehood

**Flattering** - *khelkaw* = smooth part, smoothness, flattery

**Froward** - *tahpookaw* = froward, frowardness, froward things, perverse things

**Perverse** - *hawfak'* = to be perverse, to be turned, be turned over, be changed, be turned against

**Backbiting** - *say'ther* = covering, disguising, babbling, slandering, whispering

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Its Destructive Power:

12:13 *The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, But the righteous will come through trouble.*

IT TRAPS

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12:18 *There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword,*

IT INJURES

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13:3 *But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.*

IT DESTROYS

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15:4 *A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.*

IT CRUSHES

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17:20 *And he that hath a perverse tongue falls into mischief.*

IT CORRUPTS

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21:6 *Getting treasures by a lying tongue Is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death.*

IT WASTES

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25:23 *The north wind brings forth rain, And a backbiting tongue an angry countenance.*

IT IMPOVERISHES

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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26:28 *A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin.*

IT RUINS

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### THE TRANSFORMED TONGUE

10:31a *The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom,*

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Its Ministering Potential...

12:18 *the tongue of the wise is health.*

IT STRENGTHENS

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15:4 *A wholesome tongue is a tree of life:*

IT QUICKENS

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25:15 *By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, And a gentle tongue breaks a bone (also persuades)*

IT CAPTIVATES

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10:21 *The lips of the righteous feed many:*

IT NOURISHES

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10:32 *The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable*

IT DISCERNS

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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15:7 *The lips of the wise disperse knowledge*

IT COUNSELS

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21:23 *Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles.*

IT GUARDS

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16:21 *the sweetness of the lips increases learning.*

IT STIMULATES

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Its Dependent Priority:

8:6-7 *Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, And from the opening of my lips will come right things; For my mouth will speak truth; Wickedness is an abomination to my lips.*

IT REFRAINS

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**A PROMISE TO MAKE, A LAW TO RULE:  
I WILL ONLY SPEAK WORDS BEFITTING  
THE LANGUAGE OF MY COUNTRY  
THE NATURE OF MY KING**

31:26 *She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness.*

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IT COMMITS

**THE LAW OF KINDNESS SHALL RULE MY LIPS**

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Its Unique Promise:

20:15 *There is gold and a multitude of rubies, But the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.*

UNIQUE ENRICHMENT

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22:11 *for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.*

UNIQUE FRIENDSHIP

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### CONCLUSION

"The boneless tongue, so small and weak,  
Can crush and kill," declares the Greek.  
"The tongue destroys a greater horde,"  
The Turk asserts, "than does the sword."  
The Persian proverb wisely saith,  
"A lengthy tongue--an early death!"  
or sometimes takes this form instead,  
"Don't let your tongue cut off your head."  
"The tongue can speak a word whose speed,"  
Say the Chinese, "outstrips the steed."  
The Arab sages said in part,  
"The tongue's great storehouse is the heart."  
From Hebrew was the maxim sprung,  
"Thy fret should slip, but ne'er the tongue."  
The sacred writer crowns the whole,  
"Who keeps the tongue doth keep his soul."

# **SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK**

NOTES



# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## COMMENTARY

This spiritual health check from Proverbs has examined the dying heart and the living heart, the troubled heart and the triumphant heart. In summary, in the human heart there is nothing but destruction until a new heart is found in Christ, through His gift of salvation. In essence, regeneration is new life in Christ whereby '*all things are become new*' (2 Cor. 5:17).

The study's theme text is Prov. 4: 23-27. Re-read the text. Note that the heart must be looked after (*kept with all diligence*), but the text also indicates that the lips or our speech must also be guarded.

### THE CORRUPTED TONGUE

The Bible teaches us that the tongue is like a destructive fire. *An ungodly man digs up evil, And it is on his lips like a burning fire.* (Prov. 16:27).

A few years ago my son and I were teaching in Ghana. We were awakened early in the morning by smoke rolling into our room. The smell of the smoke told us it was a bush fire. Coming from Canada, where we live in the Muskoka, Ontario bush country, a fire is a very dangerous thing. Most of our country is forest; Canada has forest fires that are larger than many countries. For this reason, my son and I were in a panic. We rushed out to assess the problem and see what we could do to help.

There we saw African nationals who, having set the grass on fire, busy catching the escaping 'grass-cutters' (large African bush rats). We later learned that such fires sometimes destroy entire African villages, but the food source is worth the risk. In His Word, God presents a similar picture of the tongue energized by human will, often resulting in great destruction as well.

The Bible speaks of the evil nature of the tongue in many verses in Proverbs. Four times it talks about a *lying* tongue (6:17, 12:19, 21:6, 26:28). God hates liars (6:16-17), yet since the fall of man, falsehood is part of the nature of the tongue. All have lied; to escape trouble or to get an advantage, or to make an impression, or for multiple other purposes. Sometimes there is escape from deception, but the Bible teaches: *you may be sure that your sin will find you out* (Nu. 32:23).

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

My mother did not become a Christian until after I was married. She used to smoke cigarettes. When I was 9 years old, I wanted to try smoking too, so I stole one of my mother's cigarettes and went outside the house to light up. I thought; "Oh, I'm a big boy now," so I wanted to show off to my older brother. I held the cigarette behind my back and knocked on our door. Now we never knock on the door to go into our own house, so when my mother came to the door she asked, "Why are you knocking on the door?"

"Can you ask Terry to come outside?" I asked, while the cigarette smoke is rolling up behind me.

My mother asked, "What do you have behind your back?"

"Nothing!"

"What do you have behind your back?"

"Nothing!"

Mom then said, "Show me your hands."

I dropped the cigarette behind me, but the smoke continued to roll up. My lie was discovered! Fortunately, I had parents that taught me that lying was wrong. When my father came home, he disciplined me. It would be a blessing if every lie was discovered and discipline applied; unfortunately, mankind has not learned the value of this. Therefore, the tongue goes on and on in the path of lying, causing great trouble and heartache.

The evil nature of the tongue is also described as a *flattering* tongue in Proverbs. The original Bible language term means 'to make smooth,' 'to flatter for taking advantage.' Most people learn the power of flattery early in life; speaking words to build another up in order to gain favour. Flattery is a dangerous path to follow. It could be said, "Flattery is not communication; it is manipulation."

In Proverbs the evil nature of the tongue is also described as *froward*, with the idea of "twisted," the same word used earlier for the heart. The froward or twisted or perverse heart, speaks of twisting the truth. In Canada this is casually referred to as speaking half-truths such as keeping back information by sharing only part of the truth or speaking in a way that we know is giving the wrong impression even though the words shared are not saying this.

Proverbs also speaks of the evil nature of the tongue as *perverse*. This has the idea of 'speaking against' or 'gossiping to dis-

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credit people by our words.’ Pastors know what this is about. After the sermon, some discontented folks will speak against the pastor in the most subtle way. In Canada, this is called ‘roasting the pastor.’ However, it is not just the people that are guilty, sometimes the pastor is as well. Similarly, in Proverbs we see the evil nature of the tongue as a *back-biting* tongue. This indicates speaking negatively about another such as whispering a lie about someone.

All of these words show the evil nature of the tongue. It is a destructive fire. There is nothing worse than having church members and church leaders with destructive tongues. Pastors have situations where people come to share their troubles and seek help. They do this in confidence, and it is honoured so much in Canada that a judge cannot order a pastor to tell what a parishioner has shared, even in a criminal trial. Yet, if church leaders violate this confidence by speaking about these situations commonly, they potentially begin a fire that will destroy the church.

I have known folks from closed churches, who can remember the time their church began to die. Most of the time these folks trace the beginning of the end of their church back to a lie, or twisted or perverse talk. Satan has many weapons, but his greatest weapon is the loose tongue of undisciplined people.

Only when the evil nature of the tongue is understood can the destructive power of the tongue be appreciated. The following verses from Proverbs expand our understanding of the evil nature of the tongue.

**12:13** *The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, But the righteous will come through trouble.*

This verse teaches that the tongue traps or snares people. When I was a boy, I found a snare trap for rabbits. I remember setting the trap and catching my first rabbit. The problem was that the trap did not kill the rabbit instantly. The trap caught the back leg of the rabbit, and because I did not check my trap soon enough, the rabbit starved to death. A snare is a trap that causes a slow death. God did not say that the tongue was like an arrow piercing the heart, resulting in immediate death. He said it is like a snare that strangles and holds until death slowly comes.

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**12:18** *There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health.*

Here the tongue is like the piercing of the sword. The passage does not say piercing the heart, just piercing the body. A few years ago, a busload of people went off the road. The bus ran into a chain link fence and the aluminum pole at the top of the fence went through the front window of the bus. A man sitting in the first seat was impaled by the pole. Being pinned to the seat, he could not move, yet he did not die. The unfortunate man could see the metal tube through his body and experienced great pain and suffering until rescued. This is just like God's word the picture of the wicked tongue piercing with a sword.

**13:3** *He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.*

The word 'destruction' is used here of the man who opens his mouth wide and never stops talking. He has no discernment. This is a person talking without thinking about what he says. God calls this destructive talk with the idea that the consequences are similar to an exploding bomb destroying everything in its vicinity.

**15:4** *A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.*

Breaking the spirit conveys the idea of the spirit being crushed. Prior to finding work in the electronic industry, I worked in an automotive parts assembly factory. I worked on a machine that fed automotive sound-deadening material through like a carpet. The machine had two rollers that fed the material through a huge stamping plate. The rollers forced the material through, stopped, and the plate dropped to stamp the material into shape.

One day the supervisor of the machine saw some scrap on the material about to go into the machine. He reached for the scrap before it entered the rollers. Unfortunately, his hand was caught in the rollers, and it pulled his arm in up to his elbow before the emergency stop was engaged. His arm was crushed to 1.5 inches thick. The man was stuck there for quite some time, until the rollers were disassembled. "Breaks the spirit" is yet another word picture from God illustrating how powerfully destructive the tongue is.

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**17:20** *He who has a deceitful heart finds no good, And he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil.*

Unlike previous uses, the English word ‘perverse’ in this verse is the translation of the Hebrew word *hā·pāʿk*, meaning; to overthrow, i.e., to cause ruin as an extension of flipping over an object, to be destroyed, formally, overturned.<sup>31</sup> A person whose motives and morals (heart) are distorted will not prosper (be blessed by God; cf. 16:20). From a perverse heart a person speaks deceitfully; he lies. This will result in trouble (*rā’āh*, “calamity,” trans. “evil” in 17:13).<sup>32</sup> This is the idea of “*a perverse tongue falls into evil.*”

**21:6** *Getting treasures by a lying tongue Is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death.*

Here God speaks of wasting things! Modern society is guilty of so much waste: wasting energy, wasting wealth, wasting time, and wasting God’s provision. For example, a survey reports that Canadian families waste 500 pounds of meat each year. How long would one family’s yearly waste feed a whole village in impoverished West Africa? Having taught in West Africa and noticed their slim diet, such a waste could easily feed a village for a month or more! Yet, even in Yaoundé, Cameroon’s capital, tons of garbage litters the streets, including food waste. The garbage there is simply pushed over the edge of the road. North Americans as well, are people who consume but also waste too much.

The text indicates that the tongue often wastes life in similar abundance. *A fleeting vapor* gives a picture of smoke being driven by the breeze with the meaning that riches gained by dishonest means are worth no more than smoke that is blown away. This ex-

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<sup>31</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.  
trans. translation, translator, translated

<sup>32</sup> Buzzell, S. S. (1985). Proverbs. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Pr 17:20). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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pression may be translated as a simile, “is *like* smoke that blows away.”<sup>33</sup>

**25:23** *The north wind brings forth rain, And a backbiting tongue an angry countenance.*

As surely as an Israelite could predict the consequences of a north wind, so one can predict the consequences of a sly tongue (lit., “a tongue of secrecy,” i.e., a slanderous tongue). One brings rain and the other angry looks. Slander leads to anger.<sup>34</sup> The tongue impoverishes relationships and keeps people in poverty. This could be spiritual poverty, physical poverty, or even relationship poverty. Because of the twisted and wicked way of an evil tongue, few will trust another. A man who always speaks falsehood is not a man with whom people will do business. More significantly, a man who does not keep his lips right with God is a man who will never grow in the Lord.

**26:28** *A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin.*

The Hebrew word *miḏ·hē(h)* means ‘downfall’, i.e. that which causes ruin or hurt to another.<sup>35</sup> This text speaks of the tongue that ruins or causes calamity. This is similar to the earlier statement that the tongue destroys.

In summary, the tongue ruins all even ministries. There have been men in Canada accused of wicked crimes and murder. When others try to understand their wickedness, it is discovered that many of these people were abruptly changed from a good path to an evil path because someone spoke wrongly to them. North America has, in recent times, witnessed individuals entering schools or businesses and randomly killing people. Often it is discovered that the perpe-

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<sup>33</sup> Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs*. UBS Handbook Series (442). New York: United Bible Societies.

<sup>34</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Pr 25:23). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>35</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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trator was angry because someone spoke harshly to them. In one instance, a boss in a warehouse called a man a fool and fired him. The man went home, got a rifle and shot twelve people in that warehouse. In essence, the tongue of one person triggered the destructive action of another. Truly, the tongue is a tool of Satan!

Take time now to review the notes on ‘the tongue’ and consider its destructive power. Then measure your own tongue against these verses. The difficulty is that a person can say the correct thing 100 times and only say the wrong thing once, and the destructive fire is lit to work its worst. Words cannot be retracted! They cannot be gathered from the air and brought back. Therefore, God calls His people to be disciplined regarding the tongue.

As I share mission needs throughout my home region of Canada, pastors tell me of the difficulties of gossip in their churches. They tell me about business meetings where people stand and scream at each other. It is likely that each one of us has a testimony of how our tongue has hurt others in our family or church. We know the danger, and yet we still allow the tongue to rule us, rather than allowing God to overcome the danger.

It is like the friend I had as a teenager. His father told him to burn some trash on. Unfortunately, the fire did not burn fast enough for him, so he took a can of gasoline and dowsed the fire. The gasoline can exploded in his hands, and it burned off all the hair and the first layer of skin on his face. By the grace of God, it was a clean burn and there were no scars. Nevertheless, my friend was in great pain for many days. He never did that again!

Why do folks wait for disaster before doing something to discipline dangerous lips? Praise God, Proverbs does not just talk about the corrupt tongue; it also talks about the transformed tongue. Such true human transformation begins by coming to know God as Saviour. For those who are saved, the tongue brings great potential as Proverbs 10:31 declares: *The mouth of the just brings forth wisdom.*

### THE TRANSFORMED TONGUE

The following verses from Proverbs reveal the character and potential of the transformed tongue.

**10:21** *The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom.*

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The righteous by wise counsel teach, support, and guide others (Eccles. 12:11; Jer. 3:15). So the clergy are the shepherds of their flocks (John 21:15; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2).<sup>36</sup> The words the wise and righteous do speak, however, will be valuable and nourishing expressions of love, capable of dissolving the power of evil and of finding acceptance with people (11–12, 20–21, 32).<sup>37</sup> The tongue can nourish and strengthen.

On Dec. 26, 2011 our daughter-in-law gave birth to a baby boy. This child was not supposed to be born until the end of February. He was 9 weeks premature, weighing 3 lb. 3 oz. (1.45 kg). The child was so small he would fit in my hand. The doctor said the baby needed time to continue to develop because he was born without a stomach that was ready for food. Therefore, the babe was put on a machine that fed him his mother's milk through a tube in his nose.

Just one month later the child was no longer on the machine, he was receiving nourishment directly from his mother. If when he was first born, that machine was not available, he would probably have died. Because the machine gave the nourishment for growth, he lived and is presently a healthy, active boy with a voracious appetite for food and books. That machine is a picture of the potential for the believer's lips. The world needs the nourishment of God. It is God's nourishment, His Word, but people deliver it. This is the potential of the tongue.

A church's growth is measured, not by increased attendance, but by how each person is growing in the Lord. True growth comes by parishioners feeding on the Word of God themselves and also by being fed the Word by the pastors and leaders. What a great privilege parents, pastors, and teachers have!

**10:32** *The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable,* (discern right from wrong - KJV)

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<sup>36</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (197–198). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>37</sup> *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition*. 1994 (D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer & G. J. Wenham, Ed.) (4th ed.) (594). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.



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A good man's lips are conversant with *what is acceptable* to God and man. Such a person considers what will please God and edify his neighbour and speaks in conformity therewith.<sup>38</sup> To be able to understand and teach what is acceptable in God's sight is a rich privilege and should be aspired to by all of God's children for only in God's will and purpose can His blessings be guaranteed.

The ground of such is established in faith. *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him* (Heb. 11:6).

By the grace of God, I had a father who taught his children right from wrong. Even before I knew the Lord, I had in my mind the values of God. Before I was saved, my father taught me it was wrong to lie, to cheat, to deceive, etc. There were others in my life that taught me right from wrong as well. My pastor taught me to study and memorize the Word of God. When I was young, I was in a youth ministry where children memorize the word of God. I was in the program from 12 years to 18 years, during this time I memorized hundreds of Bible verses.

What amazed me was that, years later while in Bible College, when the teacher asked a question, I, seemingly instinctively, knew the answer. I realized later that God's Word had programmed my mind, not human instinct! I remember a question in particular "What is wrong with rock music?" I knew in my heart that this was not good music. I did not have a verse in particular, but I sensed what was right from wrong. Many students had only known the Lord for a short time. I was not more intelligent than they, I just had more time to be fed the Word of God which had passed on to me a measure of discernment. Also, some of the students did not understand why Christians should not date or have deep relationships with a non-Christian. This too was settled in my mind long before Bible College.

Discernment: knowing what is right and what is wrong, is found in the Scriptures. It is received by studying and meditating on God's

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<sup>38</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (199). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

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Word personally and from the lips of ministering people. Ask yourself; “How discerning are the people in my church?” “Do they know the rights and the wrongs of life? But, before judging too harshly, ask yourself: “How much of the Word of God have they studied or heard, in order for the Spirit of God to change their thinking? The Spirit of God uses the Word of God through personal labour and through lips to give discernment.

Ask yourself: “Do my own lips pass on Godly discernment or just repeat meaningless worldly wisdom?” *However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 2:6-7).*

**12:18** *There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health.*

This text contrasts the babblers, *one who speaks like the piercings of a sword*, and who inflicts wounds with senseless talk, with the *tongue of the wise*, which soothes and heals even when it reproves (Ch. 4:22; 10:11).<sup>39</sup> The tongue can strengthen people. It can lift them up out of their dismay.

I was pleased when the seminary in Cameroon was able to inoculate the students and staff for typhoid. I understand that since this was completed, no one has been sick with typhoid. One simple vaccination brought health. God’s people have the same potential with their tongue. One word of encouragement, one word of truth, can turn a life around.

**15:4** *A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.*

The tongue, for believers, can be a tree of life. God can use their lips to give truth that delivers people from death to life. Words can encourage or depress an individual. Words that bring healing, that contribute to a person’s emotional health, are like a tree of life (cf. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12), a source of strength and growth. Words that are ‘perverse’ (*selep*, “subversive”; used in the OT

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<sup>39</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (236). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

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only here and in 11:3, “duplicity”) can crush the spirit (cf. 15:13; 17:22; 18:14) or depress one’s morale.<sup>40</sup>

Do you remember the first time you shared the gospel resulting in someone accepted Christ as their Saviour? How did you feel? Do you know what you did? God used you to bring new life. This is the potential of the tongue.

**15:7** *The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish does not so.*

The tongue disperses knowledge, it gives counsel. Pastors have many people asking for advice. It is the privilege of God’s ministers to deliver the wise counsel of God. Nevertheless, all believers are called to pass on God’s knowledge, His Truth. *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also* (2 Tim.2:2).

...we then use knowledge aright when we disperse it, not confine it to a few of our intimates, and grudge it to others who would make as good use of it, but *give a portion* of this spiritual alms *to seven and also to eight*, not only be communicative, but diffusive, of this good, with humility and prudence. We must take pains to spread and propagate useful knowledge, must teach some that they may teach others, and so it is dispersed.<sup>41</sup>

**16:21** *The wise in heart will be called prudent, And sweetness of the lips increases learning.*

This text is not speaking about a nice kiss, it is referring to the manner in which we speak. I have heard preachers share good sermons, but their tone was so harsh that it fell on deaf ears. A preacher I once heard had an excellent message, but it grieved me that he delivered it with much criticism and harshness. He kept saying certain people were stupid, what they did was idiotic, and they had no

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<sup>40</sup> Buzzell, S. S. (1985). Proverbs. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Pr 15:4). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>41</sup> Henry, M. (1994). *Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: Complete and unabridged in one volume* (987). Peabody: Hendrickson.

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brains. Being void of any compassion or genuine care, the message was spoiled for me. It lacked any sweetness!

When we speak the Words of Truth, we must speak with the character of God. God judges, but He does not ridicule. God is a consuming fire, but He is not a mocking God. Learn well the lesson that if desiring to stimulate people, to move people, gentleness and kindness are the flavours to be readily swallowed!

This does not mean to dismiss anger for sin. I do not suggest we be like the prophet in the OT who tore the hair out of the man who married people outside of Israel. It is appropriate for pastors to show anger toward sin before their people. But it is God's evident Spirit of forgiveness and gracious invitation of salvation that will move people.

My intention is not to be critical of a preaching style. Some pastors deliver all their messages by shouting at their people. If this is how they believe God led them, I will not be a critic. Nevertheless, God did not lead me to preach in that way even though He blessed His Word.

**21:23** *Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles.*

Here God says that when we keep our own tongue, we keep our soul from trouble. A tongue can guard us from danger. The man who says; *'let the words of my mouth be acceptable in your sight'* is the man who is protected from self-inflicted danger. He is also the man who, in giving testimony, will guard others who follow the same path. Paul said; *follow me even as I follow Christ*. So, although this text speaks of the disciplined tongue guarding oneself, it will also guard others.

**25:15** *By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, And a gentle tongue breaks a bone.*

The tongue can be very persuasive. The soft, gentle tongue can actually capture people for a purpose. History has shown this to be true in an evil way. Hitler had a tongue that gathered people and captured them for his evil vision. In the same way, but for good, God's people can use gentle words to capture people for His service.

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When I share my testimony, I speak of the man who left his job to attend Bible college. God used His words to capture me. Even though my wife, my father, and my pastor anticipated that I would make the same decision (as I discovered later), God used this man's testimony to stir me into action. I resigned from an electronics career and entered Bible College. I have never regretted that decision; it was truly in God's leading.

The ministry potential of the tongue (speech) is great. Look at the list again and note the privileges. With a transformed tongue, believers can strengthen, bring life, captivate hearts, nourish souls, teach discernment, give wise counsel, and be guarded as well as guard others. They can stimulate people to do right, which is of great potential itself.

God indicates this to be a believer's job, but it is dependent on a transformed tongue. Ask yourself; in what condition is your tongue? Is it the corrupt tongue more often than the transformed tongue? Has God given you victory over this great tool or does Satan continue to control?

God calls Christians to a unique commitment regarding their speech, especially those who are ministering the Word of God to others. "*Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, And from the opening of my lips will come right things; For my mouth will speak truth; Wickedness is an abomination to my lips.*" (Prov. 8: 6,7) This reflects a promise the writer made to God. I have put this promise into my own words for my own life: "I will only speak words that are befitting the words of my new country." What is the believer's new country? It is heaven.

Therefore, Christians should speak only the language of heaven, speak only words befitting the character of their transformed life. And who are they being changed into the image of? Jesus Christ. Therefore, God's children should determine to speak the language befitting the nature of their King, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is a Holy God.

The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:26 exemplifies this practice. *She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness.*" The virtuous woman is a model for all God's

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children, who should aim for the goal of ‘the law of kindness’ ruling their lips.

This study has examined the danger of the corrupt tongue and the great potential for the transformed tongue. Proverbs indicates that it is appropriate for believers to make such a promise to God. Their prayers should consistently be to ask for God’s strength to speak by the law of kindness. With the transformed tongue there are unique promises found in Proverbs.

**20:15** “*There is gold and a multitude of rubies, But the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.*”

There is great enrichment with a transformed tongue, enrichment for personal life and for the life of others. Gold and rubies, though rare and valuable (cf. 3:13–15), are in abundance compared with the rare and valuable ability to speak knowledge, to speak wise, appropriate words that fit the occasion.<sup>42</sup> Lips uttering God’s knowledge are more valuable than the riches of gold and rarest of jewels.

**22:11** “*He who loves purity of heart And has grace on his lips, The king will be his friend.*”

Purity of heart means “integrity,” “pure motives,” or “sincerity.”<sup>43</sup> Those whose minds and words are peaceable find themselves welcomed on the highest level (v. 11) rather than being driven away.<sup>44</sup>

God tells His children that when our speech is transformed by Him, He brings great opportunity to His own. God will multiply the opportunities for the man who has a transformed tongue. *Paul* stood before powerful rulers and proclaimed Christ. *Constantine* was the

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<sup>42</sup> Buzzell, S. S. (1985). Proverbs. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Pr 20:15). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>43</sup> Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs*. UBS Handbook Series (468). New York: United Bible Societies.

<sup>44</sup> Garrett, D. A. (1993). *Vol. 14: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs*. The New American Commentary (189). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

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first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity, by doing so, Constantine helped the spread of Christianity throughout Western Europe. *William Tyndale*, one of the first persons to print the Bible in English, worked on translating the Bible into English even when it was deemed to be an illegal act.

Such modern believers as Billy Graham and Martin Luther King have shared Christ to the whole world. And even in the coming great tribulation when the Anti-Christ reigns, God's people will be heard; *"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."* (Re. 11:3).

### Summary

My wife and I had been married for 10 years so we celebrated by going to a fancy restaurant for dinner. We had a very nice, romantic dinner. As we were heading home, I could see in the distance, smoke rolling up in the middle of the highway. In a few minutes, we came upon a traffic accident. A man under the influence of alcohol had run into the back of a car stalled on the highway.

The man had no injuries; however, the other car had exploded into flames. Witnesses to the accident rescued the parents from the front of the burning car, but the flames consumed the car before they could rescue the three children in the back seat. Those children perished that night. The suit I wore that night smelled of smoke and I could not bear to wear it again. The smell reminded me of the destruction of those three young lives.

