

Meditations



*“Becoming a Person
After God’s Own Heart”*

Ed and Janice Blankenship

***“As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, O God.”***
Psalms 42:1

We need to refresh ourselves in God. Will you drink?

There is a hunger and thirst within each of us that only God can satisfy. It certainly begins by coming to know Jesus personally through salvation. Inviting Christ into your heart and receiving God's gift of salvation is the start of a wonderful experience, both here on earth and in eternity!

But it shouldn't just stop there. God wants us to grow in our knowledge and love for Him each day, and to drink deep of Him. But we are so busy with our modern daily lives, how is this even possible today? The answer is meditation. It allows this. In this study you will get apart with Him daily, hide His Word in your heart, study anew examples of those who truly had a heart for God, and spend extended time with Him in the Word and prayer. These begin to satisfy the deep longings of your heart!

Included are tools to help you continue, deepen, and satisfy that thirst for God - a daily journal, prayer pages, a New Testament reading plan, and a page to help you set goals for your spiritual life. Included is helps for the small group leader and ways to build greater accountability into your small group. Take your group, not to a higher level, but to a deeper one!



Ed and Janice Blankenship have a strong desire to help people develop a heart for God. Ed came to Christ in college through the ministry of The Navigators where he was discipled and taught how to have a daily Quiet Time. Janice came to Christ through a revival service and grew spiritually when she also began daily getting into the Word and meeting with God.

They served 12 years on staff with the Navigators Church Discipleship Ministry in Arkansas and Tennessee where Ed helped churches establish discipleship ministries. They are now members of Stafford Crossing Community Church near Fredericksburg, Virginia where they teach a class on “Growing” and lead a Growth Group using the Navigators *Colossians 2:7 Discipleship Series*. Ed is currently employed as a civilian analyst for the United States Marine Corps and works at the Pentagon. Janice is a retired nurse and homemaker. They have three grown children and five terrific grand-children.

Meditations

Mega Book Mark

*“Becoming a Person
After God’s Own Heart”*

*“As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, O God.”*
Psalms 42:1

We need to refresh ourselves in God.



Will you drink of Him today?

**Here is a suggested guideline for a
QUARTERLY PERSONAL PLANNING RETREAT**

Bring: Bible, Paper, Pens, Songbook, Prayer Lists, Snack/Drink

Variety: Walk, Pray, Read, Kneel, Stand, Sit, Sing, Aloud, Quietly

During this time attempt to answer the questions:
Who are you, Lord? - What would you have me do?

A. 1ST HOUR - FOCUS ON GOD

- **Realize His presence** – Read, meditate, and pray on passages about God, such as Isaiah 40:31, Psalms 27:13-14, Psalms 62:5-8, Psalms 139, and Genesis 28:16.
- **Grasp His Holiness and Our Need for Cleansing** – Read, meditate, and pray on such passages as Revelations 4, Isaiah 6:1-8, Psalms 139, Psalms 51, Psalms 32, and 1 John 1:9. Confess any sin that God reveals.
- **Worship Him** – Sing some Praise songs and read passages such as Psalms 103, Psalms 111, Revelations 5. Give thanks.

B. 2ND HOUR – FOCUS ON PRAYER

1st. PRAYER FOR OTHERS – Family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, missionaries, leaders, enemies, etc. Use prayer and missionary letters if you like.

- **Pray specific things** – Spiritual strength, physical stamina, mental alertness, salvation, spiritual growth, family, relationships, effective ministry.
- **Pray one of Paul's prayers for others** – Such as Philippians 1, Colossians 1, Ephesians 1, or Ephesians 3.
- **Pray for others what you pray for yourself.** – Think of your needs and pray for others.

2nd. PRAYER FOR YOURSELF (Could come 1st if facing an important issue.)

