

OVERCOME

NOVEMBER 2021

ADULT
CONNECT CLASS
CURRICULUM



DONALD J. WILLS
SENIOR PASTOR

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

As a Christ-follower, it is important that we realize that “Christian” is not merely a label or something we do, but it is who we are! The Scripture is plentiful with descriptions of what a follower is as well as the character and traits that should be evident in our lives. This month we are touching on a few of what we could call “marks” of an overcomer which are honesty, humility, holiness, and honorableness. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but they are a vital part of our walk as a follower of Christ.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

It should be a priority to evaluate our life biblically to know if we are walking in step with the Lord. Where there are missteps, pray and ask God to reveal where they began and to help you get back in step in your walk. I am reminded of two passages: [Galatians 5:7](#) and [Hebrews 12:1](#). Take a moment to read those passages and be encouraged in your walk.

-Blessings
Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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November 7, 2021

An Overcomer is Honest

[2 Corinthians 10:1-12](#)

17



November 14, 2021

An Overcomer is Holy

[1 Peter 1:13-21](#)

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November 21, 2021

An Overcomer is Humble

[Colossians 3:12-17](#)

43



November 28, 2021

An Overcomer has
Healthy Habits

[1 Peter 2:1-10](#)

November 7, 2021



An Overcomer is Honest
2 Corinthians 10:1-12

Focal Verse:

"For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

2 Corinthians 10:12

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Introduce

During the developmental stages of a new medicine, voluntary participants are divided into experimental groups and control groups in order to determine the effects and side-effects of the medicine upon the body and its usefulness in treating specific ailments. On one hand, the experimental group is given a pill with an active medicinal ingredient which the researchers want to test. On the other hand, the control group receives a placebo or an identical pill which does not have the active ingredient. From the outside, one



cannot distinguish between the actual pill and the placebo, but from the inside no greater difference could exist! The placebo usually contains only sugar or some other harmless element, so that the researchers can isolate the actual effects of the active ingredient. Moreover, the researchers do not tell either group which pill they have received, so that the participants' perception might not alter the experiment. Interestingly, researchers have documented a phenomenon which they have called the "placebo effect." Although researchers do not reveal which pill the groups receive, they do tell them what effect it will supposedly have upon them. If, for example, researchers want to study the effect of an ingredient on drowsiness, they will communicate to both groups that the pill should indeed make them drowsy. At times, participants in the control group who took the placebo deceive themselves and their bodies by subconsciously comparing themselves to those in the experimental group. Their bodies respond accordingly even though the pill they ingested has no medicinal value. Still, some in the control group would experience drowsiness based on their perception.

By merely looking at the outside of the capsule, one could not tell its actual contents until he chemically examined the inside. Similar to a placebo, many people foolishly compare themselves outwardly with others which proves deceptive because they tend to see themselves in a much better light than they really are. When we compare ourselves to other imperfect beings, it skews our perspective; thus, Paul warns those

Introduce

“comparing themselves among themselves are not wise” ([2 Cor 10:12](#)). Instead of deceiving ourselves by inadequate and false comparisons, we must compare ourselves to Christ—the perfect standard—and examine our hearts accordingly.

The outward appearance does matter in one sense because what is on the inside becomes manifest in what we do outwardly. Even more important, the inner transformation Christ produces ought to be visible in our outward actions. Unlike the actual pill with the active medicinal ingredient and the placebo, there must be a clear difference between us and the world. We should align ourselves with the righteousness of Christ which produces holiness and we must walk in obedience to His will. The world, therefore, must see Christ in us which indicates that He dwells within us and has changed us from the inside out. Above all, let us be overcomers who honestly evaluate our lives according to Christ rather than deceiving ourselves by comparing our lives to others.

Key
Question

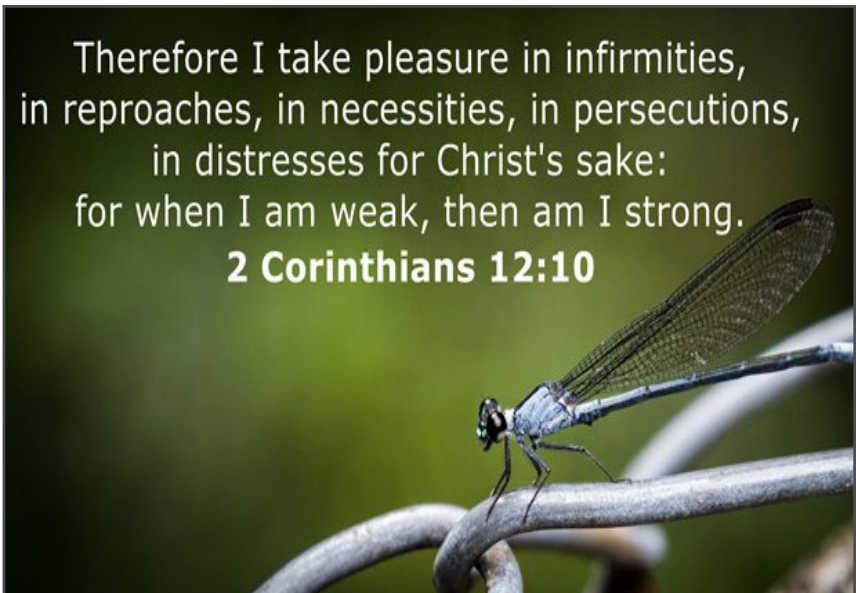
How have you compared yourself to others in the past?

2 Corinthians 10:1-6

WALK IN OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST:

The twin problems of having groups in the church divided based upon the personality of their leaders ([1 Cor 1:10-17](#)) and the struggle of some individuals to attain positions of power and influence ([1 Cor 4:6-21](#)) that we observed in 1 Corinthians have become even more pronounced here in 2 Corinthians. Those in the church who sought to propel themselves into power have not only hurled personal attacks against the Apostle Paul, but they have also challenged the very core of the gospel due to their lack of understanding and the spiritual blindness which their personal ambitions have caused. Basing their attacks purely on Paul's outward appearance, these opponents contested his authority as an apostle as well as belittled his integrity—even charging him and his fellow missionaries with walking **in the flesh** (v. 2). This prompts Paul not only to defend himself, but to defend the truth of the gospel which these opponents have misconstrued. To gain a following, these individuals attempt to entertain people by speaking eloquently and telling them what they want to hear, but in actuality they deceive them and lead them astray.

For this reason, Paul himself pleads **with** the Corinthians **by the meekness and gentleness of Christ** to re-evaluate their understanding of the gospel and assess their own relationship with Christ to make sure that they have founded it squarely upon the truth of the gospel (v. 1). For salvation and life can only come through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus which transforms us in our own human weaknesses into the righteous children of God ([2 Cor 12:9-10](#)). With this earnest appeal, Paul speaks with the authority of Christ rather than his own personal prowess—something his power-hungry opponents could not legitimately claim. By **pleading with** them in **meekness and gentleness**, he patterns himself after Christ and appeals to the Corinthians to change voluntarily after



Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities,
in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions,
in distresses for Christ's sake:
for when I am weak, then am I strong.

2 Corinthians 12:10

examining their motives and actions in light of the gospel.

Rarely does mandating or forcing someone to do something or to adopt a particular view meet with success; it often leads to more challenges and more conflict. Rather than voluntary obedience and compliance, it produces defiance. We don't need to look far in our own society to see evidence of this today whether in our nuclear families or on a national level. People rally around Patrick Henry's American revolutionary war cry, "Give me liberty or give me death" even when Scripture offers a better way to live when we submit ourselves to the Lord. In contrast, helping people to see the bigger picture, understand their purpose through reasonable evidence, and showing them the value of living in a righteous way that reflects the character of God more often produces lasting change in people who think logically than does demanding something of them. God expects obedience and faithfulness. Although He even has the right to "demand" it of us, He desires our obedience to stem voluntarily from our love for Him ([John 14:15](#)).

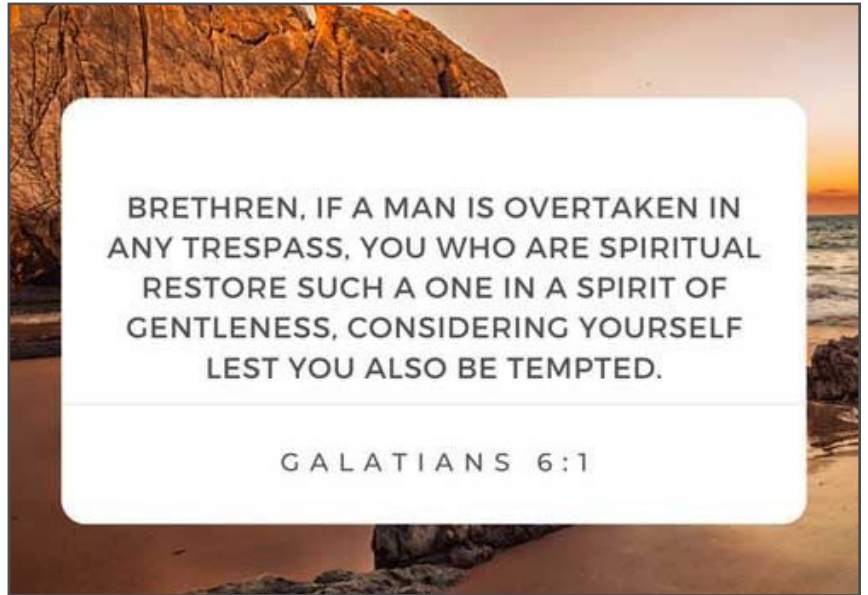
Meekness and gentleness are not signs or substitutes for weakness and permissiveness. Neither do they imply that no consequences will exist for errant beliefs or sinful actions which lead to a lawless free-for-all. When confronting His opponents, Jesus similarly responded with **meekness and gentleness**—not with an "iron fist." In His sovereignty as God, Jesus could have forced people through His divine power and prerogative to act in a particular way. On the contrary, He gave us a choice and explained our options so that we could voluntarily come to the knowledge of the truth and thereby be transformed in Him. Therefore, the crux of Jesus' discussions with His opponents centered on the benefits of following the Lord versus the consequences for following their own desires. In so doing, He shifted the responsibility upon them to decide for themselves lest they suffer the consequences for their sin and disobedience.

What benefits have you experienced when you submitted to Christ and followed His pattern for living?

Question
1

Paul presented his opponents in Corinth with a similar choice. Either they examine themselves according to the gospel and amend their ways or they suffer the consequences as defined by Scripture for distorting it for their own personal gain. Yet, Paul doesn't berate them or engage in petty retaliatory arguments; he simply

provides the catalyst for them to think introspectively. The choice is theirs. We must follow this same approach when confronting those in error after first considering our own relationship to Christ and our motives to ensure that we are in right standing ([Gal 6:1](#)). Then, we must respond with **meekness and gentleness** in a way that causes others to look truthfully at themselves and evaluate themselves according to the standard of Christ. Issuing a forceful ultimatum to people usually causes them to become defensive. When they become defensive, they won't listen to reason and accept sound advice even if it may actually benefit them.



When someone has corrected you or you have corrected someone, how does (or has) utilizing a gentle approach usually have a more positive effect and greater chance of producing results?

Question
2

At the same time, however, we cannot compromise the truth of God's Word; we must persist without wavering. If people continue in their disobedience and refuse to repent, ultimately God will deal with them and they will face the dire consequences He has outlined in His Word. Yet, God has also called leadership in the church, like the Apostle Paul, to safeguard the gospel, correct any doctrinal errors that may arise, and hold each other accountable for following the tenets of Scripture. At times, this necessitates the implementation of church discipline and a more adamant approach to address those in error and keep their sin from affecting the whole body when they continually refuse to repent ([Matt 18:15-20](#); [1 Cor 5:1-8](#)). Although he begins with a gentle approach so that they might learn on their own and be restored, Paul won't hesitate to use his God-given authority to protect the gospel and confront those who abuse it. As **bold** as they may perceive him to be in writing this letter, he hopes that they might come to their senses, realize their error, and repent so that he need not be even more **bold** when he comes to them in person.