The tongue has potential to cause destructive fire. The smoke of this fire also lingers in the minds of people. I encourage each reader to bring the awareness of the destructive power of the tongue to your family. It is important for parents to take the initiative, on a regular basis, and discuss with each other and their children the general nature of the language in the home.

Take the initiative and ask each other if there have been times when words have not been good, when words have hurt, or angered, or shown disrespect. Encourage honesty without argument. Use these times to teach God's principles of confession and forgiveness. The family will be richly blessed by the regular exercise.

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

I encourage each reader to stop and take opportunity now, to talk to God about what He has put into your heart regarding your own tongue.

## SECTION I GOD'S SPIRITUAL HEALTH PLAN

THEME: PROVERBS 4:23-27

*Keep your **heart** with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful **mouth**, And put perverse lips far from you. Let your **eyes** look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your **feet**, And let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.*

### PART 3 DISCOVERING WHAT PROVERBS SAYS ABOUT THE EYE

#### PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

1. For each following texts state in your own words what the verse is saying about the **eyes**. Additional word explanations will help identify the original intent of some passages.

lust - *hāmad* = desire, delight in, the Tenth Commandment prescribes, “Thou shalt not *hāmad*, covet” (Ex. 20:17), which refers to an “inordinate, ungoverned, selfish desire”<sup>45</sup>

evil - *ra'* = adjective, evil, bad, since the decision that something is bad depends subjectively on one's taste, the root frequently occurs with the formula “in the eyes of.” Thus, Isaiah threatens those whose moral judgments are distorted.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Payne, J. B. (1999). 673 מַחַד. In R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (295). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>46</sup> Livingston, G. H. (1999). 2191 רַע. In R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (854). Chicago: Moody Press.



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curse - מְאַרְרָה (*m<sup>e</sup> 'ē-rā(h)*) = the content of what is spoken to injure another. The curses hurled down on the selfish are both theological, in that they are calls for God to avenge, and social, in that they reveal class discord in society.<sup>47</sup>

### THE NEARSIGHTED EYE - OUR DANGER

#### IT IS CONSUMED WITH LUST

The Vices of the Lustful Eye:

*23:5 Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven.*

Earthly Riches

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*23:31 Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly;*

Strong Drink

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*6:25 Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, Nor let her allure you with her eyelids.*

Immoral People

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The Law of the Lustful Eye:

*27:20 Hell and Destruction are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied.*

The Law of Diminishing Returns

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<sup>47</sup> Garrett, D. A. (1993). *Vol. 14: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs*. The New American Commentary (227). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

### IT IS CAPTURED BY LAZINESS

The Vice of the Lazy eye:

6:4 *Give no sleep to your eyes, Nor slumber to your eyelids.*

Sleep

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The Law of the Lazy eye:

20:13 *Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread.*

The Law of unmet needs

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### IT IS BLIND WITH SELFISHNESS

The Vices of Selfishness:

28:22 *A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, And does not consider that poverty will come upon him.*

Eager to get

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28:27 *He who gives to the poor will not lack, But he who hides his eyes will have many curses.*

Reluctant to give

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The Law of the Selfish Eye:

28:22 *A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, And does not consider that poverty will come upon him.*

The Law of Divine Harvest

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28:27 *...he that hides his eyes shall have many a curse.*

The Law of Divine Rebuke

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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### IT IS SICK WITH SELF-APPROVAL

The Vices of Self-approval:

26:12 *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

The Lustful Eye gives self-approval

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26:16 *The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes Than seven men who can answer sensibly.*

The Lazy eye gives self-approval

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28:11 *The rich man is wise in his own eyes, But the poor who has understanding searches him out.*

The Selfish eye gives self-approval

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The Law of the Self-approving eye:

30:12, 13 *There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, Yet is not washed from its filthiness. There is a generation, Oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up.*

The Law of Divine Offense

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16:2 *All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits.*

The Law of Final Judgement

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## IT IS DARK WITH REBELLION

The vice of a rebellious eye:

30:17 *The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it.*

Ridicule and Contempt for parents (and authority)

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The Law of the Rebellious Eye:

30:17 *The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it.*

The Law of Divine Destruction

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## THE FARSIGHTED EYE - OUR DISCIPLINE

IT HAS A DEFINED FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD:

3:21 *My son, let them not depart from your eyes: Keep sound wisdom and discretion;*

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4:21 *Do not let them (my sayings) depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart;*

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7:2 *Keep my commands and live, And my law as the apple of your eye.*

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23:26 *My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways.*

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

IT HAS A CLEAR VISION OF HUMAN NEED:

*22:9 He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor.*

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IT HAS A DEEP SENSE OF TRUE BLESSING:

*29:13 The poor man and the oppressor have this in common: The LORD gives light to the eyes of both..*

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*15:30 The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, And a good report makes the bones healthy. {Literally fat }*

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THE LORD'S EYE - OUR MOTIVATION

*5:21 For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He ponders all his paths.*

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*15:3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good.*

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NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## COMMENTARY

This study has identified the uniqueness of the transformed heart and the uniqueness of the transformed tongue. Now the Proverbs will examine *the eye*, the focus of life.

I remember my first visit to teach in Ghana. I arrived at the airport in Accra, a very modern city. From there I had a three-or-four hour drive across Ghana to the Bible College where I was to teach. The farther I got from the city, the less modern the villages became.

The final leg of the trip had us driving on a very poor road passing villages with no electricity. The homes were made of mud walls and grass roofs. Nevertheless, it amazed me that even in these villages with no electricity and homes made of mud and grass roofs, I saw television aerials sticking up from the roofs. The ingenuity of the African people discovered how to run a television from a car battery!

This indicated to me that Africa has now become a very visual society, like North America. For example, in Canada, it is rare for a home not have a television yet listening to the radio is infrequent unless travelling in an automobile. Even new automobiles have screens to watch videos. Reading is still popular in Canada but not nearly so popular among men as it is among women. Most men, after the evening meal, will have their feet up watching television.

With satellite television, Canadians can watch whatever they want from anywhere in the world. When the great tsunami wiped out 2000 people on the other side of the world, I watched it live from my home in the bush country of Muskoka, Ontario. Yet television does not begin to touch the visual opportunities of the internet, which has provided great advantages for missionaries and ministry. However, it has also expanded the wickedness of man in bringing pornography, terrorist activity, and human atrocities into the home.

As much as our tongue can be a danger, our eyes are now in danger, even in the privacy of our own homes. Proverbs says much about what we look upon, for through the eyes come the images that affect the mind or *heart* of man. 'Heart' is defined in the O.T. by the term 'leb,' or 'levav,' with this caution; *Keep your heart (leb) with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.* (Prov. 4:23)

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

In particular, the heart (the *leb, levav*, Prov. 20:27) is the place in which the process of *self-consciousness* goes on, in which the soul is at home with itself and is conscious of all its doing and suffering as its own. The heart, therefore, is also the organ of the conscience (Job 27:6). But in general, when a man turns his thoughts within, or appropriates anything, designs anything, is busy with any plan or resolution, this happens in the heart. But the heart is the organ not simply of those acts of consciousness which are purely inward, but also of the act of *knowing in general*, which is essentially an appropriation, so that *leb* has often exactly the meaning of intellect, insight.<sup>48</sup>

The book of Proverbs talks about the near-sighted eye and the far-sighted eye. These are my terms for the description of the eye in Proverbs. I take these ideas from the book of Solomon and Ecclesiastes because Solomon in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding drew a line across the horizon. His pursuit was everything ‘under the sun.’ That was his way of saying ‘I will not look at eternity,’ ‘I will not look at the spiritual life,’ ‘I will only look under the sun at the reality in our world.’

Because Solomon looked only at the temporal world, he was near-sighted. Those who regard eternity and God’s values are far-sighted, they look beyond the temporal. God uses these perspectives to describe the eyes in Proverbs. The near-sighted eye is the eye that looks only at the temporal.

### THE NEAR-SIGHTED EYE

Proverbs tell us this near-sighted eye can be consumed with lust (Proverbs 1:19). What does the eye lust for? It often lusts for riches, the wealth of the world.

**11:28** *He that trusts in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.*

There are many expressions in this and the following verses which recall Ps. 1. *He that trusteth in his riches shall fall* (Ch. 10:2; Ps. 49:6, 7; 52:7; Eccl. 5:8). Wealth is of all things the most uncer-

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<sup>48</sup> Gustave Friedrich Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. George Day (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., n.d.), 153.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

tain and leads the heart astray from God (1 Tim. 6:17).<sup>49</sup> This lust is a vice that can destroy anyone.

The Bible does not say ‘money is the root of all evil,’ but ‘the love of money’ (1Ti 6:10). The near-sighted eye lusts for money. The eye that does not look to eternity sees security in riches. This is the curse of Canada. Even many Christians, when asked about personal security will refer to a bank account.

There is another destructive lust for the near-sighted found in Proverbs.

**23:31** *Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly;*

What is the lust of the eye in this verse? It is alcohol; the strong drink which destroys kings. The text describes with profound accuracy the pathetic physical and emotional decline of those addicted to alcohol. Wine (and in modern society, illicit drugs) brings physical pain and debilitation, exhausts one’s resources, takes away mental acuity, and yet leaves one craving for more of the same. “Linger-ing over” alcohol (vv. 30–31) describes those who derive comfort and security in knowing that a glass of wine is at hand, ready to deaden the senses. In the end, however, it only leaves people more confused and in deeper pain than ever before (vv. 32–35a).<sup>50</sup>

Twenty years ago in Canada, churches would say the Christian should be an abstainer, not involved in drink. Very few churches in Canada hold this position now. “Social drinking is not a problem,” says the modern church! Yet there is something unique to Canada; there are three commodities sold that have one defined tax: gambling in legalized casinos, cigarettes, and alcohol. The Canadian government calls this tax a ‘sin tax.’ The government is wiser than some Christians!

Most automobile accidents in Canada are caused by alcohol/drug consumption. Most domestic fights that involve police are

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<sup>49</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (218). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>50</sup> Garrett, D. A. (1993). *Vol. 14: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs*. The New American Commentary (197). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.



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caused by alcohol. Twenty-five chronic disease and condition codes in the International Classification of Disease (ICD)-10 are entirely attributable to alcohol, and alcohol plays a component-risk role in certain cancers, other tumors, neuropsychiatric conditions, and numerous cardiovascular and digestive diseases.<sup>51</sup> Alcohol is the curse of man in his pursuit of happiness. It is society that promotes the lust of alcohol.

My brother taught 12-14 year old students. One responsibility he had was to teach good health to young men, including teaching the dangers of alcohol. He asked the class how many had tasted alcohol. The class broke out in laughter. A student said you are asking the wrong question. You should ask, "How many have had drunk alcohol until passing out?" So he asked this question to the class of 20 plus students. Only three students had never had alcohol to the point of passing out. These children will be alcoholics before they are out of their teenage years. What hope do they have?

Hope is found in Christ! In the last church that I pastored there were a number of folks who had struggled with alcohol. Upon receiving new life in Christ, they found victory. There was also a woman whose husband took his life due to alcohol abuse. Unfortunately, although believers can influence loved ones, they cannot bring them victory. It is the near-sighted eye that never looks toward eternity that is lured by strong drink.

**6:25** *Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, Nor let her allure you with her eyelids.*

What is the lust that turns the eye in this passage? It is the lure of sexual immorality. It is immoral people, attracted by physical lure. It is the man or woman who lusts for any form of sexual gratification outside of God's pattern of marriage. You cannot be on the internet without realizing how much pornography is there, unsolicited yet programmed to pop up before your eyes. If someone regularly using the internet says to me, "I have never seen pornography." I say, "liar."

It is almost as impossible to watch television, use the internet, or pick up a magazine in the barbershop or hair salon, without seeing

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<sup>51</sup> <https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arcr352/155-173.htm>

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some form of ‘soft’ pornography. Marketing practices in America flaunt it! Even the billboards along the highway propagate products through soft pornography.

The temptation is there for everyone, even in the privacy of employer’s offices. The worst part is that Christian society is casual toward it. Furthermore, I have known Christians having intimacy problems in their marriages, who have been counselled by psychologists to watch a pornographic movie together, as if that will help.

Pornography has become a problem even in churches. A friend of mine had a daughter in Bible college. Her summer job was to work in a church office typing letters. She was working at the office computer doing correspondence when pornography popped up on the screen. She tried to eliminate this and continue with her work, but it kept popping up. She found out why; the associate pastor had previously used her office to view this on the computer.

She went to the senior pastor to explain what was happening. He dismissed her from her job and kept the associate pastor at the church. Perhaps they slapped his hand, but it was the student that was dismissed. The Bible teaches that the narrow-sighted man has eyes consumed with lust. Whether it is lust for riches, alcohol or sex, Proverbs also speaks of the *law* of the lustful eye.

**27:20** *Hell and Destruction are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied.*

The eye is taken as the representative of concupiscence in general. What is true of “the lust of the eyes” (1 John 2:16) is true of all the senses; the craving for their gratification grows as it is fed. Therefore, the senses should be carefully guarded, lest they lead to excess and transgression. “*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity,*” said the psalmist, “*and quicken me in thy way*” (Ps. 119:37).<sup>52</sup>

This verse tells that the eye, which pursues lust, will never be satisfied. This is the law of diminishing returns. For example, the man who begins with one drink of alcohol which stimulates his

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<sup>52</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (518). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

mind and makes him feel happy, finds the experience pleasant so he takes a drink the next day, and it feels good. The next day he takes a drink but this time it doesn't feel quite so good, so he takes two drinks. Now he feels good. The next day he takes two drinks. It is good. The next day he takes two drinks, and it is not good so he must take three drinks. It goes on and on until he is addicted to alcohol.

It is the same with riches. A man gathers riches, and he gains a million dollars. It is good; but soon it is not enough, and he pursues another million with more passion. Eventually he never has enough. In America there was a man named Howard Hughes, he had many companies and movie studios and was considered to be the wealthiest man in the USA for a time. He was asked; "With all you have, what could you possibly want?" His answer was revealing, "I want just one dollar more!"

He was saying he did not have enough. The same is true with immorality. Sexual pornography has gone past what could be imagined. The law of diminishing returns is evident. The FBI have confiscated pornography with people having sex with children and then killing them. This is where American society was twenty years ago, where has it have fallen too now? – sex with the dead!

What God says has comes true. A society that pursues lust is never be satisfied. Therefore, the efforts to invent ways to satisfy cravings has fallen to unimaginable depths of depravity. Let this be a strong warning to the reader. Never allow your eyes to look upon any kind of lust, for all are susceptible to fall, deeper than imaginable, to the power of lust. Proverbs warns of yet another craving.

**6: 4** *Give no sleep to your eyes, Nor slumber to your eyelids.*

The near-sighted eye is consumed with lust. It is also captured by laziness, the pursuit of sleep. There is nothing wrong with sleep; we all need rest. However, the lazy man would rather sleep than work. In Proverbs 6:6 it says much about the lazy man. He is a sluggard. The Proverbs Bible language word for sluggard is **לָשׁוֹן** (*‘ā-šēl*), indicating a person who is habitually lazy and inactive, suggesting he has no discipline or initiative, as a moral failure (Pr 6:6, 9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 26:13, 14, 15,

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16+).<sup>53</sup> He delights in sleep and recreation (6:9–10). He lacks initiative (6:7). He procrastinates (6:8). He is self-deceived (6:9–10). He is looking for easy gain (28:19). He is a destructive force (18:9). God has ordained severe consequences for the sluggard (6:11, 10:4, 12:24, 15:19, 19:15, 20:13, 21:25-26).<sup>54</sup>

Every society in the world has lazy people. When I first went to Ghana, there were many people begging. There are beggars in Canada too, but because I am a country boy, I had not witnessed this. So, when I saw someone begging in Ghana, I would give them a coin. This continued with each beggar (and there were many). Finally, an African pastor took me aside. He said, don't do this. God says to give to the needy but not to the lazy. He said he knew these people; they could work, but they make more money begging. I will tell you which people are really in need. I listened to his advice and to the people in the country I visit before I give away money. In Africa and India, there are lazy people, just as in Canada. Yet, in these countries, they focus on begging before white people, because they are foolish, as I was.

**20:13** *Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread.*

This text reveals the consequences of laziness - the law of unmet needs. When you love sleep, you will come to poverty. That is the law of God. God said this in Timothy, *if a man does not work, he does not eat* (2 Thes. 3:10). The sad thing is, it is not only he who does not eat, it is his children who do not eat as well.

The near-sighted eye is consumed with lust. The near-sighted eye is captured by laziness. Laziness is a destructive force for a family. In Canada most of the criminals come from homes where there is very little love and very little care. I am convinced the fathers of these families were, for the most part, lazy men and there-

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<sup>53</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>54</sup> Newheiser, J. (2008). *Opening up Proverbs*. Opening Up Commentary (110). Leominster: Day One Publications.

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fore the children lived in want, learning that crime paid well – in this life!

I know that in Africa many pastors must have jobs to provide for their family because the church members have not learned to faithfully tithe so pastors have to concentrate on earning money and not ministry. This is a daily challenge, but it is also an opportunity to learn to depend on God. Although I have observed the difficulty of doing this.

In contrast, there is a danger with most pastors in Canada who are well supported by their churches. This situation encourages carefree living for some pastor, promoting laziness. As a pastor, I used to go swimming at a recreation center early in the morning. One morning I met another pastor. Because Sunday was just two days away, I asked if he was ready for Sunday. He said he does not prepare a sermon until Saturday night. He explained that on Saturday night he would download a sermon from the internet.

“What do you do the rest of the week?” I asked.

He indicated he swims, plays golf, does a bit of visiting folks, but mostly relaxes and enjoys life! He was a lazy man. The reason pastors can get away with such living is because they are not accountable to their people. Another pastor got in debt by simply not paying his bills. Finally, the business men of the town went to church to complain about these unpaid bills. The deacons went to the pastor to rebuke him and remind the pastor of his responsibility. The pastor responded with the text *‘touch not the Lord’s anointed.’* What arrogance! Wisely, the church dismissed him; although, it is likely that he found another gullible church to continue his irresponsible practices.

There is great potential for deception and laziness in pastoral ministry. This church had wise leadership, and they dismissed the pastor. It may never be this way in Africa, but as the Lord matures the church, she will support the pastor as they should. Yet, a pastor of a church with no other job than to be the pastor faces the temptation to be lazy, to sit back, enjoy life, and become irresponsible. Churches need to embrace Biblical accounting practices to keep pastors from the temptation of such laziness and irresponsibility.

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Pastors and church leaders need to remember God's warning, He says that eventually your needs will not be met. With such pastoral practices, God is not obligated to care for you. Proverbs also teaches that the near-sighted eye is blind to selfishness.

**28:22** *A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, And does not consider that poverty will come upon him.*

A selfish eye is covetous, wanting to get more. It is not just wanting to get more but running to get more. This is simply covetousness. One who has "an evil eye," i.e., envies the possessions of others and "hastens after riches." Such a person does not realize that "poverty awaits him." His grasping greed brings no blessing with it. It stirs others to defraud him. In the end this greed consigns him to merited poverty. The idea is that God will punish him by bringing him to a state of destitution.<sup>55</sup>

**28:27** *He who gives to the poor will not lack, But he who hides his eyes will have many curses.*

The uncharitable man either turns away his eyes that he may not see the misery around him or pretends not to notice it, lest his compassion should be claimed. The expression, "hiding the eyes," occurs in Isa. 1:15, "*When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you.*" The unmerciful man meets with the curses of those whom he has neglected to relieve when he had the power, and such curses are ratified and fulfilled because they are deserved, and Divine retribution attends them.<sup>56</sup>

This verse shares the conclusion of one who is greedy. He is the man who only sees temporal things. He will never acknowledge that others have needs he could address. God rebukes this man with poverty and many curses. This man will not only have poverty, but many things will be his problem.

God's leaders should be the most generous of the church. One of the principles of Christian stewardship is the principle of first-

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<sup>55</sup> Smith, J. E. (1996). *The wisdom literature and Psalms*. Old Testament Survey Series (Pr. 28:19–22). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

<sup>56</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (539). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

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fruit giving. The tithe, given first, demonstrates faith in God not in personal resources. Even though pastors may be the poorest people in a church, they need be generous, to give to those in need, to sacrifice. God will do the opposite, He will not curse them but will abundantly bless. One of the worst things a church can see is pastoral selfishness.

We are examining the near-sighted eye. This is the eye of a man not looking to eternity but only to the temporal. We discovered the near-sighted eye is consumed with lust. This lust is toward riches, strong drink, and immorality. To pursue this lust, to dwell upon this lust is to enter into bondage.

The law of the lustful eye is the law of diminishing returns resulting in bondage to lust. This is not only a danger for the unsaved, but the saved can find this in their lives as well. The near-sighted eye is captured by laziness and the law of the lazy eye is to have needs that are not met.

The near-sighted eye is blinded by selfishness. It desires to accumulate wealth quickly. Furthermore, it desires to hold on to wealth while refusing to give to those in need. The law of the selfish eye is to have poverty and many curses from God. Throughout these texts dealing with the near-sighted eye, the negative characteristics and the law of God's discipline is apparent. In addition, Proverbs teaches that anyone with this near-sighted eye is also guilty of self-approval.

**26:12** *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

Have you ever confronted a believer who was living in sin or disobedience and when rebuked, they respond by justifying themselves. There was a woman in the church I pastored who left her husband to live with another man. When I confronted her with this sin, she said that in the ten years she was married to husband, they were never compatible; and therefore, God never saw them being as really married.

There is more wisdom in a fool than in the man wise in his own eyes. He says, "I'm fine, there is no problem." God says it is better to talk to a fool than this man. This is the response of the lustful eye. Self-approval comes from the lazy eye as well.

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**26:16** *The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.*

The sluggard is one who is too idle to think a matter out and considers his own cursory view as sure to be right. He is one who deems study to be an unnecessary weariness of the flesh (Eccles. 12:12) and flatters himself that he is quite able without it to give a satisfactory account of any question presented to him.<sup>57</sup> It is interesting that the lazy man has more words than seven other men. I can understand this. He is too lazy to work so he has lots of time to come up with excuses. Seven good men cannot argue with him, he always has his excuses. He is like a bird that squirms in your hand, trying to get away.

We also see that the selfish eye is filled with self-approval.

**28:11** *The rich man is wise in his own eyes, But the poor who has understanding searches him out.*

Here, verse 11 turns the haughty rich man into the laughingstock of the discerning poor. In this context the idea probably is that the wealthy think that their money proves they are smarter and morally superior, but the poor see that they are just more ruthless.<sup>58</sup>

Proverbs forecasts that all of these near-sighted eye conditions seek to approve themselves; they all have their own excuses. I was a pastor for 25 years, and I could write a book on the excuses for sin or disobedience I heard. People do not want to be accountable. This shows how much bondage is involved. It is not just the will that is captured; the mind is captured as well. With this, we also see the judgement of God in His law of the self-approving eye.

**30:12,13** *There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, Yet is not washed from its filthiness. There is a generation — oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up.*

Here the self-approving have not cleansed their heart by complete repentance, either because they have not examined themselves

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<sup>57</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (501). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>58</sup> Garrett, D. A. (1993). *Vol. 14: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs*. The New American Commentary (223). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.



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and know nothing of the real state of their conscience, or because they care nothing about it and will not regard it in its true light.<sup>59</sup> God here states that the self-approving stay in a state where they are not washed from their filthiness. God says they are an offence to Him. They are like the potent smell of rotting flesh.

One day, upon arriving at the seminary in Cameroon, I was informed that another missionary had stayed in this room before me. He saw the evidence of a mouse in the room, so he put poison out to kill the mouse. When I opened the door three days after his departure, the mouse was dead and a very bad smell prevailed! I cleaned it all up but even months later, the smell of that decaying dead mouse prevailed. This is God's description of the man determined to justify himself. He is an offense to God and brings God's judgment.

**16:2** *All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits.*

Scripture says the lustful eye gives self-justification, but God is the final judge. God weighs the spirit, and when God talks about weighing, he talks about severe judgement. Man so easily rationalizes and justifies his actions. Consciously or unconsciously, he easily falls victim to self-deceit. The Apostle Paul says, "My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent" (1 Cor. 4:4). Only God is capable of weighing our secret motives. Let's not be too confident of our innocence, remaining aware of our constant need for God's cleansing grace.<sup>60</sup>

There is one more step deeper that this corrupt eye goes. The near-sighted eye that only looks at the temporal and not eternity is lustful, lazy, selfish, self-approving, and is dark with rebellion.

**30:17** *The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it.*

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<sup>59</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (574). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>60</sup> Richards, L. O. (1991). *The Bible reader's companion* (electronic ed.) (390). Wheaton: Victor Books.

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The eye is named as the mind's instrument for expressing scorn and insubordination; it is the index to the inner feeling and looks may be as sinful as action.<sup>61</sup> This rebellious eye speaks of children who mock and despise their parents. This is the eye that rebels against authority. God gives a law regarding this eye as well. God says the rebellious eye will be destroyed. The ravens of the valley will pick it out.

Such an undutiful son shall die a violent death; his corpse shall lie unburied, and the birds of prey shall feed upon him. It is well known that ravens, vultures, and other birds that live on carrion first attack the eyes of their prey; and in our own islands we are told crows and birds of this sort will fix on the eyes of young or sickly animals.<sup>62</sup>

Although it speaks of children that are in rebellion, the application is also for those who will continue with an eye just for the temporal, who never say enough (30:15-16). The near-sighted eye has a descending experience. It moves farther and farther away from God until finally there is complete rebellion and sinful selfishness.

All are susceptible; all can fall in this way. The book of Proverbs raises a danger flag regarding the near-sighted eye. God says much about this dangerous appendage. Yet the book of Proverbs does not stop with just a warning about the near-sighted eye. As with the transformed heart and transformed tongue, Proverbs addresses the transformed eye. I call this eye, the far-sighted eye.

### THE FAR-SIGHTED EYE

This is the eye that looks above the horizon to eternity, the eye that acknowledges the values of God are better than the wisdom of man, the riches of God are better than the riches of man, the approval of God is better than the approval of man. This is the privilege of those who know the Lord. The far-sighted eye has a defined focus on God's Word.

