

Neighbor-to-Neighbor

Finding Practical Solutions to Today's Challenges

A 24-Session Study Series



Bible Reading Fellowship

Published by the Bible Reading Fellowship
PO Box 380
Winter Park, Florida 32790-0380
www.biblereading.org

The Bible Reading Fellowship was founded in Winter Park, Florida in 1971 as a non-profit, non-denominational ministry, with the primary purpose of bringing people into a greater knowledge of God through systematic reading of the Bible. BRF encourages and facilitates Bible reading for Christian growth by creating, publishing, and distributing Bible commentaries and related materials including *The Journey* and *Good News Daily*.

The Bible Reading Fellowship is committed to the Church's classic teaching that the Bible is the inspired word of God and contains all things necessary for salvation.

Neighbor-to-Neighbor

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Introduction

Neighbor-to-Neighbor is an “issues and answers” study for small groups as well as for individual use. It is an opportunity to explore many of the attitudes and situations facing people in our day and to look at both practical and biblical solutions. It is especially designed for use in neighborhood groups.

Although this study deals with the issues of the day by way of both practical and biblical approaches, there is no inference that practical approaches are un-biblical or un-Christian. God gives us minds to think through how to handle the challenges we face, and we might call the results “practical” solutions. But he also has given us Scripture, which contains stories about the lives of people who did or did not do his will and teachings on how we are to live. These give us biblical solutions. Together we have a full picture of how best to handle our challenges.

The idea behind the *Neighbor-to-Neighbor* approach is that it allows those who have little knowledge of Scripture to participate fully in discussions because they do have knowledge of how to deal with the issues of life. Thus, although undertaking these 24 chapters might not be called Bible study, Bible study is included. A neighborhood group using this material should become much more conversant with Scripture and how to use it to solve the day-to-day challenges of life.

Each person in the group should have a copy of *Neighbor-to-Neighbor*. If the group studies one chapter per week (which is the recommended schedule), each study begins with the participant, in advance of the meeting, answering the questions on the worksheet before looking at the commentary and approaches. In that way, original thinking will be introduced into the equation rather than adopting the “school solution.” Once the worksheet is completed, it is then appropriate to read the rest of the chapter, including looking at some of the Bible passages referred to at the end of each chapter. In this way, each participant is prepared for productive discussion at the weekly meeting.

The leadership of the group can be rotated, as no special knowledge on the part of the leader (other than conscientiously doing the homework) is necessary. The leader will simply call on someone in the group to answer the first question on their worksheet, and then others until there has been a full discussion of the question. The leader then calls on someone to answer the second question, and then others are asked for their answer. The same procedure is used with the third question.

Next, someone should be asked to give an example of how they handled a situation involving the issue under discussion, and how they might now handle it based on what they have learned through their study of the chapter. This question would also be rotated around the group until all who have something to contribute have had an opportunity to do so. The whole process should take less than an hour. This leaves time for sharing and prayers, bringing the meeting to a close within a reasonable time for all members of the group.

Something needs to be said about neighbors. Jesus did a teaching on the subject in Luke 10:25-37, which we commonly refer to as the Parable of the Good Samaritan. A teacher of the law had questioned Jesus about what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him to love God and, referring to Leviticus 19:18, to love his neighbor. The man, wanting to limit his obligations to others, asks who his neighbor is. In the parable, Jesus turns the question, pointing out that it is not “they” who are our neighbors, but “we” who are called to be neighbors to anyone in need.

We live in a time when, despite being in closer physical proximity to one another, we seem farther apart. Many are lonely. Many are in need of one kind or another. If we are honest, we are also in need. It is hoped that this *Neighbor-to-Neighbor* series will provide an opportunity for people to gather within their neighborhoods to deal with the issues of the day regardless of their religious persuasion. Fruitful discussion, better decision-making and stronger neighborhoods should result.

Harry C. Griffith

One

Overcoming Obstacles

Worksheet:

List examples of the kinds of obstacles people face in life:

What major obstacles are you facing now?

What techniques have you found helpful in overcoming obstacles in your life?

An example from life: For quite a number of years we have had a large car for long trips. In our new home, the car we had seemed too large for the garage. We had a hard time getting it into the garage, and then it took up too much room when it was in there. This was an obstacle we had to deal with. After we “backed off” the problem and assessed our current needs in our new location, we concluded that we really didn’t need a large car any longer, but would do better with a smaller, more fuel-efficient one. We then found the perfect smaller car for our needs...one that was small on the outside but large on the inside.

An example from the Bible: Joseph (Genesis 39:1-6).

Overcoming Obstacles, Commentary:

All of us face obstacles in life. We can see them as problems or as opportunities. If we just look at them as problems, we can easily become discouraged and get bogged down in our own misery. If we see them as challenges or opportunities, God can take our situation—as bad as it might be—and bring some blessing out of it (Romans 8:28).

In Genesis 39:1-6, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. Now that was an obstacle! Suddenly he had gone from being his father's favorite son to slavery in a foreign land. Yet, because of his positive attitude, he was able to work his way into a trusted position in a wealthy man's home. Joseph learned from this experience; and, despite staggering setbacks that lay ahead of him, Joseph was able to overcome obstacles and become the second most powerful person in the land.

Attitude is the key. We can give in to the obstacles we face and allow them to weigh us down or we can look for the opportunity in the obstacle, and do the best we can.

Our obstacles.

What are some practical ways to deal with the obstacles all of us face in life?

A. The Practical Approach:

(1) The first thing to do is to back off and try to get the situation in perspective. Often, we simply react to the obstacle we face and try either to bull our way through it or give up in defeat. If we will just take time to analyze the situation and where it fits into the whole of life, often either the obstacle will go away or we'll see a way to rise above it. As someone once said, "The obstacle was still there, but it was like I was in a boat and the water just rose and let me float over it!"

(2) Within almost every obstacle there is an opportunity. Look for that opportunity rather than letting the obstacle blind you to it.

B. A Biblical Approach: In addition to the above, we might consider:

(1) Praying. The Lord can help us see a solution, or at least get our priorities right, so the obstacle doesn't loom above us as it seemed to before.

(2) God does not call us to be successful, only obedient. If we are being obedient to the Lord in the situation, that is all that counts.

(3) Always look for what God is doing, and move in that direction.

Suggested Scriptural References/Overcoming Obstacles

- Moses, guided by the Lord, does signs and wonders and brings plagues, as a way to get Pharaoh to release the Israelites from captivity (Genesis 5:1—12:33);
- Joseph, framed by Potiphar's wife and imprisoned, uses dreams given to him by God to become the second most powerful person in Egypt (Genesis 41:1-44);
- God showed Moses how to turn bitter water into sweet (Exodus 15:22-27);
- God provided water from a rock at Horeb (Exodus 17:1-7);
- Under Zerubbabel, seductive arguments and direct intervention to stifle the rebuilding of the Temple are overcome (Ezra 4:1—6:15);
- Under Nehemiah, intimidation against the Israelites trying to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem is overcome (Nehemiah 4:1-23);
- Daniel and his companions refused to eat the special food and wine provided them by the king, got away with it, and prospered (Daniel 1:1-21);
- Daniel's three friends survive the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:1-30);
- Daniel survives the lions' den (Daniel 6:1-28);
- Hosea was able to use his reconciliation with his adulterous wife as a means of trying to bring Israel back from its waywardness (Hosea 3:1-5);
- Apostles are put in jail, but let out by an angel (Acts 5:17-21);
- Peter is released from prison by an angel (Acts 12:1-19);
- Paul and Silas are released from bondage by an earthquake (Acts 16:22-40);
- A plot to have Paul killed is uncovered by Paul's nephew, and Paul is taken safely to Caesarea (Acts 23:12-24);
- Because the Roman commander takes Paul's advice seriously, all hands reach shore safely following a shipwreck (Acts 27:27-44).

Two

Making Choices

Worksheet:

What are some common choices people face in life?

What major choice are you now facing?

What techniques have you used to make sound choices?

An example from life: We have added a screened porch to our home. We had choices concerning the kind of concrete flooring for it. We could have had a concrete base and then covered that with tile or flagstone, or with indoor/outdoor carpeting, for instance. We consulted our next-door neighbor who is an architect and he recommended using a colored, stamping process in the concrete itself. That saved us money and should be easy to maintain.

An example from the Bible: Mary (Luke 1:26-38).

Making Choices, Commentary:

Making choices is an integral part of life. People with leadership ability thrive on making choices. They realize that they will make a lot of mistakes, but they count on the fact that, most of the time, they will make the right choices. Decision making is simply something that goes with the job. People, on the other hand, who find choosing difficult face a dilemma because failing to choose is itself a choice that produces results. God would have us be willing “choosers” who make our choices in accordance with his will.

Luke 1:26-38 tells about what was probably the most important human choice ever made: Mary’s choice. She was just a young girl, maybe twelve or fourteen. The Son of God was to be born to her by an “overshadowing” of the Holy Spirit! Imagine if you can, in that era, being a young woman, unmarried and pregnant. The concept and the risk must have seemed overwhelming. But with courage and faith she decided: “I am the Lord’s servant,...may it be to me as you have said” (v.38).

What if she had said, “No”? Frederick Buechner put it this way: “She struck the angel Gabriel as hardly old enough to have a child at all, let alone this child, but he’d been entrusted with a message to give her and he gave it. He told her what the child was to be named, and who he was to be, and something about the mystery that was to come upon her. ‘You mustn’t be afraid, Mary,’ he said. As he said it, he only hoped she wouldn’t notice that beneath the great, golden wings he himself was trembling with fear to think that the whole future of creation hung now on the answer of a girl.”

We can be eternally grateful that Mary, faced with that enormous choice, made the right decision. The decisions we face seem very insignificant when viewed against Mary’s. Some choices truly *are* insignificant, such as what we will eat or wear. But other choices are important; much of what we do has significance for ourselves and others (sometimes many others).

Making choices.

What are some practical ways of making good choices?

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) Make a list of the options we have.
- (2) Consider the pros and cons of each.
- (3) Weigh them, taking consequences into consideration.
- (4) Make your choice, writing down the reasons for it. That way, if you later decide you have made a mistake, you have a record of why you decided the way you did.

B. A Biblical Approach. In addition to the above, especially if our decision involves a moral choice, based on Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 9-10 (via the *Life Application Bible*), we could ask ourselves:

- (1) Does this choice help my witness for Christ (9:19-20)?
- (2) Is my motivation to help others know Christ (9:23, 10:33)?
- (3) Am I, in this decision, doing my best (9:24-25)?
- (4) Is it contrary to Scripture, or would it cause me to sin (10:12)?
- (5) Is it the best course of action (10:22, 33)?
- (6) Is my interest in the other person rather than myself (10:24)?
- (7) Am I acting lovingly rather than selfishly (10:28-31)?
- (8) Does it glorify God (10:31)?
- (9) Could it cause another to sin (10:32)?

Suggested Scriptural References/Making Choices

Adam and Eve in eating the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:17);
 Cain and Abel in their offerings to God, and Cain in killing his brother (Genesis-4:1-8);
 Abram, in following God's call to go to the Promised Land (Genesis 12:1-9);
 Abram and Lot in separating and choosing different sections of land (Genesis 13:1-18);
 Abraham in offering Isaac as a sacrifice (Genesis 22:1-19);
 Esau in trading his birthright for food (Genesis 25:27-34);
 The mother of Moses in hiding him in a basket and floating it in the Nile (Exodus 2:1-10);
 The Israelites in accepting God's covenant (Exodus 24:1-7);
 The renewing of the covenant under Joshua (Joshua 24:1-24);
 Under Josiah's leadership, renewing the covenant again (2 Kings 23:1-3);
 Joseph's choice to accept Mary's mysterious pregnancy (Matthew 1:18-25);
 How Mary and Martha reacted during Jesus' visit (Luke 10:38-42);
 Jesus' choice in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46).

Three

Dealing with Busyness

Worksheet:

What causes Americans to be busier than they need to be in today's world?

What issues of being overly busy are you dealing with in your life?

What ways have you found helpful in making better use of your time?

