

God's
Design—
Your
Choice



God's Design—Your Choice

by J. Lowell Harrup

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Table of Contents

	Page
First, Let's Have a Talk	4
UNIT ONE	
Lesson	
1 Does God Really Have a Design?	7
2 Will God Tell Me What to Do Next?	15
3 Does God Expect Too Much?	24
4 Am I Missing God's Design?	33
UNIT TWO	
5 Is Being a Christian Enough?	42
6 How Can God Speak to Me?	50
7 Did Jesus Know God's Design?	59
8 How Do I Approach the Future?	66
Student Reports	75
Answer Sheets	80

First, Let's Have a Talk

A Word From Your Study Guide Author

Have you ever wondered what God's design is for your life? Perhaps you are a new believer. Maybe you have been a Christian for several years. But as you have continued to follow the Lord, it is possible that you have found questions like these arising in your mind:

Now that I am a Christian, what does God want me to do next? How will He tell me about it? When I find out what He wants me to do, how do I begin doing it? When difficulties and troubles come, does this mean that I have missed His design? What about the future? Will He show me anything about it? How should I respond to what He reveals?

This course is designed to help you find answers to these questions. As you study each lesson, you will find out more about God's design for you and how you can choose to follow it. You will discover that you are already part of His design. You will find that He desires to show you what He wants you to do. You will be able to apply the truths you learn to your daily Christian walk.

This course uses a modern method of teaching that will help you to learn the principles easily and put them into practice immediately.

Your Study Guide

This book is a pocket-sized workbook that you can take with you and study whenever you have five or ten minutes free. Try to do at least a lesson a week.

You will notice that objectives are given at the beginning of each lesson. The word *objective* is used in this book to help you know what to expect from your study. An objective is something like a goal or a purpose. You will study better if you keep in mind your objectives.

Be sure to study carefully the first two pages of each lesson. This prepares your mind for what follows. Next, study the lesson section by section and follow the instructions under the title *For You to Do*. If there is not enough room to write your answers to the study questions in the study guide, write them in a notebook so you can refer back to them when you review the lessons. If you are studying this course with a group, follow the instructions of your group leader.

How to Answer Study Questions

There are different kinds of study questions in this study guide. Following are samples of several types and how to answer them.

A *MULTIPLE-CHOICE* question or item asks you to choose an answer from the ones that are given.

Example of Multiple-Choice Question

- 1 A week has a total of
- a) 10 days.
 - b) 7 days.
 - c) 5 days.

The correct answer is *b) 7 days*. In your study guide, make a circle around *b)* as shown here:

- 1 A week has a total of
- a) 10 days.
 - b) 7 days.
 - c) 5 days.

(For some multiple-choice items, more than one answer may be correct. In that case, you would circle the letter in front of each correct answer.)

A *TRUE-FALSE* question or item asks you to choose which of several statements are TRUE.

Example of True-False Question

- 2 Which statements below are TRUE?
- a The Bible has a total of 120 books.
 - b The Bible is a message for believers today.
 - c All of the Bible authors wrote in the Hebrew language.
 - d The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible.

Statements **b** and **d** are true. You would make a circle around these two letters to show your choices, as you see above.

A *MATCHING* question or item asks you to match things that go together, such as names with descriptions or Bible books with their authors.

Example of Matching Question

3 Write the number for the leader’s name (right) in front of each phrase that describes something he did (left).

- | | | | |
|-------|---|----------------------------------|-----------|
| . 1 . | a | Received the Law at Mt. Sinai | 1) Moses |
| . 2 . | b | Led the Israelites across Jordan | 2) Joshua |
| . 2 . | c | Marched around Jericho | |
| . 1 . | d | Lived in Pharaoh’s court | |

Phrases **a** and **d** refer to *Moses*, and phrases **b** and **c** refer to *Joshua*. You would write **1** beside **a** and **d**, and **2** beside **b** and **c**, as you see above.

Your Student Report

If you are studying to earn a certificate, you will need to complete the Student Report. The Student Report and answer sheets are located at the end of the book.

There are two units in this course. In the Student Report there are questions for each unit. There is also an answer sheet for each of the two units. Your study guide will tell you when to answer the unit questions and to fill out the appropriate answer sheet.

Follow the instructions given in your Student Report for sending the answer sheets to the ICI office in your area. The address should be stamped at the top of the copyright page. When you do this, you will receive an attractive certificate. If you have already earned the certificate, you will receive a seal to affix to it, indicating that you have completed another course in this unit of study.

About the Author

Reverend J. Lowell Harrup is currently the pastor of Northland Cathedral in Kansas City, Missouri. Prior to his present place of ministry, he pastored Christian Center in Brussels, Belgium,

from 1979–1989. Before going to Brussels, he pastored for thirteen years in Alexandria, Virginia, near Washington D.C. He is a graduate of Southeastern College of the Assemblies of God in Lakeland, Florida.

Reverend Harrup has had an extensive preaching ministry in family camps, ministers' meetings, and leadership seminars. He has also ministered to young people in secondary and university schools. He brings to the writing of this course the insights he has gained from years of experience in studying the Word of God and in counseling people of a variety of ages and backgrounds.

Now you are ready to begin Lesson 1. God bless you as you study!

Additional Helps

Other materials are available for use with this study guide, including supplemental audiocassettes, an Instructor's Guide, and an Instructor's Packet (for instructor's use only). Consult the Evangelism, Discipleship, and Training Manual.

Lesson
1

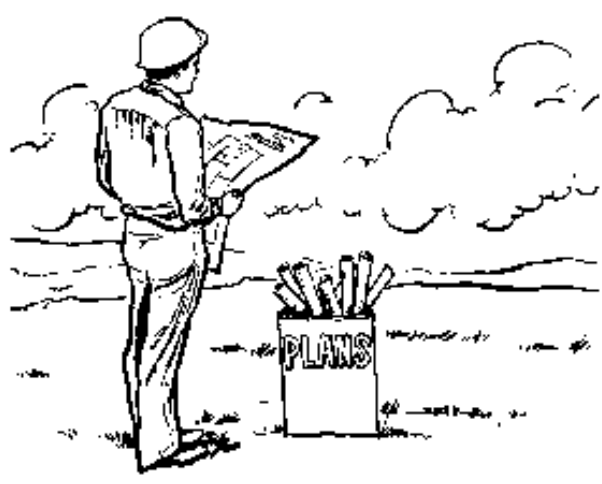
Does God Really Have a Design?

. . . So many things seem to happen by chance!

In Egypt there are great monuments called pyramids. They are immense and have stood firmly for thousands of years. Their building stones fit each other so perfectly that often mortar was not needed to hold them in place. Could they have been built by just piling stones together? No, we know it did not happen like that.

Somewhere there was a master builder who knew before he started how the final monument would look. He *designed* it. He planned, made sure the material was there, then directed thousands of men to be certain that each one did his task. No doubt many problems developed as they worked together. Some may have quit; others did not do their part. But the master builder continued until the pyramid was finished.

Imagine thousands of men with huge piles of stones. What would have been made with no design? In this lesson you will learn about God's design. What is more, you will find out that God has a design for you.



In this lesson you will study . . .

God Has a Design for Everything
God Has a Design for People
Others Have Experienced God's Design
You Can Experience God's Design

This lesson will help you . . .

- Explain what is meant by the idea of "God's design."
- Describe characteristics of God's design for people.
- State conclusions about God's design that can be drawn from the life experiences of Bible characters.

GOD HAS A DESIGN FOR EVERYTHING

Objective 1. *Describe examples of God's design.*

God has a design for everything. He told Job that He had designed how deep the oceans would be, when the sun would come up, and how big the earth would be. He designed the stars and created the lightning. God even designed how animals give birth! He put strength in the ox and majesty in the horse. He made the eagle so it could soar to the highest mountains (Job 38–39).

God designed everything, and humankind was the finest part of His design. He gave special attention to His design for people because He had a special purpose for them.

God made human beings more like himself than like the animals. God wants fellowship; He made us so that we could enjoy fellowship with Him. God thinks and plans; He made us so that we could think and plan. God loves; He made us so that we could love. God has choice; He made us so that we could choose.

God has a design for humankind, but not every person has chosen to do what God has planned. Actually, the Bible says that each one has chosen to do what he or she wants (Romans 3:23). But even this has not changed God's plan! You have learned in your own experience that God has given you and all people the opportunity to be part of His great design through His salvation. We can cooperate with Him and one day be like Him.



For You To Do

In each of these *For You to Do* sections, the questions or exercises will help you review or apply what you have just studied. Follow the directions given for completing each one. When you are directed to, write your answers in your notebook. If you need to, review the section entitled “How to Answer Study Questions” at the beginning of this study guide.

- 1 Read Genesis 1 in your Bible. Name two things God designed which are described in that chapter.
- 2 We know that God has choice. Describe a choice you have made which shows that you are like God in having the ability to choose.

Check your answers with those given at the end of this lesson.

GOD HAS A DESIGN FOR PEOPLE

Objective 2. *Describe the basic characteristics of God's design for people.*

A design for something has certain features or characteristics. For example, the design for a house includes plans for it to have walls, windows, doors, and rooms. We have said that God has a design for people. What are the characteristics of His design?

God's Design Begins With Knowledge

David was one of the leaders of God's people. He wrote many of the psalms in the Bible. In Psalm 139 he said that God knew both his actions and his thoughts. God even knew what he was going to say before he said it. God had made David. He had formed him in his mother's womb.



For You To Do

3 Read in your Bible each verse given in the references below. Beside each reference, write what the person said that God knew about him. God knows these things about you too.

- a Job 23:10
- b Psalm 31:7
- c Psalm 103:14
- d Psalm 139:16

God made not only David; He also made you. He loved David even though He knew everything about him. He loves you in the same way, though He knows everything about you. He planned for your birth, your salvation, your life, and even your eternity. If you will cooperate with Him and choose to try to follow His plan for your life, He will effectively and actively guide you (Philippians 2:13).

God’s Design Includes Diversity

The people in the world belong to many races and nationalities. Think of the variety of types of hair, shapes of eyes, and color of skin. And within each race we look different from one another. We have different ideas; we like different kinds of food. Isn’t it good that God made us as individuals?

Even in a family sometimes the children do not appear to be related to each other. Some are thin, and others are heavy. Some may have dark hair; others have light hair. But these differences are not important to the parents if they love their children. The important thing to the parents is that the children belong to them.

The real truth is that God designed the differences we see. He planned us to be different, to be individuals. This is one of the wonderful things about His design. When we feel sometimes that no one else is exactly like us, it is because that is true!



For You To Do

- 4 Name a way in which you are different from one of your friends.
.....

God’s Design Involves a Standard

Can we think back to the pyramid that we talked about? It is not important for all the stones to be alike. They may be different sizes and shapes. It *is* important for them to fit together. They all must be made so they are usable. This means that each one must be shaped according to the builder’s design.

In the same way we must be shaped according to God’s design, and this design involves a standard or pattern. Ephesians 4:13 tells us that the standard for our lives is the “height of Christ’s full stature.” This is the goal toward which God is leading us through the teaching of His Word. As

we allow Him to work in us, He changes us according to the standard and pattern of His Son. After all, we are His children. We should want to resemble Him.

This does not mean that we cease to be individuals. That is, God is not making each of us Christ's twin, but Christ's "brother" (Romans 8:29). When children grow up, they are mature like their parents and even know as much. In many ways they think like their parents. They may even begin to understand why their parents disciplined them, taught them, and often allowed them to face their own problems. But they are still individuals.

If we honestly learn to obey Jesus Christ, one day we will be like Him. This means that all of our present limitations will be taken away. We will know God in a full, complete way. We will understand His purpose perfectly. We will love Him with a perfect love. The glory that is in Christ will be our glory (Romans 8:30).

When we are like Him, when we know Him like He knows us, when His glory is ours, then we will have perfect fellowship.



For You To Do

5 Circle the letter in front of each statement about Christ that contains a *standard* for our lives.

- a) He did God's will.
- b) He was of the Jewish race.
- c) He spoke the truth.
- d) He spent His childhood in a small village.

God's Design Brings Togetherness

We are designed to fit together in God's plan. We may be weak where someone else is strong; others may be weak where we are strong.

Several pictures are given in the Bible to illustrate this relationship we have with each other. As God's family we take on the characteristics of our Father and enjoy fellowship with each other (Ephesians 2:11-19). Together we are the building blocks of a temple in which God lives by His Spirit (Ephesians 2:20-22). Together we make up the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 21:9). Together we are an army (Ephesians 6:10-18).

It is clear that God's plan or design for people is a plan of togetherness—together with Him and together with each other. It is reasonable, then, to expect that the design God has for us individually will not go against what He plans for others and for the rest of creation.

As we begin to discover what God intends for us, we will see that He always has these two things in mind: (1) our *individual* development with Christ as our pattern and (2) the development of our *relationships* with others who are in cooperation with God's design.





For You To Do

- 6 Which of the following is an example of how God’s plan for us includes togetherness?
- a) Joao realizes that God knows everything about him, including what is bad and what is good.
 - b) Manuel and Bernabe are both believers but belong to two different races.
 - c) Pieta learns how to use her teaching ability to help Jenny lead a Bible study.
- 7 Read each Bible verse given in the references below (left). Then match it to the aspect of God’s design it best expresses (right). Write the number in front of the reference.
- a John 10:14-15 1) God’s knowledge
 - b John 17:21 2) Diversity
 - c 1 Corinthians 12:14 3) Standard
 - d Philippians 2:5 4) Togetherness
 - e 1 John 3:16
- 8 Suppose a friend were to ask you this question: “What is God’s design for people?” In your notebook, write a description of the four characteristics of God’s design that you could give as your answer.

OTHERS HAVE EXPERIENCED GOD’S DESIGN

Objective 3. *Recognize conclusions about God’s design that can be drawn from the lives of people who experienced it.*

The Bible tells us about many people who experienced God’s design in their lives. Let us consider the accounts of some of these people and what their experience teaches us about God’s design.

The Disciples of Jesus

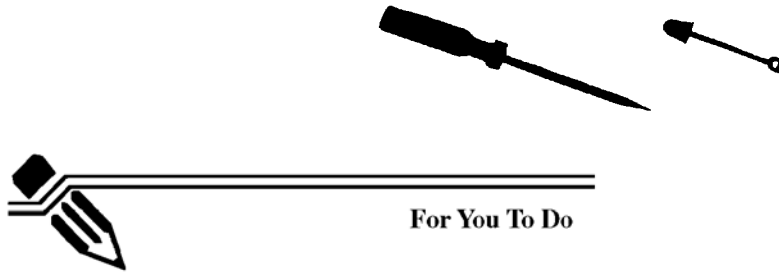
When Jesus was on earth, He chose from among all His followers twelve disciples to be with Him (Mark 3:13-15). This was the key to His plan—He would be with them and, by being with them, would change them. He chose them carefully, after spending all night in prayer (Luke 6:12-16). He also had a plan: to do the work the Father had sent Him to do (John 17:4).

The final goal in the plan of Christ for His followers was for them to be in perfect unity with each other and with Him (John 17:20-23). Yet when we read the stories of these various men in the Bible, we see immediately that they were not all alike.

Two were known as “Men of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). John, one of these, was also called “the one whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23). Peter, it appears, several times needed to have more patience shown to him than to the others. Nathanael was spoken of as having nothing false in him (John 1:47).

The men came from different professions and backgrounds—from fishermen to tax collectors. And they kept their individual personalities. Yet being with Christ brought them together. They became known as the “twelve apostles.” In the book of Revelation, we read that their names are written on the foundations of the city of God (Revelation 21:14).

The twelve apostles went through many experiences with Christ. Sometimes they were comfortable; other times they were tired. On occasion they were fed miraculously; other times they bought their food. They enjoyed great victories; they also knew frustration. But by their staying with Christ, the plan of God was fulfilled in them.



9 The experience of Jesus' disciples shows us that in order to know God's plan the most important thing to do is to

- a) endure hardships and misfortunes.
- b) experience great miracles and victories.
- c) continue to remain with Christ.

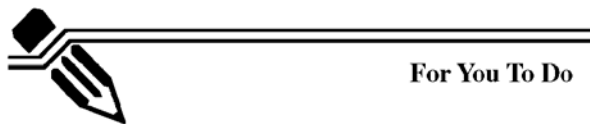
10 Peter's way of responding to Jesus was not like John's way. In regard to God's design, this fact illustrates the characteristic of

- a) diversity.
- b) knowledge.
- c) togetherness.

Paul the Apostle

The great man of God whom we know as Paul the apostle was known earlier in his life as Saul of Tarsus. At one time he hated Jesus Christ and anyone who followed Him. He was even responsible for the murder of Christians, for he thought they were blaspheming God. When God finally spoke personally to Saul, he was going to a city with letters that allowed him to arrest the followers of Christ.

Later on, when Paul looked at his earlier life, he called himself the worst of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). If God's process could work in him, it will work in anyone who will submit himself/herself to it. In 2 Timothy 4:7-8 Paul expresses to his young friend Timothy the confidence he had at the end of his life. He said that he had finished the race and kept the faith. As a result, he was sure that there was a prize ready not only for him, but also for all who would do the same.



11 Following are three comments on Paul's life. Circle the letter of the best comment about what Paul's life shows us concerning God's design.

- a) Some Christians have spent much of their lives in opposition to God's design.
- b) God's perfect will can be done in spite of a person's past failures.
- c) Every believer should realize that it is possible for him or her to experience failure.

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE GOD'S DESIGN

Objective 4. *Describe a situation in which God is working out His design in your life.*

God's plan for you is as complete and personal as it was for each of the twelve disciples. The same closeness He had with them He wants with you (John 17:21). He is working in the same way in you and your circumstances as He worked in them and in their circumstances. And as the life of Paul shows, God can fulfill His purpose in your life no matter what failures you may have had.

Once you realize that God has a design for you, your outlook will be changed. You will begin to view differently some of the things that happen in your life.