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<sup>61</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (575). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>62</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (575). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

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**3:19-21** *The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; By understanding He established the heavens; By His knowledge the depths were broken up, And clouds drop down the dew. My son, let them not depart from your eyes — Keep sound wisdom and discretion;*

The text is referring to the far-sighted eye which looks to the wisdom of God, once spoken to establish creation, evidenced in God's judgment through the flood in Noah's day, and now found in the written words of Scripture. God's Word will lead those who follow His true wisdom and discretion – the discernment of right and wrong.

But the image of clouds dropping dew on the crops of the land shows the gentle, beneficent side of creation. The world is both nurturing and dangerous. Yet creation itself is under the hand of God, and He governs according to wisdom. Wisdom is therefore essential for survival.<sup>63</sup>

**4:20-21** *My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart;*

God advises His children to give attention to His Words. The emphasis is on the activity of hearing, emphasizing either paying close attention or obeying (heeding).<sup>64</sup> But the Lord also encourages His own to not let them depart from their eyes. Here the emphasis is on God's wisdom not being lost to one's sight<sup>65</sup> resulting in being misled from correct behavior.<sup>66</sup> The far-sighted eye leads to knowing and obeying God's word.

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<sup>63</sup> Garrett, D. A. (1993). *Vol. 14: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs*. The New American Commentary (83). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>64</sup> Coppes, L. J. (1999). 2084 קָשָׁב. In R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (817). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>65</sup> Holladay, W. L., & Köhler, L. (2000). *A concise Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament* (174). Leiden: Brill.

<sup>66</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Se-*

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**7:1-2** *My son, keep my words, And treasure my commands within you. Keep my commands and live, And my law as the apple of your eye.*

God's words are to involve an emotional attachment as well as intellectual. Because of their sustaining power, the son was to keep them (cf. 3:1; 4:4, 21; 6:20), store them up (cf. 2:1; 10:14), and guard them like a treasure (cf. 3:14-15). If he did, he would enjoy a full and meaningful life (cf. 3:18; 4:4c; 8:35). The *apple* ('*îšôn*) of the eye is literally the centre of a thing. As the pupil, the centre of the eye (cf. Deut. 32:10; Ps. 17:8), is the most sensitive and carefully guarded exposed human body organ.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, believers are to make the Word of God their treasure, the focal point of life's attention. They are to let the Word of God be the measurement for everything valued and everything pursued. In essence, the Word is to be loved, cherished, and followed as a love letter from a betrothed. This is evident in the following verse. **23:26** *My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways.*

The decision to be a far-sighted person begins in the heart. The far-sighted eye is disciplined to regard eternity always. I read about a pastor in England who realized that the Lord could return at any moment. To remind him of this truth daily he marked on the living room clock these words; 'Maybe Today.' He practiced the truth that in light of the Lord's coming, we should keep our lives holy and pure (1 Jn. 3:2-3). The far-sighted eye stays focused on God, anticipating His return as a lover awaiting her betrothed, as illustrated in the Song of Solomon.

When the world is observed, from the perspective of God's Word through the far-sighted eye, it is viewed very differently than the customary human perspectives. Mankind can listen to politi-

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*mantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>67</sup> Buzzell, S. S. (1985). Proverbs. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Pr 7:1-2). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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cians, to educators, or to scientists, all with different views of the situation of our world, but theirs is not the truth. There may be a measure of the truth, but the far-sighted eye sees the world the way God does, in darkness and wickedness, in pain and sorrow. Therefore, the far-sighted respond in a Godly way, as indicated in the following passage.

**22:9** *He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor.*

Notice the far-sighted eye moves a man to desire to give generously. The individual with an eye on eternity through God's Word, knows that security has nothing to do with earthly possessions. Security is in God Himself. This is the man who will give what he has from God, to those in need. He will do so because he does not need to hold on to earthly possessions. This individual will give sacrificially because God will always supply all that he needs (Ph. 4:19). In this way, the far-sighted eye brings blessings to others. Nevertheless, the 'light of the eye' shines upon all.

**29:13** *The poor man and the oppressor have this in common: The LORD gives light to the eyes of both.*

Both rich and poor, the oppressor and the oppressed, owe their light and life to God; He makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good; He sends rain on the just and the unjust; He is the Father, Ruler, and Judge of all. Here is comfort for the poor, that he has a tender Father who watches over him; here is a warning for the rich, that he will have to give an account of his stewardship.<sup>68</sup>

**15:30** *The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, And a good report makes the bones healthy.*

The poor can be blessed through the light of the eye, but there is a distinction. Both of these texts speak of the light enjoyed in the eye but, it is the 'good report' that makes the bones fat. "The light of eyes makes the heart rejoice." Context suggests that the reference is to the brightness which shines in the eyes when one hears good news. Furthermore, "a good report makes fat the bones." Bones full of marrow were a symbol of good health to the ancients. Thus, good

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<sup>68</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (555). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

tidings invigorate the body. The promise that Yahweh hears the prayer of righteous people is good news. (15:30).<sup>69</sup>

There is nothing better for the man with the far-sighted eye, nothing better for the man who knows God, than to hear God say, “well done, good and faithful servant.” Contrary to most American Christian thinking, the happiest Christians are not the rich Christians. The most contented people I have ever met are the impoverished African believers.

I have had the privilege to teach among these brothers and sisters since 2003. Although I have taught theology in five continents, only in Africa have I encountered a Christian community that have grown accustomed to, while giving thanks for their food, to ask God for their next meal. Apart from God’s grace, this next meal is often very uncertain, especially in the small villages. Yet, these believers, although often envious of the ‘wealth’ of the American church, never cease to offer gratitude and thanksgiving to God whenever they bow in prayer. It was also quite enlightening to realize that in West African society, what belongs to one, belongs to all! Hence, although impoverished, I have never met believers who gave more sacrificially towards the needs of others.

Similarly, there were members of the church I pastored in Ontario, who had very little money, but when there was a special need, they were more generous than others. They rejoiced in giving and truly experienced what God promised; “*it is more blessed to give than receive*” (Ac 20:35). Even the poorest of believers can receive the blessings of giving, yet for the poor, the rich blessing of sacrificial giving comes much easier. The far-sighted eye realized the blessings of God every day.

The ‘far-sighted eye’ life is a call to a disciplined life for the people of God. It is opposite of the near-sighted eye which is the danger Solomon experienced when viewing the world with an ‘under the sun’ mentality. His conclusion was that all was ‘vanity’ or emptiness (mentioned 29 times in Ecclesiastes). The Scriptures say

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<sup>69</sup> Smith, J. E. (1996). *The wisdom literature and Psalms*. Old Testament Survey Series (Pr. 15:29–30). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

the choice is ours. Will God's own discipline themselves and look to eternity? Or, will they be like Solomon who looked only at the world around him? Believers may deceive others with hypocritical pretense, but God is not deceived.

**5:21** *For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He ponders all his paths.*

Ponders פָּלַף (*pā·lās*) translates a word that means “weighs” or “makes level.” The sense of weighing a person's ways is that the Lord takes account of, or thinks about, what that person does, whether it is good or bad. NRSV and NIV render the sense “he examines all...”<sup>70</sup>

Paths (‘goings’ in KJV), is the translation of מַגָּל (*mā·gāl*), and was used in 4:11 with the literal sense of tracks but is broader in scope here, referring to ‘course of life, formally, path, i.e., the way one conducts oneself in life as a figurative extension of a well-worn path.’<sup>71</sup> God missed nothing and ignores nothing, especially among His own. Therefore, each believer should acknowledge and live in light of God's commitment: *"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him, For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."* (Heb. 12:5ff)

**15:3** *The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good.*

Why should God's people keep their eyes above the horizon, on eternity? It is because God keeps His eye on them! He regards all their ways. Nevertheless, the choice is theirs. God motivates believers to make the correct choice. His motivation is His own eyes upon His children and God rewards those who will keep their eye on

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NRSV New Revised Standard Version

NIV NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

<sup>70</sup> Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs*. UBS Handbook Series (131). New York: United Bible Societies.

<sup>71</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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Him. This is not the reward of salvation; it has nothing to do with salvation for we know salvation is by faith alone. Yet God clearly tells us that He rewards the good works of His people (2 Cor. 5:10).

I began school in a building that had eight grades in one room. I am not a big man, so you can imagine how small I was when in grade one, in comparison to the other students. Everyone was bigger, even the girls. Therefore, I always worked hard for the approval and acceptance of others.

One day a nurse came to our school to give eye examinations to the grade one students. When I heard the word ‘examination,’ my heart was fearful. I thought ‘exams are what they do in school to see if you pass or fail. I immediately determined that I must pass this examination by any means possible.

Greater fear came when the ‘examination’ involved students standing on the front platform in front of all eight grades. On one side of the platform, the nurse had a chart with letters on it, the students had to stand way over on the other side, put a hand over one eye at a time, and read the chart letters. The first child followed the instructions and the nurse said, “very good.”

Alphabetically, I was next. I put my hand over my left eye, and I read the chart very carefully. The nurse said, “Well done!” Then I put my hand over my right eye. I could not even see the chart! I was going to fail my first exam!

So, instead of saying I could not see the chart, I cheated and with my right eye, peeked through my fingers. I then accurately read the chart again. The nurse said, “Very good, Earl.” I had passed my first school exam!

Three years later, our doctor discovered that I had no sight in my left eye. The doctor told my parents that if this problem was discovered earlier, the eye could have been corrected, but it was now too late now. Although I have adjusted reasonably well to my vision impairment, for all my life, I have not been able to use my left eye, simply because I had cheated to pass the ‘exam.’

Our eyes are important, especially our spiritual eyes where no ‘human’ adjustment will compensate. Even to be tempted in a small way, to allow our mind and heart to look through the near-sighted



## **SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK**

eye, is dangerous. It is paramount to cheating ourselves out of proper spiritual vision. It will affect us all our life.

I encourage is each reader to take a moment now and ask God to teach you the true condition of your spiritual eye. Be honest with God; Is your eye captured by lust? Is there danger through laziness? Is there danger through selfishness? Is there self-approval? Is there rebellion?

If God reveals any of these in your heart, I urge you to confess your sin? Ask the Lord God to give you the discipline of the far-sighted eye, to enable you every day to look up, to see eternal values, to view all from eternity's perspective.

### **NOTES**

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## SECTION I GOD'S SPIRITUAL HEALTH PLAN

THEME: PROVERBS 4:23-27

*Keep your **heart** with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful **mouth**, And put perverse lips far from you. Let your **eyes** look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your **feet**, And let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.*

### PART 4

#### DISCOVERING WHAT PROVERBS SAYS ABOUT THE FEET

##### PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

1. For each of the following texts state in your own words what the verse is saying about the **feet (paths)**. Additional word explanations will help identify the original intent of some passages

##### THE DANGERS OF THE WRONG PATHS

Beware of...

The Tug of Bad Company

1:10 *My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent.*

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1:16 *For their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed blood.*

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The Haste of Ignorant Simplicity

19:2 *Also it is not good for a soul to be without knowledge, And he sins who hastens with his feet.*

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### The Net of Evil Flattery

29:5 *A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.*

Flatters is literally, “makes (a person) smooth.” In 2:16 and 7:5 the word is rendered “seductive.” This flattery in 29:5 is smooth talk that deceives because it intends to harm.<sup>72</sup>

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### The Abuse of Neighbourly Hospitality

25:17 *Seldom set foot in your neighbor’s house, Lest he become weary of you and hate you.*

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### The Injury of Misplaced Security

25:19 *Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble Is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint.*

Confidence: The OT considers these sources of false security in some detail in order to show by contrast the excellence of hope in God. The list includes [unfaithful] man (Prov 25:19).<sup>73</sup>

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## THE DYNAMICS OF RIGHT PATHS

### The Choice to...

#### Refrain in Alluring Temptation

1:15 *My son, do not walk in the way with them, Keep your foot from their path;*

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<sup>72</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Pr. 29:5). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>73</sup> Oswalt, J. N. (1999). 233 נַטְטָ. In R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (102). Chicago: Moody Press.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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### Renounce in Pressured Expectation

4:14 *Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil.*

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### Refocus in Every Situation

4:27 *Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.*

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### The Practice of...

#### Carefully determining direction

4:26 *Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established.*

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### The Promise of...

#### Preservation from Darkness

2:11-13 *Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you, To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things, From those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness;*

Discretion: In Prov 2:11; 3:21 “discretion,” like her sisters, “understanding” and “sound wisdom,” guards one’s life from harm.

Hence, within Proverbs 1–8 “discretion” ranks as one of the key terms for wisdom employed by the author.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Wolf, H. (1999). 556 חָכְמָה. In R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (244). Chicago: Moody Press.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Preservation from Immorality

2:11,16, 20 *Discretion will preserve you. To deliver you from the strange woman. So you may walk in the way of goodness, And keep to the paths of righteousness.*

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Preservation from Stumbling

3:21,23 *keep sound wisdom and discretion. Then you will walk safely in your way, And your foot will not stumble.*

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Preservation from Entanglement

3:26 *For the LORD will be your confidence, And will keep your foot from being caught.*

Confidence means trust, belief in an object to the extent of placing mental or physical trust in it.<sup>75</sup> Certainty, what one places his belief or trust in<sup>76</sup>

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The Producing of...

An effective testimony

4:18 *But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.*

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<sup>75</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>76</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*: Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

THE DISCERNMENT OF GOD'S PATH  
PROVERBS 16:

Step 1 - The Believer's Dedication  
v.3a *Commit thy works unto the LORD,*

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Step 2 - The Believer's Dynamic  
v.3b *...and your thoughts will be established*

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Step 3 - The Believer's Discipline  
v.9a *A man's heart plans his way:*

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Step 4 - The Believer's Direction  
v.9b *...but the LORD directs his steps.*

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Step 5 - The Believer's Determination  
v. 20 *He who heeds the word wisely will find good, And whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he.*

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NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## COMMENTARY

Thus far, through this study God has examined our hearts, our lips, our eyes, and now the study leads to the examination of our feet. God's Word tells us about the path where our feet should go. When we come to Proverbs, God speaks much about our feet and the path they should follow. God warns about the wrong paths and instructs about the right paths. As these passages are examined, ask yourself if you are on the correct path or if you have gone astray.

**1:10** *My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent... My son, do not walk in the way with them, Keep your foot from their path;*

Proverbs instruction in wisdom begins with a dramatic description of a young man being invited to join a violent gang. It reads as if it could have been written today about temptations facing our young people. Those who are of the world are trying to seduce our children into substance abuse, crime, and immorality. Many worldly people take particular pleasure in luring and ruining the righteous and their offspring.<sup>77</sup>

**1:16** *For their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed blood.*

Verse 16 gives the reason why the learner is being warned.<sup>78</sup> God says beware of the influence of bad company, of making friends of wicked and evil people because their path is evil, רָע (rā') meaning bad, evil, wicked, no good, i.e., pertaining to that which is not morally pure or good according to a proper standard.<sup>79</sup> And their practice is shedding blood, where also murder, the laying in wait for blood, is proposed.<sup>80</sup>

Believers can easily be influenced by those who do not know

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<sup>77</sup> Newheiser, J. (2008). *Opening up Proverbs*. Opening Up Commentary (35). Leominster: Day One Publications.

<sup>78</sup> Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs*. UBS Handbook Series (40). New York: United Bible Societies.

<sup>79</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>80</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (10). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

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God. In America there are people who lecture about peer pressure. These lectures are usually addressed to teenagers because teenagers are often drawn into gangs being influenced by one another. In Canada, many gangs exist in Toronto, Ontario, Canada's largest city. One of the gangs in this city has the qualification that to become a member, you must of steal a handgun and shoot someone. This initiation right is carried out by misdirected teenagers every year, resulting in innocent bystanders losing their lives. Such an evil practice is also carried out in cities across America. Hence, the promotion of lecturers to teach teenagers right from wrong.

Unfortunately, not only young people are influenced by peer pressure. People of all age groups are influenced by others with God's truth proving true: *Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."* (1Cor. 15:33) The NIV translation states: "*Bad company corrupts good morals.*" This passage warns not to join hands with those who do not love God.

Believers have been saved out of this world. Therefore, there are choices to make regarding separating from those who influence believers negatively. This does not mean to turn our backs on the unsaved, God wants us to witness to them and encourage them to come to Christ. But God says to no longer walk in their path since it will lead to difficulties, dangers, and destruction.

The social care of one another in Africa exceeds America and truly amazes me. It indicates strong family ties and deep friendships. All of which is due to the family structure of tribal societies. America could learn much from simple observance of such relational interaction. Nevertheless, it is important for all believers to go beyond cultural examples and to understand the Scripture's levels of friendship/relationship established by God for His church (Developed in Section 2 "Friendship").

Who are your closest friends? Do these people have the same passion for God as you? Do these friends have the same commitment to the path of obedience? God says to beware of 'friends' who do not walk the pathway of God's leading. Their influence will be a roadblock that will misdirect Christians; an influence that will lead believers, a small step at a time, off God's path. In the wrong path, there is the danger of losing God's discernment and walking into



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danger. God's preventive measure is clear: *Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path* (Ps. 119:105).

**19:2** *Also it is not good for a soul to be without knowledge, And he sins who hastens with his feet.*

The proverb draws a contrast between two reprehensible lines of action. The ignorant person has no definite purpose in view; he does not know what to do or how to act in the circumstances of his life. The second recklessly plunges forward and misses the way. Haste here is opposed to knowledge because the latter involves prudence and circumspection, while the former blunders on in the direction of unintended consequences.<sup>81</sup>

Sometimes we mistakenly think that ignorance is the best way to be. There is a saying 'what you do not know will not hurt you.' This is not true. There are those who delight in being ignorant, who have no interest in knowing about God, who do not want to know about tomorrow, who live for the pleasures they can have one day at a time.

They are like little children playing in the playground, running from toy to toy. Their mind is not on the world at all. They cannot be reasoned with regarding the Lord. They cannot be witnessed to about new life in Christ, desiring to keep the simple life without thinking of the consequences. These people are often in a hurry to get nowhere! Ignorance is not bliss; it is wasteful and often destructive.

Scripture reveals this to be the path most people follow, but it is not the path of God's people. This is a dangerous path, like stepping into a room filled with gasoline fumes and out of ignorance, striking a match. It is going to end in disaster. Therefore, God identifies the wicked people His children should avoid being influenced by.

Dear reader, do not allow these people, despite working with, or by necessity, rubbing shoulders with, influence you toward their path. God warns us of the simple person. These are people who often look as though they have easy responsibilities, and life is very

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<sup>81</sup> Smith, J. E. (1996). *The wisdom literature and Psalms*. Old Testament Survey Series (Pr. 19:1–2). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

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good. God gives His children the responsibility to separate a safe distance from them.

In the same Proverb's context, the Lord also warns about the path of the deceiver, the briber, and later, the one who has flattering lips.

**19:5-6** *A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who speaks lies will not escape. Many entreat the favor of the nobility, And every man is a friend to one who gives gifts.*

'False witness' is a reference to one whose lies are as frequent as the breath of his nostrils. Virtually every word he speaks is false (cf. 6:19; 14:5, 25). Eventually his lies are discovered, and he is censured by society and ultimately punished by God.<sup>82</sup> *Entreat favour* refers to blatantly insincere flattery. Flattering a ruler is often done to take advantage of other people and sometimes to pervert justice.<sup>83</sup>

**26:28** *A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin.*

This study has already examined the flattering tongue that is corrupt. There is also a need to beware of the path those who seek to flatter us will take. Such individuals desire others to follow a particular path in which they will be exalted. God says that to follow such a path is to walk the path of ruin or purposed downfall. People who flatter to help achieve their selfishly deceptive ends bring ruin either to themselves, their victims, or both.<sup>84</sup>

In Canada pastors are regularly given expressions of appreciation at the conclusion of the Sunday service. People often come to

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<sup>82</sup> Smith, J. E. (1996). *The wisdom literature and Psalms*. Old Testament Survey Series (Pr. 19:4-7). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

<sup>83</sup> Buzzell, S. S. (1985). Proverbs. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Pr. 19:6). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>84</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Pr. 26:28). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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thank them; “That was a good message, Pastor,” or “God really spoke to my heart through you today.” This is good and appropriate but can also become a stumbling block leading to ruin.

There will always be people whose end is to find the pastor’s favour. Their motive is a desire for recognition. Therefore, they use sweet words to convince pastors that they are people of God to be trusted and worthy of positions of leadership. After all, who is going to oppose the pastor who declares: “I recommend John (the flatterer) to be the next deacon, he is such a good man.”

God warns that yielding to such expressions of gratitude could amount to an influence leading to a destructive trap. Flattery, whether spoken or received is unbecoming of God’s people. The best protection is to be determined to praise and glorify God in all things, not man.

Scripture indicates another path to be avoided is the abuse of our neighbourly hospitality.

**25:17** *Seldom set foot in your neighbor’s house, Lest he become weary of you and hate you.*

‘Seldom’ is literally, “make precious,” that is, “make it valuable” by its rarity. A person should refrain from frequently visiting his neighbor, to avoid being a nuisance, but he should visit enough so that his visits are valued.<sup>85</sup> There are people who are naturally hospitable, who naturally attract others. God warns His children to be careful not to abuse such hospitality.

There was a ‘priest’ of a liberal Christian denomination living in the area of my first pastoral ministry. He was not a married man, so he regularly waited each day, until mealtime, to visit people in his church, thus receiving a free meal. This man abused the hospitality he enjoyed by virtue of his position in the church. He actually turned people away from God by such abusive practice. Although an extreme example, it serves the purpose of demonstrating the need for God’s warning.

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<sup>85</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Pr. 25:16–17). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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To a lesser extent, there was a young man in our church. He was a nice guy, had a good job but lived alone. He was regularly invited to join our church folks in their homes. However, he had the habit of staying long after a meal, simply because he was very lonely. He would stay, and stay, and stay. Because I was his pastor, he was invited to eat with us often. He would stay long after our children would go to bed. He would stay long after my wife would go to bed. On one occasion, seeking to help him realize his poor habit without hurting his feelings, I told him, “I love you, but I am going to bed. Turn off the lights when you leave.” I was surprised in the morning that he was not there. We did not have the heart to ask him to leave, knowing his loneliness. By the grace of God, a widow became his friend. God brought them together and they were married. People of God, beware of abusing hospitality.

Another dangerous path that Christians should guard against is the path of injury from misplaced security.

**25:19** *Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble Is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint.*

“A bad tooth and a lame foot” can be problems, especially because a person relies on them to eat and walk. Also relying on a person who turns out to be untrustworthy can be disappointing and troublesome. Job expressed this concern over his friends (Job 6:14–15).<sup>86</sup>

The path entered into, in seeking confidence or security from an unsaved person, is dangerous. I knew a pastor who struggled with this. He had an uncle, who was very wealthy. God brought many trials into his life. Unfortunately, when financial challenges came, he turned to his uncle and not to God. His uncle was not a believer, but always helped. But the issue is not that his uncle was helping, the issue was the pastor’s understanding and choice of security outside of God. I doubt if his unsaved uncle was very impressed by God’s ‘apparent’ care of his nephew. A poor pastoral testimony indeed!

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<sup>86</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Pr. 25:19). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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I think this has much application in the tribal societies of Africa where care for each other is prominent. Although commendable, this ‘human security’ can lead God’s people astray. In Ghana, I knew of a treasurer of a church paying for the funeral of a relative with church funds. Caring for one another was his first priority, but using the church funds and consequently leaving the pastor without means was wrong.

Where is your sense of security? Is it in the people of your village? Is it in your family? Or is it in God? In every society there are things taking the place of confidence and security in God. It may be relatives, position, money, education, skills, and other things I could not imagine.

I encourage each reader to pray for God’s wisdom to seek security from no other source than God himself. Trust the Lord to supply in His own way, as Paul testified: *Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus* (Php. 4:18-19).

Although this study has already examined verse 25:20 under ‘the troubled heart,’ the following summary is appropriate: 25:18–20 All three of these proverbs are similes (although the word for “like” is not in the Hebrew text), and all concern people one should avoid (the perjurer, the undependable, and the tactless). The point of each is evident. The perjurer is a dangerous weapon<sup>12</sup> to rely on, unreliable people on a day of trouble is futile and excruciatingly painful, and being ebullient to the depressed only jolts them and makes matters worse. A sensitive person knows how to sorrow with the sorrowing.<sup>87</sup>

This study has examined the warnings of God regarding the wrong paths, now attention is given to God’s defined correct paths.

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<sup>12</sup> The NIV is correct to render  $\text{לְחֶבֶל מִלְחָמָה}$  (“one scattering”) as  $\text{לְחֶבֶל מִלְחָמָה}$  (“war club”), as in Jer. 51:20.

<sup>87</sup> Garrett, D. A. (1993). *Vol. 14: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs*. The New American Commentary (208). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

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These correct paths have dynamics and blessings for the people of God. Where the wrong paths are to be avoided, the correct paths are to be chosen.

Proverbs indicates that the right path is first, to turn from temptation:

**1:10** *My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent...*

**1:15** *My son, do not walk in the way with them, Keep your foot from their path;*

**4:14** *Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil.*

The warning of the father takes a threefold form: (1) enter not; (2) go not; (3) avoid. In effect he says this is the only course to be adopted in order to keep a firm hold of Wisdom.<sup>88</sup> *Walk not thou*, in verse 10 implies immediate and entire abandonment. In verse 15, the warning is practically a repetition of ver. 10 and is given again in Ch. 4:14, “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.”<sup>89</sup>

These texts speak of a determination that comes from self-discipline. It was Job who said; *My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food* (Job 23:11-12). As well, Paul, led by God’s Spirit, said “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” (Php. 4:13). By God’s grace, His children are able to keep to the correct path. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, . . . *self-control* (Gal. 5:22). Christians, by God’s enabling, can determine to turn away from temptation.

Centuries ago, the emperor of Rome discovered that his country was threatened by Carthage. Every time he gave a speech in the government of Rome, he would conclude his speech saying, “Carthage must be destroyed.” Because he never let go of this warning,

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<sup>88</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (88). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>89</sup> *Proverbs*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (10). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

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always sharing it with the people in every speech, Rome finally decided to act and attack this enemy. The result was peace in Rome.