An example from life: When I was in law school I realized that there were simply not enough hours in the day to do my homework, be involved in campus life, and fulfill other responsibilities I had. I knew some things had to go. I took a cold, hard look at how I spent my time each day, and simply quit doing some things I had habitually done in the past but that didn't seem as important for the future. Although it was a small thing, I still remember that I decided I no longer had time to read the comic strips in the daily paper.

An example from Scripture: Mary, the sister of Martha (Luke 10:38-42)

Dealing with Busyness, Commentary

We live in a “stressed-out” time. More people are in need of psychological counseling than at any time in the history of the world. Over and over again, we hear of “successful” people having nervous breakdowns or escaping into alcohol or drugs. It is rare if we have no one in our family or among our friends who fall into that category.

Luke 10:38-42 tells the story of Jesus’ visit to the home of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus. Martha immediately got busy making all the arrangements while Mary sat a Jesus’ feet, listening to his teaching. When Martha complained that Mary should be helping her, Jesus pointed out that Mary was doing the better thing.

It is the old classic story: being so busy doing things *for* the Lord that we don’t have time to be *with* him. The busyness of our day is such that it is easy to rationalize our way out of our daily quiet time, the reading of Scripture, and our regular worship routines. Putting family first, as parents often believe the Lord is calling them to do, they have no time for him. Many people who call themselves Christians see Sunday as a day to sleep late and read the morning paper rather than going to church. If asked about the situation they will say Sunday is to be a day of rest, and it’s the only opportunity they have to rest after such a busy and stressful week! The Martha/Mary story gives us Jesus’ solution: put time with him first and other things will fall into line.

Dealing with busyness.

If you believe you are too busy (or your spouse or family does), here are some thoughts:

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) Make a list of how much time you spend each day (or week or month, if you prefer) doing various things.
- (2) See if there are things you could quit doing or do in less time (if, for instance, you were better organized).
- (3) Prioritize your time.
- (4) Re-allot your time based on what you have found out about yourself.
- (5) Begin to function on the new, wiser schedule.

B. A Biblical Approach: In addition to the above, you might want to consider this approach. Author and pastor Charles L. Allen begins his book *God’s Psychiatry* by “prescribing” the Twenty-third Psalm as the cure for busyness. He told his patient, a stressed-out business executive, to read it five times a day for seven days. He was to read it first thing upon awakening in the morning. He was to read it carefully, meditatively, and prayerfully. Just after breakfast, he was to do the same thing. This was to be repeated just after lunch and dinner, and then the last thing before he went to bed. The “patient” was told not be hurried in reading, but to think about each phrase, giving his mind time to absorb as much of the meaning as possible. At the end of one week, Allen promised, things would be different for the overly busy man. The results

were so helpful to the man that Allen continued to prescribe the same remedy for many people he counseled in subsequent years.

Suggested Scriptural References/Busyness

- After patiently following God's directions in relation to the Ark, once Noah was back on dry land he got busy planting a vineyard and getting drunk from the wine (Genesis 9:20-29);
- Moses was being overworked in having to judge every situation that came before the Israelites, until his father-in-law Jethro showed him how to parcel out the responsibilities (Exodus 18:13-27);
- Jesus cautions to build on rock (doing what he teaches) rather than on sand (ignoring Jesus) (Matthew 7:24-29);
- In a parable about wheat and thistles, the workers want to go in and pull up the thistles prematurely (Matthew 13:24-30);
- In this parable about the workers in the vineyard, those who have worked longer want to be sure they are paid more (Matthew 20:1-16);
- In this parable about the son who had gone astray but returned, the other brother wants to be sure he gets preference because of his faithful work (Luke 15:11-32).

Four

The Problem of Worry

Worksheet:

What kinds of things do people worry about?

What things are presently worrying you?

What techniques have you found helpful in dealing with worry?

An example from life: We bought a new house in Georgia before we had sold our home in Florida. I worried about whether we would sell it for enough and soon enough so that we wouldn't have to make payments on two houses at the same time. I was able to get advice from two neighbors who were in the real estate business, but who encouraged us to try, initially, to sell it ourselves. We also had prayer support, which helped me be more patient than I would have been otherwise. I cannot say I did not worry; and, actually, I would contend that some worry is helpful in that it forces you to think through the things you need to be considering in preparing a house for sale. But I did not worry as much as some people do because of the support and advice I had, and we sold the house within three weeks of putting it on the market.

An example from the Bible: Jesus' teaching on worry (Matthew 6:25-34).

The Problem of Worry, Commentary:

The fact that worry is a universal concern has resulted in its being depicted in innumerable clichés. “Worry is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do, but doesn’t get you anywhere,” is a classic example. Basically, worry occurs when we assume responsibility for things we can do nothing about. George MacDonald pointed out that no one ever sinks from the burden of the day. “It is when tomorrow’s burden is added to the burden of today that the weight is more than a man can bear.” And Charles Swindoll said this concerning worry, “It won’t be long before you will look back on the up-tight, high-powered, super-charged issue with a whole new outlook. To be quite candid, you may laugh out loud in the future at something you’re eating your heart out over today.”

From a spiritual point of view, “Worry is like praying against yourself,” a friend once said. In a sense, that says it all. Matthew 6:25-34 is Jesus’ teaching on worry. He simply says not to do it; it’s a waste of time and accomplishes nothing. God provides. If our faith and confidence is in him, our needs will be met. Our primary concern is to be upon the Kingdom of God, and then everything else will take care of itself. This means putting God first in our lives, filling our minds with his purposes and serving and obeying him.

The alternative is worry and its fellow travelers: injury to our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health; lessening of our effectiveness; inattention and/or inappropriate attitudes toward others; and distancing ourselves from God.

Dealing with worry:

What are some practical ways of preventing or dealing with worry?

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) Think the thing through.
- (2) Ask yourself: What would the consequences be if what I am worrying about really happened?
- (3) What control do I have over this thing anyway?
- (4) Why is this worrying me? Is there some underlying issue I need to deal with?
- (5) Is there someone who could advise me or help me with this?
- (6) Sometimes it’s a matter of just writing out the situation we are worrying about, and then seeing it in perspective.

B. A Biblical Approach: In addition to the above, here are a couple of things Jesus taught about handling worry:

- (1) The first is to concentrate primarily on the will of God rather than the immediate thing about which you might worry (Matthew 6:33). Jesus uses the terminology of seeking first the Kingdom of God; but, as William Barclay points out, the Kingdom of God and the will of God are the same thing (see Matthew

6:10). If we are doing our best to do what we believe God wants us to do, why worry?

- (2) Secondly, Jesus says that worry can be defeated if we have the ability to live one day at a time (Matthew 6:34). George MacDonald was saying the same thing in the above quote. We need to focus on today and let tomorrow take care of itself.

Suggested Scriptural References/Worry

Blessed is he who trusts in the Lord (Jeremiah 17:7-8);

Commit your way to the Lord; don't worry, trust him (Psalm 37:1-7);

Cast your cares upon the Lord (Psalm 55:22);

You know me, Lord (Psalm 139);

The anxious heart weighs us down (Proverbs 12:25);

The seed among the thorns (v.22) (Matthew 13:1-9, 16-23);

Jesus' parents were worried when, as a boy, he was in the Temple talking with the teachers of the law (Luke 2:41-52);

Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42);

Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24);

In times of testing, God will give us what to say (Luke 21:12-19);

Present your requests to God rather than worrying (Philippians 4:4-7);

Cast your anxiety upon the Lord (1 Peter 5:6-7).

Five

Coping with Grief

Worksheet:

What types of grief do people face in our world today?

What is grieving you at the present time, or what recent grief have you been through?

What have you found to be effective ways of coping with grief?

An example from life: We have had deaths in our family that have certainly been occasions for grief, but none recently. The thing that grieves me mostly at the present time is what is happening to faithful Christian friends who believe their church has deserted them. My wife and I have been in Christian work for some 35 years, primarily teaching the importance of Scripture. During that time the denomination in which we have worshipped has fallen further away from Scripture, and now many people just don't know what to do. They don't want to leave their place of worship and their many friends there, but they want to be faithful to the Lord. My heart aches for them as they try to decide what to do.

An example from Scripture: David, mourning the death of the infant child born of his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:15-20).

Dealing with Grief, Commentary

In the course of our lives, we can experience many kinds of grief. Some grieving results from disappointment with others and with ourselves. This could happen when we have said something hurtful to our spouse that was unkind and uncalled for. In the Bible an example would be Isaac's grief over having mistakenly given his blessing to Jacob rather than Esau (Genesis 27:30-37). For the purposes of this study, however, we will consider instances of profound grief caused by death or despair.

In 2 Samuel 12:15-20, David mourns the illness unto death of the child born to Bathsheba out of David's lust and treachery. Through the prophet Nathan, God had told David that the child would die. David's grief undoubtedly included a large measure of despair with himself for his sinfulness that had brought on the tragedy. Sometimes our grief includes disappointment with ourselves. Often this is caused by our feeling that we could have done more for the person who is now out of the reach of our care.

Dealing with grief.

What are some practical ways of coping with grief?

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) Don't hold it in.
- (2) Find someone with whom you can talk who will understand your grief.
- (3) If the grief persists, it may be helpful to get professional assistance. There are bereavement groups in which people share their grief and support one another. Incidentally, people who have been in grief therapy following the loss of a loved one say they are encouraged not to focus too much on either the bad times or the good times they and their loved one had shared together. It is difficult enough to cope with the grief that accompanies the loss without compounding it with negative thoughts ("If only I had done this, or not done that"). On the other hand, giving attention only to the good times causes a person to idealize the relationship and never be able to overcome the grief. In grief, as in all things in life, there must be balance.

B. A Biblical Approach. In addition to the above:

- (1) Let the tears flow. Mighty men of God, including Jesus himself, did so. There is healing in the tears of grief.
- (2) The reading of psalms can be helpful during periods of grief. The psalms often express human despair and anguish. Psalm 51, for instance, is believed to have been composed by David as a result of his sin with Bathsheba and the disastrous consequences.
- (3) The good news we have in Jesus Christ does not eliminate pain in our lives. As a matter of fact, as we grow in our faith, we tend to become more sensitive to the pain and suffering of others, opening us up to more instances of genu-

ine grief. We, like the psalmists, cry out to God for solace, understanding and faith. The surrounding darkness sometimes seems impenetrable. Significantly, however, the psalms of lament always end with an affirmation of God's deliverance from the situation. As Psalm 30 tells us, for instance, "weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (v. 5).

Suggested Scriptural References/Grief, Grieving

David's grief over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1:1-27);

David grieves over the death of Abner (2 Samuel 3:22-39);

David's grief over his son Absalom's conspiracy against him (2 Samuel 15:1-30);

David mourns Absalom's death (2 Samuel 18:9—19:4);

Nehemiah grieves over the situation in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1-11, 2:1-9);

God's grief over Israel (Isaiah 5:1-7);

Jeremiah's complaint over the condition of his life as a prophet. Note, however, that despite the way people treat Jeremiah, God's word is like a fire in his heart that cannot be held in (Jeremiah 20:7-18);

Jesus grieves over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39);

Jesus grieves over Lazarus (John 11:1-44).

Six

Burdens

Worksheet:

What burdens are common to life today?

What burdens are you currently carrying?

What are some techniques you use to cope with burdens?

An example from life: When I was 67 years of age I was asked to organize and coordinate the formation of a controversial Christian organization. I undertook the work because I believed that it was what God called me to do. However, it meant leaving our home for two years, working some 60 hours a week in a highly pressured atmosphere, assisted by volunteers. It was a back-breaking and somewhat thankless task. In addition to all of the other trials and tribulations of the effort, people who had been friends for years shunned us because they did not agree with what we were doing.

An example from Scripture: The Jethro Solution (Exodus 18:13-26).

Facing Burdens, Commentary:

Jesus did not promise us a rose garden. As a matter of fact, he told us that following him would be burdensome; it would involve denying self and taking up a cross (Matthew 16:24). “Taking up the cross” includes the constancy of being a Christian to those around us in all the circumstances of the day. As we increasingly take our faith seriously, the more concerned we become for others. The good news, however, is that our burden is light (Matthew 11:29-30), because Jesus bears it with us; we are “yoked” to him, and he pulls the heavy part of the load.