Carpenters change the shape of wood with a chisel or a saw; they smooth it with sandpaper. A diamond does not reach its full value until the master jeweler has cut away the worthless part with a chisel. Maybe God is working on you with special attention! We feel at times that we have been hammered, sawed, and sand-papered. We usually think that these things are happening simply because of "luck," people, or the situation we are in. Our reaction would be different, no doubt, if we believed they were part of God's process in our lives.

Romans 8:29-30 tells us about the process into which the events of our lives fit. Remember we studied the fact that God knows all about us? His plan for our lives begins there:

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (KJV)

As you continue to study this course, you will look at some ways God uses to change us. In particular, you will look at how some circumstances can help us know what His will is. But from the beginning, keep one thing in mind: God is bigger than any circumstance. He will use everything that happens to you to reach His final goal if you cooperate with Him (Romans 8:28).



For You To Do

12 Read Romans 8:28. In your notebook, describe a circumstance or situation in your life. Then ask yourself this question: *How could God be using this circumstance to bring about His design for me?* Try to write an answer to the question.

In Lesson 2 we will consider God's next step for you and how He wants to speak to you. Before you continue, read all of Psalm 139 and meditate on the wonderful truth it expresses about God's design in your life.



Check Your Answers

The answers to your study questions are not given in the usual order. This is done so you will not see the answer to your next question ahead of time. Look for the number you need and try not to look ahead.

- 7 a** 1) God's knowledge
b 4) Togetherness
c 2) Diversity
d 3) Standard
e 3) Standard
- 1** Your answers. Genesis 1 names several things that God designed, such as these: the light and the darkness (vv. 3-4), the seas and the land (vv. 9-10), and human beings (vv. 26-27).
- 8** Your answer should include the aspects of knowledge, diversity, standard, and togetherness as they are described in the lesson.
- 2** Your answer. Your decision to study this course shows that you are able to make choices. This is one way in which God made you like himself.
- 9** c) continue to remain with Christ.
- 3** (In your own words)
a His steps or way
b His troubles
c What he is made of; how he is formed
d The number of his days
- 10** a) diversity.
- 4** Your answer
- 11** b) God's perfect will can be done in spite of a person's past failures.
- 5** a) He did God's will.
c) He spoke the truth.
- 12** Your answer. Try to become more aware of what God is doing in your life.
- 6** c) Pieta learns how to use her teaching ability to help Jenny lead a Bible study.



Lesson
2

Will God Tell Me What to Do Next?

. . . I'm not sure of His design for me.

No doubt you have already accepted Christ as your Savior. And by now you have found that God does indeed have a design for your life. I am certain that you wish to follow His will for you.

But perhaps you are wondering about your relationship to God's design *now*. You may not be sure that you are part of it and that God wants to speak to you about it.

In this lesson you will discover what is your present position in God's design. You will learn several facts which show you why you can be confident that God wants to speak to you. And you will also learn about the promises and the provision He has made to guide you into fulfilling His design for you.



In this lesson you will study . . .

You Have Already Entered God's Design
God Wants You to Follow His Design
God Wants to Reveal His Design

This lesson will help you . . .

- Be confident of your present relationship to God's design.
- Explain why God wants you to continue to follow His design.
- Give reasons why you can be sure that God wants to reveal His design to you.

YOU HAVE ALREADY ENTERED GOD'S DESIGN

Objective 1. *Describe your present relationship to God's design and how it came about.*

As a believer you have confidence that you have accepted Christ and that you *are* a child of God. This is the same confidence you need to have in order to understand the unfolding of God's will and design for you. Let us review your experience in receiving Christ to help build that confidence. Though your experience was unique and personal, it had several essential points that are shared by all who receive Christ.

You Believed in Christ

Your experience of receiving Christ did not happen by coincidence or chance. You did not stumble into this great relationship by accident; no one has been saved that way. Somehow, God communicated His plan to you. More than that, He told you of His specific pattern for your life. God's communication by itself was not your salvation, however; that came when you obeyed.

The outward action was not the essential element. The obedience was. There is one common element in the directions the Scriptures give for salvation—*belief* (faith). The obedience, then, that is always demanded is this: *we must believe*.

Notice, for example, how Paul and Silas replied to the Philippian jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Their answer was the simplest possible instruction for salvation: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). The jailer had to *obey the instruction* to believe in Christ.

In the same way it was in response to your obedience that Christ came into your heart.



For You To Do

- 1 Read the Scriptures given in the references below. Circle the letter in front of each one that tells of someone who responded in obedience by believing in Christ.
 - a) Mark 15:13
 - b) Luke 18:22-23
 - c) John 17:8
 - d) Acts 18:8
- 2 In what way is it true that salvation is the result of obedience?.....

You Obeyed the Word

In becoming a Christian, you were obedient to God's Word, the Bible. It is from the Bible that we learn of the person of God, His holiness, and of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is the Bible which tells us that Christ came into the world, that He died and arose, and that He will forgive sin. In other words, when you received Christ, you were obedient to God's will as revealed in the Bible. You learned enough of God's will to obey and become a child of God.

You Obeyed the Spirit

At the same time you were confronted with the facts God's Word teaches, you no doubt experienced an inner *conviction*. You did not just learn about the fact of the resurrection of Christ, for example. You were actually convinced that Christ did rise and is alive. This conviction came from the Holy Spirit's work of leading you into the truth. You obeyed Him by responding to His conviction.

You obeyed both the Word and the Spirit. The result is that you are a child of God. God's design for you is not beginning in the future. It began when God made you His child. He was able to communicate His plan to you even while you were separated from Him. As His son or daughter, you can be sure He will continue to speak to you.



For You To Do

3 In your notebook, explain your present relationship to God’s design and how you came into it. Use two or three sentences to do this.

GOD WANTS YOU TO FOLLOW HIS DESIGN

Objective 2. *State three reasons why God wants you to continue to follow His design.*

Because we are His children, God desires us to obey Him. This is the way we follow His design. Many times throughout Scripture this demand is made (see, for example, Deuteronomy 27:10; 1 Samuel 12:14; and Matthew 19:17). The major idea of Psalm 119 is the close relationship between love for and obedience to the Law and the Word of God (see for example, verses 47, 97, and 167). In addition, Christ considers obedience to be the most important expression of love we can make (John 14:15).



Your Obedience Brings Blessing

One of the greatest reasons why God wants us to obey Him is because it brings His blessing on our lives.

The people of Israel had suffered much hardship while they were slaves in Egypt, but God had brought them out. They were going to be in the wilderness for a whole generation.



For You To Do

4 Read in Exodus 15:26 the startling promise God made to His people. Then answer the following questions in your notebook.

- a What did God tell the people to do?
- b What would happen if they did what God told them to do?

Psalm 1 tells us about the person who finds “joy in obeying the Law of the Lord” (v. 2). Such people receive many blessings. Their lives are like fruitful trees whose leaves do not wither, and they enjoy success.

Other Scripture passages also describe the blessings that come when we obey God’s will. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), Christ promises happiness to those whose character is like His—pure in heart, merciful, and peacemaking. In Romans 2:7 we read that those who continue to do what is right will receive eternal life.

Your Obedience Builds God’s Kingdom

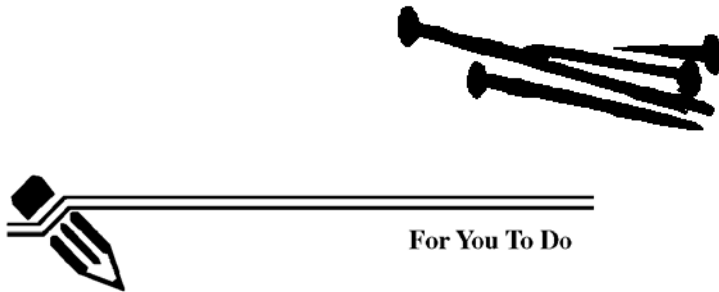
The growth of the kingdom of God often depends on our obedience. We recognize this truth immediately when we consider the words of the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray to God: “May your kingdom come; may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). Our obedience is essential to God’s kingdom.

In the Bible we read of times when God’s plan was followed and His kingdom was built. We also read of other times when disobedience by the children of God seemed to thwart His plan.

In the Garden of Eden, for example, Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:6). Was God’s creation blessed or cursed by Adam’s action? Before he ate, peace was everywhere. There is no record of even animals killing each other. There were no thorns. Adam had the opportunity of filling a peaceful earth with his offspring. But look at what happened when he disobeyed.

The image of God in Adam was dulled. He began to accuse his wife and hide from God. Then the earth, God’s creation, was cursed. All of the earthly creation shared in this—the ground, the animals, and humankind. Disobedience affected the kingdom God had created (Genesis 3:8-19).

Just as Adam’s disobedience so drastically affected the kingdom in a negative way, the perfect obedience of Christ affected the kingdom in a positive way. In fact, both Adam and Christ affected the whole earthly kingdom. Their acts had the most extreme results of all. In Adam the whole creation was cursed; in Christ the whole creation was redeemed.



5 Read Romans 5:15-21. Write each result listed under the name of the person whose act brought it about.

- a Pardon came to all.
- b Death began to rule.
- c Humankind was set free.
- d Life was given.
- e Condemnation came upon all.

1) Christ’s obedience	2) Adam’s disobedience
.....
.....
.....

Other people also affected God’s kingdom. In the Bible we read of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, and Elijah. They all had a great impact on God’s kingdom through their obedience.

Your Obedience Pleases God

God desires His children to obey for their blessing and for the welfare of His kingdom. Also, in a more intimate way, He gets pleasure from their obedience.

Christ did not seek to do His own will, but the will of the Father. He testified that He did only those things that pleased the Father (John 8:29). His obedience showed the fullness of the Father-Son relationship.

What a sense of pleasure the Father must have had as He saw His only Son so perfectly obedient! Notice in Matthew 3:17 and 17:5 how He responded to His Son's life of obedience. He actually spoke out of heaven and said that He was pleased. You also, as His child, can bring Him pleasure through your obedience.



For You To Do

6 In your notebook, state three reasons why God wants you to continue to follow (be obedient to) His design.

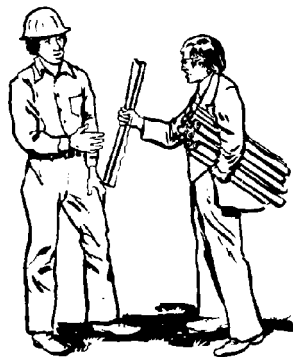
GOD WANTS TO REVEAL HIS DESIGN

Objective 3. Give evidence that God wants to reveal His design to you.

If God is able to tell us His will *before* we are His children, and if He is pleased with obedience *in* His children, will He not also tell us His will so that we can obey it?

Some approach God as though they must *convince* Him to reveal His will. They labor in prayer and even find it impossible to act as they try to “find the will of God.” Is this really the picture the Bible shows us?

Think of the parables Christ taught about humanity's responsibility, such as the ones recorded in Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 12:42-48. In no case did He teach as though individuals would have a problem knowing *what* God wanted them to do. God wants to reveal His plan! But what facts show us that God wants to do this?



He Has Promised to Lead You

We know God wants to reveal His plan because He has promised to lead us. He would not leave us without guidance.

When Christ was on earth, the disciples had no problem learning His will; He simply told them what it was. He sent them to witness when and where He wanted them to go. When He fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish, He told them how to serve the people (Luke 9:14).

Not only did they learn from what Christ said, but they also learned from His example. No doubt they were part of His ministry wherever He went. That is how they learned His will.

But Christ knew He would not always be with them in the same way. How would they know what to do when He went back to heaven? Would they become confused? How would He tell them His will?

John 14–16 records what Christ shared with His disciples to prepare them for the time when He would no longer be present. He told them what He would be doing (preparing a place for them). And He told them that they should not even sorrow at His going. In fact, He said that His going back to heaven would be an advantage for them. It was only if He went away that the Holy Spirit, the key to understanding the will of God, would come (John 16:7).

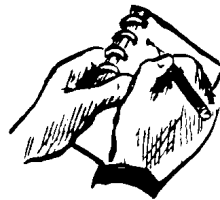
In just these three chapters are recorded many assurances Christ gave His followers that they would not be left alone. In the next exercise you will look at some of these.



For You To Do

7 Jesus described the work and character of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures given in the references below. Match each description (left) to the Scripture reference in which it is found (right).

- | | | |
|--------|---|---------------|
| a | He will teach them. | 1) John 14:16 |
| b | He will give Christ glory. | 2) John 14:17 |
| c | He will stay with them forever. | 3) John 14:26 |
| d | He will cause them to remember all that Christ told them. | 4) John 16:13 |
| e | He will tell them of things to come. | 5) John 16:14 |
| f | He will take what Christ says and tell it to them. | |
| g | He remains in them. | |



Think about these promises and how clear they are. God does want to reveal His will!

He Has Made Provision to Lead You

What provision, then, has God made to lead you? Were the promises we studied just for the future, or have they already been fulfilled?

In Acts 2 we read that the Holy Spirit was given as Christ had promised. Christ *did* go back to heaven; He *did* ask the Father to give the Holy Spirit; the church *did* receive what had been promised.

But the book of Acts not only records the fulfillment of Christ's promise to give the Spirit to His followers. It also records that this provision for their leadership was sufficient. In fact, they were able to do more for God after the Holy Spirit came than they had been able to do when Christ was on earth. His going away brought them an advantage, just as He had promised.

So the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit was Christ's provision for leading us into the knowledge of God's will. But more than that, the Bible also gives us specific examples of how the Holy Spirit works and instructions on how we can cooperate with His work.



The Spirit Prays

No doubt in asking, “Will God tell me what to do next?” you have faced this problem: *How and for what should I pray?* God has made a provision for this problem: the Holy Spirit can even pray through you and will do so in the *perfect* will of the Father. Your prayer *can* be the perfect expression of the desire of the Father (Romans 8:26-27).



For You To Do

- 8** Read Romans 8:26-27. According to those verses, our prayers can be the perfect expression of God’s desire because
- a) the Spirit tells us what to say.
 - b) the Spirit himself prays through us.
 - c) we know what we should say.

The Spirit Gives Gifts

Another way the Holy Spirit gives us knowledge of God’s will is through His gifts. These are described in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. In exalting Jesus Christ, they build up the church and the individual. Through the word of wisdom or knowledge, we receive specific insight into the person and mind of God. This insight goes beyond what we can learn through our natural intelligence.

The Spirit Indwells

In a real way the Holy Spirit dwells in you as a child of God. You are an agent through which He speaks.

Christ was led by the indwelling Spirit into the wilderness (Matthew 4:1). Philip was led by the Spirit to witness to an Ethiopian official (Acts 8:29). Paul wanted to go to Asia but was led by the Spirit into Europe (Acts 16:6-10). In the same way the Holy Spirit that dwells in you is the provision of God to lead you into His will.

The Spirit Gave the Word

There is one more specific way that God has provided for the Holy Spirit to lead us. This is in giving us His Word, the Bible. In another lesson we will learn *how* God uses the Word to speak to us. Now it is important, though, for you to understand that God’s Word is the product of the Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). It is the channel through which the Holy Spirit speaks now. It is the one by which we judge all other messages.



For You To Do

9 Suppose a friend were to ask you this question: “How do I know that God wants to reveal His design to me?” First review this section. Then write a reply in your notebook following these suggestions:

- a** Describe the promise Christ gave concerning how we would be guided into the knowledge of His will.
- b** State how Christ’s promise was fulfilled.
- c** Name four ways through which the Holy Spirit makes God’s design known to us.

You are a child of God. Will He tell you what to do next? Yes! You can be sure that God is able to speak, that He wants you to know His will, and that He has already made provision to speak to you.



Check Your Answers

- 5 Under (1) *Christ's obedience*, you should have listed these:
- a Pardon came to all.
 - c Humankind was set free.
 - d Life was given.
- Under (2) *Adam's disobedience*, you should have listed these:
- b Death began to rule.
 - e Condemnation came upon all.
- 1 c) John 17:8
d) Acts 18:8
- 6 God wants you to continue following His design because your obedience brings you blessing, builds His kingdom, and gives Him pleasure.
- 2 Salvation comes when a person obeys the instruction to "believe in Christ." (Your answer should be similar.)
- 7 a 3) John 14:26
b 5) John 16:14
c 1) John 14:16
d 3) John 14:26
e 4) John 16:13
f 5) John 16:14
g 2) John 14:17
- 3 Your answer. I would say that if you are a believer in Christ, you have already entered into God's design for you through obedience. You obeyed God by believing in Christ and by believing in the testimony of His Word and His Spirit.
- 8 b) the Spirit himself prays through us.
- 4 a He told them to obey all of His commands.
b He said they would not suffer from any of the diseases that came upon the Egyptians.
(Your answer should be similar.)
- 9 Your reply should be similar to the following:
- a Christ said the Holy Spirit would come to guide His followers.
 - b Christ's promise about the coming of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.
 - c The Holy Spirit prays through us, gives us gifts of knowledge and wisdom, indwells us, and has given us God's Word, the Bible.

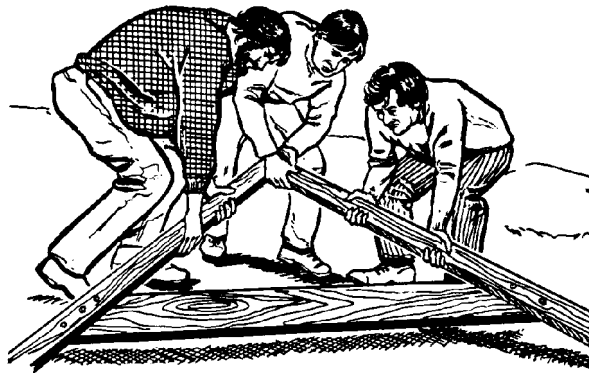
Lesson
3

Does God Expect Too Much?

. . . His plan is so big!