It was the determination of the emperor that brought this path to the people of Rome and kept them secure. If believers know there is a weakness in them regarding a wrong path, then the path of avoidance is in the discipline of daily prayer, asking God to keep their steps aright.

The correct path includes turning away from the pressure of expectations:

**4:14** *Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil.*

We have examined the influence of bad companions to move us on the wrong path. However, sometimes it is not their path, but their expectations of us, that move us on the wrong path. A pastor has many expectations placed upon him by the church. A book has been published about how you get a pastor. It suggests asking all the church members to make a list of qualifications and skills required. The man who wrote this book obviously was never involved in calling a pastor. In the churches I was pastor, there would be a list too large for any pastor to fulfill.

Everyone in every church has their own idea of what the pastor should do, their collective expectations are higher than what any one man is able to accomplish. Pastors and church leaders cannot possibly please every man. They must determine to please only one-God. It is so easy for a pastor to be under the pressure of the congregation as I myself learned.

One of our elders came to me demanding that I must preach a certain sermon and ask people to come forward to make a particular commitment. He had this all planned out so we would have a revival in the church. My response was that I did not think God wanted me to do this, otherwise He would have led me so.

The elder replied, "Pastor, you work for me," implying I must do as he said. Although there was much tension, I knew if I had bowed to the pressure, I would have been outside the will of God. Therefore, I said, "No, you are mistaken, I work for God." The elder resigned and left the church, much to the dismay of many members. Church leaders must be aware of the pressure people create

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when they push their own expectations. As God's children, in whatever place He has set you, by God's enabling "Do right whatever becomes of it."

In keeping the right path, God's children must be properly focused in every situation:

**4:26-27** *Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established.*

To *ponder* here means 'to perform, to measure or weigh out, to carry out some activity, with a focus that the activity is measured and thought out.'<sup>90</sup> Clearly the implication of the text involves staying focussed on the path, constantly weighing each decision and opportunity for the purpose being *established*, meaning to stand upright.

**3:5-6** *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Trust not in your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.*

Early in our marriage my wife and I chose these verses as our guiding principle. The text begins a discourse on making right decisions. Wisdom is more than a matter of knowing rules of right and wrong; it is a matter of knowing God. It is the wise trust in the Lord rather than in their own wisdom (3:5–6). They fear and honour Him (3:7–10) and accept His discipline (3:11–12). The Lord, not just their awareness of certain principles, protects them (3:26).<sup>91</sup>

The call to close attentiveness leads to the promise of life and health (20–22). That introduces advice regarding the guarding of the whole person: mind, speech, look, and walk (23–27). The inner person has to be right, because that is the source of all else; but outward behaviour is not just left to work itself out from that. We

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<sup>90</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>91</sup> *Holman Bible Handbook*. 1992 (D. S. Dockery, Ed.) (352). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.



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also have to pay attention to speaking straight, looking straight, and walking straight.<sup>92</sup>

Scripture states that this carefully measured focus applies to ‘all ways,’ giving careful attention to God in every situation. There is no such thing in the Christian life as a small decision or a big decision. There is no such thing as an unimportant choice. Every path must be bathed in prayer for God’s direction as the habit of life.

Different personalities respond differently even in similar circumstances. Some people are slow decision makers, taking much time to think things over. This can go to extremes where no decisions are made, and procrastination becomes the habit of life. Other people assess situations and make decisions very quickly. This can also lead to extremes, where poor decisions become the habit of life.

The solution for preventing these extremes is first going to God in prayer, who promises to provide His direction. This affords an act of faith which guards against anxiousness as Paul encouraged: *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;* (Php. 4:6). This also provides opportunity for dependence upon God securing His incomprehensible peace. *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* (Php. 4:7)

The wisdom book of Proverbs indicates that choices be embraced by the habit of life. God’s people should ponder their path which means more than just make the immediate decision. It means to look at the ultimate destination of each decision while considering the consequences. By this, God’s people should be, “speaking straight, looking straight, and walking straight” in Christ.

I recommend that pastors get away from their own congregations occasionally, just to ponder and to interact with other pastors. It encourages me to see Dr. Simon, president of Cameroon Seminary, arrange pastor conferences to teach church leaders, and to

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<sup>92</sup> *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition.* 1994 (D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer & G. J. Wenham, Ed.) (4th ed.) (590). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

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give opportunity for pastoral fellowship. It was my experience as a pastor in Canada to benefit greatly by similar occasions. I was particularly blessed with these annual fellowships by the opportunity to spend time with the pastor I came to the Lord under and was disciplined by. Sharing pastoral experiences, church and personal challenges, presented opportunities for the Lord's blessings and greatly clarified my own thinking and direction. Every church leader would benefit by such fellowships. Pastors, plan it!

When God's children discipline themselves to make the right choices, to be on the path of the Lord, when they develop the practice of pondering and disciplined thinking to determine the path God is leading in, God gives special promises.

**2:10-13** *When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul, Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you, To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things, From those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness;*

He promises to preserve His own from darkness through continued spiritual discernment. Notice the good words given to us here: wisdom, knowledge, discretion, and understanding that will protect from the ways of darkness. These verses express the promise of God to keep the mind sharp in order to stay on God's path.

When believers discipline themselves this way, God also promises to keep us from immorality.

**2:16, 20** *To deliver you from the immoral woman, From the seductress who flatters with her words... So you may walk in the way of goodness, And keep to the paths of righteousness.*

A pastor friend of mine shared this true story. He was new to this church, and one night a woman from the congregation called him to come quickly; she had an emergency in her home. He left immediately to offer his assistance. Upon arrival, he was confronted with the woman, wearing a sensual garment, who proceeded to attempt to seduce him. The pastor immediately left and purposefully engaged a church member to join him and confront her; whereby, she did confess her sin.

His prompt action probably saved his ministry. Even if he had left and said nothing, that woman would have been like Potiphar's

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wife and spread a damaging lie about him. It shows that even within the church, Satan has people who will seek to destroy a pastor. The easiest way to accomplish this is by immorality, and pastors are often easy marks by virtue of such innocent commitments to help all who ask.

The same thing almost happened to me. A mother of a church member called me late one night and asked me to come. I remembered my friend's story, so I called one of our church's mature women to address the 'emergency.' She went to the house explaining that the pastor sent her. The lady responded that the problem was all resolved. One month later, a leader of another church was dismissed for immorality with this same lady. Satan particularly desires to destroy pastors' lives.

God's people must choose the disciplines of correct paths in order to embrace the promise of God for discernment. They also have the promise to keep from stumbling:

**3:21-23** *My son, let them not depart from your eyes — Keep sound wisdom and discretion; So they will be life to your soul And grace to your neck. Then you will walk safely in your way, And your foot will not stumble.*

The *stumbling* referred to here is anything believers fall over in life or in our ministry, which can destroy. It could be over-emphasizing ministry and ignoring family, having a lust for power, possessions, position, falling into laziness, or choosing the wrong path that others influence you toward. The general principle is, with determination to keep the path, God will keep His own safe.

There is the promise to be kept from darkness, the promise to be kept from immorality, the promise to be kept from stumbling, and also to be kept from entanglement:

**3:24-26** *When you lie down, you will not be afraid; Yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror, Nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; For the LORD will be your confidence, And will keep your foot from being caught.*

The *foot being caught* implies capturing, trapping, gaining control over or restraining a person or animal as a figurative extension

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of having a limb caught in a trap.<sup>93</sup> God makes a promise that those carefully choosing His path will not be tangled with the affairs and evil schemes of the world. The climax of the text is the promise that God will be beside the follower of wisdom (v. 26). Proverbs never implies that people can be safe through their own wisdom. “Common sense” and personal competence are soon exhausted if God’s protection is missing.<sup>94</sup>

There is one more blessing mentioned in Proverbs by staying on the right path. On the right path Christians produce increasing light. **4:18** *But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.*

As God’s children continue in His path, the shining light of their life grows more and more evident. God is saying that when believers keep to His path their lives will have more effectiveness for Him. He will privilege them to expanded ministry so that their light will shine more and more. This is the principle referred to in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14ff).

Jesus taught that the one faithful in a little will be given more. For pastors, this does not necessarily mean a bigger church but a deeper effectiveness. When I accepted the Lord as my Saviour, I joined the Baptist church my father attended. The pastor remained in that church for 40 years. Being in a small farming community, the church never had more than 80 members through those years. Yet, the families from that church, whose children and grandchildren for the most part left the community, continued to love and serve God.

Many attended Bible College and went on to serve Him as pastors, missionaries, and faithful members of local churches throughout the world, of whom I am just one. What would you rather have as a pastor, a big church now or the legacy of multiple generations

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<sup>93</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>94</sup> Garrett, D. A. (1993). *Vol. 14: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs*. The New American Commentary (83). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

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of God's people influenced by your ministry? This is what this passage indicates. As God's people continue on His path, their light continues to shine through continued generations even after their life has passed.

When I was a pastor, people would ask how to know the will of God in their life. It must be understood that most of God's will is evident as His *disclosed will*, found in the Word of God. He teaches His children how to deal with our finances, how to raise our children, how to conduct our business, even how to guard our life with a spiritual health-check.

When someone asked how to find the will of God, my first response was to ask these questions. Are you walking in obedience to God in every area that you know of; without unconfessed sin, without following wrong paths, without pursuing wrong values? Often these questions exposed awareness of disobedience that prompted overdue confession and meaningful time with the Lord.

Yet, at other times the response would be, "Yes, but I don't know what God wants me to do in the future. Should I go to college? Should I get married? Should I buy a house?" These personal matters of God's leading are called the *undisclosed will* of God. This is not declared specifically in God's Word but is evident through God's Word. The way of discovering God's undisclosed will is by following the steps indicated in Proverbs 16.

God has a personal will for each of His children. He Himself chooses to lead His own into this will. In order to be led into this path of God's undisclosed, personal will, believers must be in fellowship with God and disciplined in meaningful personal devotions.

### STEPPING INTO GOD'S PATH

The Proverbs passage identifies the following steps which enable God to lead each Christian into His specific will for them:

#### **Step one:** The Believer's Dedication

#### **v. 3a** *Commit your works unto the LORD,*

This is the call to every believer to continually say, "Lord your will be done in my life." It is a commitment to keep ears open to the Spirit of God every day. It is to pray, "Lord God, as I begin this day, I give my life to you; Lord, I commit my way to you." Such

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determination will keep the believer's life before God with a willingness to go where God's will would lead.

### **Step Two:** The Believer's Dynamic

#### **v. 3b** *...and your thoughts will be established*

The second part of this verse is the privilege or the dynamic of the believer. It promises "thy thoughts will be established." When Christians daily commit their way to the Lord, God works in their mind to clarify thinking.

For me, this usually happens in the night when sleeping, and a pressing thought comes to my mind. For example, I was pleasantly contented as a pastor; nevertheless, I daily prayed for God's will for my life. In the course of time, we took our daughter to Bible College in the U.S.A. to begin her chosen field of education. When I returned home to pastoral ministry, I began dreaming of going back to Bible College.

I woke up with excitement, thinking I would enjoy going to Bible College again. The thought lingered in my mind. I asked the Lord to remove the lingering thought if this was not His will. Was God able to make me forget? Yes, of course He was. This was not a new procedure for me. Yet, instead of taking it from my mind, the idea became more pressing. God was establishing my thinking. Therefore, with the usual next step in mind, I proceeded to ask God to help me establish a plan.

### **Step Three:** The Believer's Discipline

#### **v. 9a** *A man's heart plans his way*

Because this idea never left my mind, I began to plan how I would go to school. Maybe God wanted me to stop being a pastor and go to school. Maybe God had a way for me to study and continue to be a pastor. The options included a school with online correspondence courses, a school that I would leave pastoral ministry to attend, or a school with modular courses that I would attend if my church allowed.) By God's grace, my mind was starting to develop plans to follow the leading of the Lord.

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### **Step Four:** The Believer's Direction

**v. 9b** *...but the LORD directs his steps.*

The second part of vs 9 says the Lord directs the steps. There were three schools possible, all with different situations. I contacted all three schools and was accepted by two. The other said they had no appropriate program of study for me. God was directing my steps. One school said to come down for an interview and with the churches permission I did so.

The Lord worked out the situation and confirmed in my heart that this is what He wanted. The elders in my church also confirmed this. The plan involved doing doctoral work through modular education by short trips, going to the school for two or three weeks at a time, three times a year. The elders said this was wonderful, accepting this as God's will, and promised to fill in for me. They also encouraged the church to continue my salary while attending classes.

With this defined process in Proverbs, God directed me, resulting in completing a Ph. D. in Biblical Studies. God later led me through the same process to become an international theological education missionary teacher. In this ministry, the Ph. D. degree became a necessary asset in continuing in God's will.

I have had churches ask me to leave the missionary teaching ministry and become their pastor. My answer is always the same. "You would not want a pastor who is out of the will of God." The unique privilege of peace, joy, and contentment which God has blessed my wife and I with is also expressed in the Proverbs process.

### **Step Five:** The Believer's Determination

**v. 20** *He who heeds the word wisely will find good, And whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he.*

God promises His own will that through a consistent walk with Him, they will "find good." They will find the will of God, find that which is best, and therefore find happiness. I have conducted several seminars on clinical depression, based upon the Ph. D. dissertation. When talking to attendees about what depresses them, many say they hate their jobs. I discovered that many people take the jobs they can get, not the jobs they want. Getting up every day and going

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to a hated job can be very discouraging. By God's grace, this has never been my own experience.

When I was an electronic engineering technician, I loved my job, and I had great opportunity to witness to people about Jesus Christ. Later, while attending Bible College, I had the opportunity to be a pastor. I enjoyed that ministry greatly. I have talked to pastors whose ministry was very difficult. The people were so harsh and demanding, but this never happened to me.

In the first church I pastored for 5 years, I loved the people and the people loved me. In the second church, I was pastor for 20 years. Yes, there were times when difficult situations arose, but we never had a meeting where people were screaming at each other. Some people left the church because they were not happy, but left on good terms, and, by God's grace, many were saved and far more joined church than left. These folks wanted to learn about God and were delighted with a teaching pastor. Here too there was an atmosphere of mutual love.

When I was a pastor, I thought I could never be happier. Nevertheless, when I became a missionary teacher, I found even greater happiness. I cannot count the many times while teaching church leaders in Ghana, India, and six other countries, when I have rested my head at night and cried tears of joy for the privilege God has given me. Truly, my cup runs over!

### **CONCLUSION**

My prayer is that, through this means of regular spiritual exercise of spiritual health, each reader will find the discipline to be right with God: the heart always right, the tongue always right, the eyes always right, the path always right. And with that discipline, each reader will experience the same peace, joy, and contentment which has been my experience. I encourage each reader to review this study every year. I discovered that the best way to do this is to teach it to others. Each time I teach this study God speaks to my heart about my weaknesses, which leads to renewed prayer of dedication.



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In his book *Good Morning Merry Sunshine*,<sup>95</sup> Chicago Tribune columnist Bob Greene chronicles his infant daughter's first year of life.

When little Amanda began crawling, he records: "This is something I'm having trouble getting used to. I will be in bed reading a book or watching TV. And I will look down at the foot of the bed and there will be Amanda's head staring back at me. Apparently, I've become one of the objects that fascinate her... It is so strange. After months of having to go to her, now she is choosing to come to me. I don't know quite how to react. All I can figure is that she likes the idea of coming in and looking at me. She doesn't expect anything in return. I'll return her gaze and, in a few minutes, she'll decide she wants to be back in the living room, and off she'll crawl again."

The simple pleasure of looking at the one you love, what Bob and his daughter enjoyed, is what God's people should enjoy through new life in Christ. Each time they bask in His presence through private devotions, corporate worship, or even times of trial, His work of transformation continues, and the privileges of that transformation become more precious.

Within the last few centuries, two books influenced Christianity more than any other books apart from the Bible. The first book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, was written by John Bunyan in 1678 while he was in prison for preaching. This book was translated into many languages. *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory. It begins with a man named Pilgrim who is carrying a big burden on his shoulders. He is struggling and then he sees the cross. When Pilgrim comes to the cross, the burden rolls away and his name changes to Christian.

The story continues sharing the path he follows, teaching that every time a Christian steps off the path of God's will, he/she finds trouble. This is exactly what the Bible teaches. There is a path God has for each one of His children, yet *there is a way that seems right to man, but the end leads to destruction*.

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<sup>95</sup> Bob Greene, *Good Morning Merry Sunshine* (Westminster: Penguin Books, 1985)

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The second book, *Knowing God* (1973), by J. I. Packer who said: “ignorance of God—ignorance both of his ways and of the practice of communion with him—lies at the root of much of the church’s weakness today.”<sup>96</sup> I urge every Christian to read these books which provide a wealth of insight into living the Christian life.

## SECTION II

### GOD’S SPIRITUAL FITNESS PLAN

#### PART 1

#### MY SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

#### PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

#### INTRODUCTION

1. 1Ti 4:8 *For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.*

2. All Believers need to maintain spiritual exercise

#### TEXT:

*But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ — yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

(Philippians 3:7-10)

#### CONTEXT:

1. Written to Christians
2. Written by Paul in prison
3. Paul’s personal testimony of devotion to Christ

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<sup>96</sup> <https://reasonabletheology.org/you-need-to-read-knowing-god/>

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

In the space provide for each following verse, summarize the verses meaning/application to you.

### MAINTAINING SPIRITUAL EXERCISE INVOLVES:

#### I. A Complete Denial of self by:

Denouncing self-effort, self-confidence, self-righteousness, self-satisfaction

*But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ (Phil. 3:7-8)*

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#### II. A Deliberate Walk of faith by:

##### 1. Living by the Power of Christ's Resurrection

*that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, (Phil. 3:10)*

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*Rom 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

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→Victory over sin is empowering

*Rom 6: 8, 11 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, . . . Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Reckon** = *logízomai* →To reckon means “to put to one’s account” It simply means to believe that what God says in His Word is really true in your life.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Ro. 6:11). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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→Victory over sin is a matter of believing

Rom 8:2-4 *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death... He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

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→Victory over sin is a choosing

2. Living in the Fellowship of Christ's Suffering  
*and the fellowship of His sufferings, (Phil. 3:10)*

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Is. 53:3 *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:*

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→ Holy God among sinful men – denying rights, valuing truth, despising sin, accepting the weaknesses of others, silence in persecution mistreatment

Is. 53:7 *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.*

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→Vulnerability, Humility

3. Living in Conformity to Christ's death  
*being conformed to His death (Phil. 3:10)*

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Rom. 6:4 *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

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→ Conformity to His Death is pictured by baptism

Rom. 6:6-7 *knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.*

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→ Conformed to His Death means freed from sin

Rom. 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service*

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→ Conformed to His Death calls for personal sacrifice

We have not advanced very far in our spiritual lives if we have not encountered the basic paradox of freedom... that we are most free when we are bound. But not just any way of being bound will suffice; what matters is the character of our binding. The one who would be an athlete, but who is unwilling to discipline his body by regular exercise and by abstinence, is not free to excel on the field or the track. His failure to train rigorously denies him the freedom to run with the desired speed and endurance. With one concerted voice, the giants of the devotional life apply the same principle to the whole of life: Discipline is the price of freedom. – Elton Trueblood

# **SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK**

NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## COMMENTARY

When the Philippian believers heard about Paul's imprisonment at Rome, they sent Epaphroditus, who may have been their pastor, to minister to him. Epaphroditus personally comforted Paul, expressing to him the affection of the saints in Philippi, and he brought Paul a financial contribution from them so that his confinement would be more comfortable (4:18). Three times before—twice when Paul was at Thessalonica, and once when he was at Corinth (Phil. 4:15–16; cf. 2 Cor. 11:9)—the saints ministered to his needs. The Book of Philippians might be called a thank-you note to saints in Philippi for their generous gifts. While Epaphroditus was in Rome, he became so ill he almost died (Phil. 2:27). After he recovered, he took Paul's letter to the Philippian Christians.<sup>98</sup>

The third chapter of Paul's epistle to the Philippians begins with warnings for God's people. Paul warns the church to be aware of those who teach righteousness by the human effort of obeying the law. He denounces his own past efforts of doing so as a Pharisee (3:5), then gives his personal testimony of devotion to Christ (3:7–10). In this passage, we see the disciplines of maintaining spiritual exercise.

The disciplines evident in Paul's life were first of all a complete denial of self. He clearly states that all his efforts toward righteousness prior to coming to know Christ were a complete loss (3:7–9). For a Pharisee to confess such was a denouncing of all self-effort, self-confidence, and self-satisfaction. For Paul, salvation's gaining of Christ was a total transformation, leading to a deliberate walk of faith.

Christ became the object of Paul's desire for fellowship. *That I might know Him* (v. 10). In sharing this, Paul defines the character of that walk of faith. He first states this walk is accomplished through living by the power of Christ's resurrection (Rom. 6:4). The resurrection of Jesus was not just a resuscitation; it was a new

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<sup>98</sup> Lightner, R. P. (1985). Philippians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.). *Vol. 2: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (646–648). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

form of life. In the same way the spiritual lives of believers in Jesus have a new, fresh quality... the start of new spiritual life now.<sup>99</sup>

In Romans 6:8-9, Paul explains that this is a matter of believing or reckoning to be “*dead to sin and alive to God.*” By the power of God in every believer’s life, sin is rendered powerless. This means that, for a Christian, falling to sin or victory over sin is a choice!

Paul explains the dilemma of a Christian in making the correct choice in Romans 7. Here he acknowledges the seeming conflict of the two battling natures of the Christian life.

*For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* (Rom.7:22-23).

Nevertheless, Paul’s ultimate conclusion is the choice of yielding to sin or choosing to walk in the Spirit and resting in God’s power.

*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death... He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* (Rom 8:2-4)

The believer lives a righteous life, not in the power of the Law, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Law does not have the power to produce holiness; it can only reveal and condemn sin. But the indwelling Holy Spirit enables you [the believer] to walk in obedience to God’s will. The righteousness that God demands in His Law is fulfilled in you [the believer] through the Spirit’s power. In the Holy Spirit, you [the believer] have life and liberty (Rom. 8:2) and “the pursuit of happiness” (Rom. 8:4).<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Witmer, J. A. (1985). Romans. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Ro 6:3–4). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>100</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Ro 8:4). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.



## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

The power which brought Christ forth from the dead now operates in believers' lives since they have been "raised with Christ" (Col. 3:1). "Power" (*dynamis*, also used in Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16) means ability to overcome resistance. By setting forth his own goals and ambitions Paul gave the Philippians an example to follow. His example was, of course, in stark contrast to the Judaizers whose example they were not to follow.<sup>101</sup>

For Paul, salvation's gaining of Christ was a total transformation, leading to a deliberate walk of faith in which Christ became the object of Paul's desire for fellowship. He first states this fellowship is realized by living in the power of Christ's resurrection and second, by living in the fellowship of His suffering (v. 10).

Isaiah predicted not only Christ's suffering for sin (Is. 5:5), but the cruel treatment he faced as one "*despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*" (Is. 53:3). He was the kind of individual people do not normally want to look at; they were repulsed by Him. For these reasons the nation did not esteem Him; they did not think He was important.<sup>102</sup> Yet, the reverse should have been the case. It is impossible for the minds of men to fathom the discomfort and humiliation of the Holy Son of God, perfect in humanity, innocent in thought and deed, living among depraved humanity. Eternal God when stepping into His once perfect creation, now ravaged by sin, subjected to Satan and under the curse of death, would have been justified to destroy all in its repulsive condition. Nevertheless, He came in love, experiencing the sorrows and grief such environment would moment by moment bring, to redeem and restore.

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<sup>101</sup> Lightner, R. P. (1985). Philippians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Php 3:10–11). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>102</sup> Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Is 53:3). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Paul also longed to share in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and in so doing to become like Him in His death (Phil. 3:10). These sufferings were not Christ's substitutionary sufferings on the cross. Paul knew that those could not be shared. But he did desire to participate with Christ, since he was one of His, in suffering for the sake of righteousness (cf. 1:29). God had used Ananias to tell Paul that this is precisely what he would do as a servant of Christ (Acts 9:16). The apostle did indeed suffer for Christ because he represented Him so openly and truly (cf. Rom. 8:36; 2 Cor. 4:10).<sup>103</sup>

In his second epistle to the church at Corinth written about 55 A.D., Paul related some of his own suffering.

*... in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and.* (2 Cor. 11:23-27)

Paul died a martyr's death about ten years later.

Paul revealed that his desire for fellowship with Christ would be realized by living in the power of Christ's resurrection, by living in the fellowship of His suffering, and by living in conformity to Christ's death (v. 10). These words express the idea of "being conformed inwardly in one's experience to something" (cf. Phil. 3:21), in this case, to Christ's death.<sup>104</sup> Paul explained this in Romans 6 by the illustration of baptism.

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<sup>103</sup> Lightner, R. P. (1985). Philippians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Php 3:10–11). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>104</sup> Lightner, R. P. (1985). Philippians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Php 3:10–11).

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Historians agree that the mode of baptism in the early church was immersion. The believer was “buried” in the water and brought up again as a picture of death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism by immersion (which is the illustration Paul is using in Rom. 6) pictures the believer’s identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is an outward symbol of an inward experience.<sup>105</sup> The idea of conformity to Christ’s death acknowledges the truth that salvation is not simple knowledge of the gospel facts but a living experience of fellowship with Christ.