Like a parent counting to three or threatening to go get a "switch," Paul begs the

Instruct

Corinthians not to give him more reason to **be bold with the confidence by which** he intends to **be bold against some** who have falsely charged him with walking according **to the flesh** (v. 2). If they won't listen to reason and continue their campaign to distract from the truth of the gospel, he will have no recourse other than to come down forcefully upon them **when** he is physically **present** in Corinth. The **confidence** to act boldly to which he refers comes not from his position, his accomplishments, or his own intellect; this would put him in the same league as his opponents. His **confidence** comes from trusting in the Lord, particularly the gospel through which Christ saved and transformed him. Outwardly, as Paul has already admitted, he is physically unimpressive (literally, **lowly among** them), but in Christ he can have boldness because of who he has become in Him. Thus, he can defend himself against walking **in the flesh** because he can point to tangible change in his life whereby he models Christ and upholds the righteous principles of Scripture. His opponents have no evidence against him!

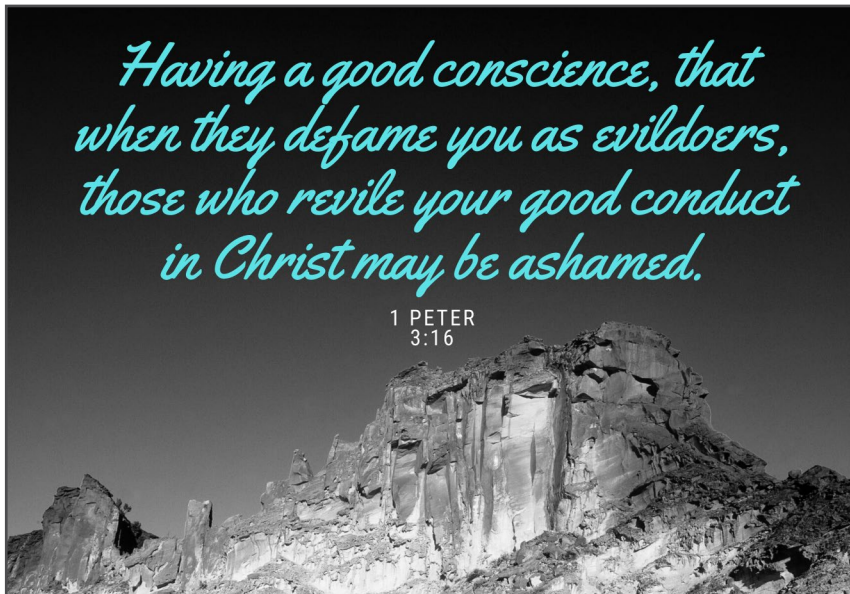
If someone charged you with walking in the flesh, to what tangible evidence could you point to show your relationship with Christ?

Question
3

Furthermore, Paul's opponents have mischaracterized him because they look at things from an earthly perspective rather than a godly or spiritual perspective. As a result, he points out that they **do not war according to the flesh** even though they **walk in the**

Having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

1 PETER
3:16



flesh (v. 3). In this way, he uses the phrase **walk in the flesh** differently than his opponents; it means to live physically as a human being—not the commission of immoral acts that dishonor God. Although Paul and his team exist physically, they do not use physical **weapons** to fight a spiritual battle. This would be futile. Thus, he explains that **the weapons of their warfare are not carnal** (i.e., “fleshly”) **but mighty in God for** destroying **strongholds** as well as

arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (vv. 4-5). Truly, human wisdom, philosophy, and understanding are all useless tools when it comes to sin and salvation. Only Christ can transform; only He has the power to overcome sin in our lives.

Even though Christ transforms us from the inside out and only He can see the true condition of our hearts, the evidence of that change should be readily visible to the world. They should see a difference in us! Therefore, it is a fallacy to claim that one's external appearance doesn't matter at all. What one does outwardly indicates what is in his or her heart. What we do, therefore, serves as a barometer of our relationship with Christ. Our **obedience** and faithfulness to the Word of God is that evidence. Our external actions must match what God says in His Word. Consequently, if people bring false charges against us as they did Paul, we can point to tangible evidence in our lives that shows our **obedience** and faithfulness to Scripture. Thus, Paul explains that the spiritual **weapons of warfare** that effectively work destroy arrogance and pride which elevates human **knowledge by bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ and being ready to punish all disobedience** (vv. 5b-6).

To take **into captivity** means that we must fully submit ourselves to the Lord. Hence, "partial" **obedience** is actually **disobedience**. We must put anything that distracts us from the Lord or causes us to act contrary to His Word out of our minds and surrender completely to Him. To use Paul's military metaphor, we can't be a "part-time" prisoner of war like on *Hogan's Heroes* where covert Americans could leave the compound freely whenever they chose to subvert German plans. We are either His captives or not! Therefore, we must honestly evaluate ourselves; we must ask the Lord to help us to see the true condition of our hearts and examine our external actions in light of His Word. Do we tithe, but not serve? That's not being captive or completely surrendered to **obedience** if we don't participate in both! Do we serve, but not share the gospel and make disciples? Do we pray, but not read Scripture? Do we give to social projects, but not tithe? Do we practice some principles in God's Word, but not others? The list could continue. This isn't a buffet where we can pick and choose what we want to do or make a priority! **Obedience** requires faithfulness in every area—not a selective few.

How would God honestly evaluate your obedience? In what areas have you completely surrendered and in what areas do you need to work?

Question
4

2 Corinthians 10:7-11

CONSIDER THE INSIDE NOT THE OUTSIDE ONLY:

Paul poses a rhetorical question that cuts to the heart of the issue: **Do you look at things according to the outward appearance** (v. 7)? As human beings, we all tend to share in this problem! We have the propensity to look at the external and make superficial judgments rather than substantive ones. Israel, like Corinth, suffered this problem more than once in their history. When selecting their first king, the people favored Saul because he was “handsome,” tall, and strong ([1 Sam 9:2](#)). He outwardly looked like a king, but inwardly he was tormented, unstable, weak, and disobedient to the Lord!

In contrast, Israel overlooked David as Saul’s replacement because he was small in stature and weak in appearance ([1 Sam 16:7](#)). As a man after God’s own heart ([1 Sam 13:14](#)), however, David proved faithful, obedient, and valiant—a king who pointed the people to the Lord. Still, Israel failed to learn from this experience! When Jesus became flesh, they rejected Him because He did not look like the Messiah they expected—or even wanted. [Isaiah 53:2](#) reports, “He [Jesus] had no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.”

When has looking only at the external appearance of something gotten you in trouble?

Question
5



To illustrate the superficiality of looking only at the outward appearance in terms of how it can deceive us in our expectations, let’s consider two scenarios. While looking at prospective colleges many years ago, I stayed in a hotel with a full continental breakfast. I got a bowl of cereal along with a carton of milk. The carton looked good on the outside and the expiration date had not even yet passed. Everything appeared in order until I opened it to pour on my cereal. Its contents had become curdled and rancid! In contrast, several times I have received packages in the mail or from

a delivery service where the box looked as if it had been run over by a truck—and it probably had. It was beat up, scarred, tattered and torn, and covered in grime on the outside. I almost assuredly expected the contents to match the outside of the box and be destroyed. But they weren't; they were pristine and functioning. If I had rushed to judgment and looked only at the external, I would have been badly fooled and missed the true evaluation of these things.

When have you rushed to judgment before examining a situation or person thoroughly? How did the haste to judge something turn out?

Question
6

To evaluate something correctly, we must take time to examine it thoroughly and compare it to the right standard. Paul gives us the right standard by which we must judge ourselves and others: Christ. **If anyone is convinced in himself that he belongs to Christ, he should consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's.** Before we can evaluate others, we must first evaluate ourselves according to Christ to make sure we are in right standing and we have the right perspective based upon Scripture. Although we will address "comparisons" more fully in the last section, we must establish two caveats here. First, apart from Christ any comparison we make is flawed because we will filter it through our selfish lenses. Only Christ who sees the heart and has set the perfect example in Himself can give us true guidance and discernment. Second, we tend to see things the way we want them to be and not the way they truly are. This becomes especially dangerous in our self-evaluation because we can fool ourselves into thinking we are better than we truly are when we don't compare and contrast ourselves with Christ who provides an honest assessment of where we truly are in our journey.

How has (does) Christ give you discernment about yourself? How has that helped you to see things in your life that you ought to change that maybe you wouldn't have ordinarily noticed?

Question
7

With this, Paul now addresses his opponents' mischaracterization and criticism of him. From his response, we know they challenged his **authority** which they viewed from a human perspective—selfishly seeing it as detrimental to their freedom and an obstacle in achieving **authority** themselves. But Paul reminds them that his **authority**

Instruct

comes from **the Lord** and is not self-imposed (v. 8). Although the **authority** God has given him will certainly destroy **strongholds** and anything **that exalts itself against the knowledge of God** (vv. 4-5), it is actually for their **edification** rather than their **destruction**. This radically differs from his opponents' self-declared **authority** because their arguments are meant to tear down and destroy people! God, on the other hand, uses Paul to tear down their arguments and false beliefs—not destroy people! The outcome of these two contrasting positions could not be starker. God saves people, but those who oppose Him seek to destroy people with their wrongheaded beliefs to elevate themselves to power.

Paul now explicitly shows how shallow his opponents think by revealing their tactics to garner sympathy through emotion. He even uses their very own words against



them. They only look at the external **appearance**, using it to attack him instead of assessing the substance of the argument. First, his opponents appeal to emotion rather than addressing the content of his message, suggesting Paul wants to **terrify** them **by** his **letters** (v. 9). Second, they do admit in their own words that **his letters are weighty**

and powerful, but they immediately dismiss his message because his personal appearance **is weak** and **his speech is contemptible** (v. 10). They refuse to listen to him because Paul does not look like or sound like what they expect or even desire. Today, most arguments devolve into personal attacks and smears designed to destroy a person and achieve victory over them. Consequently, people call each other names, assassinate their character with unsubstantiated accusations that turn out to be false many times, put others down, and call attention to irrelevant and unrelated physical features instead of having a substantive discussion. This occurs not only in the political arena, but on social media and within everyday relationships. People appeal to emotion first to generate a response, which often works in our society. And then they resort to personal attacks if they fail to get the desired outcome. They use personal attacks because their arguments have no validity and they truly don’t have a case to be

made at all! So, like a magician, they want to distract from the truth with the intent to deceive, hoping that people won't notice the flaws in their plans.

Paul answers these personal attacks by reassuring the Corinthians that no hypocrisy exists in him. He will act the same way in person as he does **his letters**; the message he delivers in person will be the same as what he has communicated in **his letters**. Because he stands squarely on the Word of God, he can be consistent and not deviate in all facets of his life and ministry. Thus, he reminds the Corinthians that **what they are in word by letters when they are absent, so also will they be in deed when they are present** (v. 11). The only way we can be consistent without hypocrisy is to measure ourselves against Scripture and conform ourselves to its message that never changes. Let us ask ourselves: When we look in the mirror, do we see Christ reflected or do we see ourselves? If we see ourselves, let us ask the Lord how we can become more consistent in our walk to reflect Him and His Word.

How have you (or have you seen others) appeal to emotion or turn to personal attacks in an argument that distracts from the actual substantive matter?

Question
8

2 Corinthians 10:12

RESIST COMPARING YOURSELVES TO OTHERS:

In verse 12, Paul succinctly summarizes the entire focus of his argument to this point. We should not classify or **compare ourselves** to those who have appointed themselves as leaders to be emulated. As we have already seen, we should compare ourselves to Christ alone who established the perfect example for us to follow. Therefore, Paul concludes that those **measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise**. For example, we would not use a damaged level or tape measure to construct something. We would want tools that we knew were accurate lest what we build would be flawed from the beginning. And it would be flawed because we would not have anything concrete with which to **compare** it except our broken tools! Life apart from Christ is the same way. We have nothing concrete with which to compare ourselves; everything on this earth is flawed. Only Christ presents an accurate measurement of where we are in life. Society constantly changes—and that change is overwhelmingly negative because it drives people further from God by obscuring the truth. People in the world can feel good about themselves because they **compare** themselves to imperfect standards.