Sam was seventeen years old and away from home for the first time. He had finished several years of school in his small hometown. Now he had come to the university in the capital of his country. His first day in class was almost frightening; there were as many students in one class as had been in his whole school back home. Besides this, the professor began to list what she expected the students to do during the coming year—the reading assignments, the written work, the tests, the oral reports, the projects. It looked impossible! Sam became very discouraged.

What Sam did not realize was this: not everything was due that day; in addition, the professor would help. That was what she was there for—to help Sam reach those learning goals. Sam would make gradual progress. Each new lesson would be built on the knowledge gained in the former lesson. Eventually the goals would be reached.



Sometimes when we begin to view the great plan of God, we may feel like Sam did. It looks *too* big; it even looks impossible. It *is* impossible to do in our natural strength. But with God all things are possible. In this lesson we will study what God expects of us, but we will also see what He will do for us and through us as we seek to reach the goals He has set for our lives.

In this lesson you will study . . .

God Expects Great Things
God Gives Powerful Help
God Doesn't Stop When We Fail

This lesson will help you . . .

- Describe what God expects of us.
- Explain how we can fulfill God's expectations.
- Explain why our failures do not destroy God's design for us.

GOD EXPECTS GREAT THINGS

Objective 1. *Recognize reasons why we need God's help to reach the goals He has set for us.*

You have an exciting future as you cooperate with God in His plan. His design for you is good, and it is eternal. Let us think together of some of the goals God has set for us that are part of His design. We will look especially at those goals that God wants all of us to reach. As God helps us to be successful in reaching these, He is able to accomplish His plan for our individual lives also.

Transformation

Romans 12:2 tells us that we are to be completely transformed. I think most people desire to be transformed. But instead they may change something only on the outside as they try to copy or imitate other people or some ideal. Is this all God plans for us? Does He want us to be just outward copies of someone else who may be good? It would not only be difficult to do this but maybe even impossible. And besides, what value would it have if we were to succeed? You have been thinking about how big God's plan is; are we to be mere *copies*? The idea doesn't seem to fit.

Transformation is more than imitation or copying. Transformation is a key to the rest of God's plan. Without it, too much of what God plans for us is just out of reach.

The Pharisees only copied religious behavior; they had never been transformed. Notice how Jesus speaks about them in Matthew 15:7-8. It is no wonder that they could not love their enemies. We do not naturally love our enemies either, nor do we bless those who curse us. Looking at the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), we see so many commands of Christ that are absolutely impossible . . . *unless* we are transformed.

Maybe you have already confronted some of the "impossibilities" that God seems to expect of you.



For You To Do

1 Certain behaviors are described in the Scripture verses referred to below (left). Read each verse. Then match it to the kind of person described (right).

- | | | |
|--------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| a | Matthew 5:40 | 1) A person who tries to copy |
| b | Matthew 5:44 | 2) A person who is transformed |
| c | Matthew 6:2 | |
| d | Matthew 6:5 | |
| e | Luke 6:36 | |

Obedience

In the last lesson we thought about the fact that God expects obedience. When we desire to be obedient, and *He* desires us to be obedient, what could ever stop us? In fact, many things do.

Some commands in Scripture are active; that is, they command us to *do something*. Others are passive; that is, they command us to *allow something to be done to us* or to experience something. We can see that it is impossible for us to obey the passive commands by ourselves. But the active commands are impossible to obey as well, for they ask us to do what goes against our natural desires.

Even after we have been transformed we still find that it is not always easy to do what is right. At the same time that we are making the effort to do right, to match the standard set by Jesus Christ, we also experience all sorts of other powers. These seem to lead us into wrong action or attitudes.



For You To Do

- 2 Read Romans 7:21-23 and write an answer to the following questions in your notebook.
- a What was the conflict the apostle Paul was experiencing?
 - b What explanation did he give for this situation?

Paul did not create this law; he observed it working in himself. Simple obedience to what he knew was right and desired to do was frustrated by this “law.”

Growth

Besides transformation and obedience, it is clear that God also expects growth. He does not want us to remain spiritual “babes” but to grow into “childhood” and finally to become “adults.” As we grow, we begin to decide what is most important so we can make the right choices. This gives us stability. As we grow, we not only learn more, but we also go from receiving to giving. We go from always learning to taking responsibility to teach. Yet now we are talking about taking the first steps in discovering God’s plan; teaching others may look like one of those unreachable goals!



For You To Do

- 3 Read in Ephesians the verses referred to below. Circle the letter in front of each reference to a Scripture passage that describes the process of spiritual growth.
- a) 2:4-5
 - b) 4:13-15
 - c) 5:1-2
- 4 One of the following statements is the best explanation of why we need God’s help to do what He expects of us. Circle the letter in front of it.
- a) New believers cannot expect God to tell them what to do.
 - b) We live in a world in which most people are opposed to doing God’s will.
 - c) Our natural desires do not lead us toward what God wants us to do.
 - d) It is hard for us to really understand what God expects of us.

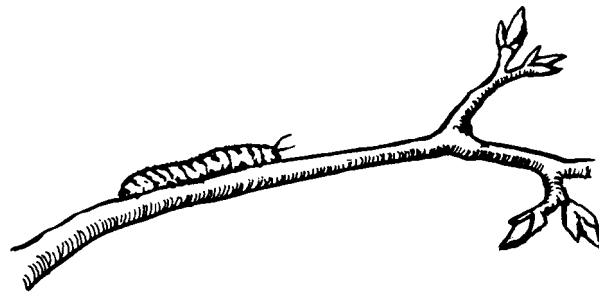
GOD GIVES POWERFUL HELP

Objective 2. *Recognize a description of God’s part and our part in our spiritual development.*

Does God expect too much? Will it be possible to satisfy Him? Will He help?

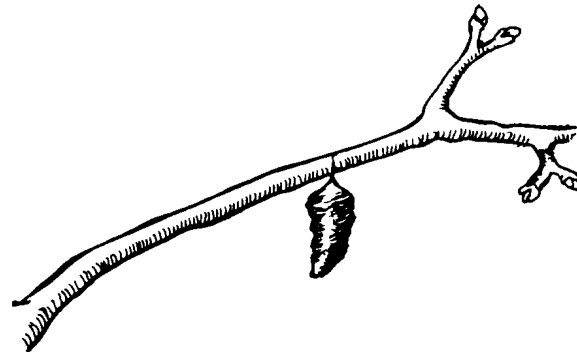
We have just mentioned some of the goals God has set for us. They are not really as different from each other as they appear to be. They show us the kind of work God wants to do in us from various points of view.

We have emphasized that in the design and plan of God, these goals are fundamental and expected of all. What does God do to help us reach them? Let us take some that we have studied and see what God does to help us follow His plan.

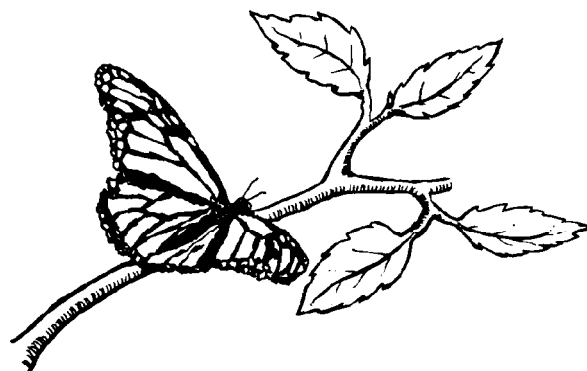


God Changes Us

One of the great mysteries of nature is how a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. A caterpillar appears to be related more to a worm than to anything else. It crawls and could not fly if it wanted to. How could it ever be thought of as beautiful? Yet in the structure of its life, God has designed change. For while it starts out crawling, God's intention is for it to fly. How does this change happen?



It “dies” as a caterpillar when it goes into its cocoon so that it will come out as a butterfly. *It doesn't learn to fly.* The caterpillar crawled by nature; the butterfly flies by nature. This transformation, called *metamorphosis*, is not the result of the caterpillar's effort to copy the butterfly. It is the result of inner change.





For You To Do

- 5 Read in your Bible the Scripture passages referred to below. Which one is the best description of the metamorphosis that a Christian experiences?
- a) Galatians 2:19-20
 - b) Ephesians 1:9-10
 - c) 2 Peter 1:10

The metamorphosis of the caterpillar could really illustrate all that God is doing in us. Metamorphosis is the idea given in Romans 12:1-2 concerning the change that God expects. And notice—it can take place only when a new life principle is in us. As we have said, the caterpillar does not make an effort to change itself. The life God has put into it is what changes it into a butterfly. In a similar way we are changed as we yield to the Spirit whom God has placed in us.



For You To Do

- 6 Read Romans 12:1-2 and write an answer to the following questions in your notebook.
- a) What two things are we asked to do?
 - b) What are we to allow God to do?

God's Power Works in Us

It is easy to see God's part in the passive commands when our task is that of cooperation. But what of those things that God tells *us* to do? Do we depend on our strength to accomplish them? In Ephesians 4:17–6:20, for example, we are told of many practical ways of expressing our Christianity, our “Christlikeness.” It would seem that these things at least are left for us to do. But even that would be expecting too much on our own strength.

In Ephesians 2:10 we read that God has made us and that we have been created in Jesus Christ to do good deeds. These good deeds are the things named in Ephesians 4:17–6:20. Then in Ephesians 3:20, we are told that God “by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of.”

Think about that. Our asking comes nowhere near the limit of His power and ability, and that power works *within us*.

We mentioned the “law” that worked in Paul (and has worked in each one of us). It prevented his perfect obedience. If this “law” is that strong, could it limit God's plan for us? Paul, at least at one point in his life, felt that this “law” effectively kept him from doing what he knew he should do. But the answer to this dilemma is given in Romans 8:14. The effect of the “law” that causes disobedience is canceled; there is “no condemnation” (Romans 8:1). Instead, the power of God works in us.

God *did* help by sending His Son; He *does* help by the power of the Holy Spirit. God's plan for you is not something He wants just you to do. Actually, it is what He wants to do *with* you and *through* you.

The Bible gives us a key idea to help us understand the balance between our effort to work out God's design in our lives and the help we can rely on God to give. This idea is stated in Philippians 2:12-13:

Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation, because God is always at work in you to make you willing and able to obey his own purpose.



For You To Do

7 Below are three statements about how we can reach the goals God has set for us. Circle the letter in front of the one that is the best description.

- a) We decide to turn away from following the world. As we do this, we transform our minds so we can obey God. By trying hard, we have success in reaching the goals.
- b) We offer ourselves to God and seek to obey Him. At the same time, God's power works in us to transform us. Together we move toward the goals He has set.
- c) God takes control of our minds and makes us willing to do what is right. Because the goals He has set are difficult, He does all the work in helping us to reach them.

GOD DOESN'T STOP WHEN WE FAIL

Objective 3. *Choose reasons why we can be confident that our failures will not destroy God's design for us.*

In understanding God's plan and following His direction, there is one aspect that we do not like to face: sometimes we fail. Perhaps this happens because of ignorance or weakness. Sometimes even our motives are mixed. In spite of the "power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20, KJV), in spite of the fact that "God is always at work" in us (Philippians 2:13), we *still* fail.

Failure. God has an answer for sin—forgiveness, new birth. But if we fail after the new birth, then what? Does our failure change God's plan? Do we then settle for "second best"? Does God have several designs for our lives in case we ruin one? Does our failure take Him by surprise? Does He then leave us to work out our own problems?

Let us look at some facts that will help us understand failure—why we fail and how God responds to it. This will help us find answers to these questions.

Our Past Failures Affect Us

Much of our feeling and emotion is shaped by our own history. For example, if a special holiday is celebrated in a happy way year after year, we will begin to feel a certain way as that day approaches. Some holidays are days of feasting. Families and friends exchange gifts. Houses are decorated. There is joy and singing. As these holidays approach, all the memories of former celebrations come back. People begin to have a certain feeling. And that feeling starts to affect how they think.

Sometimes failure shapes our feelings in a similar way. We have a history of sin before Christ comes into our lives. When circumstances arise that are like those in which we have failed before, the memory of those failures comes back. Our feelings then make us think a certain way. Satan may use these memories and feelings to tempt us, and we may behave as we did before.



For You To Do

8 Which of the following incidents is an example of how a person's history of failure can affect how he or she feels?

- a) Before Teresa became a believer, she had friends who did not live right. In order to keep their friendship, Teresa did the things they did. Now that she is a believer, she no longer does those things. Her new friends encourage her to live right.
- b) Before Jesse became a believer, he often became angry with people who had ideas that were different from his own. Recently he has met a Christian brother who has disagreed with him. Jesse finds that he is beginning to have feelings of anger toward this brother.

So though we do not, in fact, *have* to sin after we are saved, at times we *do*. Our habits are not always right; certainly our environment is under the curse. We fail because we are still human, still tempted, still living in a fallen world, still growing, still being changed.



God Knows About Our Failures

God knows all of our failures. It is important to realize that we never take Him by surprise. No circumstance in our life does; nothing that touches us does. If our sin doesn't surprise God, if He knows even our failure before we experience it, then we can be sure He has taken it all into account.



For You To Do

9 At the end of Lesson 1, you were asked to meditate on Psalm 139. This psalm reassures us that God does know all about us. Read verses 2-4 and 11-16 again. Circle the letter of each TRUE statement.

- a God's knowledge of us begins at our birth.
- b Some of our thoughts are not known to God.
- c All of our actions are known to God.

God's Grace Overcomes Our Failures

We have said that God knows about our failures. As we look at the fact of failure, what provisions do we have to give us confidence that God's grace will continue to work in our lives?

First, forgiveness is available; this is God's way of separating us from our sin. In 1 John 1:9 we read that God has promised to forgive us when we confess our sins to Him. God's plan for our lives is never based on our ability to be perfect but on *His* knowledge and ability.

Second, God's power is available. All the power God used to bring you into salvation continues to be available after your salvation. God did not wait until after you were saved to determine what would be His plan for your life. Your experience of salvation marked the day of your choice, not His. As His child, you can be sure that His power is available to you now.

This power of God is effective. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 the apostle Paul described an experience he had. He “failed” to receive the deliverance he prayed for. But through this experience Paul learned a lesson that shows us how effective God’s power is.



For You To Do

10 Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 and answer in your notebook the following questions.

- a** What did Paul learn about God’s power through the experience he described?
- b** As a result of what he learned, what was Paul able to do?

Furthermore, God’s power works beyond our failures. The real issue we often face when we confront failure is this: *Does failure mean I can have only God’s “second best”? Have I ruined His perfect plan for me?*

God taught the prophet Jeremiah a lesson that helps us deal with this issue. After seeing the failure of the nation of Israel, Jeremiah was sent to a potter’s house (Jeremiah 18:1-10). He watched the potter take the clay and shape it. But in the middle of shaping, a “failure” was found in the clay. Instead of throwing the clay away or making a flawed vessel, the potter reshaped the clay into a vessel that was perfect.

Jeremiah began to understand how God regarded the failure of Israel. God did not want to reject them but to reshape them.

In God’s knowledge your imperfections are known as well as your strong points. God will *still* make you into the vessel that pleases Him. The ingredient He looks for in the clay of your life is that “Christ is in you” (Colossians 1:27). Failure, even sin, does not change the fact that Christ lives in you.

Chapter 11 of Hebrews lists the names of many people who are regarded as heroes of the faith, worthy of fame. Their lives certainly cannot be described as following God’s “second best” design for them. But look at the list. If you were to read the stories of the people who are named, you would realize this: these people knew what failure was. They were “failures”—but heroes.



For You To Do

11 We have said we can be confident that our failures and weaknesses will not destroy God’s design for us. Circle the letter in front of each statement that *gives a reason* why this is so.

- a) Everyone has times of failure.
- b) God’s design is based on our ability to follow it completely after we have accepted Christ.
- c) God made His design for us, knowing about our failures ahead of time.
- d) Our failures and sins do not keep God’s power from working in us.
- e) People often fail because they have a history of failure.
- f) God has a “second best” plan for those who fail.

Like the people listed in Hebrews 11, you too can experience God's perfect will for you though you may have times of failure. Jesus says to you as He said to the apostle Paul, "My power is strongest when you are weak" (2 Corinthians 12:9). His power can overcome your failures and make it possible for you to fulfill His design for you.



Check Your Answers

- 6 a** We are to (1) offer ourselves as living sacrifices and (2) not allow ourselves to be conformed to this world.
b We are to allow God to transform us inwardly by changing our mind.
(Your answers should be similar.)
- 1 a** 2) A person who is transformed
b 2) A person who is transformed
c 1) A person who tries to copy
d 1) A person who tries to copy
e 2) A person who is transformed
- 7 b)** We offer ourselves to God and seek to obey Him. At the same time, God's power works in us to transform us. Together we move toward the goals He has set.
- 2 a** He wanted to do what was good, but he actually did what was wrong.
b He said there was a law at work in his body. It made him a prisoner to sin.
- 8 b)** Before Jesse became a believer, he often became angry with people who had ideas that were different from his own. Recently he has met a Christian brother who has disagreed with him. Jesse finds that he is beginning to have feelings of anger toward this brother.
- 3 b)** 4:13-15
- 9** Statement **c** is true.
- 4 c)** Our natural desires do not lead us toward what God wants us to do.
- 10 a** Paul learned that God's power was strongest when he was weak.
b Paul was able to rejoice in his weaknesses because it was then he experienced God's power the most.
(Your answers should be similar.)
- 5 a)** Galatians 2:19-20
- 11 c)** God made His design for us, knowing about our failures ahead of time.
d) Our failures and sins do not keep God's power from working in us.

Lesson
4

Am I Missing God's Design?