This is what Paul’s desired fellowship with Christ was all about. He wanted to live in the knowledge of Christ, that is being identified with Christ crucified and risen. This means knowing *the power of his resurrection* in daily experience, *sharing his sufferings* by dying to the self-centred life that is natural to the believer, and being willing to face difficulty and hardship that the gospel of salvation may go out to all people. These two realities must always belong together in any genuine Christian life.<sup>106</sup>

Such conformity will not be achieved without spiritual exercise requiring daily self-denial and meaningful fellowship with Christ as Spurgeon illustrates:

A neighbor near my study persists in practicing on the flute. He bores my ears as with an auger and renders it almost an impossibility to think. Up and down his scale he runs remorselessly, until even the calamity of temporary deafness would almost be welcome to me. Yet he teaches me that I must practice if I would be perfect, must exercise myself unto godliness if I would be skillful, must, in fact, make myself familiar with the word of God, with holy living, and saintly dying. Such practice, moreover, will be as charming as my neighbor’s flute is intolerable. – *Charles Haddon Spurgeon*

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Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>105</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Rom. 6:2–5). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>106</sup> *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition*. 1994 (D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer & G. J. Wenham, Ed.) (4th ed.) (1256). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## SECTION II GOD'S SPIRITUAL FITNESS PLAN

### PART 2 MY SPIRITUAL INFLUENCES

#### PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

##### INTRODUCTION

Most amateur sports enthusiasts, in playing golf, do better in the long game than the short. It appears to be easier to drive a ball a distance in a general direction than to lob a ball a short specific direction. This has its own parallel in life! The distant relationships seem easy to manage but as relationships move toward the inner circle of comfort, humanity has an unavoidable tendency to "smack on another with the clubs."

One of the Churches greatest challenges is to become aware of the high calling of God in all human relationships. The poet speculated on the necessity of relations by stating: "no man is an island." God emphasized the importance of relationships in these foundational words, "*It is not good that man should be alone*" (Gen. 2:18).

The purpose of this study is to bring the believer into a deeper awareness and appreciation of friendship especially as it relates to the Christian life. It is imperative that the church regain its commitment to one another and to the community as a caring and loving people. Loneliness is one of the growing ailments in our society. Modern technology as well as career trends have created 'introvert' communities. Today's family is 'cocooning' in its self-sufficient environment. As a result, the development and the opportunity for growing relationships is stifled.

To this end, each believer must assess his own role in the community with the prophet's question: "*Is there balm (healing) in Gilead* (among the people of God)." If in our own communities the evidence of the love of Christ among God's own people is conspicuously absent, then the church has failed to be the epistles to the world that God designed it to be. It was the love among the early Christians that turned the hearts of the unsaved toward God. As the song states: "They shall know we are Christians by our love!" (John 13:35)

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

PROCEDURE: For each lesson, read the texts and answer the following related questions in the space provided.

## LESSON ONE

### AN OVERVIEW OF RELATIONSHIPS

#### TEXTS:

*For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29 NIV)*

*In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. (Hebrews 2:10 NIV)*

*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12 NIV)*

*Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, (Galatians 3:25-26 NIV)*

1. In terms of relationship, what is God's intention for each believer?

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#### TEXT:

*And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men. (Luke 2:52 NIV)*

2. In what areas did Jesus develop?

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3. What specific relational dimensions are mentioned?

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4. Comment on the significance of the order of Relationship: 1st-Favour with God, 2nd-Favour with Man:

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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TEXT:

*But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." (John 4:32 NIV)*

5. Comment on your understanding of the place of "Nourishment" in the believer's life as modelled by Jesus:

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## THE ORDER OF RELATIONSHIPS

TEXT:

*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31 NIV)*

6. State in your own words what the single focus of a believer's life is:

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The Glory of God referred to in Scripture is the visible manifestation as light of all that God is in perfection, power, and personality. To glorify Him is to show Him to be all that He truly is in all of our lives.

7. What do you think it means to "glorify God in all things"?

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Since the single focus of our lives is "Do all to the Glory of God!" (1 Cor.10:31), all personal relationships (Horizontal - people to people) must have this vertical goal (vertical goal = Glorify God). To achieve this each believer must make a personal commitment to a deepening relationship with God. In interpersonal relationships this means following God's own plan for relationships.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

### TEXT:

*And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. (James 2:23 NIV)*

8. How is Abraham's relationship described?

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9. On what was Abraham's relationship with God based?

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With Abraham, who is called the father of the faith, this deepening relationship with God is called "friendship." The first step in understanding interpersonal relationships is to understand this privilege which "people of faith" have. That is where this study will lead.

### CONCLUSION

10. What has this study taught you about God's desired relationship with mankind?

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11. What should mankind's desire toward God be?

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12. What is man's desire toward God in general?

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13. What are your reasons for answer 12?

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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14. What have you learned from this study that has affected you personally?

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### FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

In the frenzy of daily routine and people problems, my mind can capture a picture of peace and serenity by returning to my boyhood days of farm living.

I picture myself sitting on the rail fence in southern Ontario watching the cows pasture quietly in the field as a breeze passes over the long grass giving the impression of a gently rolling sea. The closest thing to violent activity is the occasional flick of a tail or twitch of an ear by a cow to chase away flies. Peace prevails.

The shepherds of Israel must have found a similar peace among the flocks of sheep because their word for pasturing grew to represent the best of life's peaceful coexistence among fellow human beings. The idea of sheep or cattle grazing side by side (rah-gah) grew to include the tranquility of two standing together in peace and harmony (rah-yah) and is translated into the English language as 'companion,' 'friend,' 'neighbour.'

To this beautiful expression of human relationship, God adds His own standard of excellence. Because man is made in the image of God, the true meaning of friendship can only be found in terms of God's friendship toward man.



# **SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK**

NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## LESSON TWO

### THE PATTERN OF GOD'S FRIENDSHIP TOWARD MAN: "SECURITY"

TEXT:

*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*  
(Prov. 17:17 NIV)

1. How does God describe a true friend?

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TEXT:

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (Romans 5:8 NIV)

2. How did God demonstrate this pattern of friendship?

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God's pattern of friendship says "take me as I am." It is expressed by UNCONDITIONAL LOVE EXTENDED to others as He has extended His love to us.  
This is FRIENDSHIP'S SECURITY.

3. How is this unconditional love evident in the following texts?  
*When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"* (John 4:7 NIV)

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*When he came to Jerusalem, he [Saul] tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.* (Acts 9:26-27 NIV)

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. I am sending him--who is my very heart--back to you. (Philemon 1:10-12 NIV)*

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*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*

(1 Corinthians 13: 4-8a NIV)

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4. State in terms of "unconditional love", each characteristic of the love described in the above texts:

*Example: love is patient = love will not express frustration at the inconsiderateness of others*

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TEXT:

*The poor are shunned even by their neighbours, but the rich have many friends. (Proverbs 14:20 NIV)*

5. How is love's pattern of friendship contrasted to the world's?

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

The world's philosophy of friendship says, "What you have is important, not who you are." This pattern of conditional friendship is shallow and ungodly. Yet, parents often reinforce the world's pattern by being demanding without showing affection, or when rewarding good behaviour by affection and bad behaviour by rejection.

6. How would you assess the pattern of friendship expressed in your home, your workplace, your community?

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### TEXT:

*What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns?*

*Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:31-38 NIV)*

7. How is God's pattern of unconditional love characterized by Christ, beyond His death, for us?

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## **SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK**

8. How can you apply this example of unconditional love in your life?

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### **CONCLUSION**

9. How is God's unconditional love a source of security in the life of a Christian?

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10. Why is the unconditional love of true friendship valuable?

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11. What personal challenges has this study brought to you?

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### **NOTES**

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## LESSON THREE

### THE PATTERN OF GOD'S FRIENDSHIP TOWARD MAN: RESPONSIBILITY.

#### TEXT:

*Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father, and do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you--better a neighbour nearby than a brother far away. (Proverbs 27:10 NIV)*

1. How is the responsibility of friendship stated here?

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God's pattern of friendship is the responsibility of responding to need. In essence, it is UNCONDITIONAL LOVE EXEMPLIFIED by a believer toward others in a loyalty that accepts responsibility when a friend is in need.

#### TEXT:

*A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24 NIV)*

2. To what level does God raise the responsibility of friendship?

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3. How did God model this in the following texts?

#### TOWARD DAVID:

*Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. (Psalms 27:10 NIV)*

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**TOWARD ELIJAH:***Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. (1 Kings 19:5-6 NIV)*

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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### TOWARD STEPHEN:

*But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. (Acts 7:55-58 NIV)*

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4. How did the following people of God model the responsibility of friendship?

### JONATHAN THE PRINCE:

*Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. (1 Samuel 9:4 NIV)*

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### JOHN THE APOSTLE:

*Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he Loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. (John 19:25-27 NIV)*

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### BARNABAS THE MISSIONARY:

*37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. 39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company.*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, (Acts 15 NIV)*

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### TEXT:

*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psalm 23 NIV)*

5. Identify what need the Lord meets in each of the above verses as our "Good Shepherd"?

vs. 1 \_\_\_\_\_

vs. 2 \_\_\_\_\_

vs. 3 \_\_\_\_\_

vs. 4 \_\_\_\_\_

vs. 5 \_\_\_\_\_

vs. 6 \_\_\_\_\_

6. How is this Psalm a model to believers of God's pattern of friendship which accepts responsibility of those in need?

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## CONCLUSION

7. How have these texts helped you understand God's pattern of friendship's responsibility?

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8. What specific responsibility is God calling you to as a friend?

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9. What have you learned in this study that is personally meaningful?

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## NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## LESSON FOUR

### THE PATTERN OF GOD'S FRIENDSHIP TOWARD MAN: "VULNERABILITY."

TEXT:

*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13 NTV)*

1. To what new height has God raised the call of friendship?

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Although few in North America would risk death as a result of commitment to God's pattern of friendship, there are many each year in other parts of the world who are completely vulnerable, even to the point of death.

God's call of friendship is to an attitude of willingness to lay down our lives even as He laid down His own.

This is UNCONDITIONAL LOVE EXPRESSED to the highest degree of vulnerability.

TEXT:

*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (I Peter 5:8-9 NIV)*

2. In your own words, define this text's teaching about the fellowship of suffering among believers:

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3. How is this fellowship of suffering characterized in the following texts?

*David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there. All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered round him, and he became their leader. About four*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*hundred men were with him. (1 Samuel 22:1-2 NIV)*

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*But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house. When David was told, "Uriah did not go home," he asked him, "Haven't you just come from a distance? Why didn't you go home?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and My master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!" (2 Samuel 11:9-11 NIV)*

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*And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. (2 Corinthians 8:1-4 NIV)*

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### TEXT:

*11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12 NIV)*

David's men suffered with Him as outcasts in their own country as he ran from King Saul. Early believers suffered with the apostles in great persecution as the gospel spread throughout the land. Many believers today understand this fellowship of suffering; people like Dr. Paul Brand who spent his entire Christian carrier among lepers,

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

and Mother Theresa, who joined the poorest of this world for the sake of friendship with Christ.

TEXT:

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. (Galatians 3:13 NIV)*

4. How did Christ model this vulnerability?

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TEXT:

*"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also." (John 15:18-20 NIV)*

5. What did Jesus say about His call to vulnerability?

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TEXT:

*I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11 NIV)*

6. How did Paul view this fellowship of suffering?

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For the believer, the fellowship of suffering is a commitment to participate in the suffering of Christ. It is to say; "I stand with Christ, therefore I'm as vulnerable as Christ." This pattern of friendship is focused on the Cross where Christ died for us. The vulnerability of the cross, in which Christ bore our sin and our shame

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

through suffering and death, was the price of man's restored friendship with God. He laid down his life for us; he rightfully asks, "How far will you go for friendship - to death?"

### CONCLUSION

These first lessons have focused on the study of God's pattern of friendship. Summarize what you understand these patterns to be: God's pattern of friendship begins with SECURITY:

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God's pattern of friendship involves RESPONSIBILITY:

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God's pattern of friendship is a call to VULNERABILITY:

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### TEXT:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (Galatians 5:22 NIV)*

7. In each of these identifiable patterns, the unconditional love of God was foremost. According to Galatians 5:22, why are these patterns the potential of each believer?

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When their oil rig, the Progress Marine No. 2, capsized and overturned in the Gulf of Mexico in June of 1975, Darrel J. Dore managed to survive living on the oxygen in the air bubble about fifty feet below the surface. As skin divers sought to rescue Dore and eleven others, they managed to get a supply of oxygen pumped to the rig to replenish the supply of oxygen until escape was possible. After his rescue Dore said: "I gave up hope three or four times and

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

then all of a sudden there was a hand reaching down for me."<sup>107</sup>

Into our planet, submerged under the wrath of a righteous God, has come a supply of new life in the Gospel. There is a hand reaching out to every weary sinner who has given up hope; that hand is Christ's. He is both willing and able to save all who come unto God by Him, extending friendship's offer to each one. Can His call to friendship be any less of a commitment when He Himself abides in the believer's heart?

Entering through faith into that relationship of "Sonship" bestows in every believer's heart the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit manifests Himself in a life by producing Godliness, the Christian is afforded the potential for true expressions of friendship in God's pattern toward God and man. Consider now the privileges of friendship with God.

### NOTES

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<sup>107</sup> From "Mosaic, News You can Use," *The Prairie Overcomer*, September, 1975.

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## LESSON FIVE

### THE PRIVILEGES OF MAN'S FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

Shortly before his death, Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote *Youth and Age* in which he reflected over his past and the strength of his earlier years. He wrote: "Friendship is a sheltering tree... To have friendship with God is to the reality of the Lord as a sheltering tree. David was a man "after God's own heart." In his trials he came to realize the special friendship of God that assured him of God's care. "<sup>108</sup>

*The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble* (Psalms 9:9 NIV). David repeated that thought forty-four times in the Psalms. Like David, those who know the Lord and are given opportunity for a special status of friendship with God. The care that David realized, they can know. This sense of "sheltering tree" carries unique privileges. Jesus shared these specifically with His disciples.

#### TEXT:

*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this: that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit — fruit that will last — and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other. (John 15:12-17 NIV)*

Friendship with God brings specific privileges to His own: **First**, there is the privilege of the PERCEPTION OF TRUTH.

1. What distinction did Jesus make between friends and servants? (vs. 15)?

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<sup>108</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Youth and Age*, quoted in Charles Swindon "A Sheltering Tree," *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1983), p.153

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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2. What did Jesus share as a privilege of friendship with Him (vs. 15)?

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Jesus emphasizes the difference between servants who simply do what they are told with no explanation, and friends who are given the plans and insights of the Lord.

TEXT:

*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. (Hebrews 1:1-2 NIV)*

3. By what means does God give His plans and insights in these last days?

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TEXTS:

*How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. (Hebrews 2:3 NIV)*

*Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. (Jude 1:3 NIV)*

4. How has God brought this message from Christ down to us today?

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## TEXTS:

*Above all, you must understand that no prophecy-of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21 NIV)*

*All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (2 Timothy 3:16 NIV)*

*I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (Matthew 5:18 NIV)*

*I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (Revelation 22:18-19 NIV)*

5. Write out your observations regarding what Scriptures say in the above texts, about the **process** and **product** of God giving us His Word in written form:

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## TEXT:

*The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes (Psalms 19:7-8 NIV)*

6. What blessings are available to the believer through the Word of God?

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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TEXT:

*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)*

7. What protection is available to the believer through the word?

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TEXT:

*The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14 NIV)*

8. What is the prerequisite for understanding God's truth?

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TEXT:

*As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit--just as it has taught you, remain in him. (1 John 2:27 NIV)*

9. What is the promise to every believer in 1 John 2:27?

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TEXT:

*I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. (Psalm 119:99)*

10. What does David say about the value of meditating on the Word of God?

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Consider the privilege of having God's Word (His Truth) and God's Spirit (The Teacher). First, the believer who studies the Word has the Key to Natural Science because he/she has a personal relationship with the Creator. Only through the accuracy of Scripture can an accurate understanding of scientific data be arrived at.

Although atheistic scientists believe that the world we live in has always existed under the same natural laws, the Scriptures speak of two previous worlds entirely different from ours. First, there was the world of Eden where Adam and Eve dwelt without sin and without death. The second world existed after sin entered but before the flood, a time when a vapour canopy circled the earth and men lived for 900 years.<sup>109</sup>

11. How might these truths affect the interpretation of scientific evidence?

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Friendship with God brings specific privileges:

**Second**, the believer who studies the Word has the Key to Human Framework.

TEXT:

*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve. (Jeremiah 17:9-10 NIV)*

12. Who really knows man?

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TEXT:

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints*

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<sup>109</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), pp. 58-59

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12 NIV)*

13. What has God given man that he might come to know himself?

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### TEXT:

*Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 NIV)*

14. What other key is available for the believer through Bible study?

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God has laid out His plans and, through the Word, they can be understood by His friends. This is privilege of understanding which goes beyond all the wisdom of great minds of world.

### CONCLUSION:

15. What have you learned from this study?

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### NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## LESSON SIX

### THE PRIVILEGES OF MAN'S FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

We have discovered from our text of John 15 that friendship with God secures the privilege of the PERCEPTION OF TRUTH. There is also the privilege of the PERSONIFICATION OF CHRIST.

TEXT:

*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. (John 15:16 NIV)*

1. What is the promise to every believer?

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TEXT:

*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:1-3 NIV)*

2. What does God say will happen to every believer when he sees Jesus face to face?

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God has promised that we shall be like Jesus in Glory. There we will not be burdened with the weakness of sin nor confined to the limitations of natural laws. We shall be truly free to soar as a bird and discern all truth without the foggy spectacles of human depravity. Although this is a time to look forward to with longing, the believer also has the special privilege in this life of being made like Christ.

TEXT:

*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, [even] as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18)*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

3. What are the implications of the previous text as related to a believer's changing character.

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4. Whose character is produced in the believer's life?

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TEXT:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (Galatians 5:22 NIV)*

5. To what is this changing character compared?

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As a grape vine produces clusters of grapes on a single strand of vine and is seen as a unit, so the fruit of the Spirit is singular (fruit) yet multiple (love, joy, etc.).

6. With the texts provided below, comment on the effect of each characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit in a believer's life:

LOVE

*And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. (Romans 5:5 NIV)*

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JOY

*Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10 NIV)*

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PEACE

*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27 NIV)*

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### LONGSUFFERING

*Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, (Colossians 1:11 NIV)*

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### GENTLENESS

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32 NIV)*

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### GOODNESS

*I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. (Romans 15:14 NIV)*

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### FAITH

*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1 NIV)*

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### MEEKNESS

*By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away! (2 Corinthians 10:1 NIV)*

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

### TEMPERANCE

*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its prisons and desires. (Galatians 5:24 NIV)*

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### TEXT:

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5 NIV)*

7. What is the condition necessary for fruit being produced in the believer?

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### TEXT:

*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. (John 15:16 NIV)*

8. What did Jesus say about the fruit that He would produce in a believer?

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The privilege of friendship is the character of Jesus in our lives now! Jesus declares that this fruit should remain. This means that it shall be permanent and have lasting effect. Fruit has one purpose, to reproduce after its kind! The privilege of remaining fruit is the heritage we pass on to the next generation, a heritage of continued salvation and Christlikeness in our children and grandchildren after us!

### CONCLUSION

9. Comment on your perception of the growing evidence of the Fruit of the Spirit in your own life.

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10. In what specific way has this study helped you?

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NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## LESSON SEVEN

### THE PRIVILEGES OF MAN'S FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

We have discovered from our text of John 15 that friendship with God secures the privilege of the PERCEPTION OF TRUTH, and the privilege of the PERSONIFICATION OF CHRIST. Now let's examine the privilege of the POWER IN PRAYER. *Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.* (John 15:16 NIV)

Have you ever had that "Sense of Confirmation" in your heart that God did something just because you asked? Imagine Elijah's jubilation when after a drought of 3 years and 6 months, he prayed, and it rained buckets. Imagine the joy of Moses. God spoke to him face to face as a friend, and through his plea he stopped the hand of God's wrath on Israel. These, being "God's Friends," were led to pray in such a manner and saw the power of God.

#### TEXT:

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.* (James 5:16 NIV)

1. Who has this kind of persuasive power of prayer?

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#### TEXT:

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV)

2. What is the blessing of a believer who will go to God in earnest prayer?

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3. In the following texts, identify the "attitude of heart" in approaching God in prayer:

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. (Psalm 131:1 NIV)*

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*Praise the LORD. Praise the name of the LORD; praise him, you servants of the LORD, you who minister in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God. (Psalm 135:1-2 NIV)*

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*I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy. I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble. (Psalm 142:1-2 NIV)*

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*"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, (Matthew 6:9 NIV)*

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*Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16 NIV)*

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### TEXT:

*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last — and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (John 15:16 NIV)*

4. In the above text, is praying in "Jesus name" a formula for guaranteeing that God grants the believer every request? (Comment on the reason for your answer.)

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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TEXT:

*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. (1 John 5:14 NIV)*

5. What is one important truth about believers' requests to God in prayer?

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*Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4 NIV)*

6. How does "praying in God's will" fit the promise of Psalm 37:4?

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7. What are some other important prerequisites for going to God in prayer found in the following?

*If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; (Psalm 66:18 NIV)*

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*But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:15 NIV)*

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*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16 NIV)*

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

8. Identify and comment on the perils to avoid in prayer in each of the following texts:

*And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. (Matthew 6:5 NKJV)*

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*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widow's houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore you shall receive the greater damnation (Matthew 23:14)*

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*When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:3 NIV)*

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### CONCLUSION

9. Write out your evaluation of your present personal prayer life.

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10. Write out a commitment to God that focuses on an improved prayer time as a privilege of friendship with God.

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## TEXT

*I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other. (John 15:15-17 NIV)*

11. What are the three privileges that "Friendship with God" affords evident in John 15:15-17?

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12. Comment on what each of these privileges means to you now.

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## NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## LESSON EIGHT

### THE PATH OF MAN'S FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

The privileges of friendship with God found in John 15 are worthy of every person's aspirations; however, they are not gained by all. Jesus also indicated that there was a specific path in finding these privileges. The path to Friendship with God begins with God. *Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.* (John 15:13 NIV)

1. State in your own words the significance of Christ's death as referred to in each of the following texts:

*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

(2 Corinthians 5:21)

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*For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,* (1 Peter 3:18 NIV)

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*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

(John 3:16 NIV)

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Each person must personally accept God's provision of salvation. Like Pilgrim in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, all must follow the path of repentance and the cross.

2. According to the following text, what does that path of repentance and the cross involve?

*That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

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*For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

(Romans 10:9-10 NIV)

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3. According to the following texts, what new relationships do believers have with God?

Believers are...

*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12 NIV)*

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*But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. (Romans 6:17-18 NIV)*

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*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, (Ephesians 5:25-26 NIV)*

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4. The following text declares a specific **path** that the friend of God must take. Write out the sentence that speaks of this path.

*I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask*





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David, a man after God's own heart, valued the friendship of God. He pondered the wonder of God's grace and goodness and made this statement. *My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long* (Psalm 35 NIV). God's friends speak continually of Him. Be ready to share your testimony with the others in your study group as a means of praising God's name.

NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## LESSON NINE

### SECTION THREE - FRIENDSHIP WITH MAN

When God assessed His creation of Adam, His comment was "*It is not good that man should be alone.*" As a result, God created Eve and instituted marriage. One of the first things God said to Adam and Eve was "*Be fruitful and multiply.*" As a result, God instituted society. Both marriage and society require the interaction of people. This constitutes relationships. It follows then that by God's design, there would be within these institutions of marriage and society, varying levels of relationships or acquaintance, and that somewhere in this range of acquaintance is the wonderful gift from God called friendship.

As expressed in the following poem, man has come to treasure this gift:

There's happiness in little things,  
There's joy in passing pleasures,  
But friendships are, from year to year  
The best of all life's treasures.

Because friendship is a meaningful and purposeful gift from God, believers in particular need to understand God's teaching about friendship.

### THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF FRIENDSHIP

**FIRST**, friendship is related to the Believer's PERSONAL CALL.

1. What is the call of a believer as indicated in the following verses?  
*For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* (Romans 8:29 NIV)

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*In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.* (Hebrews 2:10 NIV)

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12 NIV)*

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*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26 NIV) In terms of relationship, God defined the believers call as "being made sons of God."*

### TEXT:

*And when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11:26 NIV)*

2. What did the community of Antioch begin to call the believers?

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3. Why do you think the believers were called by this term?

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The term "Christian" was probably a derogatory term used to identify believers who adopted a new lifestyle different from the norm. The term suggests "little Christs," and implies the intent of Holy God to perpetuate a family after His own name and manifesting His own character among rebellious mankind.

### TEXTS:

*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17 NIV)*

*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31 NIV)*

4. From the above texts, in your own words define what the fundamental purpose of a Christian is?

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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5. Paul reduced all activity of the Christian down to the purpose of glorifying God. From in the following text, state in your own words how "glorifying God" and being a Child of God go hand in hand.

*In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise (glorify) your Father in heaven.*

(Matthew 5:16)

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6. In terms of human relationships, who are the people most affected by the "shining light" of the Christian?

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**SECOND**, friendship is related to a believer's PUBLIC CONCERN.  
TEXT

*"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.*

(Matthew 5:14-15 NIV)

7. How does this text relate Sonship's "shining light" to expressing public concern?

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The Christian's purpose of "bringing glory to God in all things" finds its greatest opportunity through human friendship. Those whom believers know best are the most influenced by them! Therefore, the believers call to Sonship is keenly expressed through public concern in declaring the gospel, especially to our friends. No other avenue of reaching the lost has ever been as effective as friend reaching friend.

8. Comment on the relationship that existed between the following people and whom they influenced to follow Christ.

**JOHN THE BAPTIST**

*The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.*

*(John 1:35-37 NIV)*

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### ANDREW

*Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). (John 1:40-41 NIV)*

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### PHILIP

*Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:44-45 NIV)*

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### LEVI

*After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. (Luke 5:27-29 NIV)*

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### SAMARITAN WOMAN

*Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" (John 4:28-29 NIV)*

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Although the relationships of the above were varied from brothers to acquaintances, it is clear that each of these had the greatest influence on those who knew them.

### CONCLUSION

9. According to this study, what is God's first purpose for friendship?

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10. Name two close friends that you know would be influenced by your clear testimony of personal trust in Christ:

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11. Plan an opportunity for sitting down undisturbed with each of these friends for the purpose of sharing Christ. Bathe these plans in prayer and go "let your light shine."

### NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## LESSON TEN

### THE DEVELOPMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF FRIENDSHIP

Having the privilege of influencing a friend to accept God's gift of salvation does not fulfil all that God intended friendship to be. The various levels of relationships all carry their own particular responsibilities. In this lesson the levels of friendship are presented,<sup>110</sup> with appropriate Biblical principles to examine. Paul desired to be *all things to all people that he might win (influence) some*. Every Christian should view friendship with that same encompassing determination.