Instruct

They don't realize that they are perilously headed for destruction masked in something that promises life and pleasure. It becomes easy to lie to ourselves when the world, not Christ and His Word, is the standard! An imperfect standard tells us to "be who you are," namely do whatever feels good and makes you happy without shame. A perfect standard tells us, "Be who Christ transformed us to be." An imperfect standard tells us, "It's okay because everyone else is doing it." A perfect standard tells us, "Don't follow the world. Follow Christ." An imperfect standard tells us, "We're not as bad as someone else." A perfect standard tells us, "We should become like Christ."

What lies does the world tell us in terms of how we should live and how we should relate to Christ?

Question
9

The world constantly bombards us with its lies. If we **compare ourselves** to the world, we will never be able to evaluate our lives honestly and get a true picture of who we are in Christ because it will have become corrupted by imperfect people. If we **compare ourselves** to Christ, however, we can see ourselves in the True Light. He will not only expose our flaws that we must change, but He will also reveal our successes in terms of areas in which we have obediently followed Him. This leads to a balanced assessment of ourselves where we're not too harsh in our judgments which can lead to unfettered guilt and hinder our progress nor are we too lenient which can also hinder our progress. We will see ourselves as Christ sees us! Let us, therefore, become overcomers who are honest with ourselves so that we may visibly reflect Christ to everyone around us.

Inspire

Over the course of this week and going forward, pray and ask the Lord to help you honestly evaluate your life. Study and meditate upon Scripture so that you have something perfect against which you can compare your life. Daily seek to become captive to obedience, completely surrendering to what the Lord has said about every area of your life. Don't merely hear the Word and know it in an intellectual capacity, but apply it. Live it. As James says, "Be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" ([Jas 1:22](#)). Let our relationship with Christ be evident to all through our faithfulness and obedience. We can only achieve such obedience with the help

of Christ who enables us to evaluate ourselves honestly and empowers us to live transformed lives through His righteousness that He has given us.

Incorporate

How do you respond when someone personally attacks you? In what ways do you imitate Christ in your response?

How does an honest evaluation of ourselves and others through Christ help us to edify (build) rather than destroy ([2 Cor 10:7-11](#))? Why does an evaluation apart from Christ lead to destruction?

What standard do you honestly use to evaluate your life the most? How do you see the influence and imprint of that standard on your life? If that standard is not the Bible, what steps must you take in your life to align yourself with it?

November 14, 2021



Holy

An Overcomer is Holy

1 Peter 1:13-21

Focal Verse:

"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct."

1 Peter 1:15

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Introduce

Seven-year-old Harrison had anticipated this day for an entire calendar year; his birthday had once again finally arrived. He had now gracefully aged to a mature man of eight. Although the day would be filled with joy, celebration, and gifts, it would also be a little bitter-sweet because his father had suddenly been called away on a business trip which would span over a week. He would miss his father immensely during this momentous time in his life. When it came time to open gifts, however, Harrison excitedly began



with the one his father had left. Wasting little time, he ripped the wrapping paper, sending it flying in every direction. Soon, his eyes beheld a diecast model-car kit of a vintage 1967 Shelby GT-350. Harrison and his father loved spending time together assembling these classic car kits and they had already completed several which were proudly displayed on a shelf in his bedroom.

Now, however, he would have to wait until his father returned or attempt to do it on his own without any assistance. But as the hours passed, he realized that he couldn't wait any longer. He had to try on his own. Opening the box, he dumped its contents on the desk in his room. Hundreds of pieces in all shapes and sizes scattered on the desk along with a sheet of decals and instructions. Perplexed, Harrison stared at the pieces as they had fallen randomly, wondering where to begin. He thought to himself, "How will I ever be able to put all these pieces together into something that will even look like a car?" He sat for what felt like an eternity before an idea sprang into his mind. "What would dad do first," he pondered. To assemble the model successfully, he had come to realize that he must think and act just like his father.

He now knew exactly where to begin, so he picked up the instructions which had a diagram with all the pieces labeled in order of assembly. He read the instructions thoroughly in their entirety and found the first piece which was the frame of the car to which everything else would snap. Harrison worked methodically. He always double-checked the labels of the parts against the diagram to ensure he had them in the right

Introduce

place before he glued them, for this is what his father would have done. He slowly assembled each piece until he had a finished model which looked exactly like the picture on the front of the box.

When his father returned home, Harrison couldn't wait to show him the completed project. Leading him by the hand into his bedroom, he pointed to the shelf where he had placed the Shelby diecast model. Beaming with pride, his father carefully picked it up and said, "Son, I'm so proud of you. You did this on your own and you have a flawless model to show for it." Harrison then admitted, "You actually helped me because I learned how to do it by watching you and following your example."

Like Harrison, we must follow the example set by our heavenly Father who has shown us what it means to "be holy." In fact, Scripture even commends us to "be holy, for [I the Lord your God] am holy" ([1 Peter 1:16](#)). Unlike Harrison, God doesn't leave us on our own to figure out these things. He has given us clear instruction through His Word and also sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us. The Spirit, therefore, reminds us of what Jesus taught and how He lived. He then guides and enables us to "be holy" if only we would seek to imitate Him and follow His example. Therefore, let us be overcomers who are holy by following the pattern God Himself has set for us and shown us by His own example.

Key
Question

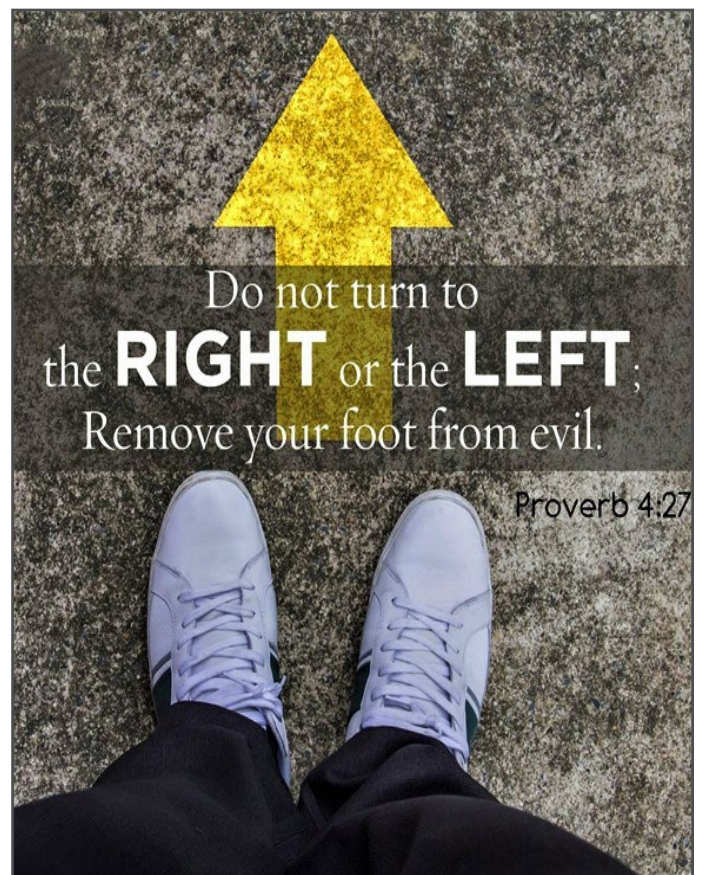
In what ways do you imitate the holiness of our heavenly Father?

1 Peter 1:13-14

CONFORM YOURSELF TO CHRIST:

Having already reminded us about the incorruptible inheritance we have through Christ ([1 Peter 1:3-12](#)), Peter transitions to a discussion about what we have now become in Him. Thus, he describes *from* what we have been saved (corruption) *to* what we have been saved (righteousness) which we express through our conformity to Christ. However, salvation is not just something we receive; it culminates in our actions. Christ does indeed freely give us life, but we must live out our salvation now through our holiness and obedience. This realization inspires Peter to implore us to **gird up the loins of our mind** (v. 13). In antiquity, people wore tunics or shirts which extended in length over their knees and sometimes to their ankles. To prepare themselves for work, they would tuck (i.e., **gird**) this shirt into a belt which would lift it above their knees to enable them to move more freely. With this call to **gird up the loins**, Peter is exhorting us to prepare our **mind** to live out our salvation. Thus, he calls us to readiness and action to live obediently in holiness.

In order to be effectively ready, we must have a definitive plan and be intentional in both our preparation and implementation of it. Those who fail to prepare will often succumb to their impulses rather than acting upon the truth because they lack self-control. As a result, impulses compel people to act upon their urges and desires in lieu of holiness which reflects the will of the Father. Today, we see people everywhere acting primarily upon their urges whether impulse buying, following trends and fads, or jumping on bandwagons. One thing that all impulses have in common is that they are guided by emotion. Our preparation and plan, however, should be guided by God's wisdom—never our emotions! Therefore, we should never let our guard down; our minds must always be



Instruct

focused on fulfilling God's will—not gratifying our own personal desires.

What impulses have you had (or do you have)?

Question
1

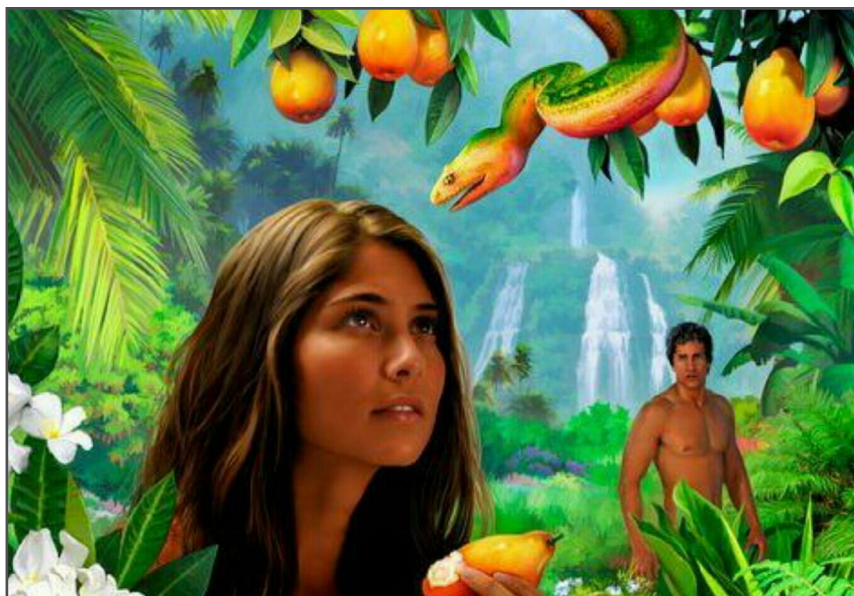
Although many people today value spontaneity for the sake of the seemingly carefree feeling it produces or the excitement it promises, it cannot replace careful planning for when temptation and unexpected troubles arise. For instance, schools, businesses, and many families have developed plans for various emergencies for which they repeatedly train. They practice so that if an emergency does occur people will instantly know what to do. The lack of preparation, on the other hand, breeds **ignorance** which can prove destructive and deadly. Grippled by emotions during an emergency, people can freeze or panic with disastrous consequences. Similarly, the failure to prepare spiritually causes people to resort to their instincts which lead them astray. In **ignorance** which turns into willful disobedience, they give in to their fleshly desires rather than dwell in the righteousness of Christ. Nothing good can come from a failure to prepare!

What is your plan for dealing with these impulses? How does it reflect the plan Scripture gives us?