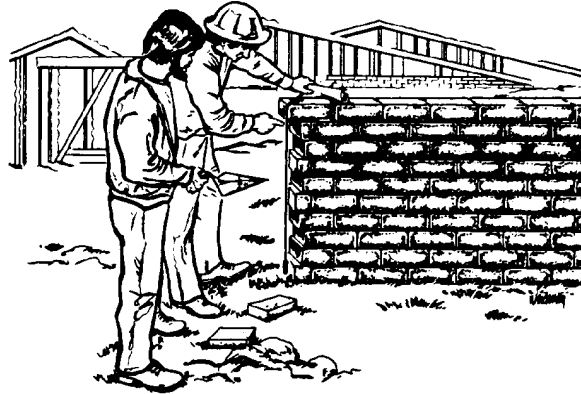
. . . Life isn't always easy.

Sometimes it is pleasant to do God's will, and sometimes it is difficult. Abraham faced one of those difficult times.

God had given Abraham a promise that he would be the father of a great nation. But years passed and no fulfillment came. The plan Abraham and Sarah made to bring about God's promise ended in heartache. Then God spoke again to Abraham and reminded him of His promise. Finally, that promise was fulfilled in the miraculous birth of Isaac. But Abraham's testing was not over.

A few years later, God told Abraham to offer Isaac—the son whom he loved—to Him on the mountain Moriah. Abraham was challenged to obey God in spite of his feelings, circumstances, and personal desire. Abraham met this challenge. He obeyed God's will and experienced a great miracle: God supplied a ram as a substitute for Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19).

You may be facing a similar challenge. God may be using certain circumstances in your life to



test your faith also. In this lesson we will study how our circumstances are related to God's design for us. As you study, you will discover some of the ways in which God can use circumstances to help fulfill His design in your life.

In this lesson you will study . . .

Circumstances Raise Questions
Circumstances Can Test Our Faith
Circumstances Can Discipline Us
Circumstances Can Encourage Us

This lesson will help you . . .

- Give reasons why God allows us to experience difficulty and opposition.
- Explain why difficulties arise when we are trying to follow God's design for us.
- Describe the values and benefits we can receive from the difficulties we experience.

CIRCUMSTANCES RAISE QUESTIONS

There are times when it seems God's will is confirmed by circumstances. There are other times when visible circumstances make doing what we know God wants us to do very difficult. Are difficulties an indication that we are missing God? Is it possible to know what God's will is by how hard or easy it seems to be? What happens if it appears to be impossible, that is, if all outward conditions seem in opposition to doing what we think God wants us to do? Let us consider the relationship our circumstances have to God's design or will for us.

CIRCUMSTANCES CAN TEST OUR FAITH

Objective 1. *Recognize two reasons why God allows our faith to be tested.*

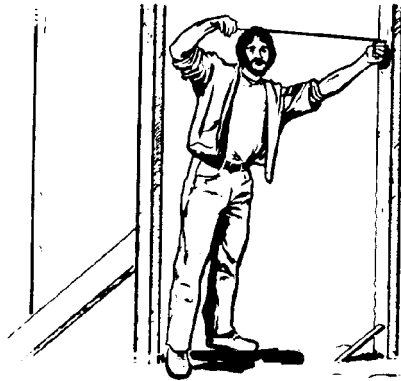
We learn how trustworthy a thing is by testing it. Sailors would want to test a boat by using it in a lake or harbor before trying to cross the ocean in it. Mountain climbers would want to test the strength of a rope before having to trust their lives to it when climbing a steep cliff.

On some occasions God seems to use difficult circumstances to test our faith. He tests our faith because it is our direct link with Him; He works through it. Without faith, nothing we do fits into His design for us or is satisfactory to Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Testing Reveals Our Faith

Some people think that they trust God when, in fact, they have never really *had* to trust Him. Circumstances and events have always supported their trust in God and have made doing the will of God the easy thing to do. In many cases they are doing what they want to do, and what they want to do happens to be God's will. How trustworthy is this faith?

God wants us to see how much we are really trusting Him. To show us this, He may allow outward supports and helps to be taken away. This may appear to make obedience difficult; it may even make us wonder if we really are *in* the will of God.



But if we do not allow God to test us and show us how much we are really trusting Him, the weakness in our faith will not be seen until Satan attacks.

Peter was sure of his loyalty to Christ. His own opinion was that he had more devotion than anyone else. Before Jesus' trial, Peter told Him, "I will never leave you, even though all the rest do!" (Matthew 26:33).



For You To Do

- 1 Read the Scripture verses referred to below about this event in Peter’s life. In your notebook, write an answer to the question about each one.
- a Luke 22:31. What warning did Christ give Peter?
 - b Matthew 26:34. What did Christ tell Peter he would do?
 - c Matthew 26:35. What did Peter say he would not do?
 - d Matthew 26:69-75. What did Peter do?

We see that the difficult circumstances Peter experienced revealed the weakness of his faith at that time. He could not stand without the outward supports.

But tested faith has value. The apostle James understood this value. He explained it this way:

My brothers consider yourselves fortunate when all kinds of trials come your way, for you know that when your faith succeeds in facing such trials, the result is the ability to endure. (James 1: 2-3)

Look at the ideas in these verses—trials, endurance. They indicate opposition and difficulty. Yet there is no indication that difficulty means we have missed God’s plan for us. In fact, we are to consider ourselves fortunate when trials come!



For You To Do

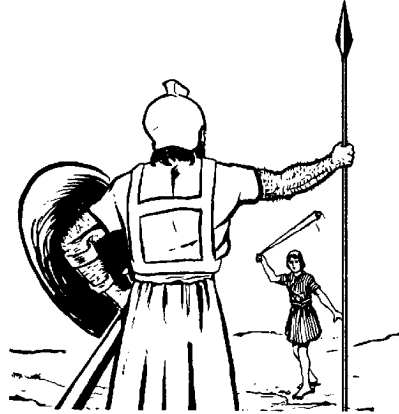
- 2 Read James 1:2-4 in your Bible. What is the final result of the testing of our faith?
-

Testing Builds Our Faith

The testing of our faith through negative circumstances can also show us how much we *are* able to trust God. It can help build our faith.

No doubt Abraham’s experience on Mount Moriah was a great victory of faith, the greatest he had won. He had been brought right up to the moment of sacrificing his son when God showed him the ram he was to offer instead. He had obeyed in spite of the difficulty; his faith was tested and proven. Now he had learned that God could supply a sacrifice; now he had learned that God could keep his family.

In 1 Samuel 17 we read of the time when David faced Goliath, a powerful enemy of Israel. It would be impossible for a young man like David to defeat a huge warrior like Goliath! But when David heard Goliath’s challenge, he was ready to fight him.



For You To Do

- 3 Read 1 Samuel 17:34-37. David was ready to fight Goliath because
- several of his brothers believed that he would be successful.
 - Goliath was an ungodly Philistine and David was an Israelite.
 - David had already learned to trust God when fighting lions and bears.

What are some of the circumstances God allows us to face in order to test our faith? There may be dangers and disappointment. There may be those around us who do not trust us. Discomfort may be a problem. Reaching our goals may be delayed beyond what we are able to accept. In all of these God is testing our faith in Him to show *us* where we lack and to cause us to trust Him more.



For You To Do

- 4 We have studied two reasons why God allows our faith to be tested by difficult circumstances. Circle the letter in front of each sentence below that expresses one of those reasons.
- Sometimes we need to be shown the actual strength of our faith so we are not deceived about ourselves.
 - God tests our faith so He can find out whether we are weak or strong.
 - Our faith is tested to show us that we have missed God's design for us.
 - After our faith has been tested, we are able to meet greater challenges than before.



CIRCUMSTANCES CAN DISCIPLINE US

Objective 2. Choose the best explanation of how difficult circumstances discipline us.

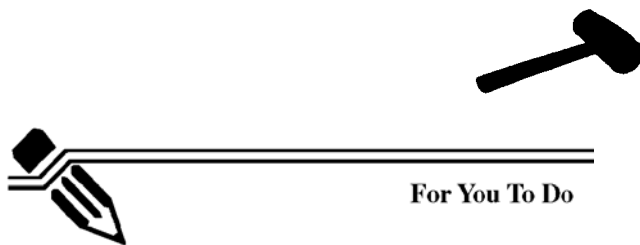
Difficult circumstances that arise as we try to follow God's will can also discipline us. The purpose of this discipline is to direct our effort toward the goal God has set for us. Some think discipline means punishment, but in fact, punishment is not necessary to discipline. It becomes necessary only when there is a failure to respond to true discipline. Discipline is *training*; it is the choosing of certain activities in order to accomplish an objective.

In sports, discipline is learning to conform to the rules in order to win a game. Activity outside of the rules not only uses energy worthlessly but is also counterproductive. It is penalized.

Discipline may involve a program of conditioning. In sports this means that the athlete deliberately faces resistance in order to become stronger.

It is easy to see the connection between the idea of being disciplined and that of being a disciple. The twelve *disciples* of Christ were men *disciplined* to do His will. As we read the accounts of their lives, we see that Christ constantly allowed them, even led them, to face difficulties. These experiences were part of their training.

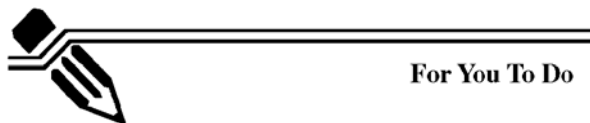
They were in a boat with Christ in a dangerous storm, but Christ did not seem to be doing anything about it. He was sleeping (Mark 4:35-41). Nine of them were left at the bottom of the mountain on which Christ was transfigured. There they were faced with a demon-possessed boy (Mark 9:14-29).



- 5 Read Mark 6:34-44. Then in your notebook, write an answer to the following questions.
- What difficulty did the disciples face?
 - What did Christ tell them to do?
 - What resources did they have?
 - What did Christ do?
 - What was the result?

In each of these negative, difficult circumstances, Christ took the disciples to the limit of their capability. He was teaching them *total* dependence on Him. He was drawing their attention to himself and away from their own limitations.

We should not allow difficulties to cause confusion in our minds concerning the will of God. Instead, we should realize that perhaps God is using those problems to make us single-minded concerning Him. This is why one of the keys to overcoming difficulties is to direct our attention toward God.



- 6 Difficult circumstances *discipline* us by
- helping us to realize that we are not following God's will.
 - making it necessary for us to depend completely on God.
 - showing us that we have the ability to face the problem ourselves.
 - bringing punishment on us so we know we have failed.

CIRCUMSTANCES CAN ENCOURAGE US

Objective 3. *Distinguish between statements giving reasons for and values of difficult circumstances.*

It is true that difficult circumstances test our faith and discipline us. But those same problems can be a source of encouragement, depending on how we react to them and to what we know to be the will of God. Let us consider three aspects of this encouragement.

Proof That We Belong to God

First, difficulties can give us proof that we belong to God. The Scripture is clear about the forces of evil that are in the world. Satan is the enemy of the follower of Christ. He withstands the progress of the kingdom of God at every opportunity. Satan does this deliberately, willfully, maliciously. He is powerful, though his power is limited. He is even more deceptive than powerful; he is the father of lies.

Satan is the enemy of the Christian and so is the world system. This system is not one of righteousness. It is one built on deceit, oppression, and injustice. It is a twisted system, with humanity calling evil good and good evil. It is a system of promise without fulfillment, knowledge without truth. It is a system that is opposed to God and to the child of God. It is a system that rejected and then crucified the Son of God because He was righteous; His righteousness aroused the hatred of the system.



For You To Do

7 Read John 15:18-20 and complete the following. Christ told His disciples that the world hated Him. He warned them that the world would hate them also because

.....

What, then, do the children of God expect when they begin to follow the will of God? They live in a twisted environment and are trying to walk a straight path. In a dark world they want to follow light. Never does Scripture show God's will as being in conformity with the system or even at peaceful coexistence with it. The two are in warfare, friction, conflict, and confrontation. Christ said: "The world will make you suffer. But be brave! I have defeated the world!" (John 16:33).

Instead of difficulty making us wonder if we have missed the will of God, it could very well be an indicator—one promised by Christ—that we are in His will. This is especially true if the difficulty has come because of the contrast between the system of evil and our own righteous lives.

In Luke 6:20-26, notice the encouragement given to the disciples in verses 20-23. They are to be directly encouraged by the difficulties! At the same time, notice the warnings they are given in verses 24-26. These warnings are directly related to receiving approval from the world system.



For You To Do

8 Read Luke 6:20-26. Match each experience (left) to the result Christ said it would bring (right).

- a Poverty 1) A happy result
- b Riches 2) A terrible result
- c The approval of all
- d Mourning
- e The hatred of people

Difficulties can encourage us. They may actually be indications that we are in God’s will, not signs that we have missed it.

Opportunities for Victory

Second, difficulties can give us opportunities for victory. It is from the world system and being in the world that our tribulations come. But Christ has already conquered this world system.

Difficulties and opposition do not make it impossible to do God’s will; the problems *can* be defeated. They actually make victory possible, for there must be conflict for there to be victory. We are overcomers and more than conquerors through Christ.

The character of a person can be discerned by looking at his or her enemies as well as at his or her friends. The Bible says that being a friend of the world is the same as being an enemy of God (James 4:4). This means that if we are the friends of God, we will be the enemies of the world.

Does a conqueror seek the approval of a defeated foe? Neither do we want to lose the discipline of keeping our attention on God by pursuing the approval or cooperation of the world system. On the contrary, the experience of victory over it gives us new determination to follow God.



For You To Do

9 Read Revelation 3:21. To whom did Christ promise the right to sit beside Him on His throne?

.....

Confidence From Opposition

Third, difficulties can give us confidence that we are trying to please God. We mentioned the problems with both Satan and the world system and how those problems can be a source of encouragement. There is a third area in which we face difficulties. It is called in Scripture “the human nature,” “the sinful nature,” or “the flesh.” It is not the physical body itself. It is that part of ourselves which agrees with and desires what the world offers.

It is bad enough to have Satan as an enemy. Besides this, we live in a fallen world with the system it has produced. But a greater difficulty is that we are joined to an enemy of God—our human nature. We cannot divorce ourselves from it; again, we have to conquer. But to conquer, there will be a battle.

Galatians 5 gives a list of the works of the flesh or human nature. It is not a complete list, but it names enough of them so we are able to recognize others that are unmentioned.

How can the opposition of the flesh or human nature encourage us? Knowing there is unceasing warfare between the flesh and the Spirit of God gives us confidence that when we refuse to follow the flesh we are pleasing God. If we were living simply according to our flesh, there would be no battle. The flesh does not battle the flesh; the battle is between flesh and Spirit.



For You To Do

10 We have studied some values or benefits that can come from our experience of facing difficult circumstances. We have also studied reasons why these difficulties may arise. Match the phrase (given first) to each statement that expresses the idea it names (given second).

1) Value of difficulty

2) Reason for difficulty

... **a** Difficulties can help us to look away from our own limitations toward Christ.

... **b** Christ is an enemy of Satan and of the world and its system.

... **c** The Spirit is at war with the flesh.

... **d** The hatred of the world for us assures us that we belong to God.

... **e** The opposition of our human nature gives us confidence that we are refusing to follow it and trying to please God.

There are many ways in which God can use difficult circumstances to help you follow His design. They can help your faith to grow. They can help you learn to depend on God. They can provide opportunities for victory. Think what Christ promised—a cross, a fight, a race, rejection by the world, temptation, and tribulation. But think what He also promised—victory, a crown, a throne, a white robe, and acceptance by the Father. “Consider yourselves fortunate when all kinds of trials come your way” (James 1:2).

Now that you have completed the first unit, you are ready to answer the questions in your *Student Report for Unit One*. Review the previous lessons, then follow the instructions in your student report. Send your answer sheet to the address given on the copyright page of your study guide.



Check Your Answers

- 6 b) making it necessary for us to depend completely on God.
- 1 a) Christ told him Satan would test him.
b) He said that Peter would say three times that he didn't know Christ.
c) Peter declared he would never say he didn't know Jesus.
d) Peter said three times that he didn't know Jesus.
- (Your answers should be the same or similar.)
- 7 they belonged to Him and not to the world. (Your answer should be similar.)
- 2 We become perfect and complete. (Your answer should be similar.)
- 8 a) 1) A happy result
b) 2) A terrible result
c) 2) A terrible result
d) 1) A happy result
e) 1) A happy result
- 3 c) David had already learned to trust God when fighting lions and bears.
- 9 To those who win the victory
- 4 a) Sometimes we need to be shown the actual strength of our faith so we are not deceived about ourselves.
d) After our faith has been tested, we are able to meet greater challenges than before.
- 10 a) 1) Value of difficulty
b) 2) Reason for difficulty
c) 2) Reason for difficulty
d) 1) Value of difficulty
e) 1) Value of difficulty
- 5 a) There was a large crowd of people who were hungry.
b) "Give them something to eat" (v. 37).
c) Five loaves of bread and two fish
d) He blessed the food and gave it to His disciples to give to the people.
e) Everyone had enough to eat.
- (Your answers should be similar.)

Lesson
5

Is Being a Christian Enough?

. . . Perhaps I should consider my actions.

Tom Watson's business was successful and growing. He did not mind hard work and expected the same from his employees. He had no patience with laziness and did not hesitate to reprimand an employee who was not producing enough. And Tom was a Christian.

He was active in his church and brought the same zeal to his responsibilities there as he did to his job and business. But many times he felt his way of doing things was resented by other Christians. Often sermons seemed to speak against his actions while they appeared to praise the results his actions produced. Tom was forced to admit to himself that though he could defend his actions as being right, sometimes he did not feel pleased about them on the inside. One thing he was sure of: there was a conflict in him that had not been resolved.

Maybe you've asked yourself, "What is my true self? Am I what the Bible says I am, or am I what I feel I am?" Even when we study the Scriptures, it



may be hard for us to understand what we are. Are we soldiers or peacemakers? Courageous or meek? Patient or aggressive? In this lesson we will compare what the Bible *says we are* with our own experience and actions. We will discover what God considers to be important. Then we will study how we can actually become what God expects us to be. This is our true goal.

In this lesson you will study . . .