#### THE FIRST LEVEL IS:

##### ACQUAINTANCES; THE PRINCIPLE OF "SHOWING"

1. In the following texts, in what way did Jesus "show" the people of His community the Father?

*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*

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*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared [him]. (John 1:18)*

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#### TEXT

*No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. (1 John 4:12 NIV)*

2. In what way do believers "show" their acquaintances the Father?

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<sup>110</sup> "Basic Seminar Textbook" of Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts. Taught by Bill Gothard, pp. 177-179



## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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Here are some tips to consider in living the principle of showing.

1. Look for new people around you.
2. Smile, be friendly.
3. Learn, remember, and greet them by name.
4. Listen well and ask questions of interest.
5. Let the love of God be expressed through you.

God's love is expressed in kindness with commitment to God's truth and holiness. The love of God is not a compromising expression of affection but embraces all that God Himself loves.

### TEXT

*All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47 NIV)*

3. Comment on how the early Christians demonstrated the principle of showing.
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### THE SECOND LEVEL IS:

CASUAL FRIENDS; THE PRINCIPLE OF "SHARING"

### TEXT

*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, (1 Peter 3:15 NIV)*

4. What is it about our lives that stimulates others to inquiry?
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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

5. List some instances in which this 'hope' might be demonstrated in a Christian?

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6. In the above text, what is the necessary attitude to have in sharing our hope?

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Here are some tips for living out the principle of sharing Christ among our casual acquaintances.

1. Learn their strong points.
2. Learn their ambitions and desires.
3. Listen and demonstrate concern.
4. Learn to be honest with them.
5. Pray for them.

### TEXT

*After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.*

*The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They-replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."*

(Acts 16:23-31 NIV)

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

7. Comment on how Paul and Silas demonstrate the principle of sharing.

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THE THIRD LEVEL IS:

CLOSE FRIENDS; THE PRINCIPLE OF "ENCOURAGING"

TEXT

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV)*

8. What are all believers urged to do for one another in the above text?

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9. What are some ways that other Christians have encouraged you toward love and good deeds?

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10. What two things (as the text go on to state in v. 25) are necessary for this encouragement to be effective?

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Here are some suggestions for living out the principle of encouragement among our close friends.

1. Look for potential in their lives.
2. Learn and discuss special goals.
3. List and define (together) hindrances.
4. Find ways to help them achieve sound goals.
5. Use scripture to encourage and direct.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

### TEXT

*Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. (Acts 18:24-28 NIV)*

11. Comment on how Aquila and Priscilla demonstrate the principle of encouraging.

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### THE FOURTH LEVEL IS:

INTIMATE FRIENDS; THE PRINCIPLE OF "BEARING"

### TEXT

*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13 VIV)*

12. What did Jesus state the highest commitment to friendship was?

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13. How does the following parable relate to that same level of commitment? *Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.*" (Luke 11:5-8 NIV)

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14. In what way does the following text address this commitment?  
*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.* (Galatians 6:1-2 NIV)

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Here are some ideas for living out the principle of bearing among our intimate friends.

1. Learn to give comfort.
2. Identify and discuss traits and attitudes (good and bad).
3. Be open and honest.
4. Be loyal in all circumstances, having a godly jealousy.
5. Learn, study, and apply Scripture together.

### TEXT

*"Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."* (Ruth 1:15-17 NIV)

15. How does Naomi demonstrate this principle of bearing?

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## CONCLUSION

16. List two individuals you know for each level of friendship.

Acquaintance: \_\_\_\_\_

Casual: \_\_\_\_\_

Close: \_\_\_\_\_

Intimate: \_\_\_\_\_

17. Review the principles that apply to these levels and seek to exercise God's desire for you in each.

## NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## LESSON ELEVEN

### BIBLICAL PRIORITIES IN FRIENDSHIP

Chuck Swindoll, in his book *Growing in the Seasons of Life*, shares a quote regarding the real impact of sincere friendship. He says, "I agree with John R. Mott: Rule by the heart. When logic and argument and other forms of persuasion fail, fall back on the heart-genuine friendship."<sup>111</sup>

Heart-genuine friendship that results in such an affirmation of confidence must accept the cost of friendship's high priority. God shares these priorities in His Word.

TEXT:

*Stone is heavy and sand a burden, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both. Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?*

*Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*

*One who is full loathes honey from the comb, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet.*

*Like a bird that flees its nest is anyone who flees from home.*

*Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice. Do not forsake your friend or a friend of your family, and do not go to your relative's house when disaster strikes you — better a neighbor nearby than a relative far away.*

*Be wise, my son, and bring joy to my heart; then I can answer anyone who treats me with contempt.*

*The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.*

*Take the garment of one who puts up security for a stranger; hold it in pledge if it is done for an outsider.*

*If anyone loudly blesses their neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse.*

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<sup>111</sup> John R. Mott, quoted in Charles Swindoll "Friendly - Inside Out," *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1983), p.97

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*A quarrelsome wife is like the dripping of a leaky roof in a rain-storm; restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand.*

*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.*  
(Proverbs 27:3-17 NIV)

According to the above text, heart-genuine friendship is expressed through four priorities.

1. Loving Concern - v.5-6
2. Sincere Counsel - v.9
3. Sacrificial Commitment - v.10
4. Discerning Consideration - v.14

## THE PRIORITY OF LOVING CONCERN

From the above text complete the following:

1. Identify the expressions of loving concern in verses 5 and 6.

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2. In your own words explain what "the wounds of a friend" are.

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3. Explain what the "kisses of an enemy" could involve.

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## THE PRIORITY OF SINCERE COUNSEL

4. In verse 9 above, hearty counsel is compared to perfume in delighting the heart. Comment on how a close friend's counsel might be so.

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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### TEXT

*Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.*

*Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose (counsel) that prevails. (Proverbs 19:20-21 NIV)*

5. Whose counsel should be foremost in our plans?

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6. Sincere counsel is a commitment to sharing God's truth. What does the following text have to offer in the way of qualifying the counsel true friendship gives?

*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. (Ephesians 4:14-15 NIV)*

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### THE PRIORITY OF SACRIFICIAL COMMITMENT

7. What is God saying in verse 10 about friendship and hard times?

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8. How did the following believers rise to the challenge of this commitment?

### TYCHICUS

*Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. (Ephesians 6:21 NIV)*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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### LYDIA

*One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.*  
(Acts 16:14-15NIV)

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### BARNABAS

*Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.*  
(Acts 4:36-37 NIV)

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### DORCAS

*Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.* (Acts 9:39 NIV)

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### GAIUS

*Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.* (3 John 1:5-6 NIV)

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## THE PRIORITY OF DISCERNING CONSIDERATION

9. What is God saying in the following texts about discernment?

*If a man loudly blesses his neighbour early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse. (Proverbs 27:14 NIV)*

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*Seldom set foot in your neighbour's house—too much of you, and he will hate you. (Proverbs 25:17 NIV)*

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10. From the perspective of being a good friend, comment on the necessary areas of discernment suggested in the following verses:

*Like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows is a man who deceives his neighbour and says, "I was only joking!"*

(Proverbs 26 :18-19NIV)

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*A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.*

*A violent man entices his neighbour and leads him down a path that is not good. (Proverbs 16:28-29 NIV)*

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## CONCLUSION

### TEXT

*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*

(Proverbs 27:17 NIV)

The result of accepting these priorities of friendship is seen in verse 17 - the mutual fine-tuning of one another's lives in Christ like character. It can be readily seen that heart-genuine friendship is no small matter. Rather, it comes with a commitment to specific priorities. Those who would aspire to be such friends will be greatly rewarded. The Bible describes this mutual fine tuning of one another's

## **SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK**

lives in Christian character, "*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*" (Proverbs 27:17 NIV) Such friendship becomes so much a part of life as to be the very pulse of the heart.

NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## LESSON TWELVE

### THE STRONG PULSE OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP

There is one story of friendship in the Bible that is worthy of special study. It is the story of two young men whose lives were brought together under great stress by the leading of God. The story of David and Jonathan expresses the very best of what God intended intimate friendship to be.

In a day when strong ties between people of the same sex are questioned regarding morality, this story brings a fresh spring breeze to our spiritual senses and awakens God's people to the innocent beauty of the spiritual bond of "kindred spirits." The story is best appreciated read in its entirety.

Take time now to put your feet up and read about the strong pulse of true friendship found in 1 Samuel 16 - 20, along with the sad epitaph by David in 2 Samuel 1 - 2.

### THE HEART OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP BEATS WITH:

#### THE PULSE OF UNBREAKABLE PARTNERSHIP

1. Describe in your own words the bond between David and Jonathan.

*And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. (1 Samuel 18:1 KJV)*

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*After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. (1 Samuel 18:1 NIV)*

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As evident above, the KJV uses the English word "Knit" in this passage as the translation of the Hebrew "kaw-shar," which means to be bound together, or tied to one another. The same word is used

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

in Job describing how God "binds" the stars in place. The word describes an unshakeable partnership.

2. How was this unbreakable tie put to the test in David and Jonathan's circumstances?

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As Israel was to 'bind' the law to their lives, so that their thoughts and actions were governed by God's Word (Deut. 6), so Jonathan and David were bound together.

THE HEART OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP BEATS WITH:  
THE PULSE OF UNSHAKEABLE PASSION

### TEXTS

*After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.* (1 Samuel 18:1 NIV)

3. In what ways did Jonathan love David?

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The love mentioned here is not sensual, but the deep emotional attachment of true friend. This is the Hebrew word "*aw-hab*," the mortar of true friendship, a love that seemingly fills God's specially built compartment of our heart by friendship. This love is unshakeable.

4. From your reading of 1 & 2 Samuel, in what ways did this love between Jonathan and David remain unshakeable through the following tests (identify the tests and comment on the victory of love):

### THE TEST OF SUCCESS

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### THE TEST OF PERSONAL LOSS

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## THE TEST OF JEALOUSY AND HATE

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## THE TEST OF STRESS

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## THE HEART OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP BEATS WITH: THE PULSE OF UNMISTAKEABLE PURPOSE

### TEXTS

*And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.* (1 Samuel 18:3 NIV)

*As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the LORD. If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?*

(1 Samuel 20:8 NIV)

5. Describe, in your own words, the nature of the covenant that David and Jonathan made.

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This was a Covenant made "before the Lord." Such a covenant implied the clear, unmistakable commitment to God's purpose in which GOD'S WILL and GOD'S WAY were first. Both men were committed to God. Because they each were, by this covenant, bound to Jehovah, they were each bound to the other.

6. Consider the following statements and comment on your agreement or disagreement to each. Explain your reasons.

TO EMBRACE GOD'S PURPOSE IS TO HAVE GOD'S BEST

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TO EMBRACE GOD'S PURPOSE OFTEN MEANS SOLITUDE

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

TO EMBRACE GOD'S PURPOSE AND BE JOINED BY  
OTHERS FORMS A TOWER OF STRENGTH

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## CONCLUSION

Frank Lloyd Wright was a world-famous architect when he was commissioned to design the Imperial Hotel in Japan. After assessing the land and environmental conditions of the area, he designed the Hotel to "Float on Swamp." Although many looked skeptically at the designs, the building was constructed accordingly. On Sept. 1, 1923 Tokyo suffered a great earthquake in which over 140,000 people died.<sup>112</sup>

In the midst of the chaos and destruction there was one oasis of safety, the Imperial Hotel. Because of the superior design, the hotel withstood the earthquake to become a temporary hospital, shelter from ravaging fires, and a fresh water source which saved countless lives. God intended friendship to be like that hotel.

God has provided three beacons to guide His children. The same rules of navigation apply—three lights must be lined up before it is safe for to proceed. The three harbor lights of guidance are:

1. The Word of God (objective standard)
2. The Holy Spirit (subjective witness)
3. Circumstances (divine providence)

Together they assure God's children that the directions received are from God and will lead to safely.

*Gregory Asimakoupoulos*

Friendship, built after God's own master design, is a sheltering tree, a refuge during rough seas and an oasis in the midst of a scorched land. If God has blessed you with that kind of friendship, take time to thank Him. Ask the Lord to help you be that kind of a friend to a brother or sister in the Lord.

May God guide each reader to His safe harbor of spiritual well-being.

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<sup>112</sup> Bits & Pieces (New Jersey: Economics Press, 1992) pp. 11-14.



# **SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK**

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# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## STUDY 2

### GOD'S WORD ABOUT ABUNDANT LIFE

#### INTRODUCTION

Speaking of His own sheep (those who would be saved through the giving of His life), Jesus said, *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly* (Jn. 10:10). Jesus intends for believers to have abundant life. The Pulpit Commentary describes this abundant life.

This is one of the grandest of our Lord's claims. He gives like God from overflowing stores (Titus 3:6). Those who receive life from him have within them perennial sources of life for others—fullness of being ... One of the differentia of "life" is "abundance" of supply beyond immediate possibility of use. Life has the future in its arms. Life propagates new life. Life has untold capacities about it—beauty, fragrance, strength, growth, variety, reproduction, resistance to death, continuity, eternity. In the Logos is *life*—and Christ came to give it, to communicate "life to the non-living, to the dead in trespasses, and to those in their graves."<sup>113</sup>

The essence of this Abundant Life is not to have 'possessions' but to 'be possessed.' God's people, indwelt by God Himself, have the unique experience of God's own life power, overflowing through them. *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."* (Jn. 7:38).

Unfortunately, the church, especially in North America, has for the most part lost sight of this truth. The church's focus on abundance is little different than the world's focus: the accumulation of personal wealth and possessions. As such, the body of Christ is robbing itself of the rich blessings of Abundant Life. This is evident in the popularity of The Prosperity Gospel.

In the prosperity gospel, health, success, and ever-soaring prof-

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<sup>113</sup> *St. John Vol. II.* 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (44). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

its in business are coveted, cherished, and publicly flaunted as signs of God's favour. In this new type of Christianity, success and wealth are the only genuine marks of faith.<sup>114</sup> Both the premise and the purpose of the Prosperity Gospel are unbiblical teachings; nevertheless this heretical teaching which began in North American churches has spread.

It was during the Healing Revivals of the 1950s that prosperity theology first came to prominence in the United States, although commentators have linked the origins of its theology to the New Thought movement which began in the 19th century. The prosperity teaching later figured prominently in the Word of Faith movement and 1980s televangelism. In the 1990s and 2000s, it was adopted by influential leaders in the Pentecostal Movement and Charismatic Movement in the United States and has spread throughout the world.<sup>115</sup>

More than a century ago, speaking to the then-largest congregation in all Christendom, Charles Spurgeon said, "I believe that it is anti-Christian and unholy for any Christian to live with the object of accumulating wealth. You will say, 'Are we not to strive all we can to get all the money we can?' You may do so. I cannot doubt but what, in so doing, you may do service to the cause of God. But what I said was that to live *with the object* of accumulating wealth is anti-Christian."<sup>116</sup>

The purpose of this study is to bring Biblical understanding and renewed passion for Jesus' promised Abundant Life with a reminder that without Him believers can do nothing. "*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*" (John 15:5)

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<sup>114</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/t/problem-with-prosperity-gospel.html>

<sup>115</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosperity\\_theology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosperity_theology)

<sup>116</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-errors-of-the-prosperity-gospel/>

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## SECTION 1

THEME: JOHN 10:7-11

*Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me {M-Text omits before Me.} are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. **I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.** I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."*

### THE TREASURE OF ABUNDANT LIFE

#### A STUDY OF GOD'S PROMISES

Introduction:

1. Illustration: Aladdin's lamp = more valuable than gold
2. So also is the Treasure of God's Promises.

IN THE TREASURE OF GOD'S PROMISES THERE IS..

#### I. The Potential for Abundance

TEXT

*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, (2 Pet. 1:3-4)*

1. Identify the nature of the potential for abundance evident in the above text.

Example: Its Source – ‘divine power’ (note breadth, avenue, etc.)

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

2. Comment on your impression of the following list of God's promises:

### God's Promises

Forgiveness to the sinner	Friendship to the lonely
Rest to the weary	Care to the needy
Comfort to the sorrowing	Reward to the Faithful
Peace to the troubled	Hope to the dying
Joy to the saddened	Provision for the penniless
Strength to the weak	Life to the dead
Love to the unloved	Care to the castaways

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Having a small view, a diminished perspective of God is dangerous for child of God.

3. Do you agree with this statement? \_\_\_ Explain for your reply:

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### TEXTS

*For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and does not take a bribe. (Deuteronomy 10:17)*

*Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand? (Job 26:14)*

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? (Psalm 8:3-4)*

*Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. (Psalm 147:5)*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. (Isaiah 40:28)*

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8–9)*

*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations. (Jeremiah 1:5)*

4. Comment on the significance or impact of the above verses to you.

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Almost all of our spiritual problems—things like doubt, apathy, unhappiness, and insecurity—come from a view of God that is too small... But this is simply not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is the opposite of small and manageable. *He is big*. He is not just big; he is *bigger* than big. He is bigger than all the words we use to say “big.” He defies our abilities to categorize or describe Him... The Bible speaks of something called “the fear of God,” and Proverbs says that it is necessary for any proper relationship with God. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.* (Proverbs 1:7a) This means that without a trembling awe before the majesty of God, we’ll never really develop the ability to *know* him, love him, or trust him.<sup>117</sup>

**POINT 1: GOD'S EXCEEDINGLY GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES ARE THE ASSURANCE OF LIFE, AND AS UNLIMITED AS GOD'S OWN RESOURCES**

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<sup>117</sup> <https://jdgrear.com/blog/your-god-is-too-small/>



## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

5. How does the following verse relate to the previous statement?  
*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.* (John 10:10)

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IN THE TREASURE OF GOD'S PROMISES THERE IS..

### II. A Principle for Abundance

#### TEXT

*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him...By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.*

(Heb. 11:6, 8-13 NIV)

- v. 13 → they saw the promises - BY FAITH
- they were assured of them - BY FAITH
- they embraced them - BY FAITH
- they confessed them (strangers) - BY FAITH

**POINT 2: THE WHOLE OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE IS DIRECTED TOWARD "FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISES"**

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## HEBREWS 11: THE BIBLE FAITH CHAPTER

Heb. 11 FAITH

→ where God is the object

→ where His Promises are Direction and life's goals

Heb. 11 FAITH

→ Abel offered, Enoch was translated, Noah prepared, Abraham sojourned, Sarah conceived, Abraham offered, Isaac blessed, Joseph worshipped, Moses parents hid him, Moses Refused...

Heb. 11 FAITH

→ Trusting and Following God: ...offered..., translated ..., chosen..., esteemed..., sojourned..., forsook..., kept..., passed through, hid him...,

*And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions... (Heb. 11:32-33ff)*

THE PRINCIPLE: ***the just shall live by faith*** (Hab.2:4, Rom.1:17, Ga. 3:11, Heb.10:38)

### POINT 3: GOD'S PROMISES ARE TOTALLY MEANINGLESS WITHOUT FAITH

TEXT

*"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? (Nu. 23:19)*

6. Do you believe God is true to His Word? Explain your answer.

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The Bible is not just another book on library shelf, but it is the living, powerful Word of God, and filled with promises made and promises kept to the letter. 2 Timothy 2:13 reassures us that *"even if we are unfaithful, He will continue to be faithful, for he cannot deny who he is."*

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

IN THE TREASURE OF GOD'S PROMISES THERE IS..

## III. The Practice of Abundance

*Cast your bread upon the waters, For you will find it after many days.* (Ecc. 11:1)

This text pictures a farmer taking "his bread" (harvested seeds usually ground into flour to make bread) and casting the seed upon "the waters" (In Bible times these were fields, laboriously watered from wells.)

Here a Modern Day "casting bread on waters" as an Asian farmer throws rice seed on wet mud,<sup>118</sup>



**POINT 4: THE HARVEST OF ABUNDANT LIFE IS REAPED THROUGH SOWING LIFE'S SEEDS UPON THE WATERS OF GOD'S PROMISES**

Picture your life as a handful of grain. Consider the following:  
How do you reap eternal life?

→ by casting the grain on God's promise of salvation

How do you reap harvest of relationships?

→ by casting the grain on promises of God for relationships

How do you find the harvest of abundance regarding... raising children, ...operating business, ...pursing career, ...finding joy, ...finding fulfillment?

→ by casting the grain on God's promises for all provision

## TEXTS

*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

(Matt. 28:19-20)

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<sup>118</sup> <https://www.shutterstock.com/search/sower>

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. (Heb. 10:24)*

*...to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. (1 Co. 9:22)*

1. What Christian activities (grain casting) might the above verses imply?

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### POEM

#### The Treasure of God's Promises

Ecc. 11:1

There's a harvest in God's promises  
that few have come to know.  
For in the midst of daily toil,  
we've forgotten how to sow.

Like Martha, we are cumbered  
with many a temporal thing.  
We've missed the very best of life  
That Mary's faith did bring.

So take your precious seeds of life  
which load you down with care,  
and cast them on the promises  
that God delights to share.

For in the Faith that lets us sow  
our all - upon this treasure,  
a harvest of abundant life  
we'll reap, beyond all measure.

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## CONCLUSION

2. Expand your answer to the following questions:

Q. Have you discovered the real treasure of God's promises?

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Q. Are you enjoying the Harvest of abundance in the promises of God?

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If your answers are NO - What are you holding back? What seeds of your life have you failed to sow in faith? Consider these Biblical Consequences of miss-sown seeds:

NO PEACE! Are you sowing the seeds of trust?

NO JOY! Are you sowing the seeds of obedience?

NO SENSE OF FORGIVENESS! Are you sowing the seeds of non-repentance?

NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## SECTION 2

THEME: JOHN 10:7-11

*Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me {M-Text omits before Me.} are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. **I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.** I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."*

### THE PURSUIT OF ABUNDANT LIFE

#### A STUDY IN JOSHUA

The book of Joshua is the historical record of Israel's return to the land promised to Abraham and his descendants by God (text). The nation of Israel was removed from the land because of its idolatry. Moses was replaced as leader because of his angry disobedience (text). Joshua was chosen to take Moses' place. The promised land was the first installment of God's unconditional promise to Abraham which included a land of abundance, an innumerable seed, and blessings to all nation through the seed. Not only did God lead the people into the land through Joshua, but He led him to record the process of re-entry for a particular purpose stated at the beginning of the record: "*Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*" (Josh. 1:8 NIV)

Although Israel again lost possession of the land through disobedience, God promised through later prophets that they would again take possession when The Seed, who was to be their King, returned and restored Israel's relationship to God.

That King is Jesus Christ. In His first coming He provided the blessing of salvation to all nations through the cross of Calvary. In so doing, He founded the Christian Church, to carry out His purposes until He returns again to restore Israel. The book of Joshua has a unique place in the hearts of Christians today as well.

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## THE FOCUS

*So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war. ( Josh.11:23).*

## THE PROMISED LAND

→ It was blessed with rain, cared for by Himself throughout all the seasons (Deut. 11:11-12).

→ It was a very productive land.

- its thirst quenched by brooks of water, fountains, and springs (Deut. 8:7);

- flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:8; 13:5; Lev. 20:24; Ezek. 20:6);

- abounding in wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, and olive trees (Deut. 8:8; II Kings 18:32);

- its hills offering iron and copper (Deut. 8:9).

## THE N.T. PARRALLEL

*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 10:10).*

## N.T. ABUNDANT LIFE

→ abiding in Him (John 15:4)

→ having His provision (Matt.6:33)

→ being filled with His joy (John 15:11)

→ producing His character “the Fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22)

→ knowing His peace (Philipp. 4:6-7)

→ finding His rest (Matt.11:29)

→ sharing His relationship “Abba (Rom. 8:15)

**NOTE:** Throughout this study in Joshua, there will be summary statements of each section in **CAPITALIZED, BOLD TEXT** with space following for personal interaction. Each reader is encouraged to carefully study each statement and respond by indicating agreement or disagreement, personal significance or challenge, or simply “How God spoke to me” through the section.

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## JOSHUA DIVISION 1

### PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY TO ABUNDANT LIFE

#### CHAPTERS 1-4

Read Joshua 1

#### **I. The Journey to abundant life begins with a point of determination:**

*Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.'* (Jos. 1:11).

**KEY:** "possess the land" of promise, the land of abundant life

**LESSONS:** God's requirements for a journey to the abundant life are:

- A Believing Heart: v.6 *"the land God is giving you"*
- A Disciplined Soul: v.11 *prepare for possession*
- A Caring Countenance: v. 14 *all.. Shall help them*
- A Submissive Spirit: v.16 *we will do... we will go*
- An Unhindered Life: v.18 *separated from the rebellious*
- An Encouraging Countenance: v. 18 *be strong and courageous*

**THE CALL: MAKE YOUR CHOICE**

**THE CHALLENGE: WILL YOU ENTER IN?**

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Read Joshua 2

#### **II. Journey to abundant life begins with a place of demarcation:**

*Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they*



## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there.* ( Jos. 2:1)

**KEY:** “Spy out Jericho”

**LESSONS:** God has a unique point of access (a Jericho) on the journey to the abundant life, to enter is:

→ To discover the place where God equips you.

- It is a strategic point of access
- It is a strategic point of reconnaissance
- It is a strategic point of FAITH

→ To understand a journey that distinguishes you. v. 1-7

→ To recognize the enemy that dissuades you. v. 2

→ To realize that the Lord goes before you. v. 9-10

- Don't limit God's source of help
- Don't close your eyes to those who desire to join

→ To believe that God will keep you. v. 18-19

- the scarlet thread

Some people have simply stopped expecting. They have accumulated enough of life's disappointments to become afraid to dream, to reach, to stretch, to broaden their horizons. ... [But] God wants to free us unto tomorrow; He won't allow us to blame yesterday. ... Neither will He allow us to cast blame on anything or anybody who seems to restrict our tomorrows.

**THE CALL: FIND YOUR ACCESS**

**THE CHALLENGE: DO YOU KNOW YOUR JERICHO**

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“Until we have learned to be satisfied with fellowship with God, until he is our rock and our fortress, we will be restless with our place in the world.” Erwin W. Lutzer

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Read Joshua 3-4

## III. Journey to abundant life faces obstacles of distraction:

*Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. ( Jos. 3:6).*

*So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, (Jos. 3:14).*

*and Joshua said to them: "Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, (Jos. 4:5)*

**KEY:** "Cross over Jordan"

**LESSONS:** An obstacle of distraction is that which, although not necessarily evil, is capable of sweeping the believer away from the intended course.