- **Guidance & wisdom** – Read and reflect on Psalms 119:18, Meditate on Scripture you've memorized or enjoyed from this or some other study.
- **Godliness** – Meditate on 1 John 1:9, Philippians 4:8, Galatians 5:22-23.
- **Concerns & needs** – Look into Scripture (Read a small book of the New Testament such as Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Titus, James, or 1 John), Look for specific direction or promises to claim. Then pray over issues facing you, asking for His help. Things such as your walk with God, your relationships, and your ministry.

C. 3RD HOUR – FOCUS ON PLANNING

- **Review and meditate on Scripture** such as Philippians 4:13, Psalms 90:10&12, Psalms 119:105, Proverbs 16:9, Jeremiah 29:11, John 4:34, and 1 Chronicles 4:10.
- **Reflect on your Schedule and Activities (Write down any needed changes)**
 - What am I not doing that I should do?
 - What am I doing that I should stop, or do less?
 - Who and what are my priorities?
 - What should be my main objectives?

Closing Prayer: Read/pray one of the closing Psalms (145-150).

Meditations

*Becoming a Person
After God's Own Heart...*

A Spiritual Journey

Dedication

To our Parents, who are now with Lord, for loving us and for teaching us right from wrong.

To Jim and Rachel Webster who were our substitute parents during the early years of our marriage when we were far away from our parents.

We thank you all for being there for us!

Studies in The Transformation Series

- *Reflections* – Spending Time With God
- *Excavations* – Digging Deep Into God’s Word
- *Meditations* – Becoming a Person After God’s Own Heart
- *Directions* – Moving Others Towards Christ

And a stand-alone 3-month journal called *Life’s Log Book* – My Time With God

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Intro to the Bible and Prayer

The Bible actually consists of numerous individual "books". The table of contents in your Bible should be used to help you locate the individual "books" of the Bible. Note that some book titles are very similar, such as the book of John, the book of 1 John, the book of 2 John, and finally the book of 3 John. If a particular verse you are looking up doesn't make sense in regards to the question, you may be in the wrong Bible book! The references to Bible passages in this study are in the traditional manner - by book, chapter, and verse. So John 3:16 refers to the book of John in the Bible, chapter 3, the 16th verse.

It is helpful to have a separate Bible for Bible study in addition to the paperback Bible or New Testament used for your Quiet Time. Bibles are available in any book, department, or discount store. There are major differences in the language used by different versions of the Bible sold today. Some versions (e.g. the King James Version) were translated in the 1600s and use old English. Others use modern English. Make sure you use a Bible you can fully understand for your study as well as your Quiet Time.

It is important for every Christian to read their Bible regularly. The New Testament is an excellent place to start reading. Use the chart near the back of this study to keep track of your reading in the New Testament. This chart lists every book of the New Testament and every chapter number. Put an "X" through the chapter numbers as you read them.

Many Christians use prayer lists to be more consistent in their prayer life. In the back you will find several prayer pages that have a column for specific prayer requests and another for God's answers. Remember that God can answer in 3 ways – Yes, No, or Wait. If he answers No or Wait, he is not trying to be mean, but knows that this isn't either the best thing or not the right time! Keep praying, be specific, and be consistent in your prayers and God will bless you with many wonderful answers to prayer! (Colossians 4:2)

Purpose of this Study and Suggested Use

God wants each of us to be communing with Him daily; to spend time regularly in His Word and to pray for ourself and for others. That is part of the purpose of this study, to provide help and encouragement to do so on a daily basis. In this study we do this by teaching a concept called a daily Quiet Time, or Devotional Time as often called. Not only do we teach it, but in this study we also practice it together, where we each have individual times with God regularly and share what we've gotten out of those Quiet Times with each other weekly.

But it should go deeper than that. During this study we will do Scripture memorization, learn how to meditate on His Word, and do Bible studies that are more reflective in nature, yet grounded in His Word. We will also have a special session, called "Celebrate God!" which we believe will be a real highlight for the group. You will also learn how to continue this beyond the 7 weeks by having Quarterly Personal Planning Retreats.