A practical example of how to deal with burdens appears in Exodus 18:13-26. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, had come for a visit. He saw Moses trying to serve as judge to all of the people (in addition to all of the other burdens of leadership!). He said, “What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out” (v.17,18). Jethro’s solution: Moses should delegate authority to those below him so that only especially difficult cases would be brought to him.

Bearing burdens:

What are some helpful ways of looking at the matter of bearing burdens?

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) Set the parameters of what needs to be done, not taking on more than is your responsibility.
- (2) Be sensible about what can and cannot be done.
- (3) Realize that you cannot do it all by yourself.
- (4) Get the help you need, dividing the labor wisely.

B. A Biblical Approach. In addition to the above ideas, here are some things to consider. There are two aspects of bearing burdens. The first has to do with the “Jethro solution.” Many of us, even in doing Christian work, carry greater burdens than God intends for us. He wants us to be conscious of our own need for physical, emotional and spiritual health. We can be of little good to him or others if we are overburdened. Furthermore, if others are to grow in their relationship with God, they need to be given responsibility and authority rather than our holding onto everything ourselves. These comments, however, have to do with being *over*burdened. There are emotional and spiritual burdens we bear on behalf of others whom God places on our heart or that occur in the natural consequence of living. Kept within reasonable bounds, these burdens are healthy and helpful to our future growth. The person who exercises regularly knows that bearing burdens with a positive attitude has many beneficial effects:

- (1) It builds up our strength; the more we bear willingly, the more we are able to bear in the future, thereby developing leadership capabilities.
- (2) It gives us endurance; we won’t be easily defeated.

- (3) We learn from the experience of it how to help and encourage others; it increases our sensitivity.
- (4) It teaches us that we can't do it on our own; we realize our dependence on God and on others.
- (5) It prepares us realistically for the future; we are less likely to be surprised by the events of life.
- (6) Those who can remain faithful to God in the face of the burdens of life can become increasingly useful to God in fulfilling his purposes in the world.

Suggested Scriptural References/Burdens

A re-statement of the action taken pursuant to Exodus 18:13-26; burdens carried by Moses were spread among many to ease the load (Deuteronomy 1:9-18);
Nehemiah takes action to uphold the Jewish Law against carrying burdens on the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13:19-22);
Penitence for the burden of guilt (Psalm 38);
Casting one's burdens on the Lord (Psalm 55);
Jesus teaches freedom from burdensome living (Matthew 11:25-30);
Jesus condemns religious leaders because of the burden of religious legalism they impose on the people (Matthew 23:1-39);
Resulting from the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-32), a letter is sent granting Gentile believers freedom from the burdens of Jewish Law (Acts 15:22-29).

Seven

Pain and Suffering

Worksheet:

What are some examples of the pain and suffering people face in life today?

What pain and/or suffering are you dealing with at the present time?

In what ways have you dealt successfully with pain and suffering in the past?

An example from life: Years ago when our daughter was working through some issues in her life, a psychological counselor advised her to cut off all ties with her family. As a result, she chose to have no contact with her mother and me for a year. It was the most painful period in our lives. Although she decided, at the end of that period, that she had been given bad advice and returned to the family system, the memories of that time are still painful to me.

An example from the Bible: The widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15).

Dealing with Pain and Suffering, Commentary:

Christian author Keith Miller says, “Advice we listen to, pain we obey.” Bishop John Coburn said, “Don’t waste your pain.” And Christian psychiatrist Paul Tournier said he hoped his patients wouldn’t get rid of their pain until they knew the meaning of it. Pain and suffering are certainly things we don’t want, but they could be alerting us to a deeper problem or need, and definitely have the potential of leading us to a greater maturity of faith.

Luke 7:11-15 tells about a widow whose only son died. Because this was the woman’s only son and she was without a husband, she was totally without a support system. When the mourners had gone away, she would be left alone and destitute. Probably too old for childbearing, she would be very unlikely to marry again. Unless some relative took pity on her, she would be reduced to begging for her existence. Jesus felt the depth of her pain and brought the young man back to life.

It doesn’t take any of us very long to be able to picture similar instances of pain in our own lives and in the lives of our friends and loved ones. Pain is as unavoidable in life as is death itself. As Christians, our spiritual growth normally causes us to be more sensitive to the needs of others, and therefore more conscious of the pain around us. Unfortunately, we cannot bring relief to the pain in the manner that Jesus did in the Bible passage. But, we can bring everything we have, starting with but not limited to our prayers, that God will use us to help others in their pain.

Dealing with pain:

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) Try first to get at the root of the pain. What is the underlying cause, and what can be done about that?
- (2) Look for the challenge in the midst of the pain.
- (3) The secret of life isn’t its circumstances, but what you do with those circumstances.
- (4) As difficult as it is, pain is not without value; “don’t waste your pain.”
- (5) The condition of your mind and soul is more important than the condition of your body.
- (6) To the extent possible, surround yourself with positive and light-producing people and circumstances, avoiding negativism and darkness.

B. A Biblical Approach. In addition to the above ideas:

- (1) Pray that God will take away or reduce your pain.
- (2) Even as pain may be removed by faith, if necessary it may be endured by faith.
- (3) God always gives us strength equivalent to the burden or pain that he allows us to suffer.

(4) Lay yourself on the altar of God (Romans 12:1) to do with as he will.

Suggested Scriptural References/Pain and Suffering

Sarai's, over her barrenness and Hagar's attitude when the latter becomes pregnant (Genesis 16:1-5);

Hagar's, over rejection and fear that leads her to flee (Genesis 16:6-10);

Jephthah's, over his foolish oath that leads to the sacrifice of his daughter (Judges 11:29-40);

Samson's, blinded and put to do the work of an ox (Judges 16:15-21);

Hannah's, because of her barrenness and the taunting she suffers because of it (1 Samuel 1:1-8);

David's remorse over the sin he has committed with Bathsheba and the disastrous consequences (2 Samuel 12:1-19);

David's cry of pain and penitence (Psalm 51);

Jeremiah is thrown into a cistern for speaking the words of God (Jeremiah 38:1-13);

Woman with the bleeding problem (Matthew 9:20-22);

Jairus, over the illness unto death of his daughter (Matthew 9:18-19, 23-25);

Martha, Mary and Jesus over the death of Lazarus (John 11:1-44);

Jesus at Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46);

Jesus' passion and death (Matthew 27:27-50);

Paul is stoned at Lystra (Acts 14:19-20);

Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:2-10).

Eight

Planning

Worksheet:

What situations do people find themselves in that require careful planning?

What are you dealing with at the current time that requires planning?

What methods of planning have worked for you in the past?

An example from life: We have recently moved. We had lived in the same house in Florida for 32 years and we had accumulated quite a few things in our 46 years of marriage! We had to decide where we were going to re-locate, find the house we wanted, sell our house in Florida, choose a moving service, get ourselves moved, get our furniture situated in our new house, and tend to an unlimited number of other details before we could feel at home in our new location. Needless to say, much planning was involved.

An example from Scripture: Jacob preparing to face Esau (Genesis 32:1-32).

Effective Planning, Commentary:

Although God expects us to be dependent upon him for guidance and direction in our lives, he has also given us minds which he intends for us to use. If we seek his will in all that we do, he will inspire our minds toward his goals for us. That is the reason many Christians lay their day before the Lord in prayer the first thing every morning, that God might set our priorities, inspire our actions, and show us how we can best use our brains and our talents to glorify him during the day.

Wise planning is illustrated in Genesis 32:1-32 as Jacob prepares to meet Esau. Jacob had cheated Esau out of his birthright and his blessing. Having escaped the wrath of Esau, he is now returning home after years have passed. He is concerned that his brother, who is coming out to meet him, will kill him and his family. First, he divided his household so that, if Esau attacked one group, the other could escape. Then he prayed. Next, he sent gifts ahead to Esau in hopes of making peace. Finally, he sent his family and possessions across the river, remaining alone to wrestle with God. The result was that Esau met Jacob in peace. There was nothing wrong with the other cautionary steps that Jacob took, but the most important step was to pray.

Planning:

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) Think through, as best you can, step by step, what needs to be done.
- (2) Write it all down.
- (3) Prioritize the items.
- (4) Undertake them one at a time, according to priority, being flexible enough to shift to other items when necessary.

B. A Biblical Approach. In addition to the above, consider this. The book *Experiencing God* says: "The constant presence of God is the most practical part of your life and ministry. Unfortunately we often assign God to a limited place in our lives. Then we call on Him whenever we need help. That is the exact opposite of what we find in the Word of God. He is the One who is working in our world. He invites you to relate to Him, so He can accomplish His work through you. His whole plan for the advance of the Kingdom depends on His working in real and practical ways through His relationship to His people."

Suggested Scriptural References/Planning, Practical Advice, Strategy

Joseph tells Pharaoh how to manage the years of plenty and of famine that have been predicted in Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:33-57);

Joseph, in arranging for Pharaoh to allow his father and brothers to settle in Egypt (Genesis 46:28—47:12);

How the mother of the baby Moses saved him from death (Exodus 2:1-10);

Jethro telling Moses how to organize his leaders and divide his responsibilities (Exodus 18:13-27);

The tribes are arranged around the Tabernacle while the Israelites are in the desert (Numbers 2:1-34);

How trumpets are to be sounded to gather the assembly (Numbers 10:1-10);
Moses convinces Hobab, who has knowledge of the desert, to accompany the Israelites (Numbers 10:11-36);
Moses sends a dozen men to spy out the land that had been promised to them by God (Numbers 13:1-33);
Moses, directed by God, deals with the property rights of the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11, 36:1-13);
Moses, following the directions of God, appoints Joshua as his successor (Numbers 27:12-23);
The Reubenites and Gadites are promised their portion of the land (Transjordan) if they will fight across the Jordan for the land of the other tribes (Numbers 32:1-42);
God gives Moses his “marching orders” for conquering the land (Numbers 33:50—35:34);
Moses recites to the Israelites what they have gone through, and why, since leaving Egypt. As life comes to an end for him and his leadership is passed to Joshua, he gives them the Ten Commandments and various other rules and regulations for living (Deuteronomy 1:1—33:29);
Joshua prepares the Israelites for crossing over into the promised land (Joshua 1:10-18);
Joshua sends two spies into the land in preparation for crossing the Jordan (Joshua 2:1-24);
Joshua leads the Israelites into the promised land (Joshua 3:1—4:24);
God instructs Joshua on the specific way to capture Jericho (Joshua 6:1-27);
God instructs Joshua on the specific way to capture Ai (Joshua 8:1-29);
The land is divided between the tribes of Israel (Joshua 13:1—21:45);
How God led Gideon to defeat the Midianites with such a small force of men (300) that everyone would know that God had done it (Judges 7:1-25);
Samuel lays before the people what they have done in choosing an earthly king over God as their King (1 Samuel 12:1-25);
Arrangements between David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:1-42);
David captures Jerusalem by sending his men through a water tunnel (2 Samuel 5:6-12);
Nathan, Bathsheba and David, in making Solomon king (1 Kings 1:1-53);
David’s charge to Solomon (1 Kings 2:1-12);
Solomon builds the Temple (1 Kings 6:1-38);
Solomon builds his palace (1 Kings 7:1-12);
The Temple furnishings (1 Kings 7:13-51);
Ezra, in leading the captives home to Judah (Ezra 8:15-36);
Nehemiah, in approaching the task before him (Nehemiah 2:11-20);
Nehemiah, in rebuilding the walls (Nehemiah 4:1-23);
Nehemiah, in establishing reforms (Nehemiah 13:1-31);
Planning and doing are senseless without God (Psalm 127);
Count the cost (Luke 14:28-31);
Matthias is chosen to replace Judas among the Twelve (Acts 1:12-26);
The choosing of the first deacons (Acts 6:1-7);
The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35);
Practical advice for living the Christian life (Ephesians 4:17—5:21).
Titus is sent to Corinth (2 Corinthians 8:16-24).

Nine

Questioning God (Honesty before God)

Worksheet:

Why might people in our day be questioning God?

What are you dealing with in your life that would cause you to question God?

How would you go about questioning God?

An example from life: I have mentioned earlier that I believe God called me to help a controversial Christian organization get started. In a sense I had assurance from the Lord all along the way that I was doing the right thing...but why did I run into so much resistance? As mentioned earlier, friends turned against me because they did not agree with what I was doing. I faced crisis after crisis in carrying out the work. Even the ones I worked with often were more trouble than help. Why, Lord, why?