### 1. The Obstacles to Overcome:

- The Jordan River was in its flood stage
- The number of the hosts of Israelites was legion
- The crossing should be completed in the daylight hours of one day

### 2. The Necessities for Overcoming

God has provided special "ships" to get His people past the "Jordans" of distraction. Successful passage past the "Jordans" of distraction calls for:

- Surrender to Lordship
  - The Ark "symbol of promise and provision": The Presence of God
  - Putting God up front and in the Lead
- Submission to Leadership
  - 3:7- "*as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee*"
  - Joshua magnified and people respecting (4:14)
  - Honouring God's appointed leaders

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

- Steadfastness in Discipleship  
3:2 - *after three days the officers went through the camp*
  - Waiting expectantly on the Lord
- Sensitivity Toward Partnership  
3:5 – “*Sanctify Yourselves*”
  - Self-examination:
  - Putting off the Inappropriate
- Seriousness toward Stewardship  
4:3-6 “*Stones of memorial .. a sign among you*
  - Marking our journey to share with others

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:1-2).*

**THE CALL: KNOW HOW TO OVERCOME**  
**THE CHALLENGE: WILL YOU "SHIP" ABOARD**

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### JOSHUA DIVISION 2

#### MOTIVATION FOR THE JOURNEY TO ABUNDANT LIFE

#### JOSHUA 5

Read Joshua 5

*Then the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." (5:9).*

**God's motivation for the Journey to Abundant Life is the assurance that the reproach has past, and relationship has been restored. This assurance comes through the following:**

#### 1. The Confirmation of Renewed Obedience

*Then Joshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. (5:7).*

*Then the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." (5:9).*

**KEY:** "Circumcision"

**SIGNIFICANCE:**

- Sign of covenant relationship
- not kept for 40 years
- shame of disobedience is over

### 2. The Confirmation of Renewed Fellowship

*Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. (5:10).*

**KEY:** "Passover"

**SIGNIFICANCE:**

- reminder of deliverance in Egypt
- not kept for 40 years
- renewal of fellowship assuring deliverance

### 3. The Confirmation that the Battle is Sacred

*And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come."*

**KEY:** "Captain of Hosts" (5: 13-14).

**SIGNIFICANCE:**

- indication of the character of battle
- not routine warfare BUT Spiritual Encounter

### 4. The Confirmation of Renewed Blessings

*And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; (5:11-12 ).*

**KEY:** Old is past

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## SIGNIFICANCE:

- supplies finished
- manna is over

*"But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD."* (6:19).

**KEY:** Firstfruits, ie. The New has come

## SIGNIFICANCE:

- all consecrated to the Lord
- foretaste of blessings to come
- in the land = newness

The yesterdays were days of preparation, the tomorrows would be days of conquest. Written in the skies above were the timeless words of the mandate, go in to possess the land. The call to conquest still resounds: *"Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest!"* (Heb. 4:11)

### **THE CALL: COMMIT TO OBEDIENCE**

### **THE CHALLENGE: WILL YOU ENTER HIS REST?**

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## JOSHUA DIVISION 3

### CONFRONTATION IN THE JOURNEY TO ABUNDANT LIFE

#### CHAPTERS 6-11

#### Read Joshua 6

"There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan." (C. S. Lewis). **The pursuit of abundant life will involve the confrontation of spiritual warfare.**

**1.** This is truly a holy war with holy people where God's people are:

→ Guided by His Word

- *And the LORD said...* (6:1-5)
- Israel "the arm of God's judgment"

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

- Victorious through obedient faith
  - *And it came to pass...* (6:6-16)
  - Battle “gaining back what was once God’s paradise
- Distinct from the ‘enemy’
  - *keep yourselves from the accursed thing*, (6:17-19)
  - |- an accursed people
  - with accursed possessions

To enter into battle, the believer must have a clear vision of the Lord our Help. “A true view of God will free and empower sons and daughters to live like Jesus. We have been designed and created to know God as love and to be transformed in this truth. But slipping into a false view of God as angry, vengeful, waiting for you to live up to His standards or whatever else can tamper your witness and your personal spiritual life.”<sup>119</sup> Jason L. Clark

2. This is truly a holy war with holy people where God our Help is:

→ The True Deliverer

*See, I have given into thine hand...* (6:2)

*The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them.* (Psalms 34:7)

- Nothing is beyond His reach

→ The Ever-Present God

- *And seven priests shall bear before the ark* (6:4)

- Nothing escapes His notice,
- Nothing takes Him by surprise,

*"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."* (Genesis 28:15)

*Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.* (Isaiah 41:10)

*Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you," says the LORD.. They will fight against you, But they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you," says the LORD, "to deliver you."* (Jeremiah 1:8, 19)

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<sup>119</sup> <https://www.ptm.org/5-signs-you-may-have-wrong-view-of-god>

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*"for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you"*  
(Acts 18:10)

**THERE IS NO PATH IN WHICH HE LEADS WHERE  
HE HAS NOT GONE BEFORE,  
NOR WHERE HE HAS MOVED OUT OF SIGHT**

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→ The All Sovereign Lord  
*the priests shall blow with the trumpets. (6:4-5)*

- Nothing surpasses His authority
- Nothing thwarts His plan

*That they may know that You, whose name alone is the LORD, Are the Most High over all the earth. (Psalms 83:18)*

*All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?" (Daniel 4:35)*

*And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. (Daniel 2:21)*

*But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another. (Psalms 75:7)*

*It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. (Isaiah 40:22)*

To discuss the authority of Almighty God seems a bit meaningless, and to question it would be absurd. Can we imagine the Lord God of Hosts having to request permission of anyone or to apply for anything to a higher body? To whom would God go for permission? Who is higher than the Highest? Who is mightier than the Almighty? Whose position antedates that of the

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

Eternal? At whose throne would God kneel? Where is the greater one to whom he must appeal?" A. W. Tozer

**THERE IS NO PATH IN WHICH HE LEADS WHERE  
HIS AUTHORITY IS IN JEOPARDY,  
NOR WHERE HIS WORD IS NOT FINAL.**

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→ The Almighty God

*Shout; for the LORD has given you the city. (6:16)*

*the wall fell down flat, (6:20)*

- Nothing is beyond His power
- Nothing is impossible with God

*Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You. (Jeremiah 32:17)*

*Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)*

*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)*

*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, (2 Corinthians 3:5)*

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)*

*I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me (Philippians 4:13)*

*Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; (Colossians 1:11)*

*I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. (Philipp. 4:13)*



## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

The only sovereign I recognize is he who sets fire to the suns and, with one blow of his hand, can send the worlds rolling in space. *François René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand*

**THERE IS NO PATH IN WHICH HE LEADS  
WHERE HIS POWER IS LIMITED,  
NOR WHERE WALLS EXISTS THAT HE CANNOT CAST  
DOWN.**

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→ The Holy Judge

*destroyed all in the city (6:21)*

- Nothing can escape His righteous judgment
- Nothing can turn away His wrath toward sin

*And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.( Isaiah 13:11)*

*Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, says the LORD. (Jeremiah 2:3)*

*But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.*

*Romans 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.( Obadiah 1:17)*

*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians 7:1)*

**THERE IS NO PATH IN WHICH HE LEADS WHERE  
SIN IS EXCUSED,  
NOR WICKEDNESS OVERLOOKED**

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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→ The Merciful Saviour

*The young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; (6:23)*

- No one is outside His offer of mercy
- No one is exempt from His passion to save

*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more (Heb. 8:12)*

*for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him (2 Chr. 30:9)*

*The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, (Ex. 34:6)*

*thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsaking them not. (Neh. 9:17)*

*So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm. (Joel 2:13)*

*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3:9)*

**THERE IS NO PATH IN WHICH HE LEADS WHERE  
HIS MERCY IS NOT OFFERED,  
NOR WHERE THE REPENTANT ARE FORSAKEN**

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→ The Jealous God

*keep yourselves from the accursed thing, (6:17-19)*

- Nothing can come before God
- Nothing can be kept from surrender to Him

*For you shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: (Ex. 34:14)*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*You shalt not bow down yourself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD your God am a jealous God,( Deut. 5:9)*

*God is jealous, and the LORD revenges; the LORD revenges, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserves wrath for his enemies.( Nah. 1:2)*

*Thus says the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. (Zech. 8:2)*

*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2)*

**THERE IS NO PATH IN WHICH HE LEADS WHERE  
HIS HONOUR IS NOT FOREMOST,  
NOR WHERE HIS FIRSTFRUITS DO NOT APPLY.**

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### HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR GOD?

Out in front of us is the drama of men and of nations, seething, struggling, laboring, dying ... but within the silences of the souls of men an eternal drama is ever being enacted... On the outcome of this inner drama rests, ultimately, the outer pageant of history. *Thomas Kelly*

The soul is the place where man's supreme and final battles are fought. *Abraham Neuman*

The pursuit of abundant life will involve the confrontation of spiritual warfare. To enter into battle, the believer must have a clear understanding of what is expected.

**3.** This is truly a holy war where Spiritual Confrontation requires:

→ Total Dependence

*And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor." (6:2)*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

**KEY:** "I have given Jericho into your hand"

**LESSONS:**

- Personal skill is no substitute for dependence
- Organization is no substitute for dependence

**IN THE PATH TO ABUNDANT LIFE, THE SOLDIER MUST  
DO GOD'S WORK IN GOD'S STRENGTH**

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When you are too sure of yourself, you are less on guard against the enemy. Be alert, therefore, for the devil, who, if he can claim even one hair of your head, will lose no time in making a braid of it. *Saint Bonaventure*

→ Unquestioning Obedience

*You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. (6: 3)*

**KEY:** "ye shall compass the city"

**LESSONS:**

- Intention is no substitute for obedience
- Sincerity is no substitute for obedience

**IN THE PATH TO ABUNDANT LIFE THE SOLDIER MUST  
DO GOD'S WORK GOD'S WAY**

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→ Patient Persistence

*And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. (6:4)*

**KEY:** march - 7 priests, 7 days, 7 times

**LESSONS:**

- Equal opportunity is no substitute for patience
- Spontaneity is no substitute for persistence

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

### IN THE PATH TO ABUNDANT LIFE THE SOLDIER MUST DO GOD'S WORK WITH NOAH'S PATIENCE

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If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my ax. *Abraham Lincoln*

→ Unified Involvement

*It shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him. (6:5)*

**KEY:** all the people... every man

**LESSONS:**

- Solo efforts are no substitute for unity
- Fragmented labour is no substitute for unity

### IN THE PATH TO ABUNDANT LIFE THE SOLDIER MUST DO GOD'S WORK AS A TEAM MEMBER

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→ Unconditional Acceptance

*And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, "Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her." And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. (6:21-23)*

**KEY:** city destroyed, Rahab saved

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

### LESSONS:

- Human passion is no substitute for acceptance
- Personal preferences are no substitute for acceptance

**IN THE PATH TO ABUNDANT LIFE THE SOLDIER MUST DO GOD'S WORK AS A SUBORDINATE SOLDIER.**

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We are not masters of our own feeling, but we are by God's grace masters of our consent. *Francois Fenelon*

→ Unwavering Loyalty

*And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. (6:18)*

**KEY:** “touch not” the dedicated treasures

### LESSONS:

- Mixed priorities are no substitute for loyalty
- Temporal reward is no substitute for loyalty

**IN THE PATH TO ABUNDANT LIFE THE SOLDIER MUST DO GOD'S WORK AS A PLEDGED PATRIOT**

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It is startling to think that Satan can actually come into the heart of a man in such close touch with Jesus as Judas was. And more—he is cunningly trying to do it today. Yet he can get in only through a door opened from the inside. ‘Every man controls the door of his own life.’ Satan can't get in without our help. *S. D. Gordon*

There was an age of chivalry when no coward courted knight-hood, for it involved the hard blows, the dangerous wounds, the rough unhorsings, and the ungentle perils of the tournament. And these were but child's play! There were the distant eastern fields, where warriors must be slain by valiant hands, and blood

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

must flow in rivers from the Red-cross knights. Then men who lacked valor preferred hawks and jesters, and left heroes to court death and glory on the battlefield. This genial time of peace breeds carpet knights, who flourish their untried weapons, and bear the insignia of valor, without incurring its inconvenient toils. Many are crowding to the seats of the heroes, since prowess and patience are no more required. *Charles Spurgeon*

### ARE YOU A TRUE KNIGHT OF THE CROSS?

*But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel. (Josh. 7:1)*

Shallow natures tremble for a night after their sin, and when they find that the sun rises and men greet them as cordially as before, and that no hand lays hold on them from the past, they think little more of their sin—they do not understand that fatal calm that precedes the storm. *Marcus Dodds*

Her rash hand in evil hour, Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she eat: Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat, Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe That all was lost. *John Milton*

Read Joshua 7

**To continue in victory, the believer must understand the necessity of a righteous walk and the devastation of sin. In Spiritual Confrontation the believer must understand:**

**1. Unconfessed sin brings:**

→ Loss of Discernment.

*And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few. (7:3)*

**KEY:** only 3000 men

*So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? (7:10)*

**KEY:** "get up"

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

### LESSONS:

- Without spiritual discernment even the obvious becomes unseen
- decision making becomes erroneous

→Loss of Strength.

*...three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. (7:4)*

**KEY:** “they fled”

### LESSONS:

- Without spiritual strength even small battles are lost
- the enemy cannot be faced

→Loss of Courage.

*And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, ... therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water. (7:5)*

**KEY:** “their hearts melted”

### LESSONS:

- Without courage even one disappointment is insurmountable
- small losses are exaggerated in mind

→Loss of Confidence.

*Joshua said, "Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all — to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? (7:7)*

**KEY:** Why Lord?

### LESSONS:

- Without confidence even past leading is questioned
- even leaders are prone to doubt God’s purposes

→Loss of Peace

*...why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all (7:7)*

**KEY:** we should have stayed on the other side

### LESSONS:

- Without peace even past blessings are forgotten
- uncertainty prevails

→Loss of Security

*For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it,*



## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth.*

**KEY:** when the enemy hears... we lose (7:9)

**LESSONS:**

- Without security even God's attributes are forgotten
- the enemy is feared instead of God

→Loss of Blessing

*Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. (7:12)*

**KEY:** Neither will I be with you...

**LESSONS:**

- Without God's sensed presence even His promises are forgotten
- fellowship is lost therefore blessings are withheld

Consider these significant observations and write your own "Sin is" statement in the space provided:

**SIN IS DEFIANCE TO THE AUTHORITY OF GOD.**

Benjamin Whichcote 1609-83)

**SIN IS ENERGY IN THE WRONG CHANNEL.**

Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

**SIN IS ESSENTIALLY A DEPARTURE FROM GOD.**

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

**SIN IS ESSENTIALLY REBELLION AGAINST THE RULE OF GOD.**

Charles Colson

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### 2. The Eight Principles of Unconfessed Sin:

→When one sins, all suffer v. 5

→God holds all that are aware of sin as responsible vs. 24-25

→God cannot bless where sin is present v. 12

→When sin is left unconfessed, God is angered v. 1

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

- God is willing to restore blessing when sin is dealt with v. 12
- When sin becomes known, it must be dealt with immediately (in haste) v. 22
- God demands that sin is confessed in order to be purged v. 19
- When sin is purged, there are still consequences to consider vs. 25-26

We have a strange illusion that mere time cancels sin. I have heard others, and I have heard myself, recounting cruelties and falsehoods committed in boyhood as if they were no concern of the present speaker's, and even with laughter. But mere time does nothing either to the fact or to the guilt of a sin. The guilt is washed out not by time but by repentance and the blood of Christ. *C. S. Lewis*

### HAVE YOU A HOLY HATRED OF SIN?

*Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. (Josh. 7:11-12)*

It is not only temptation that tries the generous Christian, but at times sin also; he may have a heavy fall, one that he had thought impossible, so deep and strong had seemed his love for the Lord. And having fallen, he is likely to become discouraged. Never before has he understood to such an extent the ugliness of sin- because he has now a greater understanding of the love of God. All is grace. This fall will make him realize that he cannot rely on himself at all. It will put him in his place at the bottom. But with this mistrust of himself must go a greater confidence in God, the Father. *Michel Quoist*

**THE FALLEN BELIEVER, IN REPENTANCE,  
WILL HAVE A MISTRUST OF SELF  
LEADING TO A GREATER CONFIDENCE IN GOD.**

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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Read Joshua 8

**The pursuit of abundant life will involve the confrontation of spiritual warfare. To restore victory after defeat, the believer must focus on the ministry of God, understanding the following:**

**1. Restoring victory after defeat requires;**

→ Restoring relationship with God

*“sanctify the people,.. take away the accursed thing from among you. (7:13-26)*

→ Hearing the encouragement from God

*“do not fear” (8:1)*

→ Claiming the promise from God

*“I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land” (8:1)*

→ Following the direction from God

*“do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king:... lay an ambush” “...And all the people, even the people of war that were with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city...” (8:2-8)*

**→ Rising to the challenge from God**

(8:9-25 refer to personal Bible)

- be committed (join the battle)

- be vulnerable (flee before them)

- be patient (wait in ambush)

→ Gaining the victory

*“...For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.” (8:26)*

→ Sharing the blessing from God

*“Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*themselves, according unto the word of the LORD which he commanded Joshua.” (8:27)*

- be contented (enjoy the spoil)

We never become truly spiritual by sitting down and wishing to become so. You must undertake something so great that you cannot accomplish it unaided. *Phillips Brooks*

### 2. The Five Principles of restoring victory;

→ Dealing with sin God’s way restores full relationship with its promises and responsibilities

→ Victory must be claimed in battle not assumed from the sidelines

→ Faith will always be the steps to restored victory

→ The faith of restored victory is a call to courage, obedience, vulnerability, and patience.

→ God rewards faith with blessings

It is not the critic who counts, not the person who points out where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the person who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes up short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the devotions, and spends himself or herself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and at the worst, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his or her place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat. *Theodore Roosevelt*

### DO YOU CLAIM THE VICTORY?

In regaining victory after defeat, the believer is privileged with a deepened passion for drawing close to God. Jesus said to Pilate: “*You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above*” (John 19:11). Nothing outside of God’s Will is allowed to come into the life of someone who trusts and obeys Him. This truth should be enough to make our life one of ceaseless thanksgiving and joy.

**GOD’S WILL IS THE MOST HOPEFUL, PLEASANT,  
AND GLORIOUS THING IN THE WORLD.**

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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3. Through the experience of victory God accomplishes

→The Priority of Worship

*Joshua built an altar to the Lord* (v. 30)

- A desire to praise Him was restored through the victory:

→The Sense of Unity

*they offered burnt offerings* (v. 31-33)

- all Israel desired to gather before Him

→The Importance of Purity

*over which no man lifted up iron* (v. 31)

- A desire to honour Him

→The Propensity for Obedience

*on the altar ...they offered* (v. 30-31)

- A desire to surrender to Him

→The Thirst for Truth

*the law of Moses ...copied & read* (v. 32,34)

-A desire to know Him

→The Dynamic of Principles

*half before Mt. Gerzim ...half before Mt. Ebal* (v.33)

- A desire to experience Him

→The Joy of Communion

*the blessings and the cursings* (v.34-35)

- A desire to fellowship with Him

*We went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance.* (Psalm 66:12)

It may seem paradoxical, but the only person who is at rest has achieved it through conflict. This peace, born of conflict, is not like the ominous lull before the storm but like the serenity and the quietness following the storm, with its fresh, purified air.

(Author unknown).

AM I DRAWING NEARER?

**IF A BELIEVER REMAINS SURRENDERED TO GOD  
AND WALKING IN FAITH, NOTHING CAN LIMIT THE  
CONTINUOUS WORKING OF GOD'S OMNIPOTENT  
POWER IN HIM/HER.**

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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## Read Joshua 9

John Owen has made an apt comparison: “religion in a state of prosperity is like a colony that is long settled in a strange country. It is gradually assimilated in features, demeanor and language to the native inhabitants until at length every vestige of its distinctiveness had died away.”

**When religion is in a state of quiet and prosperity, the soldiers of Christ will tend to forget they are at war. Their focus slackens and their passion languishes. Complacency settles in and compromise becomes the norm.**

### 1. The steps to compromise were:

#### → Deception

- by Pretense v. 4-5 *as if ambassadors*
- by disguise v. 4 *old wine skins & clothes*
- by lies v. 6 *from a far country, not your neighbour*
- by false homage v. 9 *the Lord thy God*

#### → Neglect

- by trusting when prompted to be suspicious v. 7 - *ye dwell among us*
- by being lured by gifts v. 14 *Israel took some of their provisions;*
- by not seeking God’s counsel v. 14 *they did not ask counsel of the LORD.*

#### → Partnership

Joshua made peace:

- by self-appointed authority v. 15 *Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them*
- by foolish promise v. 15,19 *league... in the name of the Lord*
- by collective agreement v. 15 *the princes swore to them*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

2. Compromise's disastrous consequences are:

→ Dysfunction

- Israel's enemies spared v. 17b-18a *Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim. But the children of Israel did not attack them,*

- princes and people at odds v. 18 *Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them*

- murmuring v. 18 *all the congregation complained against the rulers.*

→ Distraction

- removed from conquest by the need to repair damages  
*So he did to them, and delivered them [Gibeon] out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them. And that day Joshua made them woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation (9:26-27)*

→ Diversion

- redirected in conquest by the need to provide protection  
*...the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal... (Joshua 10:6-7)*

→ Deprivation

- A 3-year famine plagued Israel until Saul's sons were slain for Saul's attack against the Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21)

→ Division

- the Gibeonite presence across the middle of Canaan isolated Israel and eventually led to the division of the nation (1 Ki. 12)

Complacency is a state of self-satisfaction that the soldier of Christ cannot afford. Complacency sooner or later turns down the disastrous road of compromise. Bible Examples include: Lot, Samson, Solomon, and Israel in Joshua 9. "In our modern

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

world, our real danger comes not from irreligion, but from mild religion. *D. Elton Trueblood*

God warns His church about complacency: *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:* (Rev. 3:15-17)

**WHEN GOD BLESSES VICTORY WITH PROSPERITY,  
THE BELIEVER MUST BEWARE OF  
THE DANGER OF COMPLACENCY.**

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Read Joshua 10

The Spirit of God is always the spirit of liberty; the spirit that is not of God is the spirit of bondage, the spirit of oppression and depression. The Spirit of God convicts vividly and tensely, but He is always the Spirit of liberty. God who made the birds never made birdcages; it is men who make birdcages, and after a while we become cramped and can do nothing but chirp and stand on one leg. When we get out into God's great free life, we discover that that is the way God meant us to live "the glorious liberty of the children of God." *Oswald Chambers*

**God makes Himself uniquely real to His children when they truly pursue Him with passionate hearts and surrendered lives. God makes Himself uniquely real by melting the hearts of unbelievers with fear, when His own are submitted to Him.**

*Now it came to pass when Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai and had utterly destroyed it—as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king--and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, that they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great*



## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty (Josh. 10:1-2).*

In Joshua 10-11, **God makes Himself uniquely real by:**

→ Fortifying the hearts of believers with courage when they are tuned to His voice.

*And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you." (10:8)*

*Then Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight." (10: 25)*

*But the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel." (11:6)*

→ Enriching the soul of believers with great faith when they are following His will.

*Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: Sun, stand still over Gibeon. (10:12)*

→ Intervening in battle for the believer when they will boldly face the foe.

*So the LORD routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them along the road that goes to Beth Horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. And it happened, as they fled before Israel and were on the descent of Beth Horon, that the LORD cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword. (10:10-11)*

→ Guaranteeing victory for believers, when they uphold His cause, uphold His Word, uphold His principles, uphold His name, no matter what the circumstances.

*for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight. (10:25)*

→ Assuring victory for obedience when the enemy appears great and invincible

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*They came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots — a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the sea-shore. All these kings joined forces and made camp together at the Waters of Merom to fight against Israel. The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them, slain, over to Israel. You are to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots." (11:4-6)*

“The pursuit of the abundant life is not a grab for possessions, nor a claim of promises, it is a passion for a person, the pursuit of God Himself. It is being in a relationship with the Lord where God makes Himself uniquely real every day.

Fulfillment comes as a by-product of our love for God. And that satisfaction is better than we ever imagined. God can make the pieces of this world's puzzle fit together; He helps us view the world from a new perspective.” *Erwin W. Lutzer*

IS GOD REAL TO ME DAILY?

**UNTIL WE HAVE LEARNED TO BE SATISFIED WITH  
FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, UNTIL HE IS OUR ROCK AND  
OUR FORTRESS, WE WILL BE RESTLESS WITH OUR  
PLACE IN THE WORLD.**

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NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## SECTION 3

THEME: JOHN 10:7-11

*Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me {M-Text omits before Me.} are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. **I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.** I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."*

### THE OBSTACLES TO ABUNDANT LIFE

#### A STUDY IN ISRAEL'S JOURNEY TO JORDAN

**I.** The Obstacles to Abundant Life are:

**FAILING TO SEE GOD'S EARNEST DESIRE TO LEAD HIS PEOPLE TO ABUNDANCE**

*But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive. So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?" And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them." Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them." (Exodus 1:17-21)*

**God's willing heart is evident in:**

→ He is willing to bless many for the faith of a few

*Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive." ... And a man of the house of Levi went and took as wife a daughter of Levi. (1:22-2:1)*

*So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it*

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

*with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank. (2:2-3)*

*the woman took the child and nursed him. And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. (2:9-10)*

→He is willing to agonize His people to bring forth a leader  
*"Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them." (2:23-25)*

→He is willing to invoke His promises when His own cry out  
*And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." (3:2-3, 14)*

*And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you." (3:14)*

→He is willing to uniquely reveal Himself to equip His leadership  
*Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'" (4:1)*

*Then Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." (4:10)*

*But he said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send." (4:13)*

→He is willing to patiently wait for His leadership to come around  
*And Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest from their labor! So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying,*

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*"You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves." And you shall lay on them the quota of bricks which they made before. You shall not reduce it. For they are idle; therefore they cry out, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it, and let them not regard false words."*

(5:5-9)

→He is willing to magnify the burden of bondage upon His people in order to convince that He is the only path to freedom

*"The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.' But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go."* (3:18-19)

→He is willing to destroy a nation to demonstrate His sovereign power and the uniqueness of His people

*So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.* (3:20)

### SUMMARY

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"* (Matthew 23:37)

As for that which is beyond your strength, be absolutely certain that our Lord loves you, devotedly and individually, loves you just as you are.... Accustom yourself to the wonderful thought that God loves you with a tenderness, a generosity, and an intimacy that surpasses all your dreams. Give yourself up with joy to a loving confidence in God and have courage to believe firmly that God's action toward you is a masterpiece of partiality and love. Rest: tranquilly in this abiding conviction.