We also have a Goals page which allows us to tailor the study to meet our own needs. The purpose of this is to include some accountability which we all need, to insure that the concepts we learn are also the concepts we practice. This study is intended for small group use, with each member having his or her own copy. The Bible lessons are meant to be filled out before the group meets. The lessons aren't long or difficult, but will require about two hours each week as homework.

This study is also a journal designed to be used for 10-15 minutes on a daily basis. During these 7 weeks you will have a Quiet Time daily. Our hope and prayer is that God will show you some key insights from His Word. You will record

those thoughts on the Journal Pages in the back. Then each week we will all share from our Journal Pages what God has impressed on our hearts and minds. The purpose behind all this is not to fill out blanks on a sheet, nor is it even to achieve certain goals, but to meet with God on a daily basis as often as we can. When we do that, He will change our lives! We trust God will do this in your life as you walk with Him every day.

For the Small Group Leader

Thanks for leading this study in your small group! I encourage you to model what is being taught by doing the lessons ahead of time and then applying them to your life. This is particularly important as far as the Quiet Time is concerned. In week 1 you will share what the Quiet Time has meant to you. Even if you have had a Quiet Time regularly, we encourage you to do the practice Quiet Time in week 1 ahead of time and use the Journal Pages for 2 weeks to personally see the benefits before you teach it in your group.

Each week, there is material that is to be read. It is best if this is read aloud by group members (rather than by the leader), going around the room and letting each person read a paragraph aloud, in sequence. This allows even the quiet person to hear his or her voice in the group and participate.

Each week group members will be sharing something they have written down on their Journal. This is not to be rushed. In week 1, during the practice session have everyone share as time permits. In subsequent weeks, ask for volunteers, and encourage them in what they have written down. Try to allow for all to share, including yourself, even going first at times. Note that it is recommended that members choose their own book in the Bible to read rather than assigning specific devotional readings. This allows for better sharing.

Encourage members to get a paperback New Testament or Bible for their Quiet Times so they will feel free to mark in it. They may want a different Bible for their Bible study.

The Goals Page is meant to be a measure of accountability to help encourage members to complete the assignments and have regular Quiet Times. Allow time for people to share their accomplished goals and get them initialed off weekly. As the leader you may want to add a note of encouragement!

A special part of this study is Celebrate GOD in week 6. This is a time for your group to reflect on God and devote themselves to prayer and His Word. It should be an encouraging time. You as the leader will have some additional planning to do prior to week 6. There will be singing, so you need to decide if you will have any kind of accompanying music (such as with a CD or with musicians) or whether people will simply sing with song books or hymnals. You may want to decorate appropriately and have some additional aids such as a world map, pictures of missionaries, newspapers or news articles to add some variety. Some of the time you will be together, other times you will want to break up in smaller groups. You will be reading His Word, praying His Word, singing, reading silently, praying silently, and sharing for variety. Have a small shoebox and some blank index cards. The time is broken into four parts, each one designed to last approximately 30 minutes, making the entire time about two hours. Please read through week 6 at least several weeks prior to that time so you can ask others in the group to get involved. In Part 3 particularly you will need several volunteers to take one of the focus areas: Your Church, Government (City State and Country), Missionaries and the World, and the Poor, Oppressed and Helpless. Have an individual tell a little bit about that focus area, read the Scripture, and then pray. You can also have someone in your group or outside the group come and share about a specific

ministry or two for a few minutes. Someone could then pray for that ministry.