An example from Scripture: Abraham (Genesis 18:20-33)

Questioning God, Commentary:

There is such a thing as honest doubt that can cause us to question God and his grace and mercy. It is also true that we can find ourselves disappointed with God, perhaps even angry with him, and need to express that in honesty to him. There is also such a thing as blaspheming God. A thin line divides these attitudes and feelings, and we are called to keep our relationship with God in perspective. This type of situation was not foreign to Scripture, as we shall see below.

The story of Abraham's plea to God concerning Sodom (Genesis 18:20-33) is a good example of honest questioning of God. Abraham's nephew Lot lived in Sodom with his family, and Abraham didn't want them to be killed when God chose to destroy Sodom. Abraham argues his case, but in a very respectful way. Because of Abraham's faith in God, God patiently let Abraham present his position. God knew that there were not ten righteous people in Sodom, but he wanted to allow Abraham to be honest with him and to express his genuine feelings. God wants nothing less from us. When we assume that God is not listening or doesn't care what is on our hearts—even when it is questioning his love or mercy—we are short-changing God, and that is no way to build a relationship.

Questioning God:

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) To be able to honestly approach God with questions about how he is running the world, the first requirement is that we be in relationship with him.
- (2) Proceeding to lay out our complaint to God requires honesty without arrogance.
- (3) We should then allow God to respond, and be prepared for whatever that response might be.

B. A Biblical Approach. In addition to the above, here is something else to consider. In his tract, "You Can Be Real with God," Jim Scully makes some pertinent points. He says that we grow up understanding that, if we want to get along with people, we won't disclose much of our reality. We're taught to conform, play the game, keep up appearances. But, when we try that sort of thing on God, we are in deep trouble. Phoniness, pretense and posturing are just out of place with God. God is in the reality business, and he expects us to be real with him. God can't help us if we're not willing to lay on the line (in our prayers) what's really in our hearts. Scully says, "Being real—pouring out our heart and soul to God—is always a kind of prayer we may need, even if we do not need it all the time. As long as we have feelings, we will need to tell God about them. How can we be intimate with God (the purpose of all prayer) if we do not reveal our innermost selves to the One who know us best and loves us most?"

Suggested Scriptural References/Questioning God

Moses' concerns about his own abilities and whether others will believe him to be a representative of God (Exodus 3:7-4:17);

Moses, following rejection by both Pharaoh and his own people (Exodus 5:19—6:8; 6:9-13; 6:28—7:6);

Moses, in trying to convince God that he should not destroy the Israelites following the golden calf incident (Exodus 32:1-35);
Moses, when the Israelites complain about not having any meat to eat (Numbers 11:4-15, 21-23);
Moses, when God had determined to destroy the Israelites for their fear of entering the promised land (Numbers 14:10-25);
Gideon, when the angel of the Lord came to him (Judges 6:1-40);
Job's questioning (Job 10:1-22) and God's answer (38:1—41:34);
Why do the wicked succeed? (Psalm 10);
Why is God silent? (Psalm 13);
When feeling forsaken (Psalm 22);
Jeremiah's complaint (Jeremiah 12:1-13);
Jonah's, over why Nineveh was saved (Jonah 4:1-11);
Habakkuk's complaints (Habakkuk 1:1—2:20);
Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46);
Zechariah, about the birth of his son in his and Elizabeth's old age (Luke 1:5-25);
Thomas' doubts (John 20:24-31);
Ananias, in being asked to go to Saul (Paul) and pray for him (Acts 9:1-19).

Ten

Listening

Worksheet:

To what extent is there a problem of people really listening to one another in our day? Give some examples to support your conclusions.

What problems are you having in listening to others or having them listen to you?

What are some techniques you use to be a more effective listener?

An example from life: As my wife and I have become older, our hearing seems to have begun to degenerate a little. We have to listen more carefully to one another than in the past. On the other hand, with age, we think we have become wiser. The wisdom we have gained is that it is very important for couples to give each other, and their children, plenty of listening time, both quantity and quality of listening time. We owe it most to those we love to listen to them as effectively as we can.

An example from the Bible: Proverbs 12:15, 13:1, 15:31-32.

Listening, Commentary:

The book of Proverbs tells us that it is good to listen to parents and other experienced elders; and that it is by listening to God that we attain wisdom. God communicates with us in various ways through prayer, the reading of Scripture and in our contacts with other people. We cannot receive his guidance unless we are willing to give the time and attention to listening.

The importance of listening to others is emphasized in several Proverbs. Proverbs 12:15 says that fools think they don't need advice, but the wise listen to others. In Proverbs 13:1 a wise child accepts the discipline of parents, but the foolish child refuses to listen. Proverbs 15:31 and 32 deal with constructive criticism; if we listen to it we will grow in wisdom and understanding; if we do not, we only harm ourselves.

Proverbs are practical guidelines for living, and certainly those having to do with listening speak to us in our day. We live in an age in which many things seem to demand our immediate action. It is easy to be driven by these demands to the exclusion of intimate relationships with our loved ones and others deserving of our attention. We need, instead, to stop and listen.

Listening:

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) A good listener places maximum value on what is going to be said. He or she listens as though the success or failure of something major is at stake.
- (2) The good listener listens more than with the ear, and takes due account of the person who is talking and whether (for instance) that person tends to overstate or to downplay the points they are making.
- (3) Yet, the good listener accepts with an open mind what others have to say. Preliminarily judging the other person can impede effective listening.
- (4) The desire to formulate an answer or observation to what is being said before the talker is finished is often the reason we don't listen well. Focused listening can often lead to a more measured response than if you tried to think too far ahead.
- (5) Finally, the good listener is a patient listener.

B. The Biblical Approach. In addition to the above, remember that listening is a key element in loving. If you need to remind yourself what true love is all about, read once again 1 Corinthians 13.

Suggested Scriptural References/Listening

If God's people would only listen to him (Psalm 81:8-16);

The importance of listening to the Lord (Proverbs 1:8, 33; 8:33, 34);

One of a number of instances where Jesus says, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15);

Mary chooses to listen to Jesus instead of helping Martha, and is affirmed while Martha is rebuked for being too busy to listen (Luke 10:38-42);

Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Romans 10:14-17);

We are to be doers of the word, and not hearers only (James 1:22-25);

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29).

Eleven

Disappointment with God

Worksheet:

In what ways might people in our day be disappointed with God?

In what way or ways are you disappointed with God?

How do you deal with your disappointment with God?

An example from life: We have a beautiful, talented daughter who is 42 years old and has never found the right man to marry. She would have liked more than anything else to find the right guy, to be able to share her life with him and to have children. Yet, it has never happened. My “priority prayer” every day for years has been for her to find the love of her life, and the fact that the prayer has not been answered is a great disappointment.

An example from the Bible: Abram (Genesis 16:1-3)

Disappointment with God, Commentary:

We Christians would like to think that everyone who has had the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and have failed to do so have made a willful choice grounded in selfishness; they want to live their lives their own way without honoring and serving God. Although there is some truth in that, we need to acknowledge that there are many people who began by accepting Christ, but then became disappointed with God.

Perhaps because of a faulty understanding of God and how he works in the world, these people have given up on him. They prayed and nothing happened. They went to church regularly, read their Bible, tried to live by Christian principles, but they lost their jobs or their spouses, contracted a dreaded disease or otherwise saw their world fall apart around them. They decided, based on their own experiences, that God is not to be trusted, much less obeyed and followed in every aspect of their lives.

In the Bible, there were believers who were clearly disappointed with God, though they did not ultimately give up on him. Abram was disappointed with God when Sarai did not become pregnant although God had promised them a son (Genesis 16:1-3). Moses seems to have been disappointed with God more than once, but certainly when, after doing what God told him to do to force Pharaoh to free the Israelites, things got worse instead of better (Exodus 5:22-23). Interestingly, there are other outstanding examples in the Bible of people who might have been disappointed with God, but didn't seem to be: such as Joseph of the Old Testament who suffered several misfortunes even when he was obeying God; David, whose son by Bathsheba was born dead despite his prayers and fasting; and Paul whose "thorn in the flesh" didn't disappear despite his prayers.

Dealing with disappointment with God:

A. The Practical Approach::

- (1) Before concluding that we are disappointed with God, we should be sure that we are not really disappointed with ourselves or someone other than God. Don't blame God for our own mistakes or those of others.
- (2) Get to the heart of the issue. Don't let it float around as a vague notion. What is it that really disappoints you with God?
- (3) Be honest with God in prayer and see what happens.

B. A Biblical Approach: In addition to the above, here are a few things to consider:

- (1) The book of Job is considered to be the Bible's most poignant look at suffering, and few would have been surprised if Job had given up on God after all of the disasters he faced. However, he did not. He was tested, and he found that he could not fathom God's ways. Yet, in the end, he reaffirmed his faith in God, and God blessed him. When we believe we are suffering even a portion of what Job suffered, he can be an inspiration to us.

- (2) We yearn to sense God’s presence and to believe that he answers our prayers. Remember, however, that it was during the time when God was “closest” to the people of Israel (in the wilderness when there as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, etc.) that they continually fell away from him. And, as soon as Jesus faced crucifixion and death, his followers ran and hid. God wants us, instead, to show our faith in times of uncertainty, testing and doubt.
- (3) In his book *Disappointment with God*, Philip Yancey tells the story of Douglas who had experienced a series of Job-like disasters. Yancey wondered how Douglas was able to remain faithful in such circumstances. Douglas replied, “I have learned to see beyond the physical reality in this world to the spiritual reality. We tend to think, ‘Life should be fair because God is fair.’ But God is not life. And if I confuse God with the physical reality of life—by expecting constant good health, for example—then I set myself up for a crashing disappointment.”
- (4) In response to the question, “Where is God when it hurts?”, Dr. Paul Brand (the man who made great medical breakthroughs in treating and healing leprosy), replied, “He is in *you*, the one hurting, not in *it*, the thing that hurts [you].”
- (5) Romans 8:28 represents truth even if what is happening to us at a particular time doesn’t seem like it.

Suggested Scriptural References/Disappointment with God

The book of Job;

Elijah, following the miraculous demonstration of God’s power to Ahab (1 Kings 19:1-10);

David, in his song of lament (Psalm 22);

Jeremiah, in wondering why the wicked prosper (Jeremiah 12:1-4);

Jesus, on the cross, quoting Psalm 22 (Matthew 27:46).

Twelve

Wisdom

Worksheet:

What are some of the greatest needs for the use of wisdom in our day?

What are you facing, or have recently faced, that requires the use of wisdom?

Where do you find wisdom when you need it?

An example from life: Years ago I would begin talks before Christian groups by using humor. I had a list of funny things people said when dealing with police about automobile accidents. One day, when speaking to a group on whom I had already used those pieces of humor, I switched to a list of funny things that people had written the government about various needs they had. When the talk was over, a woman came up to me and pointed out that, in using those stories, I was making fun of people who were probably poverty-stricken and poorly educated. She didn't find that funny; and, after only a moment's reflection, I agreed with her and never used them again. She had shown wisdom in approaching me on the matter; I had not shown wisdom in using them.

An example from Scripture: Abigail (1 Samuel 25:1-44).

Wisdom, Commentary:

“When looking back on the lives of the men and women of God,” according to Oswald Chambers, “the tendency is to say, ‘What wonderfully astute wisdom they had! How perfectly they understood all God wanted!’ The astute mind behind their thought is the mind of God, not human wisdom at all. We give credit to human wisdom when we should give credit to the Divine Guidance of God through childlike people who are foolish enough to trust God’s wisdom and the supernatural equipment of God.”

In 1 Samuel 25:1-44 wisdom is exercised by Abigail in supplying provisions to David when her husband Nabal had refused to do so. David had protected Nabal’s flocks and duly expected hospitality from him, but was refused. David therefore took up the sword against Nabal, but was intercepted by Abigail, who had wisely brought provisions for David and his men along with an apology for her husband’s rudeness. It could be argued that Abigail was simply using human wisdom to protect her life and the life of her family. However, in showing obeisance to David, she invokes the name of the Lord seven times. And David, in response, acknowledges that it is the Lord who has sent Abigail to him that day (v.32).