Question
2

Not only must we have a plan to combat our fleshly desires, we must also have the self-control to implement it and live by it as Scripture commands us. Peter implores us to **be sober** or self-controlled. The verb translated **be sober** literally refers to not being intoxicated by alcohol. People who have consumed alcohol and have become drunk have lost control over their faculties which often causes them to put themselves into precarious and embarrassing situations. Although they are still responsible for their actions, they are controlled by the alcohol that they have put into their bodies. In a sense, our desires can consume us, controlling our thoughts and actions unless we focus our minds on Christ who can overcome them. We are still responsible for our actions, but we have allowed our flesh to control us rather than the Holy Spirit. We have pushed Him out of the driver's seat so-to-speak and taken control of our own lives. Perhaps, the characteristic that has best defined man since the dawn of creation is the lack of self-control. Although man knows the right thing to do, he lacks the self-control to do it! Both Adam and Eve knew what God had said about eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve even paraphrased it to the serpent when he

cunningly asked! Yet, they lacked the restraint to resist eating the fruit when they saw it was pleasing to the eyes (i.e., desirous). Self-control, therefore, isn't predicated merely upon knowing something intellectually. We must also have the resolve to apply that which we know. For this reason, we must know God's plan, practice it (repeatedly), and apply or use it.



Even the best plan in the world does not do us any good if we know it, but we never apply it!

As both a diabetic and chronic sufferer of gout, I know the things that I ought not eat so I can maintain good health. For diabetes, most people naturally think of abstaining from processed sugars, but carbohydrates (i.e., breads, cereals, potatoes, pastas, etc.) quickly break down to increase the blood sugar level. Therefore, a healthy diet for a diabetic is not *just* about abstaining from sugar like most people think! For gout, which is the build-up of uric acid in the blood which causes kidney stone-like crystals to form in the joints, one must avoid things high in purines (i.e., red meats, shrimp, many kinds of fish, spinach, cauliflower, etc.). Intellectually, I know how these things affect my body and the other health issues that they can cause long-term, but I must have self-control not to eat them. I must apply this knowledge, realizing the consequences of what will happen if I do eat these things! Fortunately, God has given me the ability to formulate a plan and exercise self-control to eat wisely—and anyone who has eaten a meal with me can testify to that end. Nonetheless, it can still be difficult at times to make healthy choices with others eating a variety of things around you.

We all still have certain areas in our lives in which we do struggle with self-control. The areas in which I struggle with self-control may differ from the areas in which you struggle with self-control. Yet, we cannot claim **ignorance** and that we didn't know. God has clearly set forth the parameters in Scripture by which we should live. Knowing what to do (or not to do) is not the problem; lacking the self-control to do it is! We willfully chose to indulge in these things. We lack self-control because we rely on our flesh, which is weak, to overcome our desires rather than turning to the Lord who empowers us to overcome through His strength and righteousness! Paul best captures

Instruct

God's role in enabling us to have self-control when we turn to Him: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor 10:13).

In what areas do you struggle with issues of self-control?

Question
3

Peter now gives us the worst-kept secret for overcoming our impulses and maintaining self-control: we must focus on Christ and be conformed to His image. We can say it's the worst-kept secret because God has revealed it plainly to us in Scripture. He wants everyone to know it! For this reason, Peter encourages us to **rest our hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ** (v. 13b).

Thus, as **obedient children**, we should **not** conform ourselves **to** our **former lusts** as if we were ignorant and didn't know (v. 14). We should direct our **hope** toward Jesus Christ, particularly His second coming, so that we may be found faithful, obedient, and holy when He returns. **Hope** in this world may promise fun, excitement, and stability at times, but it only leads to discontentment, disappointment, and desperation. Only Christ can satisfy because only He can offer a permanent **hope** through His sacrifice which offers everlasting life.

While we remain here on earth waiting for Christ's return, we are to prepare ourselves by living holy and righteous lives. Consequently, another way of translating this phrase is to "fix your hope completely upon the grace of Jesus," which should remind us then of what the author of Hebrews said: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" ([Heb 12:2](#)). Literally to "fix our eyes on Jesus," it means that we are to follow Him and pattern our lives after Him. Rather than looking deep within ourselves to find the power to overcome, which will always fail us, we must look to Christ who will never fail. Instead of seeking solutions from the world, which will also fail, we must look to Christ for the solution to all our problems and for the self-control to conform our lives to His. Too often, people turn to the wrong place for the solution. Rather than looking to Christ first, they try everything else the world has to offer which only compounds their problems. Just like we would not go to a car mechanic for our health problems, we should not go to the world for the solutions to our spiritual problems because they have no clue how to overcome the flesh and sin!

From these first two verses, we can extract two principles that will help us to live holy lives in Christ and overcome the flesh. First, we must have a renewed mind and carefully guard what we put into it ([Rom 12:1-2](#)). If we don't protect ourselves and filter what enters our minds, it will eventually transform the way we behave. It will come out in our actions no matter how "spiritually strong" we may consider ourselves to be! While in the hospital, the doctor changed two of my medications, particularly the one I took for diabetes. At the time, I took it without hesitation. A physician's assistant then even renewed the prescription during a follow-up visit upon my release from the hospital.

Over the next two weeks, dealing with other effects of my medicine, I felt tired and weak—thinking it was all part of the process of recovery until I checked my blood sugar one night at 2 AM. It had dropped to 67 and I could not get it to rise much. Unknowingly, this had been an on-going problem for two weeks! Fortunately, I had an appointment with my doctor the next day, so I showed him the prescription. Immediately, he exclaimed, "You shouldn't be on this! This is why you



haven't felt well." Something that I had consumed had affected me internally! This same principle applies to our minds. What we consume with our minds will affect us internally and change our behavior if we don't exercise caution.

How carefully do you guard your mind about what you put into it?

Question
4

The second principle stems from the first. We must seek to remove any influences in our lives that might distract us in our pursuit of holiness. Realistically, we cannot remove or control everything that might negatively influence us. However, we should not intentionally subject ourselves to those things which can tempt us if we have the power to remove them. So much of temptation giving way to sin centers upon our own foolishness for not guarding our minds and not removing the negative influences in our lives when we can. We allow them to work on us daily and then they begin to consume us until our desires give birth to sin. Therefore, let us overcome the flesh

Instruct

and live in holiness by preparing our minds for battle, keeping our focus on Christ, and conforming our lives to the pattern He has set for us.

1 Peter 1:15-16

CONDUCT YOURSELF IN HOLINESS

Peter now makes his point more explicit and provides the scriptural basis for it. He commands us to **be holy in all** our **conduct** just **as** the One **who called** us **is holy** (v. 15). Paul states this same principle this way in Ephesians 5:1, “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.” Like Harrison in the introduction, both Peter and Paul encourage us to think, speak, act, and respond in the same way our heavenly Father would. Colloquially, we would say that we’re to be the spitting image of our Father (His character, not physicality, in this instance). This isn’t a new concept originating in the New Testament era; it was God’s design from the very beginning. Mankind was created in His image to represent Him to the rest of creation ([Gen 1:27](#)). Sin, however, severed man’s relationship with the Lord and corrupted the image and purpose for which he had been made. Man needed restoration which came about through Christ. Through His sacrifice, Christ reconciled our relationship with Him and restored the holy image through which we are once again able to represent His holiness.

The call for God’s people—that is those who truly have a relationship with Him—to



represent His holiness to the rest of the world pervades all of Scripture. Here, Peter summarizes [Leviticus 19:2](#) to lend scriptural support for his command, “You shall **be holy, for I** the Lord your God **am holy.**” In Christ, we are to exhibit our transformation by no longer living in the flesh, but living **holy** and righteous lives. In the Sermon on

the Mount, Jesus says something similar when He interjects, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt 5:48).

How well do you fulfill this call to live holy?

Question
5

Whether the call to **be holy**, to imitate God, or to be perfect, we have a tall order to fill and big footsteps in which to follow. We often short-change ourselves, however. We lower our expectations because we do not believe we can ever fulfill this obligation to match Christ's example. So, some people may never try at all while others may give up trying because they have lost hope amidst their struggles to live righteously. On our own, we can never achieve perfection or imitate God's holiness. But God hasn't left us on our own to do these things. He sent His Spirit to dwell within us and to help us. In Him, we have the power to overcome the flesh and temptation; we have the ability to fulfill His will perfectly and follow the precepts of Scripture flawlessly. But this requires total surrender to Him! We cannot foolishly think that we can control our own lives and have the power to overcome. We must surrender to Him daily. Let's not short-change ourselves and say "we can't." As Peter urges us, let us look to the Lord and say that we can in Him! We can live holy lives regardless of how bad our past may be or how much degradation occurs in the world around us because God indwells us and will empower us to overcome and **be holy** when we call upon Him—which Peter will now discuss!

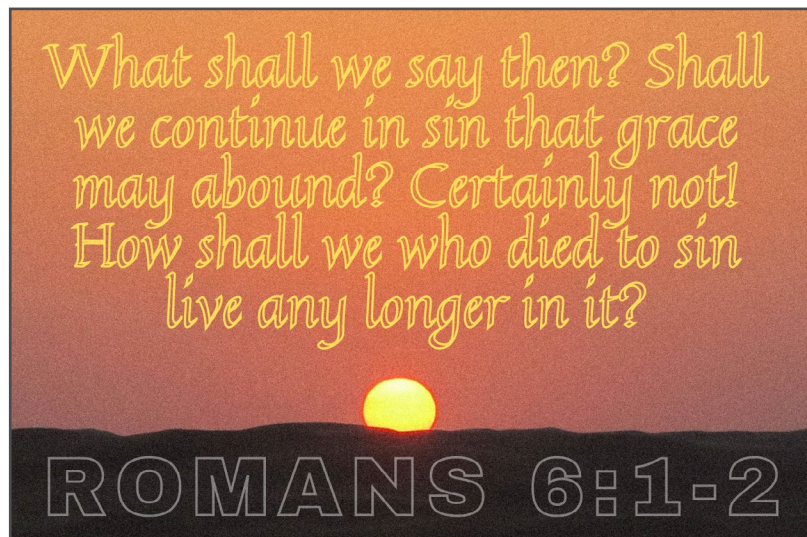
1 Peter 1:17-21

CALL UPON THE FATHER:

Peter now exhorts us to **call** upon the Father and contemplate the value of our inheritance in Christ. Because **God judges each one's work without partiality**, we should **call** upon Him and **conduct** ourselves during our **stay here in fear** (v. 17). As Peter has already said in [verse 13](#), we are to look forward to the day when Christ returns while at the same time remembering the **grace** He has offered in forgiving our sins. He will continue extending that **grace** to us until one day our faith will become sight. We will be made perfect and complete on that day, but we must also give an account of how we represented Him here on earth—i.e., Peter's reference to judgment in verse 17. Although He will forgive us when we sin, we should not abuse His **grace** and habitually live in disobedience. We've been transformed from that way of living. Peter, therefore, is not saying that we should **fear** losing our salvation, for once God has saved us and made us His children nothing can separate us from Him. We should, however, **fear** dishonoring the Lord, bringing shame upon Him in the eyes of the world because of our sin, and the chastisement we will receive for our disobedience.

To help us realize the cost of our sin, Peter calls us to contemplate the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf. In doing so, he shows that the worth of our salvation supersedes

anything here on earth because Jesus paid the ultimate price by laying down His own



life. Consequently, our salvation should be the greatest gift we have ever received. Peter reminds us that we **were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers** (v. 18). In other words, our inheritance is valuable because it comes from God Himself and not

tradition passed down by man or through man-made religion. Moreover, it is valuable because it is eternal, not temporary. Its power and effectiveness never fade unlike everything on this earth which will one day disintegrate. On the contrary, we are saved **with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and spot** (v. 19).

How often do you think about the worth of your salvation in terms of Jesus' sacrifice? How does that affect the decisions you make?

Question
6

Continuing his discussion about the worth of our inheritance in Christ, Peter reveals that God had planned this method for our salvation from the very beginning. It wasn't a spur of the moment, last-minute, hurriedly put-together plan! God spent time contemplating it. For this reason, Peter acknowledges that Christ **was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest** (revealed) **in these last times for us** (v. 20). He concludes with a specific reminder to direct our **faith and hope** to God who facilitated our salvation through raising His Son **from the dead** and giving **Him glory** (v. 21). If God spent time contemplating the plan to redeem us even before He created us, then we ought to spend time contemplating the cost of His sacrifice and His call for our obedience. When we realize the price He paid, it will influence the way we conduct ourselves. When we consider the tremendous price He paid and how truly "little" is required of us, our love and gratefulness toward the Lord should spur us to live in holiness following His example.