There is a unique way of praying introduced in week 6 called “One-word prayers”. This is a way to get people in your group praying in a rapid, dynamic, and meaningful way. You as the leader will start this time by explaining it in prayer. You will end your prayer with one, or sometimes two words. The purpose of the prayer is to Praise God by saying one word describing Him such as “Faithful”, “Wonderful”, “Kind”, etc. After an introductory prayer you’ll end by saying your “one-word” and then others will say their “one-word” about God such as “Holy”, “Lord”, “Compassionate”, “Loving”, or “All-Knowing” for example. Only say one word, however, then stop immediately, and let others say their one or two words, one person after another. After a while people get the hang of it, and they become more spontaneous and one word often leads to another related word which is really encouraging, such as “Loving”, “Mercy”, “Thoughtful, Forgiving”, etc. As the leader you will need to pray more initially until people get the idea of how these type of prayers should work. So have several thoughts in mind if needed, but definitely pray as the Spirit leads. There will be times when the words come from different people one right after another, and other times when it almost stops. The leader praying a word can often get things going again. If you feel led to pray a word, do so. When there is a lull in the prayers and you feel it has completely ended, then say “Amen”, and go on to a song as indicated.

WEEK 1

Get acquainted and open in prayer

Read the material on My Pursuit of God

Leader share about his or her Quiet Time

Read the material on Personal Worship (“Quiet Time”)

Practice having a Quiet Time

Share practice Quiet Time writings

Discuss assignment for next week

Close in Prayer

My Pursuit of God

By Janice

I grew up on a farm in northern Missouri. Our family worked hard but we always went to church together every Sunday. My elementary school was a two-room school-house for grades 1-8. I was rather shy and had just a few close friends. As I became a teenager and went on to high school, I started to make more friends. It was while I was in high school that I decided I wanted to be a nurse. I really did enjoy helping people. So after high school, I went to a local junior college and then on to nursing school. It was hard work, but I really enjoyed caring for patients. It was while I was in nursing school that I met my future husband, Ed. After graduation we were married. We have lived in several states and had the privilege of raising three children. Our children are now all married and we have four delightful grandchildren. It is a great joy being a wife, a mother, and grandmother.

But the greatest joy I have experienced goes back to the little country church I attended with my family growing up. It was there I learned what the Bible said about my relationship with God. They told me everyone has done things that separate us from God. But Jesus, God’s Son, paid the penalty for these wrong-doings, by dying on the cross and then rising again. His death made it possible for me to have abundant life here on earth and to be with Him in Heaven when I died. All I had to do was pray and ask Jesus to come take control of my life. I did this one evening at church, and experienced a peace I hadn’t had before. I know

that Jesus has helped me be a better wife and mother, and also helped me overcome much of the shyness I had as a child. And best of all, I know when I die; I will be with Jesus in Heaven.

But at first in my Christian life I didn't really grow very much. I was used to going to church and listening to a sermon, but that was it. I had no intake of the Word the rest of the week. But when I met my future husband Ed, I noticed he was a growing Christian. He memorized Scripture and was in a Bible study. After we were married he encouraged me to get into the Word myself. We not only got involved in a local church where we lived, but also went to regular Bible studies and I learned how to have a daily devotional time. I enjoyed the Bible studies especially as I had not been in the Bible on a regular basis before. I began to see growth in my walk with God. It was wonderful!

But there was one particular time when I found myself in a spiritual slump. I felt like I was going through the motions of being a Believer. I remember one day looking out the window asking God to bring me back to a closer walk with Him! I prayed for God to give me an increased desire for Him.

Around that time I also started reading *The Pursuit of God* by A. W. Tozer. God really started to open my heart to what he was saying. I needed to desire God and God alone. I also meditated on Psalms 42 at this time. The first verse says, "As the deer pants for the waterbrooks, so my soul pants for thee, O God." What a visual picture of how I should be desiring God! So I started to pray this verse for myself, for Ed, and for other family and friends. Well God did answer that prayer, as I began to see new things in His Word, and see my desire for God and His Word grow in my life. I began to experience a joy for the Lord I had not thought possible. Ed also developed a new hunger for the Lord. God truly became the joy of my life!