It is a common experience of Christians today to begin praying about a serious situation they face and then suddenly getting the inner guidance to the Holy Spirit who provides a solution, an alternative, or an insight (sometimes a conviction!) that solves the problem or puts it in a totally new light. At other times, the direction we are to go comes to us from Scripture. In either of these events, we are experiencing the wisdom of God.

Exercising wisdom:

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) There is a humorous saying that wisdom is knowing, when you make a mistake the second time, that it was a mistake the first time. It is better, of course, to realize the first time that we have made a mistake and to try to learn from the mistake.
- (2) It is important to remember that the only people who don’t make mistakes are those who don’t make decisions.
- (3) Something that doesn’t work is not necessarily a failure. That may have been a saying of Thomas Edison, who had to discover a lot of things that didn’t work in order to find the things that did.
- (4) Dwelling too much on past mistakes can develop a mistake-prone pattern in your life. Dwell on the positive instead.
- (5) Wisdom is doing things in a good spirit rather than a bad one. Things done in the wrong spirit are doomed to failure.

B. A Biblical Approach: In addition to the above, here are a couple of other things to consider:

- (1) A quiet mind will produce much more wisdom than a confused or distracted mind. Take time to be with God, so that you can be at peace and able to perceive his guidance.
- (2) Hubert Van Zeller said this, “We are all children and the less we boast of our knowledge the safer we are. We have no knowledge but what is lent to us by God. All wisdom is his wisdom.”

Suggested Scriptural References/Wisdom

Exercised by the Philistine commanders in not wanting David to join them in battling the Israelites (1 Samuel 29:1-11);

Shown by Nathan in using a parable to convict David of his sin (Samuel 12:1-13a);

Demonstrated by Joab and the woman of Tekoa, in using a parable to convince David to reach out to Absalom (2 Samuel 14:1-33);

By the woman of Abel Beth Maacah who saved the city (2 Samuel 20:14-22);

Demonstrated in Solomon’s prayer (1 Kings 3:1-15);

Demonstrated by Solomon in resolving the dispute between the two prostitutes (1 Kings 3:16-18);

More evidence of Solomon’s wisdom (1 Kings 4:29-34);

Demonstrated by the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1-13);

Shown by Naaman’s servants in talking him into doing what Elisha had told him to do (2 Kings 5:1-27);

Shown by Zerubbabel in dealing with opposition to rebuilding the Temple (Ezra 4:1—6:15);

Exercised by Nehemiah in how he approached the king about the situation in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:1-9);

Demonstrated by Nehemiah in how he went about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 4:1-23);

All of the book of Proverbs is about wisdom (Proverbs 1—31);

Christ, the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:18—2:16);

Two kinds of wisdom (James 3:13-18).

Thirteen

Frustration

Worksheet:

What are some of the many frustrations people experience today?

What are some of the things frustrating you?

How do you deal effectively with frustration?

An example from life: I am a “technologically challenged” person. As a result, I become more and more frustrated by the technologically-dependent age in which we live. I am grateful for my computer, because it aids my work substantially; but it is definitely a love/hate relationship because of all the things that happen to it that frustrate me.

An example from Scripture: Moses (Exodus 4:27—5:23).

Frustration, Commentary:

We live in an age of many options. An unlimited range of activities is before us: leisure pursuits, electronic communication possibilities, health and fitness training, entertainment in great variety, mental and artistic challenges...and the list goes on. A person can become frustrated just by having so many options, especially in not being able to keep up with the pace of them or with the people around us who are caught up in them. But there are many other frustrations as well: unhappiness with our work, our spouse or family, even our church. And, of course, we may be disappointed with ourselves. Frustration is nothing new, as we will see from those in the Bible who faced it.

Exodus 4:27—5:23 tells of the frustration faced by Moses when he followed God's instructions about how to approach Pharaoh. What God told Moses to tell Pharaoh only seemed to make matters worse. Instead of letting the Israelites go, Pharaoh imposed additional burdens on them. This got Moses in trouble with the Israelite elders as well as Pharaoh! Moses goes to God with his frustration in verses 22-23: "Why did you send me? Since I gave Pharaoh your message, he has been even more brutal to your people. You have not even begun to rescue them!" (NLT)

Moses was more frustrated with God than with Pharaoh. Sometimes our frustration, although superficially with people or situations, may also be with God.

Dealing with frustration:

- A. The Practical Approach. The nature of frustration is this: we are disappointed with something or someone because things aren't working out as we think they should, and we have the feeling that the disappointment is not soon to be resolved; it is lurking out there irritating us. Usually we can deal with the frustration once we identify the source of it. Here is how to do that:
 - (1) Is the frustration a result of my expecting too much of myself? Perhaps I need to be more realistic about who I am and what I can do.
 - (2) Is it because of disappointment with someone or ones? Perhaps it would help to talk it out with the person or persons concerned; often the problem is simply one of communication.
 - (3) Are there circumstances that are causing my frustration (job, house, car)? Pinpointing the source of the problem often leads to an obvious solution.

- B. A Biblical Approach: In addition to the above, consider these:
 - (1) Is the problem God, or my relationship (or lack thereof) with him (God isn't present, or doesn't seem to care; or my spiritual life is not what it should be)?
 - (2) If so, go back and look at our studies on Questioning God and Disappointment with God.
 - (3) We may need to talk to our pastor, prayer partner, spiritual director or mentor.

Suggested Scriptural References/Frustration

The people complained to Moses about the lack of water (Exodus 17:1-7);

The Israelites were frustrated because Moses did not return from the top of the mountain right away, so they fashioned a golden calf to worship, which really frustrated Moses when he returned (Exodus 32:1-35);

The Israelites, faced with the opportunity of going into the Promised Land, were afraid to do so and once again challenged Moses' leadership (Numbers 14:1-12);

Moses, in frustration, disobeyed God's instructions regarding bringing water from the rock (Numbers 20:1-13);

Moses is not allowed to enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 3:21-28);

Job's bitter frustration over the disasters that have befallen him (Job 3:1-26);

Jonah's frustration over the fact that Nineveh repented (Jonah 4:1-11);

Jesus was unable to perform significant miracles in his own hometown because of the unbelief of the people (Mark 6:1-6);

Jesus, often frustrated by the disciples' unbelief, here finds them fearful of the storm while he sleeps in the boat (Matthew 8:23-27);

Jesus' frustration that the disciples were not able to bring healing to the epileptic child (Matthew 23:37-39);

Jesus laments over Jerusalem (Matthew 17:14-20).

Fourteen

Burn-out

Worksheet:

To what extent is burn-out a problem in modern society, and why?

What experience have you had with burn-out in your life?

What do you do to prevent or deal with burn-out?

An example from life: Prior to reaching the age of “retirement” (although I am in no way actually retired), I used to get burned out every Spring. Being an introvert whose work required a lot of exposure to and working with others, I simply “gave out of steam” around March or April of each year. I would have to have a period of rest and relaxation in order to continue a productive life.

An example from the Bible: Moses (Exodus 17:1-4).

Burn-out, Commentary:

Burn-out is a condition of our age, even among Christians. The more we have become mechanized with labor savers, the more we have become burdened with “things to do.” Instead of having more leisure, we have become more occupied. Those who are not trying to live the Christian life are involved in a great variety of ways to amuse themselves. Those who take their Christian faith seriously are often expected by their church to perform an endless number of services to the congregation and the surrounding community. Although it has been noted above that burden bearing has many beneficial effects, there is a limit to what one person or one family can do. The result of over commitment is burn-out: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual exhaustion.

Exodus 17:1-4 demonstrates Moses facing burn-out. He had contended with Pharaoh (and the Israelites themselves) in order to free the people from the yoke of slavery, had led them successfully across the Red Sea, and had gotten them manna from God with which to feed themselves. Yet, as soon as a new problem arises, they are quick to blame Moses. No wonder Moses would cry out to God, “What am I to do with these people?”

Moses is exhausted by the constant complaints of the Israelites. How easy it is to complain when things aren’t going our way, and to place the blame on others. Perhaps we have been guilty of complaining, or maybe we face burn-out because of the endless demands placed upon us by our family, our boss or our church. The answer here was prayer, and God responded. Prayer is always the first thing to do when we sense burn-out approaching. Not only does that give us some “space” from the situation and an opportunity to be objective about it, but God’s guidance may be forthcoming to allow us to deal with the stress that is creating the situation. But, a way to help prevent burn-out in the first place is to build healthy boundaries.

Dealing with burn-out:

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) The solution to burn-out is having healthy boundaries. There is a saying that good is the enemy of the best. There is only so much that we can do.
- (2) It is important to remember that “No” is a complete sentence.

B. The Biblical Approach: In addition to the above, have in mind that what we are doing may be good but not the main thing or things God wants us doing. God wants our best, not what is left over after we have run around in circles trying to meet every demand that is placed upon us. Jesus told us to love our neighbors as ourselves, but that includes loving ourselves. Unless we protect our own physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health, we are not going to be much good to others in the long run; we will burn-out.

Suggested Scriptural References/Burn-out

Jethro advises Moses to divide his duties among the Israelite leaders to avoid burn-out (Exodus 18:13-26);

Elijah wearies of his ministry when threatened by Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-9);

David prays for relief from despair (Psalm 13);

David cries out for deliverance (Psalm 22);

Jesus, in the Parable of the Sower, describes, in verse 22, the reason so many people burn out: the brambles representing the cares of the world (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23);

Paul describes the frustration of trying to live a godly life in the face of his own sinful nature (Romans 7:14-25).

Fifteen

Apathy

Worksheet:

To what extent is apathy a problem in today's world? Give some examples.

To what extent do you find yourself being apathetic about some things?

How do you deal with the problem of apathy in your own life or the lives of those around you?

An example from life: I have what might be called "selective apathy." By that I mean there are many things I care about very much, and I tend to focus on them to the exclusion of other important things that might be going on around me. I have to be awakened from my apathy by those who live with me and want me to be taking some things more seriously than I am.

An example from Scripture: Eli (1 Samuel 2).

Apathy, Commentary:

There is a story about a teacher whose class was so unmotivated that he was on the verge of despair. One day, before saying anything to the class, he simply wrote in large letters on the board: APATHY. He sat back to let it sink, continuing to say nothing, just looking at the students. Finally, one of the students turned to the class leader and said, “Don’t know that word, Joe; what does it mean?” To which Joe replied, “Who cares?”

That wasn’t exactly the situation in 1 Samuel 2, but there was certainly apathy. The sons of Eli the priest were guilty of the most heinous of crimes. Their responsibility was to be mediators between God and the people; in practice, they took every advantage of the situation to fulfill their own selfish desires. Eli, rather than taking effective action against them, allowed them to continue in their evil ways. His apathy cost the sons their lives and Eli the humiliation of ceasing to be the ancestor of the priests of God.

There was, in a sense, double guilt on Eli’s part. He had the responsibility as a father to discipline his sons. All parents have the duty to hold their children accountable for their actions. But, additionally, Eli was a priest of God overseeing his sons in their priestly duties. By not taking effective action against them, he was honoring his sons more than God.

We can be guilty as well if we are apathetic in our responsibilities, especially those related to our family and God. Do we honor God in our worship of him, in the time we spend with him, in obedience to what he teaches us in Scripture? If not, our apathy is sin.

Apathy is a serious failing of our age. The story of the teacher and his apathetic class is an all-too-typical picture of the time in which we live. There are probably many reasons. There is widespread disillusionment with government, society, and the systems and processes that seem to control our lives. Affluence, and the boredom that often results, is a factor. And, on the other hand, for those who are poor and disadvantaged, the unlikely escape from their condition leads to hopelessness.

Dealing with Apathy:

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) We need to care creatively if we are to build relationships. A busy executive missed his wife’s birthday, their anniversary and Mother’s Day all in one year. He was so contrite that he told his secretary never to let that happen again. That was not creative caring! We need, instead, to make a deliberate choice to care for others, and to take the time and attention necessary to do so.
- (2) Relationships are like gardens; they need a lot of attention. But, just as gardens give back to us in beauty and productivity, so does the attention we give to others.
- (3) “The novelty wears off, and what was initially exciting and challenging has become dull and uninspiring.” “Familiarity breeds contempt.” Those are

comments people commonly make to explain their apathy. Yet, those comments show that our focus is in the wrong direction. “Things of value get better with age.” “We live in a time of constant change; something familiar gives comfort.” Those are at least equally true comments. If we find that we are becoming bored with what we are doing, or other aspects of our life, maybe we need to look for the hidden treasure in what we already have and rejoice and be glad in it.