Inspire

Last week, we learned that as overcomers we must honestly evaluate ourselves, comparing ourselves to Christ and not other people. This week we further cemented the need to fix our eyes upon Him, follow His example, and conduct ourselves in holiness. When faced with a challenge such as the one Harrison found himself in when his father was suddenly called away on a business trip, we must ask ourselves, “What would our Father do in this situation?” The answer is found in the instructions that He has given us in His Word. Therefore, let us be overcomers who pattern themselves after our Father in holiness as He has established for us in His Word.

Incorporate

How do you see a lack of self-control in the world around us? How does (or has) it affected you?

What things have you (or should you) remove from your life so that your mind doesn't become distracted from the Lord and you find yourself succumbing to sin?

How has the Lord shown you grace over the years? How has His grace propelled you to live in holiness? If not, why and in what area(s) do you still struggle?

November 21, 2021



*An Overcomer
is Humble*
Colossians 3:12-17

Focal Verse:

"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering."

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Colossians 3:12

Introduce

I enjoy spending time outdoors soaking in the sights and sounds of God’s beautiful creation, particularly in regions where foothills and mountains dominate the landscape. Nothing can compare to hiking a trail which opens to a stunning overlook—whether a towering peak, a deep river gorge, or a vast canyon. While we look upon the grandeur of the Lord’s creation, we can gaze upon its vastness and see how small and insignificant we truly are in the

universe; yet, it also reminds us of how important and special we are to God that He sent His Son for us. Some of our predecessors, such as Ulysses S. Grant and Theodore Roosevelt, had the foresight to preserve some of God’s most marvelous scenery in the national parks. The arch spanning the roadway over the old northern



entrance into Yellowstone even reminds us that this park is “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.” Whether hiking, camping, kayaking, or any other outdoor activity, we must prepare ourselves appropriately to receive the full benefit and truly enjoy what the Lord has made.

That preparation must begin before we embark upon our journey. We must know the terrain, topography, and the general weather conditions that may exist in the area in which we intend to go. Fortunately, many websites today give us this information in detail, so we have no excuse for not being adequately prepared. In general, most websites will adamantly warn us to wear the proper clothing, especially footwear when hiking. Even on “maintained” trails, one will find obstacles like rocks and tree roots protruding from the path along with holes and uneven surfaces; coupled with changes in elevation, this can prove disastrous if one doesn’t have the right shoes that have good traction and provide support for the ankles. Without the proper shoes, one can very easily stumble and fall or, even worse, twist an ankle requiring a long, grueling walk back to the trailhead.

The same applies to our clothing in mountainous regions where the weather can change suddenly and drastically. Prudent hikers dress in layers which can be removed

Introduce

or added as temperatures vary. They will also carry some form of rain gear, like a poncho, to prevent their clothes from becoming drenched by a sudden shower which could cause hypothermia in the cool mountain air. On most of my journeys, I will encounter people who have not prepared properly. Some will have on flip flops which can easily cause a fall or sprained ankle. Others will have dressed inappropriately for the weather and have no recourse but to suffer. Although one may not always suffer an injury from wearing flip flops, it's really only a matter of time before one suffers a stubbed toe, laceration, or a fall.

Like these trail guides on websites, Scripture warns us that we must dress appropriately to navigate our life in Christ. God has "preserved" or saved us through Christ for His pleasure, but to receive the full benefit and enjoyment of life in Him we must be in right standing. This requires that "as the elect of God, holy and beloved" that we "put on" the righteous qualities that reflect His character and at the same time remove the old way of the flesh in which we formerly lived. Just as we have no excuse for being unprepared to hike safely with all the information at our fingertips, we have no excuse for being unprepared for life. If we are, we have simply ignored the information God has given us or, even worse, we have willfully refused to implement it in our lives! Scripture plainly tells us what we ought to wear or "put on," so that we can enjoy the abundance our life in Christ has to offer. Let us, therefore, overcome with humility by always wearing the righteous characteristics that God has outlined for us in His Word.

Key
Question

How do you ensure that you have dressed appropriately for life in Christ?

Colossians 3:12-13

EXTEND FORGIVENESS TO ALL:

After having revealed the sinful characteristics and fleshly desires that we ought to remove, or literally “put to death” ([Col 3:5-11](#)), Paul presents us with a list of some of the holy traits that we should exhibit or **put on** (v. 12). He issues this call to live righteously because **as the elect of God, holy and beloved**, we have the obligation to represent Him to the world by conducting ourselves according to His holy character. People all too frequently misunderstand the concept of election in Scripture because they do not consider the full context of what God has said, thereby seeking to impose their own narrow view of theology upon this word. The word translated **elect** does not refer to salvation in the sense that God has chosen, or even predetermined, some people to be saved and others to be condemned. Rather, it refers to salvation in the sense of what one “becomes” in Christ after he begins a relationship with Him.

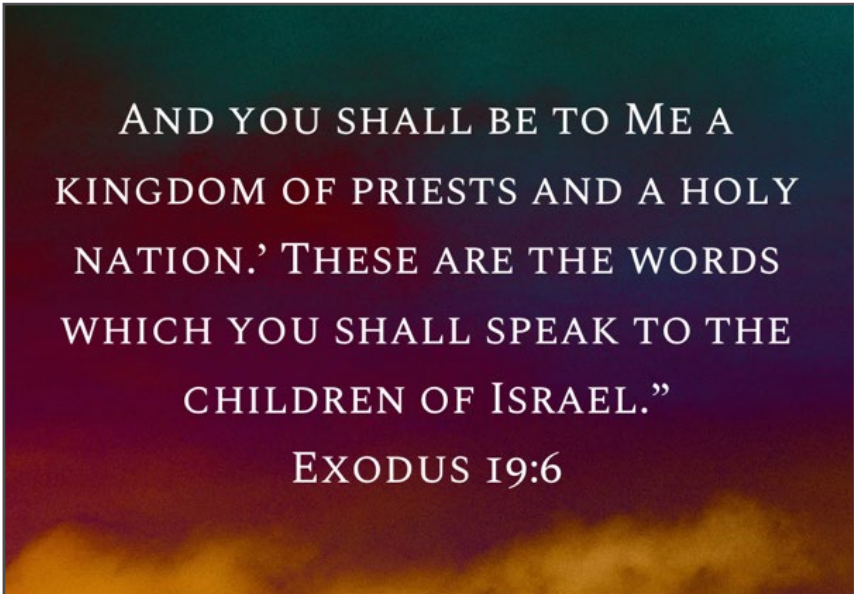
In this context, therefore, the designation **elect of God** describes how we have been chosen by Him to bear His character to the world as a testimony of His grace! Truly, this concept lies at the very heart of our curriculum’s theme this month. Last week, Peter reminded us that God has called us to imitate Him and conform ourselves to His example; thus, we are to “be holy” because He is “holy” ([Lev 11:44](#); [19:2](#); [1 Peter 1:15](#)). Next week, Peter will remind us that we are “a chosen generation,” “a royal priesthood,” and “a holy nation” who represent and serve the Lord ([Exod 19:6](#); [1 Peter 2:9](#)). From

the beginning God has called His people to represent Him by conducting themselves in holiness, obediently practicing that which He has commanded.

[Deuteronomy 7:6-11](#) perhaps comes closest to the language Paul uses here in Colossians:

“For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for

Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth . . . Therefore,



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.”

EXODUS 19:6

Instruct

you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them.” Let’s not become so hyper-focused on one word that we miss the entire point: God has saved us to be **holy!**

How are you living up to your calling to be holy as God’s “elect?”

Question
1

With this, Paul quickly turns to list the traits of our restored character in Christ that we should **put on** daily. First, Paul urges us to **put on tender mercies**, or translated literally “bowels of compassion.” In more modern terms, we would say **put on** hearts of compassion; hence, the reason some translations use tenderhearted. As the head of this list, this call to compassion or mercy reflects the very heart of the Lord. Jesus even commands us, “Therefore, be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful” ([Luke 6:36](#)). Although we should extend compassion toward all people, it does not equate synonymously with pity which is a more emotionally-charged term. Emotions should not drive our compassion because they fluctuate and become arbitrary depending upon the circumstance. On the contrary, the quest to exemplify Christ should compel us to compassion because He will guide us to exercise it in the right way.

The world often misconstrues compassion as a hand-out rather than a helping hand which allows a someone to get back on his feet. Or they see it as permissiveness and “tolerance” rather than a loving warning of danger that lies ahead and a solution to correct it. Compassion should never create dependence upon anyone else other than Jesus Christ! True compassion helps others to see Christ and teaches them to rely upon Him during difficult times. Therefore, biblical compassion always leads to restoration and transformation—not merely a temporary reprieve from life’s troubles which then allows people to continue their current path unphased. Truly, such a false view of compassion that only masks the symptoms of the problem is unloving because people seek the “easy fix” instead of a lasting solution that requires investment and work through the empowerment of Christ.

How do you engage in true Christ-like compassion? How does this differ from the world’s view of compassion?

Question
2

Next, we should **put on kindness** as a reflection of God’s patience with us. In Romans

2:4, Paul asks, “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness [actually, kindness], forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness [kindness] of God leads you to repentance?” Even though we willfully disobey and sometimes stubbornly persist in our defiance, God remains patient with us, kindly giving us repeated chances to repent. To help us understand how we can display such kindness, take a moment to ponder customer service in this country—whether at a call center, store, restaurant, or any



business. Whether we think that the quality of customer service has decreased for whatever reason is irrelevant to this illustration. If we do receive poor customer service, we should remain calm, courteous, respectful, and patient—all of which embody **kindness**. We can still plead our case with persistence and seek a proper resolution, but we must do so with **kindness**. We can never fully know what a person may have experienced in his or her life at that time. We also might not fully realize the impact that our testimony of **kindness** can and should have.

Seventeen years ago, I was flying internationally from DFW Airport for a mission trip in East Africa. Three of us were flying in advance of the rest of the team to make preparation for their arrival. Thunderstorms in the Chicago area delayed the flight. And then a series of mechanical problems in the airport concourse caused the monitor to freeze only indicating a status of “delayed” and the broken speakers caused us not to hear our flight was departing, so we ended up missing it. In dealing with the American Airlines agent who was attempting to rebook us, which proved difficult for international travel, we spent around two hours trying to find other flights. After about an hour and a half, the agent stopped and said, “You guys are different. Most people would have been complaining, yelling, and even cursing by now.” This gave us the opportunity to share our mission plans and witness, even leaving a tract of the gospel with her. Instead of becoming frustrated with the hard life has dealt us, may we display the **kindness** of Christ as a means to testify about Him.

Third in this list Paul implores us to **put on humility**. Technically speaking, humility exemplifies having the proper perspective first about ourselves and then about

others. We must have the proper perspective about ourselves in Christ so that we don't become prideful or arrogant as well as that we don't become too critical and self-deprecating. When we put Christ first and adopt His perspective, we will see value in other people and the joy we can have when serving and meeting their needs. For this reason, Paul admonishes the Philippians to "let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" ([Phil 2:3-4](#)).

We all know the dangers of pride and arrogance, but sometimes we fail to grasp the danger of self-deprecation—particularly thinking we're not worthy to be used by



God or becoming riddled with guilt over past sin which we have confessed and of which God has already forgiven us. Sometimes such an attitude can become a self-fulfilling prophecy with consequences God never intended. Moreover, it causes us to focus on our circumstances and abilities instead of seeing how God wants to work through us. Technically, none of us is worthy in and of ourselves. But God has made us worthy to serve Him through Christ. Although we ought to remember the

depths from which God saved us so that we don't repeatedly make the same mistakes, we ought to focus on that which He has made us. When we focus on what He has made us, then He can use us as He sees fit. And others will see God working through our weaknesses to bring glory and honor unto Himself.

What is the danger of being racked with guilt by sin which we have already confessed and for which God has given us? How can we overcome such guilt to work effectively in Christ?