*Abbe Henri de Tourville*

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## FAILING TO SEE GOD'S EARNEST DESIRE TO LEAD HIS PEOPLE TO ABUNDANCE. THIS IS FAILING TO SEE HIS LOVE

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Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the heavens of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade,  
To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry,  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky. Chaldee Ode

### II. The Obstacles to Abundant Life are:

#### FAILING TO ALLOW GOD TO TEACH HIS TRUTHS:

1. We Fail to allow God to teach His Truths when... We overlook the distinction between God's conditional and unconditional promises.

→ God made an unconditional promise to Abraham that included Israel entering the Promised Land. This God will keep!

*Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Deut. 6:1-3)*

*"Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to*

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*observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has Promised you--`a land flowing with milk and honey.’” (Gen. 12:1-3)*

→God gave Israel the Law (Mosaic Law) as the conditions for having the blessings of that promise land. This the people must keep! *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."* (Gal. 3:8)

*Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."* (John 14:23)

→God included the church in the unconditional Abrahamic promise as “blessings to many nations” through the salvation of Abraham’s seed (Christ). This God initiates in:

*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* (John 10:10)

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast* (Eph. 2:8-9)

*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;* (Ro. 3:20-21)

→The church has been offered the blessings of promised land (abundant life), not dependent upon Mosaic Law (Christ fulfilled this), but upon an obedient Walk in the Spirit. This the people must keep.

*Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.* (Re. 20:6)

## CONCLUSION

There is an ancient story of a sentry standing day after day at his post with no apparent reason for his being there. One day, a

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passerby asked him why he was standing in that particular place. "I don't know," the sentry replied, "I'm just following orders." The passerby then went to the captain of the guard and asked him why the sentry was posted in that place. "I don't know," the captain replied. "We're just following orders." This prompted the captain of the guard to pose the question to higher authority. "Why do we post a sentry at that particular spot?" he asked the king. But the king didn't know. So he summoned his wise men and asked them the question. The answer came back that one hundred years before, Catherine the Great had planted a rosebush and had ordered a sentry placed there to protect it. The rosebush had been dead for eighty years, but the sentry still stood guard. – Sometimes believer's view obedience to God this way. Consider the following observations:

Faith and obedience are bound up in the same bundle. He that obeys God, trusts God; and he that trusts God, obeys God.

*Charles Haddon Spurgeon*

Obedience is the key that unlocks the door to every profound spiritual experience. *Dorothy Kerin*

The term obey would be better expressed by the word use. For instance, a scientist uses the laws of nature; that is, he more than obeys them, he causes them to fulfill their destiny in his work. That is exactly what happens in the saint's life. He uses the commands of the Lord, and they fulfill God's destiny in his life.

*Oswald Chambers*

Obedience to Jesus Christ is essential, but not compulsory; he never insists on being Master. We feel that if only he would insist, we should obey him. But our Lord never enforces his "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not"; he never takes means to force us to do what he says. He never coerces. In certain moods we wish he would make us do the thing, but he will not; and in other moods we wish he would leave us alone altogether, but he will not. If we do not keep his commandments, he does not come and tell us we are wrong. We know it, we cannot get away from it.

*Oswald Chambers*



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The most fitting response to undeserved blessing is unreserved obedience.

THE CHOICE IS OURS!

### APPLICATION

A few centuries before Christ a man named Alexander conquered almost all of the known world using military strength, cleverness, and a bit of diplomacy. The story is told that Alexander and a small company of soldiers approached a strongly fortified, walled city. Alexander, standing outside the walls, raised his voice and demanded to see the king. When the king arrived, Alexander insisted that the king surrender the city and its inhabitants to Alexander and his little band of fighting men.

The king laughed, "Why should I surrender to you? You can't do us any harm!" But Alexander offered to give the king a demonstration. He ordered his men to line up single file and start marching. He marched them straight toward a sheer cliff

The townspeople gathered on the wall and watched in shocked silence as, one by one, Alexander's soldiers marched without hesitation right off the cliff to their deaths! After ten soldiers died, Alexander ordered the rest of the men to return to his side. The townspeople and the king immediately surrendered to Alexander the Great. They realized that if a few men were actually willing to commit suicide at the command of this dynamic leader, then nothing could stop his eventual victory.

Are you willing to be as obedient to the ruler of the universe, Jesus Christ, as those soldiers were to Alexander? Are you as dedicated and committed? Think how much power Christ could have in our area with just a portion of such commitment.

How teachable are you? Is there any point of obedience being ignored or Walk of the Spirit that is being neglected by which you have placed yourself outside God's richest blessings?

**WHEN WE OVERLOOK THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN  
GOD'S CONDITIONAL AND UNCONDITIONAL  
PROMISES, WE FAIL TO ALLOW GOD TO TEACH HIS  
TRUTHS.**

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

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2. We Fail to allow God to teach His Truths when... We forget the holy character and nature of God

GOD IS HOLY:

→By Definition God is... infinite, eternal, unchangeable, perfect...in His... being, will, power, love, holiness, goodness, righteousness, wisdom, truth,...resulting in... sovereignty, blessedness, glory, Majesty, in himself... and grace, mercy, compassion, long-suffering, faithfulness, justice, wrath ... toward creation

→By Description in the Psalm's

*I cried to the LORD with my voice, And He heard me from His holy hill. (Psalm 3:4)*

*But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple. (Psalm 5:7)*

*Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven With the saving strength of His right hand. (Psalm 20:6)*

*Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? (Psalm 24:3)*

*Hear the voice of my supplications When I cry to You, When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary. (Psalm 28:2)*

*God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne. (Psalm 47:8)*

*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised In the city of our God, In His holy mountain. (Psalm 48:1)*

*A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, Is God in His holy habitation (Psalm 68:5)*

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*For He remembered His holy promise, And Abraham His servant.  
(Psalm 105:42)*

ISRAEL WAS CALLED TO HOLINESS:

→ God called Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a Holy nation  
*And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*

*These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.  
(Ex. 19:6)*

*And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.  
These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Is-  
rael. (Ex. 19:6)*

→ Israel promised to do all that God said knowing God's Holy character meant keeping Him distinct and first and living accordingly (as separated people).

*Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. (Ex. 9:8)*

→ The integrity of Israel in keeping their promise and being a Holy nation was dependent upon understanding the Holy character of God; therefore, He revealed that character to them on Mt. Sinai.

### **Read Ex. 20-31 The Giving of the Law**

*And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.... (Ex. 20:18-21)*

→ Knowing God's Holy character meant keeping Him distinct and first, and living accordingly (as separated people).

*"For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth." (Ex. 33:16)*

→ Israel's immediate idolatry because of Moses delayed return,

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shows that they did not allow God to teach them His Holy character. If Moses had not interceded, they would have been destroyed. *Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" (Ex. 32:11-13)*

### THE CHURCH IS ALSO CALLED TO HOLINESS

→ God called believers to be a kingdom of priests and a Holy nation

*"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"*

(1 Pet.2:9)

→ The integrity of a believer's life is also dependent upon an understanding of God's Holy character.

*"...but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."*

(1 Pet. 1:15–16)

### CONCLUSION

Holy is the way God is. To be holy he does not conform to a standard. He is that standard. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is. Because he is holy, all his attributes are holy; that is, whatever we think of as belonging to God must be thought of as holy. A. W. Tozer

Our greatest failing is in not realizing who God is and what his character is like. God is not human. He is God, and as such there is an infinite gap between the highest in us and the lowest in God. The destined end of man is not happiness, nor health, but holiness. God's one aim is the production of saints. He is not

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an eternal blessing machine for men; he did not come to save men out of pity; he came to save men because he had created them to be holy." *Oswald Chambers*

A holy life is not an ascetic, or gloomy, or solitary life, but a life regulated by divine truth and faithful in Christian duty. It is living above the world while we are still in it. Saying yes to God, means saying no to things that offend his holiness.  
*Tryon Edwards*

The bloom of the TRILLIUM looks like snow out in the country, but near the vast city or along the roadside its virgin whiteness is sadly stained. Too often contact with the world has just such an effect on our piety. We must make our way to the far-off garden of Paradise to see holiness in its unsullied purity, and meanwhile we must be much alone with God if we would maintain a gracious life below. *Charles Haddon Spurgeon*

**WHEN WE FAIL TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S HOLY CHARACTER AND HIS SANCTIFYING (MAKING HOLY) WORK IN OUR LIVES, WE FAIL TO ALLOW GOD TO TEACH HIS TRUTHS.**

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**III. The Obstacles to Abundant Life are:  
BREAKING TRUST WITH GOD THROUGH A MURMURING SPIRIT:**

**1.** Although the Lord miraculously delivered Israel from their enemies, they persisted with a murmuring spirit:  
→ Before the Red sea, a fear invoked murmuring became breaking trust with God

*Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? "Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, `Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?' For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyp-*

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tians than that we should die in the wilderness." (Ex. 14:11-12)

### **The broken Trust: We do not believe God's promise to deliver**

→ In the wilderness with bitter water and no food, want invoked murmuring became breaking trust with God

*Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink? ..." (Ex. 15:23-24)*

*Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." (Ex. 16:2-3)*

### **The Broken Trust: We do not trust God to provide for our physical needs**

→ Even with God's evident guidance to lead them, discomfort invoked murmuring became breaking trust with God

*So they departed from the mountain of the LORD on a journey of three days; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them for the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them ... (Nu. 10:33)*

*Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp. (Nu. 11:2)*

### **The Broken Trust: We do not trust God to strengthen us for the journey**

→ Even though God miraculously fed them, discontent invoked murmuring (lusting after fresh meat) became breaking trust with God

*Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely*

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*in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" (Nu. 11:4-6)*

### **The Broken Trust: We do not trust God to provide the best for us**

→ Even though God was successfully leading Israel through Moses, jealousy invoked murmuring (Miriam & Aaron) became breaking trust with God

*Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. So they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the LORD heard it. (Nu. 12:1-2)*

### **The Broken Trust: We do not trust God with the delegation of responsibilities**

→ Even though God had demonstrated His power to deliver, obstacle invoked murmuring became breaking trust with God

*"There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight. So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!" (Nu. 13:33–14:2)*

### **The Broken Trust: We do not trust God to overcome big obstacles.**

→ Even though God confirmed the Leadership of Moses and Aaron, rebellion invoked murmuring (Korah seeking leadership) became breaking trust with God

*They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" (Nu. 16:3)*

### **The Broken Trust: We do not trust God with His appointment of leadership**

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→Even though God disciplined Israel's 'self-appointed' leaders, blame invoked murmuring became breaking trust with God  
*On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the LORD." (Nu. 16:41)*

**The Broken Trust: We do not trust God to give direction through His leadership**

→When the soul of people discouraged because of the way, discouragement invoked murmuring became breaking trust with God.  
*Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." (Nu. 21:4-5)*

**The Broken Trust: We will not trust God if the way gets tough**

### 2. The Meaning of Murmuring

The Hebrew word לַן (*lân*), translated 'murmur' means to grumble against, blame, i.e., make a verbal complaint against another, whether proper or improper.<sup>120</sup> The true nature of this murmuring is seen in the fact that it is an open act of rebellion against the Lord (Num 14:9) and a stubborn refusal to believe God's word and God's miraculous works (Num 14:11, 22, 23).<sup>121</sup> Murmuring is breaking trust with God by rejecting unconditional obedience to His Word and unconditional acceptance of His Work.

### 3. The Common Path of the Murmuring Spirit:

1. Emotion directed agendas
2. Self-righteous spirit

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<sup>120</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>121</sup> *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. 1999 (R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (475). Chicago: Moody Press.



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3. Contagious spread of discontent
4. Criticism of leadership
5. Concealed movement against leadership
6. Rejection of leadership
7. Contempt toward leadership

### 4. Overcoming the Murmuring Spirit

→ Confess a grumbling attitude

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)

→ Call for a spiritual guard.

*Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.* (Psalm 141:3)

→ Cultivate a grateful heart.

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord* (Col. 3:16)

Gratitude is a vaccine, an antitoxin, and an antiseptic." What did he mean? He meant that gratitude, like a vaccine, can prevent the invasion of a disgruntled, discouraged spirit. Like an anti-toxin, gratitude can prevent the effects of the poisons of cynicism, criticalness, and grumbling. Like an antiseptic, a spirit of gratitude can soothe and heal the most troubled spirit.

*John Henry Jowett*

→ Embrace a loving spirit.

*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* (1 Cor. 13:4-7)

People too often view murmuring as a kidney stone, an aggravation that will pass albeit with pain! God views murmuring as a cancer, a malignant intrusion that requires removal before it destroys life!

A man once wrote, "When I would beget content and increase confidence in the power and wisdom and providence of Almighty

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God, I will walk the meadows by some gliding stream, and there contemplate the lilies that take no care, and those very many other little creatures that are not only created by but fed (man knows not how) by the goodness of the God of Nature, and therefore trust in Him."

What we need very badly these days is a company of Christians who are prepared to trust God as completely now as they know they must do at the last day. For each of us the time is coming when we shall have nothing but God. Health and wealth and friends and hiding places will be swept away, and we shall have only God. To the man of pseudo faith that is a terrifying thought, but to real faith it is one of the most comforting thoughts the heart can entertain. *A. W. Tozer*

*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.*  
(Psalms 19:14)

**MURMURING IS A SIN (PROV 19:3, 17:19) THAT ARISES FROM THE FLESHLY NATURE OF OUR HEARTS AND IT ROBS US OF GOD'S BLESSINGS AND GRACE.**

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### IV. The Obstacles to Abundant Life are: FAILING TO IMPLEMENT GOD'S PRINCIPLES

We fail to implement God's principles of spiritual life when we miss...

→The essentiality of intercession amidst the battles  
*And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (Ex. 17:11-12)*

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*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: (Matthew 7:7)*

### **God's Principle of Spiritual Life:**

#### **Prayer is the channel to God's Victory**

How much prayer meant to Jesus! It was not only His regular habit, but His resort in every emergency, however slight or serious. When perplexed He prayed. When hard pressed by work He prayed. When hungry for fellowship He found it in prayer. He chose His associates and received His messages upon His knees. If tempted, He prayed. If criticized, He prayed. If fatigued in body or wearied in spirit, He had recourse to His one unfailing habit of prayer. Prayer brought Him unmeasured power at the beginning and kept the flow unbroken and undiminished. There was no emergency, no difficulty, no necessity, no temptation that would not yield to prayer.

In driving piles, a machine is used by which a huge weight is lifted up and then made to fall upon the head of the pile. Of course, the higher the weight is lifted the more powerful is the blow which it gives when it descends. Now, if we wish to impact our age and society with ponderous blows, we must see to it that we are uplifted as near to God as possible. All our power will depend upon the elevation of our spirits. Prayer, meditation, devotion, communion, are like a windlass to wind us up aloft. It is not lost time which we spend in such sacred exercises, for we are thus accumulating force, so that when we come down to our actual labour for God, we shall descend with an energy unknown to those to whom communion is unknown.

→The importance of shared responsibilities

*"Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God..." (Ex. 18:18-19)*

*"Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then*

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*it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you.” (Ex. 18:21-22)*

*“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” (Rom. 12:5)*

### **God’s Principle of Spiritual Life:**

#### **God’s people function as a body.**

The degree to which leaders are able to delegate work is a measure of their success. The quality of work leadership can accomplish is directly proportional to their ability to delegate work to others. When leaders delegate, the magnitude of the production they can achieve is unlimited.

Lessons: It is a mistake to assume more duties than God has called us to. It is good to recognize personal limitations. It is easy to assume responsibilities under pressure from men that are not God given. It is wise to promote God’s principle of the body – one body, individually members of one another.

→The essence of unity in the expression of worship

*And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD, just as you do, so shall he do. One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you. (Nu. 15:14-16)*

*Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*

### **God’s Principle of Spiritual Life:**

#### **God’s people are united as equals.**

→The necessity of forgiveness in maintaining relationship

*And if a person sins unintentionally, then he shall bring a female goat in its first year as a sin offering... (Nu. 15:27 )*

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*But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the LORD, and he shall be cut off from among his people (Nu. 15:30)*

*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. (Col. 3:12-13)*

**God's Principle of Spiritual Life:  
God's people maintain wholesome relationships  
with God and fellowman.**

→The danger of assuming upon God's grace  
*I the LORD have spoken this; I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."* (Nu. 14:35)

*Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD is not among you. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you. (Nu. 14:39)*

*But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop; nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed from the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah. (Nu. 14:42-45 )*

*And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. (1 Samuel 15:22 )*

**God's Principle of Spiritual Life:  
Sincerity never replaces obedience.**

There is simply no room for passivity in the Christian faith. Life in Christ is one long string of action verbs: grow . . . praise . . . love . . . learn . . . stretch . . . reach . . . put on . . . put off . . .

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press on . . . follow . . . hold . . . cleave . . . run . . . weep . . .  
produce . . . stand . . . fight.” *Joni Eareckson Tada*

### CONCLUSION:

It has been said: ‘God’s people do not break God’s Laws as much as they break themselves against God’s Laws.’ The Christian religion is like a vast cathedral with dimly lighted windows: standing without, you see no beauty nor can you possibly imagine any. Standing within, every ray of light reveals a harmony of splendor.” *Nathaniel Hawthorne*

Christianity seems at first to be all about morality, all about duties and rules and guilt and virtue, yet it leads you on, out of all that, into something beyond. One has a glimpse of a country where they do not talk of those things. Everyone there is filled full with what we should call goodness as a mirror is filled with light. But they do not call it goodness. They do not call it anything. They are not thinking of it. They are too busy looking at the source from which it comes. *C. S. Lewis*

Christianity is not devotion to work, or to a cause, or a doctrine, but devotion to a person, the Lord Jesus Christ.  
*Oswald Chambers*

Christianity is not "an idea in the air." It is feet on the ground going God's way. *Frederick W. Brink*

**THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING THE  
CHRISTIAN LIFE ARE QUITE SIMPLY STATED: THE  
BELIEVER PUTS INTO DAILY PRACTICE THE  
PRINCIPLES OF THE WORD OF GOD BY THE POWER OF  
THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

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There is no other way to become a mature Christian growing in the character and likeness of Christ Jesus than through God’s own

## **SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK**

indwelling Spirit. God saved us so that we can know Him personally and enjoy a special spiritual relationship with Him.

NOTES

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## SECTION 4

THEME: JOHN 10:7-11

*Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me {M-Text omits before Me.} are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. **I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.** I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."*

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF ABUNDANT LIFE

A STUDY IN PSALMS 37

Psalms 37 offers divine advice for God's children to avoid the obstacles to Abundant Life and find the fullness of God's blessings:

**1. Believers must not fret over God's providence**

*Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong; (37:1)*

*Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret — it leads only to evil. (7-8)*

**Key:** "Fret not of evil doers" - to heat oneself in vexation (furious)

**2. Believers must "trust in the Lord"**

*Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. (37:3)*

*He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. (37:6)*

**Key:** "Trust in the Lord" - confident, secure, bold

**3. Believers must "do good"**

*Trust in the LORD and do good; (37:3)*

**Key:** "Do good" - produce, work benevolence, righteousness

**4. Believers must "delight in the Lord" and not place contentment on earthly things**



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*Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (37:4)*

**Key:** to ‘take delight’ is to be happy about, to find exquisite joy, to draw from communion with God all that inward intensity of joy<sup>122</sup>

**5.** Believers must "commit their ways to God

*Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: (37:5)*

**Key:** to ‘commit’ mean to turn over to the Lord your whole life— all your desires, problems, anxieties<sup>123</sup>

**6.** Believers must practice Holy silence

*Be still before the LORD ... do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. (37:7)*

**Key:** “Rest” - be silent, be still

**7.** Believers must bear suffering

*Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; (37:7)*

**Key:** “Wait patiently” - wait longingly, as to suffer torture

**8.** Believers must put away anger

*Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret — it leads only to evil. (37:8)*

**Key:** “cease from anger” - relax, let drop, abandon

**9.** Believers must put away revenge

*For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. (37:9-10)*

**Key:** “Forsake wrath” - leave behind, set free, let go

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<sup>122</sup> *Psalms Vol. I.* 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (285). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>123</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991). *A translator's handbook on the book of Psalms.* UBS Handbook Series (351). New York: United Bible Societies.

## **SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK**

**10.** Believers must be humbly dependent

*But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity.*

(37:11)

**Key:** “Meek shall inherit” - power under God’s control

NOTES FOR BOOK TWO

# SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

## APPENDIX A

### WHAT IT MEANS TO POSSESS PERSONAL SALVATION

The terms saved and salvation occur 268 times in Scripture. The Hebrew word *yaw-shah* translated “saved” in the Old Testament, and its New Testament Greek synonym *sode'-zo* can best be defined by the word deliverance. It cannot be ignored nor cast aside that man stands separated from Holy God because of sin, that sin holds man in bondage in this life, and that all mankind stands condemned as a result. Although it may go against the grain of man's pride and self-sufficiency, Scripture presents a clear and logical answer for our helplessness. God's answer is personal salvation and is foundational upon several truths of Scripture.

The *first* of these truths is that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23 NIV). Adam's fallen state of spiritual death earlier examined is the inheritance of all mankind and results in the bondage of every person to sin - wrong thinking, wrong decisions, wrong actions, and to emotional disorder. Sin is falling short of God's perfection. Every person is on need of deliverance.

The *second* of these truths is that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6:23 NIV) Whereas every person earns the penalty of sin (spiritual separation from God in the present life and eternal separation from God after this life), *salvation is a gift*. A gift is something unearned, granted out of love, and received out of gratitude.

The *third* of these truths is that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NIV) The gift of salvation was provided out of the unconditional love of God for every person. This gift of love was provided by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's own Son on the cross of Calvary, proved sufficient to transform man from the state of death to spiritual life in Christ by the resurrection of Jesus.

The *fourth* of these truths is that "it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no-one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV) *Salvation is by grace*. Grace is something that is undeserved.

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When a person is caught wilfully breaking the law that person knows some penalty or punishment is due. If the prosecuting authority in some way states that he or she will be *gracious* in judgment, the guilty person immediately recognizes the hope of escaping the deserved punishment. Nevertheless, no true justice will excuse severe and wilful wrongdoing no matter what efforts are made by the guilty party to compensate. For example; saving a child from drowning can never compensate for premeditatedly taking the life of an adult. However, if the debt (penalty or punishment) has been paid then grace can rule and the undeserved can be acquitted. Salvation is the graciousness of God accepting the paid debt of sin by the sacrifice of God's Son and justly pardoning the guilty.

After hearing the gospel explained, people often say, "You mean there's nothing I can do to deserve it? That's too easy." It seems natural for people to object to the idea that God's unmerited favour can be given so freely to unworthy sinners. Many find it difficult to trust a God who offers salvation as a free gift.

Salvation is free to man but cost God much. His own Son actually became man's substitute. Where man is unable to change his standing before God through any self-effort, Christ died in his place: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. 5:6) It is man's responsibility to believe and receive the free gift of life. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:9-10)

The language of Scriptures knows nothing about a "cross of example," or a "cross of martyrdom for the cause." Although Calvary was a cross of grace, a cross of goodness, a cross of courage, a cross of suffering and a cross of perseverance, it was foremost a cross of substitution. "For he (God) has made him (Jesus) to be sin for (in the place of) us, who (Jesus) knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

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Salvation is free but not cheap, and it is anyone's for the asking 'in faith.' "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. 10:13) Charles Spurgeon, known as "the prince of preachers," once wrote, "It will not save me to know that Christ is a Saviour; but it will save me to trust him to be my Saviour. I shall not be delivered from the wrath to come, by believing that his atonement is sufficient; but I shall be saved by making that atonement my trust, my refuge and my all."

Believers must be reminded of these Bible verses. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:9-10) It has been said of this verse that people can miss heaven by eighteen inches, the distance between the mind which hears that safety lies in Christ, and the heart which refuses to reach in faith and accept Him.

The Bible clearly states that faith in Christ alone secures salvation. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. 10:13) This is a faith that turns the heart in sorrow from sin (repentance) to acceptance of Christ's substitutional death (belief). Therefore, the securing of salvation is not dependent upon any works of man such as being baptized or joining a church but upon a point of decision. The epistle of John emphasises this point of decision. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, [even] to them that believe on his name." (John 1:11-12) This decision to "receive" Christ as *personal saviour* restores the relationship of each individual (in the fallen state of spiritual death) to spiritual life in Christ. At the moment of this decision by faith the Spirit of God enters into the individual, quickening (or making alive) the spirit of man (Ephesians 2:5). This new state or "new birth" (John 3:3) allows the believing individual to be spiritually led by God and empowered by God and to be delivered not only from eternal punishment (John 3:16) but also from present bondage (Galatians 5).

For each individual who has heard (or read) of God's free offer of salvation by faith through the sacrificial death and glorious

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHECK

resurrection of Jesus, there is a window of opportunity. This is not an opportunity to prove oneself before God. Sin prevents this (Romans 3), but this is an opportunity to accept the gift of life from God. God has secured the means of spiritual rescue from present bondage and eternal loss by dealing with the penalty and the power of sin on the Cross of Calvary. It is now up to each individual to reach out by faith and receive that gift. It is this gift of life that is the foundation for deliverance, not only from the eternal penalty of sin but also from the present bondage of sin and weakness. The beauty of that expression of faith is that no one will ever be disappointed; Jesus' promise is always kept. " For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. 5:6, 10:13)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. Earl Cooper, "A Word in Season," in *Muskoka Advance*, July 28, 1996.