How God Sees Us

What Is Important to God

Fulfilling God's Expectations

This lesson will help you . . .

- Describe the way God sees us.
- Explain the importance of Christ's work and our response to it.
- State reasons why we can fulfill what God expects of us.

HOW GOD SEES US

Objective 1. Choose a description of how God sees us.

As we try to discover how God sees us, let us begin by examining what the Bible says we are.

What the Bible Says

We may hear some Christians talk about what they are “in Christ.” It almost seems to be a language of fiction or fantasy. But in fact, the Bible does describe our position.

In Ephesians 1 we are told that we have blessings in the heavenly world (v. 3). We are holy and without fault (v. 4). We have been chosen to be God’s people because of His purpose and decision (v. 11). In chapter 2 we read that we are alive with Christ and have been raised with Him in the heavenly world (vv. 5-6). God has made us what we are (v. 10), and we are fellow citizens with God’s people and members of His family (v. 19).

We find these same ideas in 1 Peter 2:9. We read there that we are a chosen race, royal priests, and a holy nation. And there are many more descriptions besides these. What higher names or titles could be suggested?



For You To Do

1 Read each of the verses referred to below. Circle the letter in front of the reference to a verse that gives another description of what we are “in Christ.”

- a) Ephesians 2:22
- b) Ephesians 4:1
- c) Ephesians 4:17

What We Experience

Yet in our actual experience, we find a struggle. We are subject to tiredness, hunger, thirst. We have ambitions and dreams. We feel driven on the inside and find attractions on the outside. Temptation to sin is not taken away. When we think we have conquered in one area, we find that the battle has just shifted to another.

Some of us as children of God do not find ourselves in perfect harmony with other believers. We experience fear, hostility, and frustration. God seems to give us names with meanings that reach to the sky. We are all too well acquainted with our limits, and they are more identified with the earth than the sky.

In addition, our actions seem to come more out of our earthly nature than our heavenly one. It would be easy if really praying one time were enough to solve our problems. But instead we often find that our prayers did not solve the problems at all. We *still* faced temptation and frustration.

How do all of these difficulties relate to finding God’s design for our lives? It is relatively easy to make life decisions—such as deciding whether to be a teacher, pastor, or doctor. But God’s will for us includes more than simply making life decisions. It includes all our actions. The real difficulty is *how* to do what we *already know* we should do.

We place importance on things that are unimportant and treat things that are important as if they were not. Our relationships become complicated. Our goals show that we are double-minded. When we have trouble making life decisions, it is because our daily decisions are not good.

It becomes evident from this, then, that knowing about our position in Christ is not enough if it has little to do with our attitudes, actions, goals, or desires.



For You To Do

2 Perhaps you have realized that in some areas of your life, you have difficulty in actually living according to what you are in Christ. Opposite each area listed (left) mark an X under *None* for no difficulty, *Some* for some difficulty, or *Much* for a great deal of difficulty. As you continue to study, expect God to show you ways of solving the problems you have indicated.

	None	Some	Much
Moving toward worthwhile goals			
Overcoming selfish motivations			
Making correct decisions			
Dealing with temptation			
Relating well to others			
Concentrating on important matters			

What God Sees

After children are grown, parents often remember only the good times of their children’s earlier years. The difficulties of raising them are forgotten—the nights without sleep, the childhood sicknesses, the vomiting, the toilet training, all the “unpleasant” times. Only the moments of closeness and affection are remembered. A child who was difficult to train is often remembered as an angel. Is this how God sees us—through biased eyes? Absolutely not!

God has an unyielding, absolute standard of righteousness. He calls us “saints,” “His children,” “priests.” What does He see when He looks at us?

When God looks at us, He sees us exactly as we are. He sees our natural appetites—which are not sin—but He also sees the old or sinful nature that takes a lifetime battle to conquer. He sees selfishness manifested in a variety of ways. He sees good beginnings that too often end in less-than-hoped-for results.

God saw Noah with faith to survive the Flood (Genesis 7:6-10), yet He also saw him drunk (Genesis 9:20-21). He saw Moses in his faith (Exodus 14:13-14) and in his anger and impatience when he smote the rock (Numbers 20:11-12). He saw David writing great psalms or songs of praise and worship (2 Samuel 22; Psalm 18). Yet He also saw him with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). He saw Peter with his inconsistencies (Matthew 16:17; Luke 22:54-62) and Paul with his impatience with Mark (Acts 15:37-40). And which of the Twelve were faithful to Christ through His suffering? None! He was alone (Matthew 26:56).

Imperfect, failing saints. But still saints!

God sees us as clearly as He saw the people we read about in the Bible. And if our lives were recorded in as vivid detail as theirs are, the same pattern would be visible. It *is* visible to Him.



For You To Do

- 3 Circle the letter in front of the paragraph below that most completely describes how God sees us.
- a) We are risen with Christ and are God’s children. Our position is that of priests and fellow citizens in His family.
 - b) We are a holy nation, chosen by God to belong to Him. Yet we also have times of failure and inconsistency.
 - c) We are human and subject to failure. We have times of frustration, and often our relationships with others are not right.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO GOD

Objective 2. *Identify a description of what God considers to be most important.*

We have considered what the Bible says we are and the facts of our daily experience. But what is important to God? Does He place more value on our position as saints or on our behavior?

This question can be answered clearly; the answer to it includes two aspects that must be considered.

The Work of Christ

God places priority or highest value on the work of Jesus Christ—on His righteousness, His perfection, His obedience. Both Scripture and reason indicate this clearly.

The message of salvation is that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, the just for the unjust, that *He* might bring us to God. He is the cause, while our coming to God is the effect. *His* righteousness causes our righteousness!

So when God calls us saints (and we do not feel or behave as saints), He is not seeing a false picture. He is seeing the final result of a process—the cause of which is already clear and complete and the effect of which is already perfectly assured. He is not limited to time in the sense of needing unfolding knowledge. He sees the end (or the process) from the beginning. He sees the end *in* the beginning.



For You To Do

- 4 God can truly call us “saints” or “holy ones” because He
- a) knows that we want to serve Him.
 - b) does not see our faults and failings.
 - c) sees what we will become.

It is reassuring to consider the cause of our salvation. Colossians 1:15-27 clearly states the priority the work (and person) of Christ has in the plan of God. Christ has delivered us; our

redemption is in Him. He is the visible likeness of the invisible God; He is the creator of all things. He existed before everything and is the upholder of all. He has *first place* (priority) in everything, including what God sees. He is the cause, actually: “Christ is *in* you . . . you will share in the glory of God” (Colossians 1:27).

Your Response

The result of the cause (Christ and His work) is assured: sainthood is consummated, the glory of the children of God is revealed (Romans 8:19; 1 John 3:1-2)! If the time needed for the process is not considered (since God is not subject to it), then cause and effect happen together. That is, in God’s view, we already are what we will be.

The assurance is *great*, yet your part is important. You remain significant, not by adding to the work of Christ, but by remaining *in* the process (Colossians 1:23).



For You To Do

5 Suppose a believer you know were to ask you this: “What does God consider most important—what Christ has done for me or how I respond to His work?” Circle the letter in front of the best reply.

- a) God considers the work of Christ to be more important because He knows that our human weaknesses make us unable to participate in the process. This means that God does not consider our response to be significant.
- b) God considers both to be important in different ways. He considers Christ’s work to have priority as the cause. Our response is important because we must remain in the process for the effect to occur.

We recognize the difference between what God calls us and what we view ourselves to be. Our goal is clear—His cause, His plan fulfilled in us. But now we must discover how we can cooperate to make God’s view of us become true in our experience. We must find out how we can *be* the saints that we *are*.

FULFILLING GOD’S EXPECTATIONS

Objective 3. *Recognize reasons why we can become what God expects us to be.*

The wrestling, the battle of the Christian experience, the unsureness, the tensions of the Christian life all arise because we are trying to find an answer to this question: *How do we daily choose God’s design for us?*

Most of the instruction of the New Testament relates to this question. Its passages that tell us how to *become* Christians are short; its passages that tell us how to *act* like Christians are comparatively long.

The ability to change comes from two basic storehouses of strength. The first is the reality of the work of Christ in His defeat of the law of sin and death. The second is the particular power of good to overcome and replace evil.

Christ Was Victorious Over Sin

The first reason why we can fulfill God’s design in our lives is because Christ won the victory over sin. Sin no longer has dominion over us. It has *influence*, but not *dominion*.

How real was the victory and work of Christ? Christ's work was not an idea or thought. It was a real event; it happened at a certain time in a certain place. And it was a real battle. There was real bloodshed, real death, real resurrection, real victory. It was real because the power of sin was real.

In the history of humankind, no one has ever escaped from the power of the law of sin (Romans 3:23). This is enough evidence of its reality. But though there is evidence to prove the reality of this law, there is also evidence to prove the victory Christ had over it. The resurrection was examined for forty days by many people (Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). There was no question. Christ had risen!

The power of sin was based on Adam's fall. The victory over sin is through the obedience of one, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:18-19). This victory is the "life" triumphing over the "law," hope over hopelessness, the purpose of God over the foolishness of humanity, love over impulse.

You can have righteousness and freedom from the law of sin because, in a real sense, Christ died for your sin. He was your substitute. Satan's method of tempting you is to discourage you, make you doubt the reality of your victory. He uses intimidation, accusation, deceit. *But you are free!*



For You To Do

- 6 Sin no longer has dominion or rule over us because
 - a) Adam's disobedience brought sin on the whole human race.
 - b) the real victory of Christ overcame the real power of sin.
 - c) the Bible explains to us how to act like Christians.



Good Overcomes Evil

The second reason why it is possible for us to fulfill God's design in our lives is because good (from God) triumphs over evil (from Satan). Scripture reveals this fact to tell us how to defeat the old or sinful nature that causes so much heartache.

Sinful practices are not just stopped. They are replaced. Sin is not creative; it is perverse. That is, it is the wrong use of energy, skills, and action that could be used in a right way. So the Bible gives several examples to show the good that will replace evil. These good deeds are not just superficial actions; they are expressions of the new nature instead of the old. Our part in the warfare that rages between flesh and spirit is to replace evil with good.



The old nature lives on falsehood (the gift of Satan, the father of lies). The new nature expresses itself in truth. So we are to stop lying and replace it with speaking the truth (Ephesians 4:25). In the next exercise you will study more examples of this process.



For You To Do

7 Read in your Bible the following verses. Below the description of each evil action, describe the good action the verse says should replace it.

- a Ephesians 4:28; robbing and stealing
.....
- b Ephesians 4:29; using harmful words
.....
- c 1 Peter 3:9; returning evil for evil
.....
- d Galatians 5:16-26; doing the evil actions our human nature wants
.....
- e 3 John 11; imitating what is bad
.....

This process shows a pattern that is found throughout Scripture. Satan has always tried to put evil action in the place of good. That is what brought about the Fall (Genesis 3). We are to put good action in the place of evil.

To act rightly is not to become *self*-righteous. It is to use the power of our mind and will on the side of the new nature, which is created in holiness. As God works in those ideas that are beyond our power, we turn *our* power and ability away from doing evil to doing good and giving expression to the “Christ in us.” This is the process of *becoming* (and we are *all* still in that process).

When we accept the fact that we are in that process, several results will follow. We will find it easier to accept others who are still in the process. We will understand our own battles better. We will be strengthened in resisting temptation by knowing how to respond. We will use the power of habit, a power that Satan so often uses, to make ourselves stronger rather than weaker. That is, we will develop good habits to replace the evil ones of our sinful nature.



For You To Do

8 We have studied some reasons why we can fulfill God’s expectations. Circle the letter in front of each statement that gives one of those reasons.

- a) God expects us to be completely righteous and perfect in all that we do.
- b) Sin has influence over us, but not dominion.
- c) The good that comes from God is victorious over the evil that comes from Satan.
- d) The battles of the Christian life arise from our trying to become what we already are.
- e) We share in the real victory that Christ won by His triumph over sin.

It is possible for us to fulfill God's expectations. We can be successful because Christ has won the victory over sin, and the power of His life in us can overcome evil with good.



For You To Do

- 9 As you conclude your study of this lesson, take a few moments to find and read 1 John 3:1-3, 9-10 in your Bible. Then in your notebook, write answers to the following questions.
- a What hope do we have (v. 2)?
 - b Why do we not continue to sin?



Check Your Answers

- 5 b) God considers both to be important in different ways.
- 1 a) Ephesians 2:22
- 6 b) the real victory of Christ overcame the real power of sin.
- 2 Your answer. Any difficulties you have are really opportunities for victory!
- 7 a) Work and give to others. (Notice: we will relate to things, either by stealing or by working and giving.)
- b) Use helpful words that do good. (Notice: words will be used. The question is which habit we will develop.)
- c) Return blessing for evil.
- d) Do the good actions the Spirit wants.
- e) Imitate what is good.
- (Your answers will be in your own words.)
- 3 b) We are a holy nation, chosen by God to belong to Him. Yet we also have times of failure and inconsistency.
- (The other choices do not give *both* sides of what God sees.)
- 8 b) Sin has influence over us, but not dominion.
- c) The good that comes from God is victorious over the evil that comes from Satan.
- e) We share in the real victory that Christ won by His triumph over sin.
- 4 c) sees what we will become.
- 9 a) That we will be like Christ
- b) God's very nature lives in us.
- (Your answers will be in your own words.)

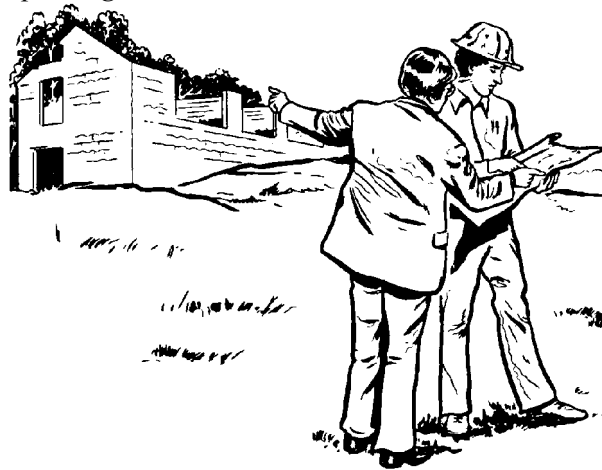
Lesson
6

How Can God Speak to Me?

. . . I've never actually heard Him.

"Go out; touch no unclean thing." The voice was insistent; it had authority; it was convincing. Manuel was on his way home when he heard it. He had an important position in a business that paid him very well but was not honoring to God. The voice interrupted his thoughts; it was real. Manuel knew it was speaking, yet he was not sure if he was hearing it with his ears or in his heart. Somewhere he had heard the words before.

Manuel had grown up in a Christian home; he had memories of going to Bible classes as a boy. His brother and sisters all served the Lord, but early in life Manuel had been attracted to the "good life"—big money, big houses, and plenty of comfort. And so his life had gone in a different direction from the rest of the family. He had not allowed his conscience to disturb him. He was young, his goals were set, and he was well on the road to "success." Then this voice. *Where was it coming from? Who was speaking?* he asked himself.



As Manuel listened, he became sure of one thing: the voice was God's voice. He remembered the words from stories in the Bible, but this was more than a memory. He completely stopped in the middle of his way home, turned his thoughts toward God, and answered the voice with a dedication of his life.

God does speak. He can be heard. Sometimes it is in the manner that Manuel "heard" Him; sometimes it is in a different way. This lesson will help you discover how God speaks to you.

In this lesson you will study . . .

Ways God Speaks to Us
Reasons Why Some Do Not Hear God's Voice
Assurance That God Will Speak

This lesson will help you . . .

- Describe several ways God speaks to us.
- Explain why some do not hear God speak to them.
- Gain assurance that God will speak to you.

WAYS GOD SPEAKS TO US

Objective 1. *Recognize examples of different ways God uses to speak to us.*

Some people spend a lot of time worrying about whether God can communicate with them. *Can God speak to me? How can He speak?* they ask themselves. It is interesting that God, who created us and gave us the ability to hear and to communicate with other people, is often thought to have difficulty speaking himself! But God does speak. He has chosen to use several ways of communicating with us.

God Speaks Through the Bible

The primary way in which God speaks to us is through His written word, the Bible. It seems impossible that a book that was completed almost two thousand years ago could speak to individuals today concerning the will of God for them. But the Bible is more than a book. It is a message to us from God himself. This fact assures us that it can speak to us and that we can understand it.

The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible. He is the Third Person of the Trinity. He is as much God as the Father and Son are God. Every quality the others have He also has, including that of having complete knowledge. He knows everything. He knows the present; He knows the past (He does not forget). He knows the future. He knew *you* before you were born, before your parents were, or before anyone else was.

He is the author of the Bible. He guided its writing; He made sure of its accuracy (2 Peter 1:19-21). It is the revelation of God's design for humankind. Not only is it able to lead you into salvation, but it is also sufficient for further guidance. The Holy Spirit included in the Bible everything you need for a successful Christian walk.



For You To Do

1 Read in your Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and write in your notebook an answer to this question: How will Scripture help the person who serves God?

The miracle of Scripture is not just in how it was written, but also in how it is understood. For the Holy Spirit is still alive. He was the agent of the Bible's authorship; He is the agent of its understanding.

Think of some of the Scripture passages you studied in Lesson 2 which assure us that the Holy Spirit is able to lead us. For example, remember the teaching of Christ in John 14 and 16 concerning the Helper or Comforter who would come—the Holy Spirit (John 14:16; 16:12-15). Remember the assurance given in Romans 8:26-27 that the Spirit knows the mind of God and will direct our praying. Christ even said that the Holy Spirit would bring to our mind His teaching (John 14:26). How does the Spirit do this? Through the Word, of which He was the author.

Have you ever read Scripture and suddenly a verse or passage seemed to stand out? It spoke to *your* need—you were not sure why—but it gave an answer or a guide point. It may have given assurance. We do not experience this as we seek Scripture verses to support our ideas, but as we seek to know God's mind through the Scriptures.