Question
3

meekness or gentleness in our daily walk. Jesus declares unto His disciples, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5). **Meekness**, however, doesn’t mean being a push-over who can easily be tread upon nor does it mean cowardice and timidity when it comes to doing, saying, or believing the right thing as defined in Scripture. On the contrary, **meekness** means not given to anger or indignation, but being capable of rational and reasonable communication to resolve any issue. Apart from Scripture, the world also implicitly recognizes the value of such instruction even though it rarely heeds its own advice. The world, for example, tells us that “we’ll catch more flies with honey.” Although not exactly the same concept as **meekness**, it is close since this old adage refers to restraining oneself from anger and responding with the type of **kindness** with which we dealt earlier in the lesson.

Overall, the world has an anger problem. People respond with anger, and sometimes violence, when they become frustrated with their situation or life in general. We’ve seen this repeatedly over the last two years, particularly as this year has progressed. With pent-up frustration whether from certain policies, inconveniences, or the general isolation to which we have all been subjected, we have seen people explode in anger on airplanes, at restaurants, and at stores over things that truly make no difference. A spike in violence in road rage incidents also proves indicative of how some in our society choose to resolve their disputes and it shows specifically how self-centeredness skews our perspective. Consequently, people’s frustration for not getting their way or not being first in line boils over into acts of aggression and unrestrained speech.

Yet, **meekness** is not just about preventing ourselves from being triggered and losing control of our emotions. It’s

about seeking to resolve our differences through biblical means, particularly being **longsuffering**, **bearing with one another**, and **forgiving one another** (v. 13). We will discuss these three principles as a group since they are inter-related. Although patience or **longsuffering** can have a variety of applications, we will stick to

those closest to the immediate context which describe the attitude one should have when someone slights or wrongs him. Therefore, we should exercise patience and not

What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

ROMANS 9:22

Instruct

immediately fly into a fit of rage. Instead, we should take time to assess the situation and carefully and thoughtfully craft our response. Hence, James tells us, “Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas 1:19). We see God Himself express patience toward His people in rescuing them from injustice as well as patiently waiting for them to repent of their shortcomings ([Luke 18:7](#)), toward sinners who need salvation ([Rom 2:4](#)), and in delaying judgment to give people a chance to repent ([Rom 9:22](#)).

How has the Lord shown patience to you? How does (or should) this help you to show patience to others?

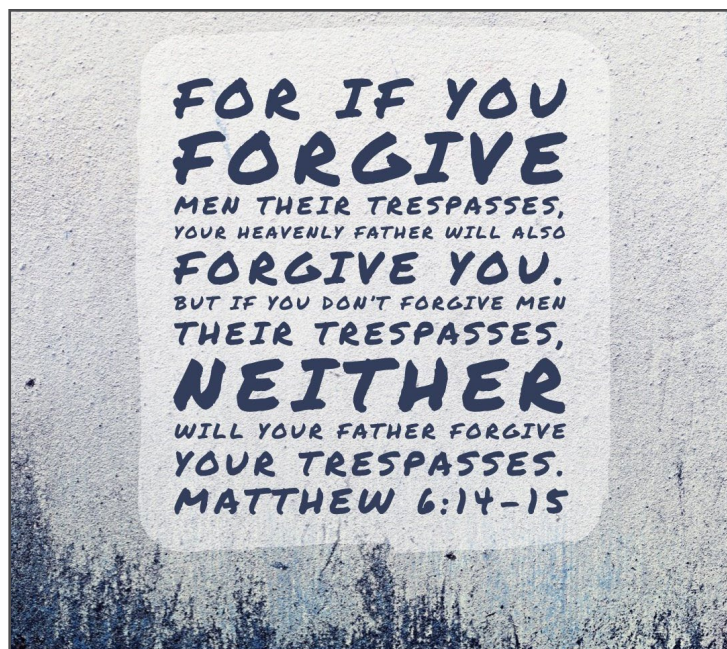
Question
4

Paul also encourages us to **bear with one another**. In more modern language, we would say “put up with one another.” This means that we should not allow our personal preferences and pet peeves to cause anger and frustration when people engage in things that annoy us. However, this doesn’t mean that we should tolerate or overlook things that are clearly sin! Quite oppositely, we should still speak in love against sinful actions as the Bible clearly dictates. Therefore, **bearing with one another** refers to amoral behavior—something that is neither right or wrong. Things like leaving the toilet seat up, leaving things lying around the house, the habits we have around the house, at work, or in public, ruining a movie by continually telling what happens next, and so much more constitute amoral behavior.

But sometimes these amoral behaviors can become a major source of dysfunction and contention. We all have our distinctive ways of doing something or the way we use certain mannerisms to express ourselves that will likely annoy someone at some point. Unless you’ve lived alone your entire life, you undoubtedly have experienced this within your nuclear family! Consequently, Paul tells us here to have patience and put up with others’ unique characteristics when it’s only a matter of personal preference and not sin. Preferences and pet peeves should not divide us and cause arguments; we must prefer one another in Christ, overcoming our differences even to point that we put up with the things that may annoy us.

Moving on from **bearing with one another’s** quirks, Paul now addresses what we should do when an actual wrong has been perpetrated against us. He compels us to forgive **one another** just **as Christ forgave** us. It doesn’t matter what the **complaint** or dispute may be; we must stand ready to forgive. Christ didn’t place any qualifications

on His forgiveness; He didn't say, "I'll forgive you only if . . ." He **forgave** all our sins unconditionally! Likewise, we should also forgive others regardless of what they may have done. James Dunn captures the importance of practicing forgiveness as God's people: "A community has hope of holding together and growing together only when the need for forgiveness is recognized on each side where fault has been committed and only when forgiveness is both offered and received."



In Reference



James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to Colossians and Philemon, The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), p. 231.

Colossians 3:14-15

EXHIBIT LOVE IN EVERYTHING:

Paul identifies the quintessential trait that should define our character in Christ: **love** (v. 14). **Above all** that he has already said, he exhorts us to **put on love which is the bond of perfection**. **Love** defines who we are in Christ because it is the very essence of His being and permeates everything He does. As John points out, "God is love" ([1 John 4:16](#)). If we have a relationship with Him, we ought to embody His **love**. For John also goes on to say, "He who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." Our obedience then becomes the evidence or testimony of our **love** for Him. Jesus affirms, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). We don't obey because it *causes* God to **love** us any more or any less; He loves us regardless, but, in His **love**, He will punish sin and disobedience and reward righteousness. Consequently, we obey because we **love** Him and we want to glorify Him with our lives.

When we **love** God wholeheartedly, it will become apparent in our **love** for all His creation—our families, our neighbors, and even our enemies. But it should become most evident in our **love** for one another—our brothers and sisters in Christ whom He has **called** into **one body**, the church. Therefore, Paul centers his remarks on **love** in this context around our human relationships in the church. The **love** of Christ manifest

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in the church will produce unity because it binds us together rather than divides. It creates a strong, or **perfect, bond** in which we as a community can overcome any



obstacle together with Christ because everyone has the same focus and agenda. We can only have a strong, close-knit community when we practice **love** in the biblical sense of humbly understanding our place in Christ, seeking to serve others, resolving our differences with gentleness, overlooking each other's quiriness (i.e., non-sinful actions), and forgiving one another. In **love**, we must all put aside our personal preferences and desires to worship Christ by seeking to fulfill His will through

serving others and proclaiming His Word.

As God's family who lives in an imperfect world, we are still subject to the frailties of the flesh which can cause division, disagreement, and dysfunction when one or more people promote their own agenda. As a result, sometimes individuals in our own families are the most difficult to **love**—including those in the church! Just as squabbles and annoyances occur in our nuclear families from time to time, they will also occur in the church when we lose focus on Christ and place it upon ourselves. With self-centeredness so pervasive in our society, it becomes easy to live that way in the church, elevating the individual above the community. In Western thought, individualism has become engrained within us and we forget about living and functioning as a community. As a whole, we generally tend to focus on what we want, what we can get, what benefits us, and what we want to control. Conversely, Paul wants us to think as a community of God's people! The **love** of Christ, therefore, should cause us to humbly examine our motives and ponder how our actions affect the whole body.

How has the individual been elevated above the community as a whole in many modern churches?

Question
5

For this reason, Paul urges us to **let the peace of God rule in our hearts**, to which we **were also called in one body**, and to **be thankful** (v. 16). Unity achieved through **love** leads to **peace** in Christ. In this context, **peace** refers to the absence of conflict or at least the godly resolution of it. If every member exudes the **love** of Christ in his or her life, then unity and **peace** will characterize the body and present a beautiful picture of our transformation in Him to the rest of the world. Thus, in **love**, we can overcome self-centeredness which causes friction, strife, fights, and hurt because our focus remains upon Christ which causes us to see the value in others.

Consequently, we have two reasons to rejoice and **be thankful**—and our thanksgiving must always be directed to the Lord. First, we must **be thankful** that God has saved us through His grace and transformed us from what we once were. Second, we must **be thankful** that God has placed us in a family to point us constantly to Him, to encourage us, to strengthen us in our faith, to help us to mature, to correct us when we err, to rejoice with us in times of triumph, and to lift us up or assist us in difficult times. Thank God He has not left us alone as individuals to face the challenges of the world, but that He has placed us within a body to help us navigate life together in Him.

Specifically, what are you thankful for about the body in which God has placed you?

Question
6

Colossians 3:16-17

EMPLOY THE WORD FOR GUIDANCE:

Paul concludes with a call for us to **let the Word of Christ dwell within** us (v. 16). Only through the knowledge and application of His **Word** can we understand what it truly means to **love** and be **holy** by putting on all the traits outlined in this passage in addition to the rest of Scripture. Without the **Word**, therefore, we cannot know what **love** is. We cannot know how to resolve our differences unless we know the **Word**; we cannot know how to evaluate ourselves honestly without the **Word**; we cannot know how to live humbly apart from the **Word**! To allow **the Word of Christ**, that is the gospel or Scripture, to **dwell in us richly in all wisdom**, we must not only study it diligently and know its contents, but we must employ it! After all, to “**dwell**” means to “live” or “reside.” If **the Word of Christ** truly resides within us, then it will change us! It will change how we live and how we relate to others. Where we reside physically has a direct influence over how we speak (our accents and local expressions), our customs, how we drive (fast in Texas), and how we conduct ourselves. It affects every aspect of

Instruct

our lives! When we **dwell in the Word of Christ**, it will likewise affect every area of our lives: how we speak, how we think, and how we live!

Therefore, we should collectively teach and admonish **one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord**.

Collectively studying God's Word together constitutes an act of worship! But too many times we forget this and see it as a laborious and boring task simply for the acquisition of knowledge. Learning Scripture, however, should be as joyous a celebration as gathering to worship. In fact, it is an act of worship itself! In a society with high illiteracy, principles for life were often taught through public proclamation or reading, the use of mnemonic devices like acrostics or rhymes, and even through music or songs—just like many of the psalms which record a large amount of history. Teaching and instruction then lead to further worship whereby we live in obedience to **the Word of Christ**.

How do you use your time of studying God's Word collectively or individually as a time to worship?

Question
7

Paul concludes this passage with a general statement calling us in **whatever we do in word or deed to do it all in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father through Him** (v. 17). Hence, he recognizes that this passage is not an exhaustive list of the principles by which we ought to live or God's expectations. It provides an overview of the life we should live exemplified in Christ. Therefore, Scripture teaches us the general principles for living in holiness by defining God's standard for life which we can apply to every situation we face no matter whether the Bible addresses it specifically or not. When **the Word of Christ** dwells in us and we follow the leadership of the Spirit, we will obediently implement God's pattern for life in every situation. Therefore, let us be overcomers who study God's Word so that we might humbly apply it in our lives so that we can relate to one another as a community in the way He has designed and called us to do.

Inspire

Just as hikers must wear the proper clothing and footwear to have a successful journey, we must put on the proper character traits in Christ to have a life that honors and glorifies Him. This requires humility on our part where we submit to Him in everything and have the proper outlook about ourselves and others so that we can relate to one another as God intends. As overcomers who are humble, the Word of Christ should dwell in us whereby we reflect it clearly in our lives. Only when the Word of Christ dwells in us can we love others just as God has first loved us! When we love others in this way, we will have a strong community bound together in Christ so that we can effectively deal with any differences or disputes that may arise—offering correction when need, but always seeking restoration and extending forgiveness.