B. The Biblical Approach. In addition to the above, you might consider:

- (1) Having a mentor, spiritual director, soul friend, accountability group, or prayer partner with whom we can be honest about our disappointments in life, or feelings of failure and our lack of enthusiasm for work and/or spiritual disciplines can help us find our way out of our apathy.
- (2) And, if everything else fails, note what Dante said: “The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who remain neutral in a time of great moral crisis.”

Suggested Scriptural References/Apathy

Esau “despised” his birthright and gave it to Jacob for some stew (Genesis 25:19-35);

Moses cautions against, in the performance of priestly duties, on the occasion of the deaths of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-20);

The prophet’s warning about being complacent (Amos 6:1-7);

Paul’s warning against idleness (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15);

A warning against falling away from the faith (Hebrews 5:11—6:12);

The charge against the “lukewarm” church (Revelation 3:14-22).

Sixteen

Crises

Worksheet:

Name some typical crises faced by people today,

What crisis or crises are you facing today?

How have you handled crises in the past?

An example from life: A couple of years ago, my wife woke up in the middle of the night with tightness in her chest. We couldn't be sure whether it was something serious or not, but we knew it was something that needed to be checked out. Because she was not in pain, we decided to drive to the emergency room of the local hospital rather than calling an ambulance. As it turned out, she had had a mild heart attack...although, thank the Lord, there was no permanent damage to her heart and her arteries were clear. Nevertheless, this was certainly a crisis for us!

An example from the Bible: The flight from Egypt (Exodus 14:5-31).

Crises, Commentary:

“Constant change is here to stay” is an apt expression in our day. The more rapidly things change, the more crises we face. But, as is true of all traumatic situations in life, crises are opportunities for growth. How we approach and deal with crises can tell us a lot about ourselves.

Exodus 14:5-31 tells the story of the Israelites’ flight from Egypt, pursued by Pharaoh. It was certainly a crisis situation! Six hundred Egyptian chariots were bearing down on the defenseless Israelites who were caught between the mountains and the sea. It was a situation in which only God could provide deliverance. He did, by allowing the Israelites to pass through the sea, but not the chariots. The incident was so miraculous that the memory of it was recited again and again throughout the history of the Jewish people.

The nature of this situation required total dependence on God. Too often, when we face crises in life, turning to God is the last thing we do rather than the first. Although we can’t expect God to “part the sea” for us every time we face a crisis, we do need to give him the opportunity to guide us in the way he would have us go. He can calm us down, help us to see the situation in perspective and give us ideas on how to cope with it.

Handling crises:

A. The Practical Approach: Here are four steps to consider:

- (1) Fight panic. It can rob you of reason and that’s what you need most in a time of crisis.
- (2) Rely on any training, experience or other background you may have that is related to the crisis you face.
- (3) Rely also on your intuition or “gut feeling” concerning the matter.
- (4) Advice from a more knowledgeable person can also be a tremendous help, but often such advice is not readily available in times of crisis.

B. The Biblical Approach. In addition to the above, consider these steps:

- (4) Prayer. Paul says to be constant in prayer; and, as we face each crisis, it is through prayer that God can give us the insights and inspirations, the ultimate solutions, and the calmness to reach them.
- (5) Patience. In Romans 12:12, Paul also says to be patient in tribulation. If the crisis we are facing is not one that demands immediate action, looking for the easiest way of getting through a crisis is not always the best. Otherwise it may soon crop up again and be an even bigger problem. Each crisis is deserving of the right solution, and that can be found only if we are patient with ourselves and everyone else involved in it. Sometimes God will show us that the best thing for us to do is nothing at all, but simply have faith that God will provide the solution in some way that we cannot foresee.

- (6) Preparation. Although most crises do not require the immediate decisions we may initially think they need, some do need to be addressed quickly. Therefore, we want to be ready when these kinds of crises occur. We can only be ready if our priorities are straight, and our priorities can only be straight if we are earnestly trying to live in the will of God.

Suggested Scriptural References/Crisis

Pharaoh's refusal to free the Israelites, and the ensuing plagues (Exodus 5:1—11:10);
The Israelites form a golden calf and worship it (Exodus 32:1-35);
Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:1-30);
Daniel in the lion's den (Daniel 6:1-28);
Jonah, disobeying God, causes the ship he is in to face disaster, as a result of which he is thrown into the sea and swallowed by a fish (Jonah 1:1-17);
Joseph, warned in a dream, takes Mary and the babe to Egypt to escape King Herod (Matthew 2:13-15);
Jesus faces temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11);
Jesus calms the storm (Matthew 8:23-27);
Lazarus dies and is raised from the dead by Jesus (John 11:1-44);
Jesus at Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-43);
The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark (Acts 15:36-41).

Seventeen

Depression

Worksheet:

To what extent do you believe depression is affecting people in our day, and why?

What depression are you experiencing or have experienced?

How do you deal with depression?

An example from life: I tend to become depressed when there is not something challenging on the horizon for me to tackle.

An example from Scripture: Saul (1 Samuel 18:6—19:24, 28:1-5 and 31:1-16).

Depression, Commentary:

Richard Kirby, in a booklet entitled “Depression: Agent of Hope,” begins with these words: “Mental depression, at first sight, is a gloomy subject. It sounds and feels like bad news; it seems to be the antithesis of the Christian message, and the kind of thing which is wholly diabolical in its origin. It is frightening, or at least sad, to experience; we long for it to go away. Good moods are, we readily believe, the wine of life; depressed moods are the dregs. People who have experiences of severe depression seem to be terrified of a recurrence; they will go a long way to avoid a depressed mood, and, if they find themselves in one, will move heaven and earth to get out of it.” God can use depression as an agent to help us grow in our relationship with him, but it is not something anyone looks forward to.

Saul, the first king of Israel, seems to have been depressed a great deal of the time. See, for instance, 1 Samuel 18:6—19:24, 28:1-25 and 31:1-6, for some illustrations of the fits of depression Saul had. At first, it was jealousy because of David’s popularity with the people. This, in turn, led to fear of David, and an increasing desire that David be killed. A tormented spirit came upon Saul from time to time. Ultimately, he consulted a medium even though he had earlier sought to have them banished from the land. In the end he committed suicide.

Saul’s life was a contrast between pride (1 Samuel 14:24) and a poor self-image (1 Samuel 10:17-22). In that sense it could be said that he had a built-in susceptibility to depression. But, there are a great many things that can lead to depression, some spiritual, some emotional and some physical. Moods of depression can come on us suddenly and unexpectedly. They are not signs of weakness or instability. Some of the greatest people in the world, including spiritual leaders such as Martin Luther, have suffered from depression. The first step is to admit it when we are depressed and begin trying to do something about it.

Responding to Depression:

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) When you are depressed, let others know how you are feeling; don’t hold it in.
- (2) By talking your problem over with a wise friend—especially one who has fought depression—you may be able to get to the bottom of the problem and find a solution.
- (3) Is your suffering a result of natural consequences over which you have no control? If so, recognize that we live in a world in which good and evil exist side by side. Try not to weigh yourself down with something that is not your fault and is outside of your control.
- (4) Perhaps there is a physical or mental health problem involved. Many people get depressed because something wrong is going on within their bodies that can be corrected by medication. Get professional help.

B. The Biblical Approach. In addition to the above, consider:

- (1) Is God punishing you for sin? If so, confess it.
- (2) Is this an attack of Satan? If so, resist the devil and call on God for help.
- (3) Is God preparing you for special service, that you might be more compassionate toward those who suffer? If so, resist self-pity. Ask God to lead you to others who are suffering as you are.
- (4) Are you being tested, as Job was? If so, pray for endurance, and trust God to work his purpose through you.
- (5) Is your suffering for some unknown reason? If so, don't let that quandary defeat you. Keep seeking God's word on the matter and wait patiently in the knowledge of God's love.
- (6) Remember that nothing can separate us from the love of God, and, in the end, God will wipe away all the tears from our eyes.

Suggested Scriptural References/Depression

The Israelites were depressed because of their labor and bondage being made more cruel by Pharaoh (Exodus 5:1—6:9);

Moses in desperation over the attitude of the Israelites (Exodus 17:1-4);

Hannah's depression over being childless (1 Samuel 1:1-8);

Elijah's depression resulting from fatigue and discouragement (1 Kings 19:1-9);

The Israelites became depressed about the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem because of threats and taunting by their enemies, but this is overcome under Nehemiah's leadership and assurance that the Lord would give them the needed strength to persevere (Nehemiah 4:1-18);

Job is depressed during much of the book; these are exemplary chapters (Job 3, 6, 7);

The psalmist is discouraged, apparently because of being in exile (Psalm 42);

Jonah, in the belly of the great fish (Jonah 2:2-10).

Eighteen

Healing and Wholeness

Worksheet:

What types of healing do people need today?

What healing do you need?

What methods of healing have you used in the past?

An example from life: Years ago when I was a very busy attorney, I contracted flu and was sick for several days. After the obvious symptoms of the flu had ceased, I was still plagued with terrible back pains. The doctor gave me some pills but they seemed to do little to help. I would go to work in the mornings, but before noon I was in agonizing pain and had to come home and go to bed with a heating pad. After several days of this, it seemed the Lord spoke inwardly to me and told me to get out of bed, onto my knees, and ask him to heal me. I did, and he did...immediately. I have had other healing experiences in subsequent years, but that one was the most dramatic

An experience from the Bible: Naaman (2 Kings 5:1-27).

Healing, Commentary:

In his book *Faith and Practice*, Frank E. Wilson wrote: “Modern psychology is catching up with the Christian practice of many centuries. It is now recognized on all hands that a human being consists of something more than muscle, bone, and sinew, and that a person’s health depends upon a mental attitude and spiritual condition as well as upon lungs and glands. If a person is to be really well, he must be *all* well, and if he falls sick, all of him needs to be treated. Therein lies the reason for the Church’s ministry of healing, which was part of the commission given by our Lord to the Church and exercised by the Church from the very beginning.”

2 Kings 5:1-27 Naaman is healed of leprosy on instructions from the prophet Elijah. In Scripture, healing occurs in a great variety of ways. Here, Elijah did not participate directly in the healing; he did not even see Naaman before the healing occurred. Naaman obviously needed something more than physical healing because he almost let his pride get in the way. Thus, God worked through Elijah to effect a broader healing.

When we think of Christian healing, it is often physical healing that we have in mind. Someone is injured or sick, and we want and pray for God’s healing. But, in such instances, there may be spiritual or emotional healing that is more important to God. The physical death rate is 100%; no matter how we pray that a person be spared, he or she will ultimately experience physical death. What is more important to God, and to us, is that a person attain eternal life. Many people who have not been physically healed have been led into a relationship with the Lord because Christians cared enough to pray for them.

Seeking God's healing power.

The Practical and the Biblical Approaches. It is obvious that, when we are ill, we need to get medical help. It is also obvious that it is a good idea to practice preventive medicine by getting regular checkups, not smoking, not overeating, and getting exercise. The following is adapted from *The Life Recovery Bible*: “When Jesus was on earth, he was so renowned for his healing power that crowds of sick people constantly pressed in on him. One day ‘a woman who wanted to be healed came up behind him and touched him, for she had been slowly bleeding for twelve years, and could find no cure...But the instant she touched the edge of his robe, the bleeding stopped’ (Luke 8:43-48).” This woman can be an example to us all if we want to be well. We cannot afford to stand back, waiting for a cure. Of course, we should avail ourselves of the best in medical help; but our first step should be to approach God in prayer for our healing. And, like the woman in the passage, we should persevere rather than be squeezed out by the crowd (those who would ridicule our seeking the Lord’s healing). Faith always seems to have been involved in the healing stories in the Bible—and not always the faith of the person needing to be healed. Like this woman, we should step forth boldly in faith for our own healing and the healing of our loved ones.