Christ was well aware that the Holy Spirit spoke in such a way, for He often quoted Old Testament passages and said that they referred to Him. Without the aid of the Holy Spirit, the truth or direction would have been missed (see Luke 4:18, for example). Others have also experienced this kind of revelation (such as Peter in Acts 2:14-21).

Manuel, whom you read about at the beginning of this lesson, is a close friend of mine. That voice he heard was the voice of God speaking through Isaiah 52:11, though the words there were originally spoken to other people. This is an example of the Holy Spirit using the words of Scripture to speak and making their message understood.



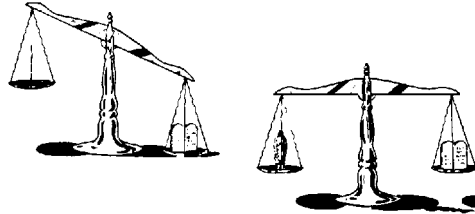
For You To Do

2 Suppose you were trying to explain to someone else how the Holy Spirit can use the words of Scripture to speak to us. In your notebook, describe an example of this from your own life, the life of someone else you know, or this lesson.

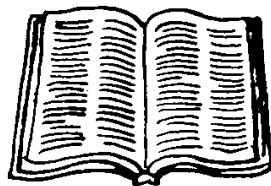
The Holy Spirit will guide us to apply Scripture according to the principles that are clearly taught. He will not contradict himself.

If the principles of Scripture are going to help us follow God's design, then we should understand how they are given in the Bible. The Bible is not simply a collection of ideas about life. It is the record of God's speaking to people and their responding to Him. Principles are presented, and we understand their meaning by examining the record of their effect on individual lives. This record shows us how principles are applied and keeps us from becoming unbalanced in our view of them.

For example, Christ taught the principle of the final victory of meekness or humility (Matthew 5:5). But what is humility? We understand how it works in balance with other qualities through studying the life of Moses (see, for example, Exodus 12).



We understand the difference between repentance and sorrow by looking at the lives of David and Saul, two kings of Israel. It wasn't the greatness of Saul's sin that caused him to lose the kingdom. It was the fact that he reacted with sorrow but never truly repented and changed his ways. In contrast, David repented with his whole heart. (Compare, for example, 1 Samuel 13:8-14; 15:17-25; 2 Samuel 12; and Psalm 51.)





For You To Do

- 3 Read Acts 5:40-42 and the verses referred to below. The event described in Acts is an example of the principle given in
- Matthew 5:7.
 - Matthew 5:11.
 - Luke 6:37.

We may say, then, that the Holy Spirit applies the Word to guide us within principles that are consistent. These principles are understood as we see how they have operated in the lives of others.



For You To Do

4 We have studied three kinds of guidance we receive through the Scriptures. Read each Scripture passage referred to below and match it to the phrase describing the kind of guidance it represents. Write the number of the phrase in front of the reference.

- 1) A direct command given to a person or group
- 2) A principle of behavior
- 3) An example of a principle in someone's life

... a Joshua 6:4

... b Matthew 5:44

... c Matthew 19:21

... d Acts 7:54-60

God Speaks Through Others

God also uses others to explain His will to us. He may use Christians or non-Christians to do this.

We work and live within structures or relationships based on authority, such as those of our government, family, business, and even church. Each of these is responsible for a certain area of guidance. Scripture recognizes each as a means by which God speaks. For example, parents of young children give them direction, and God's Word says it is His will for the children to obey (Ephesians 6:1). Rulers of a nation have a right to direct citizens of that nation, and God's Word says it is His will that the rulers be obeyed (Romans 13:1).

Beyond these kinds of relationships, there are also those we may have with certain people whom God chooses to bring into our lives. They may be wise because of a longtime walk with God; often their advice is priceless because they know the ways of God.



For You To Do

5 Read in your Bible Exodus 18:13-26. In your notebook, write an answer to the following questions.

- a What was Moses' problem (vv. 13-17)?
- b What was Jethro's advice to Moses (vv. 18-23)?
- c What was the result (vv. 24-26)?

King David, however, fell into sin by numbering the people of Israel because he ignored the advice of Joab (2 Samuel 24:3-4, 10). Jethro and Joab did not have "authority" over Moses and David; in fact, Moses was leader, and David was king. But there was value in counsel.

God might even use a test or examination given by your school to show you that He has given you certain gifts or abilities. He can speak through teachers who often recognize special talents.

What happens if the advice we receive is not in agreement (as is usually the case)? Some advice should be ignored because it goes against the directions of Scripture. Sometimes we need to consider the person who has advised us: what are his or her intentions concerning us? But with these safeguards against confusion, remember, the confidence is that God *can* speak clearly and *will* speak clearly.



For You To Do

6 Kenneth works hard at his job and feels he is not paid enough. He asks his friends what to do. Read Ephesians 6:5-8 and decide which advice you think he should *reject* based on those directions.

- a) Carl advises him to make up for low pay by leaving work early when his employer is gone.
- b) Bob tells him to have a talk with his employer and explain his grievances.
- c) Jim advises him not to work quite as hard since he isn't receiving a fair wage.

God Speaks Through Past Experiences

Past experiences of following God's direction will help you learn to hear the voice of God more clearly through whatever channel He wishes to speak. As you think back over your life, you will recognize that God has been faithful; He has spoken. Each time you are able to identify His voice or leading in your life, you become better able to recognize it.

In the same way that God worked in people's lives in Scripture according to certain principles, He will work in your life according to certain principles. You will probably view God's work in your life as a series of unconnected events at first. Then you will possibly be able to see a pattern. Finally, from your own experience of following God, you will discover the principles by which He is working. The following illustration is an example of this.

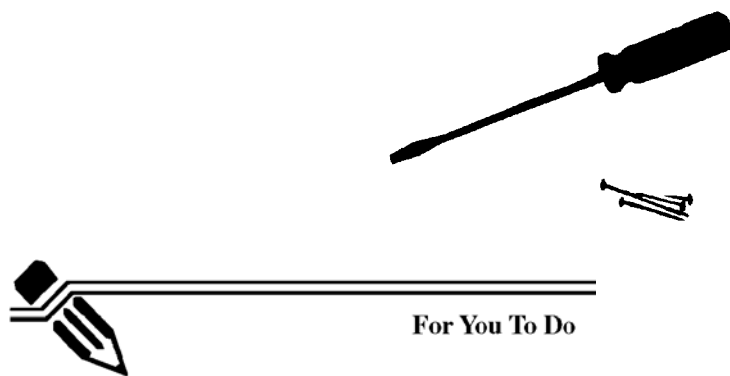
When Jim graduated from Bible college, two different churches asked him to come and be their pastor. He prayed, read the Bible, and sought advice from spiritual leaders. Nothing seemed to be clear. No principles of Scripture would be violated if he were to choose one church and not the other. His Bible college teachers advised him to choose one of them; a spiritual elder advised him to choose the other. Finally he could wait no longer and had to make a choice. Almost in fear he made the choice and told the churches. Now he was committed. He had done everything he knew to do.

The amazing thing was that his fear of choosing was replaced by a confidence in his commitment. He became sure he was in God's will.

Did Jim get lucky and make the right choice? No. His choice was not made by luck . . . it was the result of the direction of God. For along with all his seeking of advice, Jim honestly wanted to do God's will. He was walking after the Spirit. He had a renewed or changed mind (Romans 12: 1-2). His decision was actually made—without his conscious knowledge of it—in response to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Several years later Jim was called on to make another important decision. Again he sought God, prayed, listened to advice, and looked at the different possibilities. Again there was no voice from heaven. Again he reached a time when he could wait no longer and had to make a decision. He made it, and again his fear was replaced with confidence as he followed God.

Jim began to realize that there was one principle that remained constant in his pursuit of God's will. When he had been sincere in seeking God, God had led him each time it became necessary for him to make a decision. That principle became the basis of a confidence. He saw that the principle given in Psalm 37:23, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (KJV), was being worked out in his own life. He could rely on it. There was never a voice he could identify, yet God was speaking. God was actually speaking in a variety of ways. As they blended, Jim's decision was actually a response to God.



7 We have just studied an example of how God led a person who wanted to do His will. Think about how God has led you in your own life. Then write a short answer in your notebook to the following questions.

- a How did God lead you into salvation?
- b What people has God used to guide you?
- c What message in God's Word has given you special direction?
- d What circumstances has God used to shape you?
- e Have you observed a pattern or principle of guidance in your life? What is it?

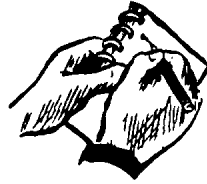
God May Speak Directly

Besides using His Word, other people, or past experiences to speak to us, God also speaks directly on some occasions. How often does God choose this way? If we include our conscience as representing the voice of God, we could say that God speaks directly to us quite often. If we have in mind just audible words, we would say that God more often chooses to use the Bible. But He does speak. And remember, the message will *never* be in contradiction to what He has already said in His Word.

How do you know if the voice you hear is the voice of God? The Bible gives two checks that balance each other. The first is subjective. As sheep know the voice of their shepherd (John 10:4),

you will know the voice of your Shepherd (John 10:14-15). When you have sought God, filled your mind with His Word, and followed the Holy Spirit, you can know it is God speaking.

The second check strengthens the first: God's direction will always agree with His written Word (Isaiah 8:20).



For You To Do

- 8 Read Acts 10:9-33 and write an answer in your notebook to the following questions.
- a In what two ways did God speak directly to Peter (vv. 9-16, 19-20)?
 - b How was God's message confirmed (vv. 14, 17-18, 22)?
 - c How did Peter respond (vv. 21-23, 28)?

REASONS WHY SOME DO NOT HEAR GOD'S VOICE

Objective 2. *Match examples of people who have missed God's message to reasons why they have done so.*

There are usually two major reasons why people miss the voice or direction of God. One is that they cannot accept God's method of speaking. The other is that they have not obeyed what God has already said.

Rejection of God's Method

First, some people have already determined how God must speak. When He chooses another way, they are not prepared. Sometimes they miss His voice altogether; sometimes they reject the message because of the medium (how it appears).

Hebrews 1:1-3 tells us that God changed the way He spoke to humankind. Prior to the coming of Christ, He spoke by the fathers or ancestors and the prophets. But then He chose to supersede that way of speaking by speaking through His Son. The message of *who God was*, was perfectly given in Jesus Christ. But because some people did not accept the medium (Jesus), they missed the message (who God was).

Naaman was a great general, successful in everything (see 2 Kings 5). But there was a blight on his life: he had leprosy, a dreaded skin disease. God used different methods to speak to him and finally led him to Elisha the prophet. Naaman expected Elisha himself to speak to him, but Elisha's servant brought the message instead (vv. 9-12). Naaman no doubt had problems with the message partly because he did not like the messenger. But when he obeyed the message, he was healed (vv. 13-14).

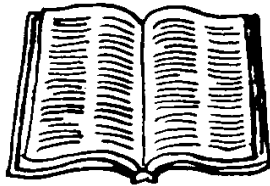
Sometimes God may choose to speak in a way to which we are not accustomed. That is His privilege and right as God. Don't miss His message because of the means He may use.

Disobedience

Second, some people miss the leading and voice of God because of disobedience. I have already said how necessary obedience is to hearing God's voice (see Lesson 2). But I repeat this principle now because it is so important. So much of what God says is progressive; that is, it is revealed to us one step at a time. We are not shown the whole plan at the beginning.

Gideon was preparing an army to free Israel. He was taking orders from God in how to do this. If at any time he had disobeyed, he could not have expected God to continue to unfold His plan of action. But as Gideon followed each step, the next was clearly communicated to him. Finally he had the handpicked force of three hundred that defeated thousands of Midianites (Judges 7:1-25).

Gideon's experience suggests this advice: if you are having difficulty hearing from God for direction, begin to search God's Word to find out where you have failed to do what God has already revealed to be His will.



For You To Do

9 Match each description of a person who has missed God's leading to the phrase giving the reason why he or she has done so.

- 1) Rejection of the method
 - 2) Disobedience
- ... a Olav knows that God wants him to forgive a friend who has wronged him, but Olav hasn't done this. Now he finds that his prayers for further direction seem to be unanswered.
- ... b Dan has been seeking God's leading. His parents have also been praying about what he should do. They advise him to work for a year and save his money for further training. But Dan rejects their advice; he hasn't been expecting God to speak through them.
- ... c Linda wishes she knew what God wanted her to do next. She knows that God wants her to help teach a Bible class now, but she hasn't yet done this.

ASSURANCE THAT GOD WILL SPEAK

Objective 3. *Meditate on facts which give you assurance that God will speak to you.*

No one who desires to do the will of God needs to have any fear that he or she will be incapable of hearing God's voice. The power to communicate does not depend on us but on Him.

God does speak; He will speak to you. In this you can have confidence. And He can make himself heard. The Bible records numerous examples of God's speaking and being heard even when people were not listening for His voice (see, for example, Jonah in Jonah 1:3 and Saul in Acts 9:1-6). He will certainly speak to the one who is listening.



For You To Do

10 Read and meditate on the passages of Scripture given below. In your notebook, write an answer to the question about each one.

- a** Psalm 19:7-11: What does God's law or Word give to us (v. 11)?
- b** Psalm 23:1-3: Why does God guide us (v. 3)?
- c** Psalm 25:8-10: Why does God teach us (v. 8)?



Check Your Answers

6 He should reject

- a**) Carl's advice and
- c**) Jim's advice. Can you explain why?

1 It will equip him or her to do every kind of good deed. (Your answer should be similar.)

7 Your answers. I hope that your response to these questions will help you as you seek to understand God's leading in your life more completely.

2 Your answer. You could have described the experience of Manuel or a time when something similar happened to you or to someone else you know about.

8 a Through a vision (vv. 10-16) and a voice (vv. 13, 15, 19)

- b** Peter recognized God's voice (v. 14), and circumstances confirmed it (vv. 17-18, 22).
- c** He obeyed God's voice (v. 23) and accepted those whom God told him to accept (v. 28).

(Your answers should be similar. This event is a good example of how God may speak directly.)

3 b) Matthew 5:11.

9 a 2) Disobedience

- b** 1) Rejection of the method
- c** 2) Disobedience

4 a 1) A direct command given to a person or group

- b** 2) A principle of behavior
- c** 1) A direct command given to a person or group
- d** 3) An example of a principle in someone's life

10 a It gives us knowledge or warning.

- b** He guides for His name's sake or to fulfill His promise.
- c** He teaches us because He is good and righteous.

(Your answers should be similar.)

5 a He was judging all the people by himself, and this work was too much for him to do alone.

- b** Jethro advised him to appoint capable men to help him.
- c** Men were appointed, and the problem was solved; Moses was enabled to properly lead Israel.

(Your answers should be similar.)

Lesson
7

Did Jesus Know God's Design?

. . . He was God's Son.

The carpenter's shop had an "Open for Business" sign hung on the door. It was a family affair, run by a father and his young son who was his apprentice. It had a reputation of honesty, for the carpenter and his son were careful to match exactly the design chosen by the customer.

The apprentice was special and showed great promise. His only limit seemed to be his youth. What he did, he did right; but there was so much for him to learn. What made this apprentice so outstanding was his ability to put all of his energy into his work. When others seemed drawn to sin, the carpenter's son instead seemed to be bent on doing right because of an inner desire.

Could this description represent what Christ was like as a child? Of course I have written it, for very little is told about His childhood. This much we know: His childhood was real. When Christ became man, He submitted to the limitations of natural life. When as a baby His life was in danger, His parents had to flee with Him to



protect it. Though He was the eternal Son of God, Herod could have killed Him. As God the Son, Christ certainly knew the plan of eternity. But in becoming man, He chose to share in the human experience of learning and of communicating with God through prayer.

As we study His life, we will learn more about what it means to discover and follow God's design.

In this lesson you will study . . .

Christ Learned Through Limitations
Christ Learned as He Grew
Christ Learned as He Prayed
Christ Learned as He Experienced

This lesson will help you . . .

- Explain how Christ learned and followed God's design for Him.
- State ways in which you can follow His example.

CHRIST LEARNED THROUGH LIMITATIONS

Objective 1. *Identify what Christ learned through His experience of limitations.*

Christ became acquainted with limitation. The God of Creation (John 1:3) limited himself to the very flesh He had created! He willingly limited His divine knowledge, presence, and power. He allowed himself to learn through experience.

He learned the limitation and frustration of childhood through being submissive to His parents. His childhood was normal; there is no reason to think otherwise. No doubt He was introduced to discipline at an early age. Even as He grew, there was only a gradual lessening of limitation.

From having a position of complete equality with the Father, He accepted one involving the limitation of obedience (Philippians 2:6-8). He did not do what He wanted, but only what God wanted (John 5:19, 30). He learned from experience that humankind is subjected to a variety of real pressures. Natural (nonsinful) desires might dictate one thing, yet the will of the Father might be something else.

During His temptation, He would feel the very essence of His human life weakening and yet know He was bound by choice not to make stones bread (Luke 4:1-4). What an experience for the Creator of life to share!



For You To Do

- 1 Christ willingly limited himself so He could share in our experience of
 - a) sin.
 - b) failure.
 - c) humanity.

CHRIST LEARNED AS HE GREW

Objective 2. *Recognize conclusions about God's will drawn from the biblical descriptions of Christ's childhood.*

Christ grew in knowledge and understanding. The Bible records several specific areas of His life in which this happened.

In Luke 2:40 His early growth is described. It must have been evident that the favor of God rested on Him, for the Bible says there that He was full of wisdom at an early age. Yet He did no miracle until He began His ministry in Galilee (John 2:11).

When He was twelve years old, His parents took Jesus to the temple for the feast of Passover (Luke 2:41-42). In Jewish society He was reaching the age when He would be considered an adult in religious matters. Yet He was still supposed to be in submission to His parents.