Incorporate

Out of the character traits Paul mentions in these verses, which do you find the most difficult to apply in your life? Why? Which is the easiest for you to apply? Why?

When you disagree or have a dispute with someone in the church, how do you handle it? What are the guiding principles that you use to resolve it?

How do you dwell in the Word of Christ? How has it influenced how you live and how you relate to others?

November 28, 2021

HEALTHY HABITS



An Overcomer has Healthy Habits

1 Peter 2:1-10

Focal Verse:

"You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

1 Peter 2:5

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Introduce

Only five months after opening to traffic on July 1, 1940, the modern and “innovative” Tacoma Narrows Bridge which spanned more than a mile over the waters of the Puget Sound in Washington State catastrophically failed and collapsed on November 7, 1940. Many of us have probably seen videos of this suspension bridge, which came to be known as “Galloping Gertie,” violently



Photo from the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

swaying and eventually plummeting into the sound as it broke apart, but perhaps we don't know exactly why it failed. In the ensuing years, many engineering studies were conducted to determine the cause. The official report issued by the federal government concluded that it failed due to “a random act of turbulent wind.”* The report continued to highlight its design flaws which made it susceptible to excessive vibration in the wind and eventually weakened the structure, causing its demise. The study found that “the [road] deck was too light” as well as well “too shallow.” When the force of wind hit the structure, especially from a particular direction, it was displaced both over and under the road deck which caused the underweighted structure to twist vertically. This “excessive flexibility” would ultimately cause the cables supporting the road deck to snap and the bridge to break apart. Although no one was injured or killed during the collapse, it effectively ruined the career of the engineer who had designed it and changed the way suspension bridges were constructed.

As believers living in a world wrecked by sin, the forces of this world continually push against us just as the wind did against the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. But we cannot bend to temptation lest we indulge and find ourselves failing to live up to the holy standards by which Christ has called us. When it comes to temptation and sin, we cannot be “flexible”; we must stand on the Word of the Lord without compromise. We must align ourselves with the immovable, unshakable Rock who provides a foundation that will not sway in the winds of cultural change and iniquity ([Heb 12:27](#)). Moreover, let us not become like the engineer who designed Galloping Gertie and ruined his

Introduce

career; we can easily ruin our testimony if we cave to the pressures of this life and bow to sinful temptation. Instead, we must develop healthy habits which bring glory to the Lord through our holy conduct which refuses to participate in evil. Through Christ alone can we win the war with sin when we completely surrender to Him.

Key
Question

How inflexible would you describe your resistance to sin?

In Reference



Washington State Department of transportation, "Lessons from the Failure of a Great Machine," available from wsdot.wa.gov.

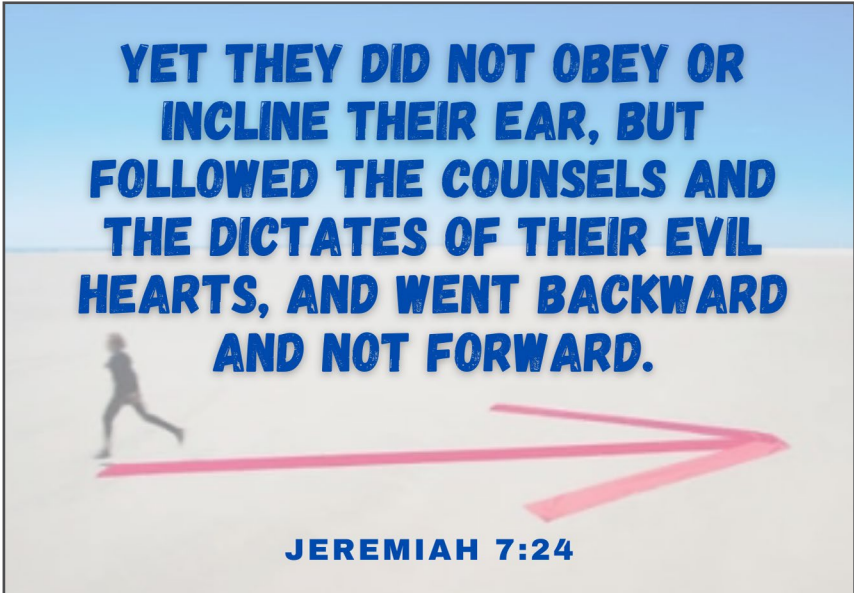
1 Peter 2:1-3

DESIRE THE PURITY OF THE WORD:

Having already called us to imitate God's holiness, which we studied in the second lesson this month ([1 Peter 1:13-21](#)), Peter now reminds us of the things that we ought to remove completely from our lives. The word translated **laying aside** pictures the removal of clothing, in this case our fleshly "garments" stained with sin (v. 1). Last week, we also learned Paul used this same metaphor to describe the sinful desires we should "take off" ([Col 3:5-11](#)), but we primarily concentrated on what character traits he said we should "put on" in Christ ([Col 3:12-17](#)). Instructing us to lay **aside** all sinful desire, Peter begins his list with a broad, all-encompassing category: **malice**. Although all modern translations use **malice**, the Greek literally means "bad thing" or "evil." Typically, however, we regard **malice** as the desire to threaten, slander, or physically harm

someone as a means of revenge. We often equate it to hostility and hatred. Biblically, the word has a much broader range. It refers to the desire to participate in any kind of evil or to have evil inclinations. **Malice** then almost becomes synonymous with sinful depravity. Nonetheless, no hint of any kind of **malice**, or sinful desires, should ever exist in our lives. With the help of Christ, we must get rid of them and don His holy character.

Because the next two traits that we ought to remove from our lives overlap significantly, we will group them together: **deceit** and **hypocrisy**. As the more comprehensive category, **deceit** can include lying ([Psalm 34:13](#)), misleading others through the misrepresentation or omission of information ([Isa 53:9](#); [Acts 13:10](#)), and influencing the opinion of others through trickery to produce a desired result ([Matt 26:4](#); [Mark 14:1](#)). **Hypocrisy** is actually a form of deception in which we try to conceal our actions and obscure our true motives. It comes from the Greek word which means



**YET THEY DID NOT OBEY OR
INCLINE THEIR EAR, BUT
FOLLOWED THE COUNSELS AND
THE DICTATES OF THEIR EVIL
HEARTS, AND WENT BACKWARD
AND NOT FORWARD.**

JEREMIAH 7:24

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to act in a theatrical play. For our purposes, it signifies pretending to be something or someone we're not! If one concept could characterize the primary fault of the church in any period of time, it would be **hypocrisy**. Simply put, we live inconsistently. We verbally confess Jesus as our Lord, but oftentimes we don't live like He is really Lord. We haven't completely surrendered to Him! We don't follow His commands and we fail to live the holy lives to which He has called us.

In the past, what areas has the Lord revealed you were inconsistent in your practices? Is there any area in which He has currently revealed that you're inconsistent?

Question
1

The final two vices in this list also specifically relate to one another: **envy** and **evil speaking**. Translated literally, **evil speaking** most closely describes what we would call slander, but it is still sufficiently broad to include other areas like gossip, sexual innuendo, and coarse language and joking. Taken together with **envy**, however, Peter probably intends it to refer primarily to slander. People who **envy** others—whether their positions, their possessions, their popularity, or their personal achievements—often resort to slander in order to make themselves feel better. They attack other people in hopes of gaining honor and status by making them look bad and themselves look good. But usually the opposite occurs! In all, we must eliminate any kind of **evil speaking** from our lives—whether slander or any other kind of speech that does not have constructive value or reflect the character of the Lord. Our speech must always be



praiseworthy, used for the glory of the Lord as His Spirit leads.

As believers, most of us don't struggle with the things we may identify as "big" sins, such as murder, stealing, or in most cases adultery. Yet, we see the sins that Peter lists here running rampant in the church today and very few believers even bat an eye! **Envy** and jealousy stem

from self-centeredness and wanting to be the center of attention which wrongly shifts

the focus from Christ to the individual. If we honestly evaluate ourselves in light of the community, we may often find self-centeredness and **envy** distracting us! **Evil speaking** can occur in which the language of the church mimics that of the world: rumors run wild and slander is freely employed as a means of revenge. For the most part, the world can clearly see the presence of **hypocrisy** in many believers' lives while in some cases the church has been blinded by the deception that we can no longer see it as easily.

Although Peter singles out **newborn babes**, or those just beginning their relationship with Christ, as the recipients of this teaching, it truly applies to every one of us no matter how many years we have walked with Him (v. 2). Only by knowing and applying Scripture can we effectively lay **aside** or remove sinful desires from our lives because only through it can we **grow** in our faith. In this life, none of us ever fully arrives at maturity and stops growing. Therefore, we should always **desire the pure milk of the Word** which enables us to continue to mature in Him daily. If we feel like we lack knowledge or understanding in God's **Word** and that we're "not being fed," we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Whether as **newborn babes** in Christ or maturing believers, the responsibility is ours to **grow** by consuming God's **Word**. A parent can place a spoon with pureed baby food against an infant's lips while making airplane sounds to entice him to eat, but ultimately the child must choose to open his mouth and to eat it. Likewise, teachers in the church provide the opportunity for us to gather and study God's Word in-depth, but it's our responsibility as students to open our minds, to meditate upon it, and to apply it in our lives regardless of how bad or good the teacher may be. Moreover, complaining that Scripture is too difficult to understand or that we just don't get it is no excuse for not studying. Rather, the problem is that we often don't seek to understand His **Word** because we don't take the time to study it as we should!

How much do you value studying God's Word?
How often do you study it? How is the study
of His Word evident in your life?

Question
2

More than watching television or movies, more than reading a good book, or more than any other way that we choose to spend our time, studying Scripture must be our primary passion! Peter commands us to **desire the pure milk of the Word**. The word translated **desire** is much better captured by the word "crave." We should crave **the Word**. Like life in general, however, we frequently crave things that are not



healthy for us. Do most of us crave healthy food or junk food? Never have I heard someone excitedly say, “My body is craving turnip greens.” More regularly, I hear people exclaim, “I could use some chocolate right now or a milkshake, piece of pie, cake, or candy.” We crave junk food even though we know it is bad for us! We work ourselves into a frenzy—

continually dwelling upon our desires until we lay **aside** all self-control as we give in to them.

As believers, Peter urges us to have this same **desire** or craving for holiness and righteousness by indulging in **the pure milk of the Word**. We must actively pursue the study of God’s **Word**. To continue the junk food illustration, sweets don’t just magically find their way into our homes and they certainly don’t just jump into our mouths. We must deliberately purchase them and make the effort to eat them even if we abandon self-control. Just as we must make a conscious effort to eat a balanced and healthy diet, we must make a conscious effort to study Scripture so that we might **grow**. This doesn’t just happen, though. If we fail to make a conscious effort, we will find ourselves forgetting to study daily, neglecting to make time because we’ve filled our lives with a plethora of other things, or rushing through our study time just to fulfill our “obligation” and mark it off our list. When we don’t make an effort to crave God’s **Word**, we will fill our lives with junk—the sinful desires which Peter has explicitly told us to lay **aside**.

How would you describe your craving or desire for God’s Word?