Suggested Scriptural References/Healing

Jeroboam is healed by the man of God from Judah (1 Kings 13:1-10);

Elijah brings a boy back to life (1 Kings 17:7-24);

Elisha also does the same (2 Kings 4:8-37);

Hezekiah, who was dying, is healed (2 Kings 20:1-11);
A plea for healing (Psalm 41);
Authority to heal is given to the Twelve by Jesus (Matthew 10:1-16);
Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31)
Peter heals a lame beggar (Acts 3:1-10);
The Apostles heal many (Acts 5:12-16);
Peter heals Aenas and Dorcas (Acts 9:32-42);
James' instructions for the prayer of healing (James 5:13-16).

Nineteen

Temptation

Worksheet:

What temptations commonly face people today?

What temptations plague you?

What have you found effective in resisting temptation?

An example from life: When I was a young man I experienced sexual temptations. I was delighted when a friend gave me a subscription to *Playboy* magazine (though I must say, parenthetically, that it wasn't as pornographic as it apparently is today), and I went to see movies that had explicit sexual content. I wasn't a practicing Christian at the time. When I became a Christian, I came under conviction about the matter. I realized that the best way to resist sexual temptation was to steer clear of material with sexual content.

An example from the Bible: David (2 Samuel 11:1-27).

Temptation, Commentary:

Gale D. Webbe wrote this about temptation: “In short, temptation is annoying, wearying, constant and—as we persevere—increasing, but it is not a negative or useless element. Nor is it, like a sand fly at a picnic, an intruding interruption into the otherwise good life. Temptation is of the everlasting nature of things. It obviously existed even before the fall of man; indeed it was the inciting cause of that disaster. Human freedom is real, even in a state of grace, as Adam and Eve discovered to our sorrow. Temptation is merely harder to fight, now that we are weaker.”

2 Samuel 11:1-27 tells of King David’s temptation on the occasion of seeing Bathsheba bathing. David was immediately consumed with lust, a strong temptation to do the wrong thing. At that point, he had the opportunity to resist the temptation; he could simply have turned aside and left the roof the moment he saw the naked woman. Instead, he indulged himself, found out who the woman was, sent for her and had sexual relations with her. It was a case of yielding completely to the temptation.

All of us are tempted in one way or another all day long. We are continually tempted in the “smaller things” such as going our own selfish way instead of doing what Jesus would do. Sometimes we also face the “bigger” temptations to be unfaithful, to steal, or to commit a violent act. In all of these situations, by the grace of God, we can resist.

Resisting temptation.

The Practical and the Biblical Approaches. The nature of temptation is such that it is impossible to separate the approaches to dealing with it into categories. Here are some guidelines:

- (1) Avoid, as best you can, getting into situations that tempt you.
- (2) Realize that it is Satan who is tempting you. A large part of success in resisting temptation comes from recognizing who is causing the problem, catching him at it, and telling him where he can go. Satan is the mastermind behind all of our temptations (see Ephesians 6:10-12).
- (3) Resist the devil. Scripture tells us that if we resist Satan's enticements, he will flee from us (see James 4:7-8).
- (4) Rejoice that the victory is ours in Jesus Christ. We do not have to be subject to the wiles of Satan. God promises that he will always provide a way of escape when we are tempted (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Suggested Scriptural References/Temptation

Adam, Eve and the snake in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-10);

A prayer for help when facing temptation (Psalm 141);

Jesus is tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11);

Jesus warns against (Matthew 18:7-9);

We will not be tempted beyond our ability to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:1-13);

Jesus has experienced temptation and so is able to sympathize with our weakness

(Hebrews 4:14—15:9);

Doesn't come from God (James 1:2-18).

Twenty

Patience

Worksheet:

What features of life today require people to be patient?

What are you having the most trouble being patient about?

What has worked for you in practicing patience?

An example from life: My wife says that patience is one of my best features. In fact, however, I am very impatient about a lot of things. Probably the thing that tests my patience the most (and I consistently fail!) is going shopping with her. When I go shopping it is because there is something I need, and I go and buy it. Women seem to look at shopping in an entirely different way, and it drives me up the wall.

An example from Scripture: Jacob (Genesis 29:15-28).

Patience, Commentary:

Patience implies waiting and enduring. Contrasted with the slogan, “Just do it,” its motto is “Take your time.” It is in patience that we recognize God as the Lord of time who does not run behind schedule.

Genesis 29:15-28 tells the story of Jacob, who had to work 14 years to earn the right to marry Rachel. Laban, the father of Rachel and Leah, tricked Jacob because Jacob did not know the custom of the land that the older daughter must be married first. So, after working seven years for Laban, Jacob was given Leah as a wife and then had to promise to work seven more years in order to marry Rachel, the one he truly loved.

In our day of “instant everything,” our first reaction is that Jacob’s plight seems harsh in the extreme. Yet, in real life, our patience is constantly tested. It can be as small a thing as being trapped in a traffic jam when we are late for work or for an appointment. It can be as great as a crippling injury or illness that seems to put our entire life on hold. We can either accept patience as a friend who is telling us to slow down, or we can rail against it as an enemy and suffer the consequences of ill temper and ill health.

Practicing patience.

The Practical and the Biblical Approaches. Once again, this seems to be a subject in which it is difficult to separate into categories. The two primary qualities needed in order to be patient are inner peace and living one day at a time. Inner peace comes from a stable relationship with God through prayer, Bible reading and worship. It helps us keep things in perspective, and focuses our attention on others and their needs rather than our selfish desires. Living one day at a time allows us to experience life at its fullest rather than fretting over things of the past or future.

Suggested Scriptural References/Patience

Joseph is left for a long time, forgotten in jail (Genesis 40:7-15, 23);

Trust in the Lord (Psalm 37:1-7);

Waiting patiently on the Lord (Psalm 40:1-5);

A day of rejoicing because the Lord has come (Isaiah 25:1-12);

Simeon’s patience in waiting for the Messiah (Luke 2:24-32);

Anna, who had been fasting and praying in the Temple (Luke 2:36-38);

The leader of the synagogue who had to wait for his daughter to be healed because of the interruption of the woman who touched Jesus in the crowd (Mark 5:22-43);

Jesus teaches about patience, using a fig tree as an illustration (Luke 13:6-9);

The parable of the weeds among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30);

Paul teaches about the value of patience (Romans 5:3-5);

Patience of the Thessalonians commended (1 Thessalonians 1:1-6);

Paul uses the example of his own patience to encourage Timothy (2 Timothy 3:10-17);

Encourages patience (Hebrews 10:35-39);

Let your patience grow (James 1:1-4);

Examples of patience given (James 5:7-11).

Twenty-one

Risk

Worksheet:

What risks do people face in our country today?

What risks are you facing?

How have you dealt with the risks that have faced you in the past?

An example from life: I'm a physical coward. I wouldn't think of skydiving or bungee jumping. I don't ski or run the rapids. I even declined a free ride in a hot air balloon. So, I was surprised years ago when a psychiatrist friend told my wife that I was one of the biggest risk-takers he knew. That was because I had left a great future in industry years ago to devote my life to Christian work. I've never really thought of it as having taken a risk simply because I think I would have been miserable if I had not done what I believed the Lord was calling me to do. I've done a lot of things I believed the Lord was asking me to do; so, if that is risk taking, I'm a risk-taker.

An example from Scripture: Rahab (Joshua 2:1-21).

Risk, Commentary:

Risk implies going out on a limb. We might call it gambling on God. It involves an extra measure of faith: knowledge of, and confidence in, a God who acts.

Rahab, in helping Joshua's spies, as told in Joshua 2:1-21, is an example of one willing to take a risk. Joshua had sent two spies into the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho, as a prelude to his invasion of the land. The two men spent the night at the house of Rahab, but someone alerted the authorities to the fact that they were there. Rahab, however, hid the men and gave misleading information as to where they had gone, thus saving their lives. She did so at the risk of her own life. She knew the story of how the Israelites had fled Egypt across the Red Sea and she instinctively believed that God was with these people. Therefore, despite her past as a prostitute, she opened a pathway to a new life in following God.

God doesn't place us in life-or-death situations of risk very often today, but our reputation, or job, or our standing in the community (including our church community!) can be affected by positions we take in obedience to him. Life is not without risk, but our biggest risk is that we get out of relationship with God, because that has eternal consequences.

Dealing with Risk.

A. The Practical Approach:

- (1) Don't be totally impetuous. Why are you taking this particular risk?
- (2) Consider the "horrible alternative" to taking this risk. If you think you're "getting cold feet," weigh the risk against what will happen if you don't take it.
- (3) Don't go it alone when there are others you respect with whom you could discuss your options.
- (4) And, if it is just fear of change that is holding you back, show some courage!

B. The Biblical Approach: There are four primary characteristics needed by those who will take risks for God, able to be recalled by the word ROAR:

- (1) **R**emembering (that God will equip you for anything he calls you to do),
- (2) **O**penness (to what God would have you do),
- (3) **A**vailability (having God's will as your priority), and
- (4) **R**eadiness (always being as prepared as you can be).

Suggested Scriptural References/Risk

Noah, doing exactly what God had told him to do, as unlikely as it sounded (Genesis 7:13-22);

Abram, in going where the Lord told him to go, although he had no idea what lay ahead of him (Genesis 12:1-5);

Moses' mother, in disobeying Pharaoh and providing for the baby (Exodus 1:22—2:1);

Ruth goes with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:3-22);

David against Goliath (1 Samuel 17:34-51);

Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:16-40);

Esther was willing to enter the king's chamber though it could have been fatal (Esther 4:16—5:14);

Daniel and his friends in declining to eat defiled food (Daniel 1:1-21);

The first disciples in following Jesus (Matthew 4:18-22);

Jesus' teaching on the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-35);

Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:1-53).

Twenty-two

Perseverance

Worksheet:

In what ways in our lives today do we need to persevere?

What are you presently facing that requires perseverance?

What methods of persevering have been helpful to you?

An example from life: We started the Bible Reading Fellowship in the United States 33 years ago with a personal loan from me of about \$2,000. We believed that the Lord was calling us to provide effective methods of Bible study to a denomination that was largely biblically ignorant. Over the years, as noted earlier, the denomination not only remained biblically ignorant for the most part, but its leadership moved steadily away from Scripture. Yet, over those same years, thousands of Christians have benefited from the ministry of the Bible Reading Fellowship, and it is still a thriving ministry years older than many ministries and businesses. Simply put, we have persevered.

An example from the Bible: Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:7-11.

Perseverance, Commentary:

To the Christian, one of our most disheartening experiences is when someone we knew to love and serve the Lord at one point in their lives is now turning their back on him. There are many enticements of the world to distract people from following the Lord today, and yet that was a concern in the early Church as well. God calls us to persevere in the faith, and to encourage others to do so as well.

God encourages us to persevere in prayer (Matthew 7:7-11) as well as in other aspects of our lives. Quitters aren't of much use in the kingdom of God. The Lord needs people who will witness to his love in every situation that gives them the opportunity to do so, and keep on doing so despite the odds.

As we saw earlier in Genesis 18:22-33, Abraham was a model of perseverance in pleading that Sodom be spared. Evil was so rampant in Sodom that God had decided that the only solution was to destroy it. Abraham, however, had relatives there and didn't want to see them destroyed. So, he started bargaining with God. His point was that if there are only a few people who are righteous, the city should be spared because of them. Boldly and honestly he went before the Lord to plead his case.

Why persevere?

The Practical and the Biblical Approaches. Once again it seems to make sense to combine our approaches in looking at perseverance. Here are some thoughts that can help us persevere:

- (1) Perseverance gets results. Like seeds planted in good soil, those who hear the Good News and cling to it bring in a manifold harvest for the Lord (Luke 8:15). Often, we do not know the good results of our perseverance in the lives of others; but, if we are faithful, it will happen.
- (2) Perseverance builds character and makes us stronger to face the trials of life (James 1:2-4). Problems can then be seen as opportunities for growth rather than as obstacles that impede our path.
- (3) Perseverance was demonstrated by Christ (Hebrews 12:1-3). Jesus endured great pain for us so that, following his example, we might be encouraged to keep our faith regardless of the consequences we face.
- (4) Perseverance leads to a crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:7-8). It is as we "run the race" of life in faith that God will reward us for our perseverance.