Perhaps at this time Jesus was feeling a kind of testing that we also experience as we grow. This question often arises: When does a person begin to set the direction of his or her own life and accept responsibility for his or her own decisions?

There must have been a growing spiritual awareness or God-consciousness in Christ's life—perhaps one even beyond His years. One thing is clear: it created a tension in His life. He found himself drawn to stay in the temple yet still under the guidance of His parents (Luke 2:43-51).



For You To Do

- 2 Read Luke 2:41-51. By His behavior at the time described, Jesus showed that He
- could make His own decisions because there was no person in authority over Him.
 - was limited by His parents' authority yet could serve God perfectly.
 - had no need to follow the advice and guidance of His parents.

It is interesting that in Luke 2:40 we read that Christ was *full* of wisdom and in Luke 2:52 that He *grew* in wisdom. From this it seems that even wisdom as a gift is related to a person's stage of maturity and growth. Wisdom that would fill Christ as a child would need to develop along with His mental and even spiritual growth.

Christ no doubt learned at that time something about God's design or will for Him. As He began to understand His Sonship, He would find His right place in the temple. However, God's will for Him also included Mary and Joseph and years more of their discipline and teaching. He did not see the complete picture at the age of twelve but reacted in a twelve-year-old way to what He *did* know. The fact was that God was just not finished yet in His training of Christ, nor was Christ yet ready for His ministry.

Just as we grow into understanding of facts, so Christ grew. He *saw* His ministry early; He *grew* to understand it.



For You To Do

- 3 Circle the letter in front of the conclusion about God's will that can be drawn from the Bible's description of Jesus' childhood in Luke 2:39-52.
- A person who sees God's will may still need to grow in his or her understanding of it.
 - A person cannot follow God's will and submit to limitations at the same time.
 - The wisdom God gives concerning His will is unrelated to growth or maturity.

CHRIST LEARNED AS HE PRAYED

Objective 3. *Describe lessons you have learned through prayer that are like those Christ learned.*

Not only did Christ learn as He grew, but He also learned as He prayed. Prayer was His conscious link with the Father just as it is ours. While the Bible says nothing about His habit of prayer as a young man (up to age thirty), it is clear from His prayer life during His three years of ministry that it was a habit He developed early. What could He have learned of God's design through prayer?

Discipline

Christ submitted to the discipline of prayer. Prayer is not an easy exercise; it is seldom supported by the desire of the flesh. In fact, the spiritual victories that come through agony in the Spirit are often won at the price of suffering in our bodies. Our flesh would tend to stay away from taking part in that kind of struggle.

This principle is so clearly revealed in Christ's experience of prayer in Gethsemane. There we see Him, regardless of His spiritual insight, in the midst of the dynamic process of yielding to the unchangeable will of the Father. "My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me,"

He said (Matthew 26:39). His cry was that of a real man learning the ways of God. In the middle of that tension, that agony of prayer, His human body reached a point of exhaustion and He sweated “like drops of blood” (Luke 22:44, NIV).



For You To Do

- 4 Read Matthew 26:40-41. The disciples were not praying because they
- a) weren't sure how they should pray.
 - b) had no desire to pray at that time.
 - c) allowed their fleshly desires to rule them.

The human body always seeks physical comfort. Its desires will not lead one to prayer, to intercession. Christ learned that truth well, though He had a perfect human nature, unspotted by the curse that came through Adam's sin.



Dependency

Christ also learned how to depend on the Father as He prayed. Each new direction of His ministry was preceded by extended sessions of prayer. When He was selecting His twelve disciples, He spent the night in prayer. Though the words of that prayer are not recorded, we see that He had confidence the next day as He called to himself the twelve He had chosen (Luke 6:12-16).



We are allowed to hear the prayer He prayed as He approached the time of His suffering and death (John 17). In it we see the extent of His personal relationship with the Father. His prayer was so matter-of-fact, so personal, that we can almost picture the Father there. Christ reminded the Father of their relationship and of how He trusted those who were given to Him by the Father. It was a prayer of total dependency.



Effective Communication

Christ also learned that prayer was a completely effective and sufficient way of communicating with God. When He prayed, things happened. While He was being baptized in water, He prayed, and the Holy Spirit came down on Him in the form of a dove (Luke 3:21-22).

He chided the disciples on their prayerlessness when they were unable to deliver a young boy from the evil spirit that oppressed him (Mark 9:19, 28-29). He said that victory came because of prayer. His power testified to His prayers.

He prayed at the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:38-44). He constantly sought the power and direction of the Father through prayer. He learned that the medium of prayer was sufficient and effective for communicating with God.



For You To Do

5 We have studied three things that Christ learned through prayer. Think over what you have learned through prayer. In your notebook, write a short description of experiences you have had or lessons you need to learn in the following areas:

- a Discipline
- b Dependency
- c Effective communication

CHRIST LEARNED AS HE EXPERIENCED

Objective 4. *Select descriptions of what Christ learned through experience.*

Christ learned through experience. There is a different kind of knowledge that we possess when we have experienced something than that which we possess from knowing it but being totally separated from it.

The holiness of God is characterized by separation. As God's Son, Christ did not come to join himself to sinners but to humankind. His object was to share human experience but maintain His holiness.

What could Christ learn through the experience of becoming a man that He did not already know?

Victory Over Temptation

Christ learned through His experience of temptation. Temptation was not something He observed. It was a real experience. Follow Him as He experienced the temptation in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13).

The Holy Spirit led Him into the desert, and for forty days He had no food. By the time He faced the three temptations from Satan as recorded in the Bible, He was hungry, tired, and physically weak. He was feeling His human limitations. Some of the acts He was tempted to do then do not seem to be completely wrong, especially that of turning stones into bread.

All the hope of the world for all eternity depended on Christ's being able to know and follow the will of the Father in spite of hunger, tiredness, exhaustion, or any other circumstance. That kind of conflict is the experience of temptation.

Compare His victory to the failure of others. Esau had been hunting for a matter of hours when the smell of Jacob's soup was more than he could resist (Genesis 25:27-34). Israel was in the wilderness only a matter of days when they would have returned to Egypt for a few meals of the kind of food they wanted (Exodus 16:1-3).

Jesus learned through experience. He learned the frailty of the natural body and mind. He also learned the sufficiency of the Word's power to combat temptation. He has sympathy for weaknesses but no patience with sin (Hebrews 4:15).



For You To Do

- 6 Christ's experience of temptation shows us that
- temptations come at a time when we are too weak to overcome them.
 - He did not really face temptation the same way we do.
 - we can overcome temptation by using God's Word.
 - it is possible to be victorious over temptation even when we are weak or exhausted.

Obedience

Christ learned obedience through His experience of suffering. It is one thing in the paradise of heaven for the Son to submit to the Father; how could one imagine it to be otherwise? But it is another thing for a person to be obedient on earth. Humanity's obedience is the submission made to God when all the force of the natural world is against it, when all the power of the fallen creation is against it, when all the might of Satan is against it.

That kind of obedience is learned through suffering (Hebrews 5:8). There is no other way. We do not misinterpret the Scriptures when we say that it was necessary for Christ to become man to know as we know, to obey as we must obey.

For what could opposition mean to the All-powerful? What could death mean to Life himself? What could pain mean to Jehovah the Healer? What could any need mean to the One of limitless resource? Can a person measure what effect one cup of water taken from the ocean has on the ocean?

But for Christ, the Incarnation—His becoming man—was the very experience of limitation itself. It was the way He learned to obey the will of God as a human.



For You To Do


- 7 Through His experience of suffering, Christ learned obedience because He
- had no previous knowledge of suffering or pain.
 - did God's will as a man, not as God's Son in heaven.
 - was not subject to the Father's will before He became man.

8 We have studied several ways in which Christ learned and followed God's design for Him. Read each sentence describing one of those ways. Then in your notebook, complete the following sentence by describing how you can follow His example in your own life.

- a** Christ did God's will perfectly within the limitations that were part of His human experience. I can do God's will within these limitations that are part of my experience: . . . (complete this in your notebook).
- b** Christ learned God's will through the discipline of prayer. I can learn God's will through the discipline of prayer by . . . (complete this).
- c** Christ followed God's will in spite of temptation, hunger, tiredness, pain, or suffering. I can follow God's will in spite of the following kinds of temptation, hunger, tiredness, pain, or suffering: . . . (complete this).

Christ was the Son of God before He came to earth. He knew everything before He came, but it was a different knowledge that He took back when He returned to heaven to be our great High Priest and represent us before the Father (Hebrews 12:2).

What an encouragement! What an example! Christ has gone before us. He learned and followed God's design for Him. He is victorious.



Check Your Answers

5 Your answers. Do you see some principles in Christ's prayer life that you can apply to help you learn and follow God's design?

1 c) humanity.

6 c) we can overcome temptation by using God's Word.

d) it is possible to be victorious over temptation even when we are weak or exhausted.

2 b) was limited by His parents' authority yet could serve God perfectly.

7 b) did God's will as a man, not as God's Son in heaven.

3 a) A person who sees God's will may still need to grow in his or her understanding of it.

8 Your answers. I hope you were able to see several ways in which you can follow Christ's example in your life.

4 c) allowed their fleshly desires to rule them.

Lesson
8

How Do I Approach the Future?

. . . I want to know what to do.

Mr. Robinson's business had suffered reverses; for the first time in years, he had actually lost money. The problem was that he really did not know why this was happening. An offer was made to buy the firm from him. Should he sell it for immediate cash or hold on to it, hoping for future profit? If only he could know the future!

Mr. Robinson did what others have done. He went to a fortune-teller. If he could know the future, he would know how to act. The fortune-teller claimed to "see" a dishonest employee, a trusted person near him, who would soon try to become owner of the business. In fact, said the fortune-teller, this person was responsible for the temporary loss in the business.

Mr. Robinson acted quickly. He fired Mr. Casey, his associate. He had trusted Mr. Casey for years, but he felt that the fortune-teller could not be wrong.

That night Mr. Robinson went to his church. There the Holy Spirit convicted him. He repented of going to the fortune-teller and called



Mr. Casey to ask forgiveness. To his horror Mr. Casey had committed suicide! Later, Mr. Casey was proved to have been totally innocent of any wrongdoing.

What is this thing in humankind that always wants to know the future? Is it wrong? In this lesson you will discover how God wants you to view the future and what He has revealed about it.

In this lesson you will study . . .

God's Design for the Future
Why God Limits His Revelation
God's Design for Today

This lesson will help you . . .

- View the future with the proper attitude.
- Explain why God shows us some things about the future and not others.
- Follow God's daily plan for your life.

GOD'S DESIGN FOR THE FUTURE

Objective 1. *State the purpose for and the content of God's revelation of the future.*

It is important to understand that humankind is the only creature that gives any sign of being able to think about the future. Animals act by instinct to gather food for the future, but humanity thinks of the future and even tries to control it for his own purposes. Humankind did not develop the ability to think about the future on his own; it was given to individuals by God. It is part of human character as a creature made in the image of God.

The danger lies not in people's desire to know the future. The danger lies in the fact that sometimes human knowledge of the future can lead him to unwise rather than wise actions.

There is a difference between praying to know the future and praying to know God's will. We normally want to know the future so we can decide what to do. But when we want to know the will of God, it is so we can do what *He* wants us to do.



For You To Do

- 1 Which statement expresses a proper attitude toward the future?
 - a) I want to know the future so I can decide what actions need to be taken.
 - b) I would like to know God's plan so I can do what He wants me to do.

What God Has Revealed

God has chosen to reveal to us some of the future. Coming events are unfolded as a panorama or series of pictures in the Revelation to John, the last book of the Bible.

Many times John described what he saw in detail. Yet in spite of what he wrote, Bible scholars find it difficult to agree exactly on what is going to take place. Perhaps when God shows the future, it is hard to accept because of the present.

How can we imagine the real, personal return of Jesus Christ to earth or a thousand-year reign of righteousness (Revelation 1:7; 20:1-6)? It is no wonder that many of John's descriptions seem so unreal. Because we cannot adjust to seeing events in an unfamiliar setting, we find it hard to interpret his message correctly.

But though there are some problems in interpreting John's message, several things about the future *are* clear. When God's time has come, the world will be changed. Human civilization will be destroyed, but humanity will survive. Christ will intervene and will set up a kingdom.

Evil will be judged, and the scars it left will be removed from the earth. Satan, the author of evil, will be eternally cast away and punished.

We will be changed! Our bodies will be glorified, our knowledge perfected. Salvation will be completed. You individually will be perfect. You will also be in the perfect will of God. As the Master Builder, Christ will have finished His work on you; His kingdom will be complete.

It is easy to understand why God did not tell us more. We find it hard to imagine what He *did* tell us.



For You To Do

- 2 Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.
- a John’s descriptions of the future are unfamiliar because they are unreal.
 - b The book of Revelation says that Jesus Christ will personally return to earth.
 - c Because we might misuse knowledge of the future, God has chosen not to tell us about it.
 - d God’s plan for us includes complete perfection.

God’s Purpose for Revelation

With the little bit we know of the future, we still try to “help” God. If you would like to read an example of this in the Bible, you can find it in Genesis 16—the story of Abraham and Hagar. Our efforts to bring about God’s promise often lead to sorrow, not blessing. God has shared with us a glimpse of the future so we might have hope, not o we would try to devise a method to make future events happen.

Jesus saw the ultimate joy of the plan of the Father for Him. This joy that was set before Him caused Him to endure the cross and even despise its shame (Hebrews 12:2). Satan’s plan was to use the knowledge of the future that Christ possessed (that the kingdoms of the world would become Christ’s) to get Jesus to determine an easy way to obtain them. He would get Christ to simply bow down and worship him (Luke 4:5-8). But Jesus refused Satan’s offer and followed God’s way for Him.

God has shown us the future to help us deal with the difficulties of the present. The very impossibility (in the natural) of reaching the goal He has set for us—of becoming perfect—should cause us to look to Him for daily help. He wants us to draw on His strength and His grace to obey what He has told us to do.



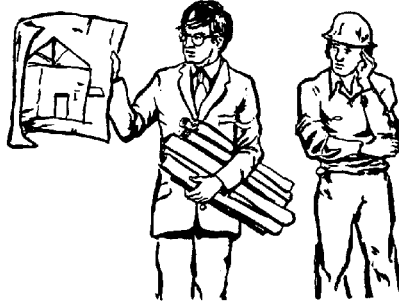
For You To Do

- 3 Complete the following sentence. God shows us the future so that we will
-

WHY GOD LIMITS HIS REVELATION

Objective 2. *Choose explanations of why God limits His revelation of the future.*

Why does God not show everything to us beforehand? Can He not trust us? The question is not His trust of us but our trust of Him.



If we saw all the steps needed to arrive at a future goal, we would hurry to take some and try to avoid taking others. The very drawing back we might do would not fit into God's plan for us. We see this pattern of hurry or avoidance in the lives of some people we read about in the Bible.

Joshua had completed the Jericho conquest. Ai was clearly next. He was eager to finish the job (who doesn't enjoy winning victories?), and so he hurried to Ai without the direction of the Lord. The result was disaster (Joshua 7:2-5).

David tried to hurry the ark (the sacred box containing a copy of God's covenant with Israel) back to Jerusalem. The right goal looked so inviting. He did the efficient thing and put the ark on a cart instead of having it carried as it was designed to be (Exodus 25:12-14; Joshua 3:2-4). Again, the result was not the speedier progress of God's kingdom but disaster (2 Samuel 6:6-8).

Peter found the sacrifice Jesus would make on the cross to be an intermediate step he could not accept (Matthew 16:22). He wanted to fight with the sword rather than walk with Christ through that experience (John 18:10-11).

Sometimes what is really meant by saying *I want to know the will of God for me* is this: *I want to know God's plan so I can decide what is to be done*. We must accept the limits of what God has revealed and be sure that our motives for wanting to know His will are right.



For You To Do

- 4 The most important reason why God limits His revelation of the future is because
 - a) our knowledge of the future will not change it.
 - b) we would often try to hurry or avoid taking the intermediate steps.
 - c) it is sometimes difficult for us to understand what will happen.
- 5 Read 2 Peter 3:10-11. In your notebook, describe how this passage says we should respond to the knowledge that the heavens and earth will be destroyed.

GOD'S DESIGN FOR TODAY

Objective 3. *Describe ways in which you can follow God's design every day.*

What is God's will for your life today? What does He want you to do?

There are different kinds of spiritual experiences. Certain kinds of experiences in Christ are meant to be once-and-for-all or onetime. The new birth is one of these, for God offers eternal salvation.

Other experiences seem to be of a seasonal type. Just as there are certain cycles in the natural creation, so these experiences reoccur at particular times or periods of our spiritual lives. Revival—

a special time of spiritual renewal—is one of these. We do not live in a perpetual state of revival. We seek “rain”—spiritual renewal—in times of rain. God makes the nature of these seasons clear through the ministry of His Word and the Spirit. Usually there are signs that indicate both a need for revival and God’s desire to send one, just as in nature there are signs of the coming seasons.

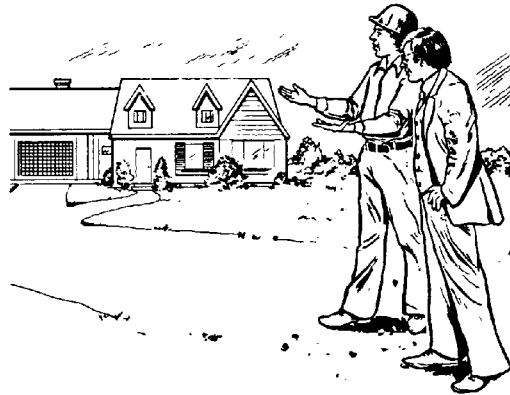


For You To Do

6 A spiritual experience that is *seasonal* is one which occurs

- a) at periodic times.
- b) only one time.
- c) on a continuous basis.