Question
3

Peter refers to Scripture as **pure milk**. The word **pure** has the same root in Greek as the word **deceit** in verse 1, but an additional letter (alpha) at the beginning of the word makes it negative—i.e., “not deceitful” or hence the translation **pure**. Peter is saying that we can have confidence in Scripture and trust it because it is truth. It provides an accurate picture of ourselves and the world around us. With it, we can accurately judge

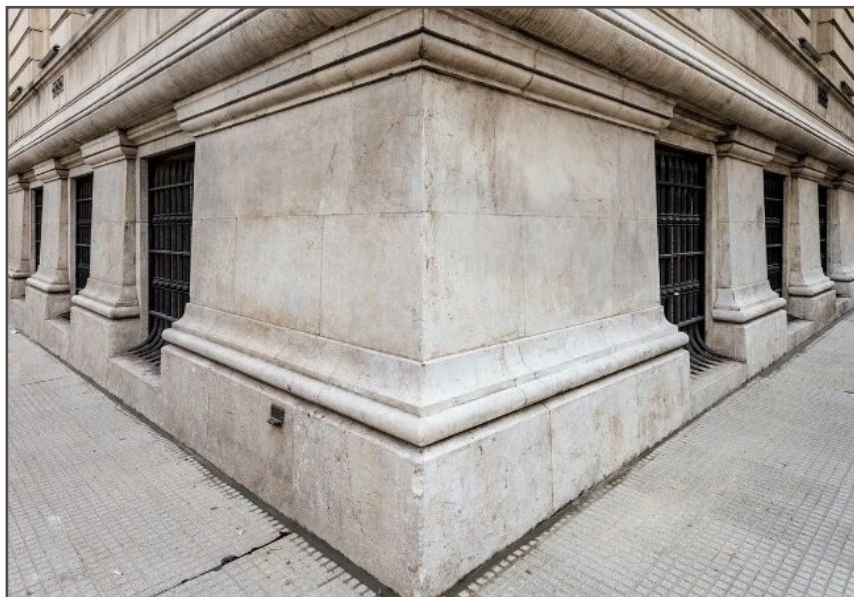
our own lives and live with godly discernment. It never misleads or deceives us as the world will do; it always guides us to the right path by pointing us to the Lord and His righteousness and keeping us focused on Him.

To further explain the dependence and trust we can have in the Lord, Peter appeals to Psalm 34:8: **If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious** (v. 3). **If indeed** is better translated as “since” here. Since they have a relationship with the Lord, they have seen first-hand His graciousness and faithfulness. Neither the Psalm nor its reference here in 1 Peter, however, is a call to test God, but rather to trust Him because He is faithful to His **Word**. Hence, it’s not a call to try God out and see if He’s faithful—sort of like a money-back guarantee. On the contrary, we can confidently trust God in everything and walk by His Word because we have seen His faithfulness repeatedly demonstrated. We know from our experience in our relationship with Him that He will always fulfill what He has said in His Word!

1 Peter 2:4-8

DEDICATE YOURSELF AS A SPIRITUAL SACRIFICE:

When we have a relationship with Christ, we share in His ministry because He has metaphorically used us to build His **spiritual house**—that is the church. Whereas Paul uses the human body to describe the unified work of the church, Peter uses the building blocks of the temple. Yet, in both, the foundation remains the same: Christ Jesus. Before examining our role in Christ, we must understand His role. We come **to Him as**



a living stone (v. 4); even though He physically died on the cross, His resurrection guarantees life to all who believe in Him. As God who became flesh, Jesus was **indeed rejected by men, but chosen by God** as Messiah. Whereas **men** found Jesus worthless for their own godless pursuits, God found Him valuable or **precious** for His plan, namely the salvation of the world through Him!

Peter recites three Old Testament passages which show how Jesus is the linchpin or crux of God’s plan. Without His sacrifice, sin would reign and we would have no

hope for life. First, Peter recalls [Isaiah 28:16](#) which speaks about God laying **in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame** (v. 6). In modern construction, cornerstones are largely symbolic containing information about the dedication of the building; they really have no structural purpose and contribute very little to the structural integrity of the building. In antiquity, contrarily, cornerstones played a vital role in construction. As the first piece laid, every other stone would be built according to the specifications and straightness of that one **cornerstone**. It had to be perfect for the building to be properly constructed and soundly engineered.

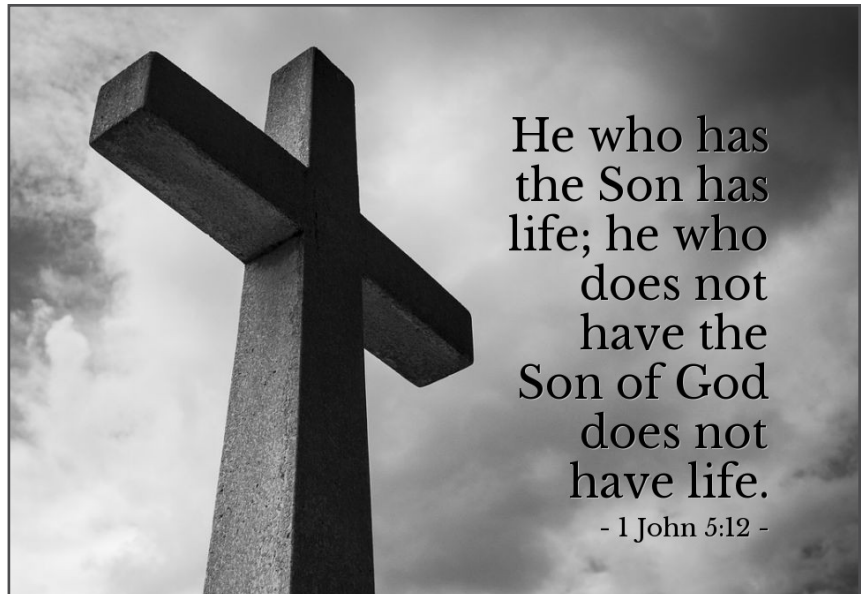
As **the chief cornerstone** in our lives both individually and collectively as the church, we must measure everything against Christ and build upon Him as the foundation. For our lives to be structurally sound, we must ensure that we are indeed building upon Christ and not some other foundation. Unfortunately, some often weaken their foundation because they intermingle secular elements—sometimes without ever even knowing it. For example, the expression, “my family (or my friends) is my world,” may be well intentioned, but it is misguided. Our family is important, but it cannot be the foundation of our lives! Other areas may also unwittingly become the primary foundations in our lives: our education, our career, and even planning for retirement. If we build our lives upon any of these foundations, they can collapse in an instant, leaving us in despair and desperation. If we build our lives upon Christ **the chief cornerstone**, however, regardless of what may happen around us we will not be shaken and our final outcome will remain certain.

Upon what are you truly building the foundation of your life?

Question
4

Second, Peter quotes [Psalm 118:22](#) which declares, “**The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone**” (v. 7). To that he adds [Isaiah 8:14](#) which identifies Jesus as a “**stone of stumbling and a rock of offense**” (v. 8). Peter employs these three verses to contrast two starkly different responses to Christ. People must decide what they will “do” with this **stone** or **cornerstone** when they meet Him along life’s journey. And everyone must make this choice in his or her life at some point! Either they choose to believe **on Him** and regard Him as **precious** or valuable or they choose to **reject** Him and be **disobedient to His Word**. Scripture makes the path to

eternal life clear! Either we have a relationship with Christ which leads to life or we **reject** His gift and subject ourselves to destruction. No other options exist! Consequently, Peter points out that **they stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they were also appointed** (v. 8). In this, he isn't saying that God has **appointed** or chosen some for salvation and others for destruction. On the contrary, Peter is referring to two groups: the obedient (i.e., the ones who believe) and the **disobedient** (i.e., the ones who **reject**). In a sense God did determine to bestow life on the obedient and punish the **disobedient** as a collective whole based upon His holy plan. But the group in which we find ourselves is determined by our response to Christ. God, in His omniscience, knows our response, but we seal our own fate when we choose either to believe on Christ or **reject** Him.



For those of us who have a relationship with Christ, He makes us into **living stones** and assembles us in **a spiritual house as a holy priesthood** (v. 5). We become **living stones** because He graciously grants us a share in His life through His sacrifice. In addition, He also grants us a share in His ministry when we believe in Him and accept that sacrificial gift. Therefore, He collectively places us in the church to serve as His priests or representatives. Whether God has called us to full-time vocational ministry or not, we as His people all still serve as His representatives. In the Old Testament, a priest served as a mediator between God and the people. Although Christ is that mediator now (Heb 9:15), we still bear His image or character to the rest of the world; we represent Him to all creation.

How do you serve as a priest to bear the image of Christ to the world?

Question
5

Another function of a priest is to **offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ**. No longer do we offer animal **sacrifices** as an annual reminder of our sin, but in Christ we obediently offer ourselves. We can only offer ourselves,

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however, because Christ has made us **acceptable** through His sacrifice! In other words, He has given us His righteousness by restoring the relationship which we had severed through our sin. As a result, we can once again serve God the way in which He designed us from the very dawn of creation. Our obedience to His Word then becomes our **spiritual sacrifices**. This obedience will shine through our character as well as the tangible ways in which we serve God by loving His creation.

In what ways do you tangibly offer yourself as a spiritual sacrifice to the Lord?

Question
6

1 Peter 2:9-10

DECLARE THE PRAISE OF CHRIST IN YOUR CONDUCT:

By alluding to [Exodus 19:6](#) and God's establishment of His covenant with Israel through Moses, Peter continues to reinforce the idea of how we as God's people represent Him. Because we as the church have been engrafted into the lineage of believing Israel, we too **are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and His own special people** (v. 9). Moreover, God has chosen us as His people for the purpose of proclaiming **the praises of**

Him who saved us—that is **called** us **out of darkness into His marvelous light**. To describe God's salvation, both to Jew and Gentile, Peter summarizes the book of Hosea in which Gomer's (Hosea's wife) unfaithfulness symbolized the unfaithfulness of Israel to the Lord. Despite Israel's unfaithfulness, God sent the Messiah through this nation to bring salvation to the world. Thus, those **who once were not a people** (i.e., Gentiles and disobedient Israel) **are now the people of God** through the **mercy obtained** from Him (see [Hosea 1:9; 2:23](#)).

As God's people, we are **called** not only to testify verbally about the **mercy** He has shown us through our salvation, but also to distinguish ourselves from the world. The

HOSEA 2:23

THEN I WILL SOW
HER FOR MYSELF IN THE EARTH,
AND I WILL HAVE MERCY ON HER WHO
HAD NOT OBTAINED MERCY;
THEN I WILL SAY TO THOSE
WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE,
'YOU ARE MY PEOPLE!'
AND THEY SHALL SAY,

'You are my God!'

world ought to see a difference in the way we act and talk when they compare their lives to ours. Instead of practicing unrighteousness, therefore, we are to lay it **aside** and be **holy**! God had given Israel the law for this very reason. In itself, the law could never save a person and God never intended it as a means for salvation because no one could ever perfectly fulfill it. The law, therefore, showed us what sin is. But even more important, when applied, it set Israel apart as God's people from the rest of the nations. Although the law could never save, Israel's obedience to the law revealed their relationship with the Lord and pointed the rest of the world to Him. In other words, it showed that they belonged to the true and living God who gives life through His mercy and grace when we submit to His plan.

In the same way, God uses our obedience to set us apart in Christ from the world. When we obediently submit to His Word, it shows the world the transformation Christ has produced within us. Our obedience then becomes a mark of our salvation which points people to Christ and the only way that they can attain life. Therefore, let us declare the praise of the Lord through our conduct as His **holy people** set apart for the purpose of demonstrating His salvation and His character to the world. As overcomers, may we develop healthy habits as God's people whereby we remove sinful desires from our lives and crave the nourishment of His Word so that we might grow in our faith and represent Him by offering ourselves as spiritual sacrifices.

How does the way you conduct yourself reflect upon the Lord?

Question
7

Inspire

The world pressures us on every side to conform to its image and live in disobedience to Christ. Let's not become like the Tacoma Narrows Bridge that caved and collapsed under that enormous pressure because it didn't have the right foundation or design. Instead, may we found our lives upon the Rock and develop healthy habits that keep us centered upon Him by grounding us in His Word. When we crave to study God's Word and apply it in our lives, we will have the foundation upon which we can resist temptation and fulfill our calling to obedience. Therefore, let us be overcomers who develop healthy habits as God's people so that we might represent Him with honor through our holy conduct, becoming lights to dark and depraved generations which point others to Him.

Incorporate

What healthy habits have you developed as a child of God? What are some healthy habits that you may need to implement or some improvements that you may need to make?

How does studying God's Word collectively in the church help you to grow in your faith? Who do you know that doesn't attend Bible study that would benefit from it and you could bring with you?

How clearly can the world see Christ in you? How can we as a church encourage and help one another in our endeavor to represent Christ?

NOVEMBER 2021

**WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED BY
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FORT WORTH**

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