Suggested Scriptural References/Perseverance

Jacob's perseverance in seeking Rachel as his wife (Genesis 29:14b-30);

Joseph endured a lot of things; this is about his persistence in protecting Egypt from famine (Genesis 41:41-49);

The person who pursues good and avoids evil (Psalm 1);

Persevering in God's law (Psalm 119);

Jesus encourages persistence in prayer (Matthew 7:7-8);

The parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-14);

Nothing can separate us from Christ's love (Romans 8:35-39);
God's pursuing faithfulness (1 Corinthians 1:4-9);
Protecting ourselves by the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18);
Paul encourages Timothy to persevere (2 Timothy 2:1-7);
Perseverance in spiritual growth (Hebrews 6:1-6);
A call to perseverance in faith (Hebrews 10:19-39);
Run the race with perseverance (Hebrews 12:1-3).

Twenty-three

Conflicts in Relationships

Worksheet:

What are some examples of conflicting relationships we face in our world today?

About what do you need to resolve any conflicts in your relationships with others?

How have you gone about handling such conflicts in the past?

An example from life: My mother died when she was in her late 40s, and my father remained a widower for a number of years. When he remarried a widow in his late 50s, he only lived for a year. My siblings and I didn't like our stepmother, and we blamed his early death on her. We avoided having any relationship with her other than a condemning one. Then, one day when I was reading my Bible, I became convicted that my attitude toward our stepmother was un-Christian. I asked her forgiveness, and we had an excellent relationship for the remainder of her life.

An example from Scripture: Joseph (Genesis 45:1-28)

Handling Personal Conflicts, Commentary:

At the heart of personal conflicts is our need to forgive or be forgiven. In Scripture, God continually shows a willingness to forgive just by virtue of the fact that he did not completely destroy the Israelites in Old Testament times despite their frequent rebellion against and complacency toward him. The stories in the Old Testament that deal with forgiveness lack the depth of understanding that Jesus taught and demonstrated. Jesus brought the subject to a new level. He not only made crystal clear that, through him, God forgives our sins, but he made it equally clear that we are to forgive others. Love and forgiveness may well be the two most important subjects in the Bible.

A classic example of forgiveness in Scripture is in Genesis 45:1-28 where Joseph forgives his brothers. Out of jealousy, Joseph's brothers had first thrown him into a pit where they were thinking of leaving him to die, and then sold him into slavery to some Egyptians who happened by. Fortunately, what the brothers intended for evil, God intended for good (Genesis 50:20). Joseph prospered in Egypt, and ended up being the savior of his family as they faced famine.

Most of us would find it difficult to be as forgiving as Joseph. If you remember all of the problems Joseph faced and how they turned into good, you have to believe that Joseph is the Bible's prime example of a person with a positive attitude. But, in our case, even if things had worked out for us in the long run (Romans 8:28), would we have been willing to forgive treachery of the dimensions that Joseph faced? That's what God would want of us.

New Testament forgiveness has a certain imperative for us in the post-resurrection age. Jesus asks us to ask God to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others. In the verses immediately following the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:14,15), Jesus states clearly that a quid pro quo exists that if we cannot forgive others, we may not expect forgiveness from God. This is an injunction that we cannot ignore.

Steps to Forgiveness.

A. The Practical Approach. According to Doris Donnelly, one of the principal Christian writers on forgiveness, here are the steps to forgiving another:

- (1) *Acknowledge the hurt; affirm the pain.* This is not as easy as it sounds; it means admitting our own humanity, that we're not immune to the thoughtless, selfish acts of another person. It also means acknowledging that we have not been able to snap out of the bad feelings toward that person. That's okay; it's honest. And, it is the first step in beginning to forgive. Otherwise, the feeling festers and brings serious problems.
- (2) *Decide to forgive.* Make a conscious act of the will for the spirit to forgive. We don't have to decide at this point how we will forgive, only that we will.
- (3) *Recognize that forgiveness is a process and may take some time.* Just as most physical hurts take time to heal, so do hurt relationships. Don't look for the quick fix; be willing to give time to the healing process.

- (4) *Be realistic about the fact that forgiveness is not easy.* Some things that look like forgiveness are easy, such as the martyr's response ("That's all right; I always get slighted") and the phony reconciliation ("Don't worry; it didn't bother me a bit"). But real forgiveness always involves a little death that is not pleasant and is not easy to endure.
- (5) *Recognize that forgiveness is worth it.* Think of stories of others who have forgiven and been glad they did. Recall personal victories through forgiveness. Remember that Jesus taught forgiveness. Consider the horrible alternative of carrying the bitterness.

B. A Biblical Approach. In addition to the above, Donnelly recommends that we *Develop a plan of forgiveness and carry it out.* Here are some ways to do that:

- (1) Pray. Seek God's guidance about the situation.
- (2) Try "walking in the other person's shoes" for long enough to experience their point of view. What was going on then in that person's life that caused the offense, or at least contributed to it?
- (3) Consider whether to tell the person who offended you that you are forgiving him or her. If sharing that information will help, do it; if it will only compound the problem, don't.
- (4) If possible, share your act of forgiveness with another person. This helps seal your commitment to forgive, and also tests it.
- (5) If appropriate, undertake some symbolic act—perhaps anonymously—to evidence the forgiveness. An example would be doing something nice for the offending person.
- (6) Pray for the person for some specified period of time. It will help the healing process and it will cause us to care for and perhaps better understand the other person.

Suggested Scriptural References/Forgiveness

Esau forgives Jacob (Genesis 32:1-31; 33:13-20);
 God's forgiveness brings joy (Psalm 32:1-11);
 Assurance of God's forgiveness (Psalm 130:1-8);
 Jesus, in connection with the Lord's Prayer, teaches on forgiveness (Matthew 6:12-15);
 Jesus forgives the paralyzed man (Matthew 9:1-8);
 The Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor. (Matthew 18:21-35);
 At the Last Supper, Jesus refers to his blood of the covenant, poured out for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:20-26,29-30);
 Jesus forgives the woman who anointed his feet, and explains to Simon the Pharisee the depth of love that follows forgiveness (Luke 7:36-50);
 Jesus, from the cross, asks God to forgive those who are crucifying him (Luke 23:32-34);
 Jesus does not condemn the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11);
 Jesus forgives Peter for betraying him (John 21:15-19);
 Paul teaches on forgiveness for the sinner (2 Corinthians 2:5-11);
 Forgiveness was attained for us by Christ (Colossians 2:6-15).

Twenty-four

Prayer

Worksheet:

What are some things we need to be praying about in our world today?

What do you need to be praying about?

How do you pray?

An example from life: My wife and I had the privilege of leading an international prayer fellowship for eleven years. It was a wonderful experience. We went all over the United States and to Canada, Germany and England doing workshops on prayer. Obviously, to perform the work of that ministry, we needed to know something about prayer. What we learned more than anything else is that there is always more to learn about God and our prayer relationship with him. We are still learning today.

An example from Scripture: Abraham's servant (Genesis 24:1-67)

Prayer, Commentary:

Christian spirituality is centered in the Bible. Scripture represents our instruction book on how to grow in the love and knowledge of God. Thus, if we are going to learn about prayer, the Bible is the primary source book from which to learn. Set forth below are the prayers in the Bible. In a sense, virtually all of the psalms are prayers, so they are not included in this listing.

Genesis 24:1-67 tells about Abraham's servant seeking a wife for Isaac. In many ways, it must have been an uncomfortable journey. The expectations were high because Isaac was to father a great nation. The prayers at verses 12-14 and 26-27 are the key. The first one is for guidance, and that guidance is provided. The second is in praise and thanksgiving for the guidance received. When God answers our prayers, we should always honor him for his faithfulness.

How to Pray.

A Biblical Approach: the five facets of prayer. Many people find it helpful to pray daily by way of a method that is commonly called "the five facets of prayer." This involves beginning with Adoration (Praise), then going to Thanksgiving, next to Confession, then Intercession and finally Petition, in this manner:

- (1) Adoration/Praise. This is praising God, loving him for who he is, and is the ideal way to begin prayer. The Bible, especially the psalms, can be helpful in praising God, as can a hymnal.
- (2) Thanksgiving. Here we thank God for all he does for us, for our family and friends, for faith in him, for good health, a happy home, the work he gives us to do, and whatever else we have to be grateful for.
- (3) Confession. We ask God to forgive us for anything we have done that we shouldn't have done, or have failed to do that we should have done.
- (4) Intercession. This is our opportunity to pray for others, especially our loved ones and people in any kind of need.
- (5) Petition. Finally, we pray for ourselves, that we may be in God's will and that our life may be spent as he would have us spend it. We especially ask for God's help and guidance in specific situations we are facing.

Suggested Scriptural References/Prayer

Noah's, concerning Shem and Jephath (Genesis 9:26-27);

Abram's, despairing of his childlessness (Genesis 15:2-3, 8);

Jacob's, following the dream in which angels were ascending and descending a ladder to heaven (Genesis 28:20-22);

Jacob's, preparing to meet Esau (Genesis 32:9-12);

Moses', following rejection by both Pharaoh and his own people (Exodus 5:22-23);

Moses', responding to the Israelites' cry for water (Exodus 17:4);

Moses', following the golden calf incident (Exodus 32:31-32);

Moses', seeking the Lord's glory (Exodus 33:12-13, 15-16, 18);

Moses', asking God to remain present to the Israelites (Exodus 34:9);

The priestly blessing (Numbers 6:24-26);

The prayers of Moses upon beginning and ending a march in the wilderness (Numbers 10:35-36);
 Moses', for Miriam (Numbers 12:13);
 Moses', to see the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 3:24-26);
 Joshua's, that the sun stand still so the battle could continue in daylight (Joshua 10:12-13);
 The prayer of Manoah, Samson's father (Judges 13:8);
 Samson's, seeking strength to gain revenge on the Philistines (Judges 16:28);
 Boaz blesses those harvesting his field (Ruth 2:4);
 Hannah's, for a son (1 Samuel 1:11);
 David's, seeking the Lord's guidance (1 Samuel 23:10);
 David's, upon God's covenant with him and his household forever (2 Samuel 7:18-29);
 David's, that Absalom's adviser's words would be turned to foolishness (2 Samuel 15:31);
 David's, of thanksgiving on Solomon being anointed king (1 Kings 1:48);
 Solomon's, for wisdom (1 Kings 3:6-9);
 Solomon's prayer of dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8:23-53);
 Elijah's, that the child be brought back to life (1 Kings 17:20-21);
 Elijah's, to die (1 Kings 19:4b);
 Elisha's, that his servant might see the heavenly host protecting them, and that the enemy be blinded (2 Kings 6:17-18);
 Hezekiah's, for deliverance from capture by the Assyrians (2 Kings 19:15-19);
 Hezekiah's, not to die from his illness (2 Kings 20:3);
 David's prayer of praise for gifts toward the building of the Temple (1 Chronicles 29:10-20);
 Jehoshaphat's, in the approaching battle with Moab and Ammon (2 Chronicles 20:6-12);
 Ezra's, in shame for the disobedience of the exiles who had first returned to Judah (Ezra 9:5-15);
 Nehemiah's, concerning the situation in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:5-11);
 Nehemiah's, that God would remember his kindness to the poor (Nehemiah 5:19);
 Nehemiah's, for strength to deal with intimidation (Nehemiah 6:9b);
 Nehemiah's, that God would punish those who opposed him (Nehemiah 6:14);
 All of the psalms are in the nature of prayers (Psalms 1-150);
 Jeremiah's prayer (Jeremiah 32:17-25);
 Daniel's prayer (Daniel 9:15-19);
 The prayer of those on the ship with Jonah (Jonah 1:14);
 Jonah's prayer (Jonah 2:2-9);
 Habakkuk's prayer (Habakkuk 3:1-19);
 The Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13);
 Jesus', in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39, 42);
 Jesus', on the cross (Matthew 27:46);
 Jesus' prayer for himself, his disciples and future believers (John 17:1-26);
 Of the infant Church (Acts 4:24-30);
 Ananais prays for Paul (Acts 9:17);
 Paul's, for the Ephesians (Ephesians 1:15-18; 3:14-21);
 Paul's, for the Philippians (Philippians 1:9-11);
 Paul's, for the Colossians (Colossians 1:9).