But along with once-for-all and seasonal experiences, there are those which are meant to occur on a daily basis. God has placed us in a world into which He has built a daily cycle. Because we live day by day, there are certain spiritual principles He intends us to follow day by day. To do His will in its most basic form is to do *each day* those things that we know to be His will for that day.



Let us look at what God wants us to do each day and then see what He promises.

When the tabernacle or tent of the Lord’s presence was the center of worship during Old Testament times, there were duties assigned to certain men called priests and Levites. These duties were to be fulfilled daily. Without the practice of that daily obedience, the celebration of the great annual festivals would have been absurd.

It was while Zechariah was doing his daily priestly duties that the angel Gabriel told him he would have a son who would prepare God’s people for the coming of the Lord (Luke 1:8-17). It was while Anna the aged prophetess was at her daily prayers in the temple that she was given a great privilege. She witnessed the dedication of Christ himself, the salvation of the world (Luke 2: 36-38)!

What are we to do daily?

After the Day of Pentecost, the church experienced great success (Acts 2:40-41). The behavior of the believers was marked by daily action that caused God’s blessing to remain on them. It was as though they continued by their spiritual worship the daily ceremonial worship practiced by the priests in Old Testament times. What was their pattern? Let us examine it as it is described in Acts 2:44-47.

First, they kept their relationships with their fellow believers right daily. They were in close fellowship (vv. 44, 46).

Nothing will distort your hearing of God's voice so much as a wrong relationship with one of God's people. Bitterness, resentment, jealousy, or other wrong feelings will surely lessen your ability to be freely responsive to God. It is best to daily check your relationships. The Bible says that if a relationship is spoiled or broken during the course of the day, let the end of the day mark the end of the strife (Ephesians 4:26).



For You To Do

7 In your notebook, make a list of the people who are an important part of your daily life. Are your relationships with each one right? Make it a habit to daily check these relationships and do what is necessary to keep them right.

Out of the unity described in Acts 2:46, no doubt there flowed encouragement and exhortation. Hebrews 3:13 directly commands us to help and encourage each other.

In principle then, God's Word tells us to make sure every day that our relationships are right. Then out of these right relationships, we are to minister, serve, and help each other. With the renewed mind you can have according to Romans 12:1-2, you will see opportunities of doing this.

Second, they praised God daily (vv. 46-47). Praise is to be the daily expression of the child of God. It may begin as a sacrifice of obedience, but it will end as an expression of gladness for the goodness of God.

Third, they renewed their consecration daily. The example given in Acts 2 shows how the believers demonstrated their consecration in action. Christ said that anyone who wanted to follow Him had to "take up his cross everyday" (Luke 9:23). By this Christ was saying that each day we need to remind ourselves that we belong to God. Out of that attitude or mindset, everything will be done to the glory of God.

David learned that consecration involved offering to God every day those things he had vowed or promised to do (Psalm 61:8).

Fourth, no doubt they looked to God for the supply of their needs daily. This should also be our pattern. "Give us today the food we need," we are told to pray (Matthew 6:11).





For You To Do

8 Circle the letter in front of each description of an action that is part of the *daily* cycle of obedience.

- a) Fasting for an extended time
- b) Giving praise and thanks to God
- c) Consecrating ourselves to God
- d) Keeping our relationships with others right
- e) Experiencing the new birth
- f) Trusting God for our daily needs

God's will, then, is not hard. We find confusion when we cloud the air with other issues. In our daily obedience He will guide our life-changing decisions.

What has He promised? He has said He will daily renew His benefits of grace and help to us (Psalm 68:19). We do not exhaust His supply for tomorrow by totally enjoying His provision for today.

This is the daily cycle . . . God has established it. It was there with Adam, the first man. It was there in the worship ceremonies of the nation of Israel. It was there in the New Testament church. And in that daily cycle, God guides us.



For You To Do

9 Perhaps you have realized that you need to begin obeying God daily in one or more of the four ways described in this part of the lesson. In your notebook, complete each of the following sentences about these areas of daily obedience.

- a** (Refer to study question 7.) I need to daily check my relationships with these people: . . .
- b** One of the ways I can take time to praise God daily is to . . .
- c** Renewing my consecration to God each day means that I must . . .
- d** I need to trust God to supply my daily needs of . . .

You have finished your study of *God's Design—Your Choice*. I hope these lessons have helped you understand God's will and design for your life. May God bless you as you choose each day to follow His plan and put into practice the things you have learned about it.

Now that you have completed the second unit, you are ready to answer the questions in your *Student Report for Unit Two*. Review the previous lessons, then follow the instructions in your student report. Send your answer sheet to the address given on the copyright page of your study guide and ask about another course of study.



Check Your Answers

5 We should live holy lives dedicated to the Lord.

(Your answer should be similar.)

1 b) I would like to know God's plan so I can do what He wants me to do.

6 a) at periodic times.

2 Statements **b** and **d** are true.

7 Your answer. Is there someone you should forgive? Should you ask someone to forgive you? Ask the Lord to help you see what needs to be done if you have any relationships that are broken.

3 Your answer. I would say so that we will have joy and know how to respond to the present.

8 b) Giving praise and thanks to God

c) Consecrating ourselves to God

d) Keeping our relationships with others right

f) Trusting God for our daily needs

4 b) we would often try to hurry or avoid taking the intermediate steps.

9 Your answers. I hope you have described practical ways you can follow each of these principles in your life.

One Final Word

This is a special kind of book because it was written by people who care about you. These are happy people who have found good answers to many of the questions and problems that trouble almost everyone in the world. They believe that God wants them to share with others the answers they have found. They believe that you need some important information to answer your own questions and problems and find the way of life that is best for you.

They have prepared this book in order to give you this information. You will find this book based on these fundamental truths:

1. You need a Savior. Read Romans 3:23; Ezekiel 18:20.
2. You cannot save yourself. Read 1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:6.
3. God desires that the world should be saved. Read John 3:16-17.
4. God sent Jesus who gave His life to save all those who believe in Him. Read Galatians 4:4-5; 1 Peter 3:18.
5. The Bible shows us the way of salvation and teaches us how to grow in the Christian life. Read John 15:5; John 10:10; 2 Peter 3:18.
6. You decide your eternal destiny. Read Luke 13:1-5; Matthew 10:32-33; John 3:35-36.

This book tells you how to decide your destiny, and it gives you opportunities to express your decision. Also, the book is different from others because it gives you a chance to contact people who prepared it. If you want to ask questions or explain your needs and feelings, you may write to them.

In the back of the book, you should find a card called *Decision Report and Request Card*. When you have made a decision, fill out the card and mail it as indicated. Then you will receive more help. You may use the card to ask questions or make requests for prayer or information.

If there is no card in this copy of the book, write to your ICI instructor and you will receive a personal answer.

God's Design—Your Choice

UNIT STUDENT REPORTS AND ANSWER SHEETS

STUDENT REPORT DIRECTIONS

When you have completed your study of each unit, fill out the answer sheet for that unit. Do only one unit at a time. Return each answer sheet to your ICI instructor or office in your area as soon as you have completed it.

The following are directions on how to indicate your answer to each question.

EXAMPLE

There is one best answer. Blacken the space for the answer you have chosen.

- 1** To be born again means to
- a) be young in age.
 - b) accept Jesus as Savior.
 - c) start a new year.

The correct answer is b) *accept Jesus as Savior*, so you would blacken space **b** like this:

1	A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C
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Now read the questions in your Student Report and mark your answers in the answer section as we have shown in our example. Choose your answer and blacken the space **a**, **b**, or **c** according to your choice.

STUDENT REPORT FOR UNIT ONE

For all questions, be sure the number beside the spaces on the answer sheet is the same as the number of the question.

- 1** God's great design for humankind that so many have rejected as Romans 3:23 says is
 - a) productivity.
 - b) salvation.
 - c) individuality.
- 2** God's true standard for us is that we be like
 - a) the disciples of Jesus.
 - b) spiritual people we admire.
 - c) Jesus Christ.
- 3** The fact that all Jesus' disciples were different from one another illustrates the principle of
 - a) knowledge.
 - b) diversity.
 - c) standard.
- 4** The life of Paul the apostle shows us that
 - a) despite one's failures it is still possible to follow God's design.
 - b) only those who have never failed can please God.
 - c) there is little hope for a person who has failed.
- 5** God often works His design in our lives by
 - a) giving us detailed plans for our lives.
 - b) protecting us from hard circumstances.
 - c) bringing us through trials.
- 6** We actually enter God's plan for us by
 - a) obeying God's Word and Spirit.
 - b) discovering what God wants us to do.
 - c) explaining God's will to others.
- 7** Anyone who has already entered God's design has done so by
 - a) chance.
 - b) force.
 - c) obedience.
- 8** God desires that we continue to follow His design, because if we do, He will
 - a) control our wills.
 - b) receive pleasure.
 - c) keep us from trials.
- 9** Jesus said His going away would be good for the disciples because
 - a) other believers would respect them more.
 - b) they needed to begin preaching immediately.
 - c) the Holy Spirit would come to guide them.
- 10** We know that God wants to lead us because
 - a) He has given us His Spirit.
 - b) we are sincere in seeking Him.
 - c) His will is hard to understand.

- 11** Romans 12:1-2 says that we are to be *transformed*. This means that we are to be
- completely changed.
 - informed about what to do.
 - unlike other believers.
- 12** We are able to fulfill God's expectations because
- we can understand what they are.
 - God's power actually works in us.
 - our strength makes fulfillment possible.
- 13** Our spiritual development, much like the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly, occurs as
- we try hard to be spiritually mature.
 - God takes charge of changing us.
 - we yield to God's power working in us.
- 14** The spiritual lesson Jeremiah learned at the potter's house was that
- when there is failure, God ceases to work.
 - failures can limit God's grace.
 - God's grace overcomes failures.
- 15** Our failures will not destroy God's design for us because God's Word says that
- God's power is strongest when we are weak.
 - our failures aren't really our fault.
 - God overlooks the failures of believers.
- 16** God tests our faith because
- He needs to know if we are trusting Him.
 - we need to know how much we are trusting Him.
 - He wants to see if we are depending on outward supports.
- 17** God allows our faith to be tested to
- condemn us for our weaknesses.
 - reward us for unusual strength.
 - help build our faith up.
- 18** Jesus led the disciples to face difficulties because the disciples needed to
- be punished for their failings.
 - learn total dependence on Him.
 - prove to Him how strong they were.
- 19** When we experience opposition from our sinful human nature, this shows we are trying to please God because
- our flesh desires what the world offers.
 - the world hates those who belong to God.
 - flesh and Spirit are opposed to each other.
- 20** Difficult circumstances may in fact encourage us because they
- make us try harder to avoid difficulties.
 - help us to be overcomers through Christ.
 - stress the conflict between Satan and Christ.

This is the end of the requirements for Unit One. Please stop here and return your Answer Sheet for Unit One to your instructor. Continue your study in Unit Two.

STUDENT REPORT FOR UNIT TWO

For all questions, be sure the number beside the spaces on the answer sheet is the same as the number of the question.

- 1** God sees us as
 - a) flawed children needing care.
 - b) mature followers of Christ.
 - c) saints needing completion.
- 2** God places the highest value on
 - a) our motives and attitudes.
 - b) how we behave in daily life.
 - c) the work of Jesus Christ for us.
- 3** The way God sees us is based on
 - a) Christ's righteousness in us.
 - b) our desire to be like Christ.
 - c) Christ's work alone.
- 4** We remain significant in God's design by
 - a) continuing to allow Him to change us.
 - b) adding our part to the work of Christ.
 - c) waiting to obey until we know more.
- 5** We can have victory over sin because
 - a) we have a strong desire to do right.
 - b) Christ has broken sin's dominion over us.
 - c) sin is only a thought or an idea.
- 6** God speaks to us about His design primarily through the
 - a) advice of others.
 - b) commands of leaders.
 - c) Word of God.
- 7** An example of a relationship based on authority through which God may speak is that which a person has to his or her
 - a) government.
 - b) friends.
 - c) neighbors.
- 8** When we say that God often reveals His design to us *progressively*, this means He often shows us His design
 - a) one step at a time.
 - b) as it will be at the end.
 - c) all at once.
- 9** Some people like Naaman could miss hearing God's voice because they
 - a) reject God's method of speaking.
 - b) have disobeyed God in the past.
 - c) are unwilling to change.
- 10** The Bible's description of the childhood of Jesus shows us that
 - a) a person must be fully grown before he or she can please God completely.
 - b) people who are spiritually aware need not submit to any kind of human authority.
 - c) limitations are sometimes part of God's design.

- 11** Christ learned through His experience of the limitations of
- God's wrath against unrighteousness.
 - humanity's subjection to pressures.
 - the real freedom of being God's child.
- 12** Christ's experience in growing up shows us that
- we will not know God's will until we are mature.
 - God's will is unrelated to our level of maturity.
 - we must grow in our understanding of God's will.
- 13** As Christ did, we can learn through prayer
- the secrets of success.
 - relaxation in intercession.
 - discipline of our fleshly desires.
- 14** According to Hebrews 5:8, Christ learned obedience through
- victory.
 - suffering.
 - success.
- 15** Overcoming temptation may best be described as the experience of
- learning that we have weaknesses and failings.
 - following God's will regardless of circumstances.
 - discovering that we have missed God's will.
- 16** God does not show us all the details about the future because
- descriptions of future events are not easily understood.
 - knowledge of future events has no value for daily living.
 - we might try to hurry or avoid taking the intermediate steps.
- 17** God shows us certain things about the future so we can
- face present circumstances with hope.
 - decide how to make future events happen.
 - avoid the steps we think are unnecessary.
- 18** God limits His revelation of our future lives because
- the exact design is subject to change.
 - like Joshua we may try to skip certain steps.
 - He knows He cannot trust us.
- 19** The most basic form of doing God's will is to
- make decisions about which profession to follow.
 - do each day God's will for that day.
 - wait on God for a revelation of the future.
- 20** In His design for us, God expects us daily to
- renew our consecration.
 - experience revival.
 - win someone to the Lord.

End of requirements for Unit Two. Please return your student report Answer Sheet for Unit Two to your ICI instructor. Now that you have completed your study of this course, ask your instructor to recommend another course of study.

God’s Design—Your Choice
Answer Sheet for Unit One

CL1310

Please fill in the blanks below:

Your name

Your ICI Student Number
(Leave blank if you don’t know what it is.)

Your Mailing Address

.....

City State or Province

Zip or Postal Code

Country

Age Sex

Occupation

How many members are in your family?

How many years have you studied in school?

If you are a member of a church, what is the name of your church?
.....

What responsibility do you have in your church?

.....

How are you studying this course: Alone? In a group?

What other ICI courses have you studied?
.....

Now, turn the page and answer all questions.

ANSWER SHEET FOR UNIT ONE

Blacken the correct space for each numbered item.

1	A	B	C
2	A	B	C
3	A	B	C
4	A	B	C
5	A	B	C
6	A	B	C
7	A	B	C

8	A	B	C
9	A	B	C
10	A	B	C
11	A	B	C
12	A	B	C
13	A	B	C
14	A	B	C

15	A	B	C
16	A	B	C
17	A	B	C
18	A	B	C
19	A	B	C
20	A	B	C

Write below any questions you would like to ask your instructor about the lessons.

.....
.....
.....

Now look over this answer sheet to be sure you have completed all the questions. Then return it to your ICI instructor or office in your area. The address should be stamped on the copyright page of your study guide.

For ICI Office Use Only
Date Score

Christian Life Program

God’s Design—Your Choice
Answer Sheet for Unit Two

CL1310

Please fill in the blanks below:

Your name

Your ICI Student Number
(Leave blank if you don’t know what it is.)

Your Mailing Address

.....

City State or Province

Zip or Postal Code

Country

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The ICI office in your area will be happy to send you information about other courses that are available and their cost. You may use the space below to ask for that information.

.....
.....
.....
.....

Now, turn the page and answer all questions.

ANSWER SHEET FOR UNIT TWO

Blacken the correct space for each numbered item.

1	A	B	C
2	A	B	C
3	A	B	C
4	A	B	C
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14	A	B	C

15	A	B	C
16	A	B	C
17	A	B	C
18	A	B	C
19	A	B	C
20	A	B	C

Write below any questions you would like to ask your instructor about the lessons.

.....

.....

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CONGRATULATIONS

You have finished this course. We have enjoyed having you as a student and hope you will study more courses with ICI. Return this student report answer sheet to your instructor or to the ICI office in your area. When we have checked your answers, we will send you a certificate for this course in your program of studies.

Please print your name below as you want it to appear on your certificate.

Name

For ICI Office Use Only
Date Score

Christian Life Program

CL1310 God's Design—Your Choice
Decision Report and Request Card

After studying this course, I have placed my trust in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. I am returning this card with my signature and address to your ICI office for two reasons: first, to testify to my commitment to Christ and, second, to request information about more material to help me in my spiritual life.

NAME.....

ADDRESS

.....

SIGNATURE



**THE GREATEST OF ALL
IS THE SERVANT OF ALL**

Serving is one of the greatest ways we can show our love to God. ICI courses prepare you to better serve others.

Using our courses will create an orderly system of Bible study and encourage a better understanding of spiritual truths.

To begin preparing for God's service, we suggest enrolling in courses offered from our **Christian Service Program**.

Some courses from the **Christian Service Program** are:

- THE GREAT QUESTIONS OF LIFE
- GOD LOVES YOU
- WHO JESUS IS
- WE BELIEVE
- GOD'S DESIGN—YOUR CHOICE
- CHRISTIAN WORSHIP
- PERSONAL EVANGELISM
- ALIVE IN CHRIST
- CHRISTIAN MATURITY

If you desire a more detailed description about each course or directions on how to enroll in any of these courses, contact your local ICI director.

**SEND US THE NAMES AND ADDRESSES
OF YOUR FRIENDS**

We will send them Lesson 1 of
“The Great Questions of Life.”

Print Clearly

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