Now whenever I begin to feel I need a boost in my spiritual life, I think and pray about Psalms 42, and remember how I am to desire God and God alone. He always lifts me up and helps me walk close to Him. I strongly urge for you to pray for God's renewal in your life also. That is part of the purpose behind this study. And hide His Word in your heart and meditate on it daily. Getting in His Word and praying daily is key, so we will begin in the area of daily devotions as they will be part of the foundation God will build upon. I know I've found the Quiet

Time to be something I look forward to each morning. My hope and prayer is that you'll find real joy in pursuing Him too! Let's start our journey of spiritual renewal now, beginning with the daily Quiet Time.

Personal Worship (“Quiet Time”)

The most exciting opportunity in life is the privilege of walking close to God. That certainly begins by coming to know Jesus personally through salvation. Inviting Christ into your heart and receiving God's gift of salvation is the start of a wonderful experience, here and in eternity!

But it shouldn't just stop there. God wants us to grow in our knowledge and love for Him each day. But how does a believer do this? The answer is simple - "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." James 4:8a. "Drawing near to God" involves daily meeting Him, talking with Him, and He with you. As we do this, we begin to build a deeper and deeper relationship with Him, the most important relationship of all.

One key habit that can help build this deeper relationship with God is having a daily "quiet time", or a daily "devotional" as it is sometimes called. This is a time of Bible reading and prayer where you quiet your heart before God and listen to Him through His Word and then also commune (or talk) with Him in prayer. It doesn't have to be long, maybe just 5 to 10 minutes at first, but it is a time you will soon find grows and means more and more to you each day!

WHY HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME?

First, God desires to meet with you daily! He died on the cross to make that a possibility. Each and every day, He is interested in your life, and having a daily quiet time is a wonderful way to commune with Christ.

Secondly, you need a daily quiet time. By doing so, you will get to know Jesus better. It will enrich your day. God will use it for cleansing and to guide you in everyday decisions. It will help in all areas of your life.

Third, it will give you something to share with others. A passage you read today may be just what someone else needs to hear. Keeping a journal is an excellent way to have those thoughts from God available to you for others' needs.

HOW TO HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME.

While there are many ways to have a quiet time with God, here is one that can often work best to get you started.

1. Find a quiet place, apart from distractions, where you can be alone. Many find the morning to be the best time.
2. Pray, telling God you love Him, and ask for wisdom and for Him to speak to your heart. Also thank Him, and confess any sin that comes to your mind.
3. Read a passage in the Bible. Start with a chapter, perhaps in the New Testament, particularly if the quiet time is a new concept. As you read, underline verses that stand out to you. Many people prefer a paperback Bible for their quiet time so they feel "more free" to underline.
4. When completed reading, go back and review the verses you underlined. Pick one underlined verse that impresses you. Fill out a journal entry on it. For the appropriate day, write down in a journal what you read in the Bible, what verse stood out to you the most, what that verse said (paraphrase it or put down what it said verbatim), how it impressed you, and your response. Here's an example:
◊ **Monday:** Date: 12/4/09 What I read: Phillipians 1 Best Verse: 25
What it said: Paul lived so he can help others grow and experience the joy of salvation.
How it impressed me: He was focused on helping people grow more mature in their faith.
My response: Lord, help me (and use me) to help others grow and experience You daily!
5. After completing your journal entry, talk to God in prayer about this verse, how it impacts you, and how you want to respond as a result of it. Then go on to pray about other items from your daily prayer list(s).

Practice Having a Quiet Time

Read and mark the passage that corresponds with your birthday, then fill out the practice journal entry that follows:

Birthday is January 1 – March 31

Psalms 23 1. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. 2. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3. he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (NIV)

Birthday is April 1 – June 30

Psalms 1 1. Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. 4. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. 5. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. (NIV)

Practice Journal Entry

◊ **Today:** Date: _____ What I read: _____ Best Verse: _____

What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

Read and mark the passage that corresponds with your birthday, then fill out the sample journal entry that follows:

Birthday is July 1 – September 30

1 John 1

1. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4. We write this to make our joy complete. 5. This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. (NIV)

Practice Journal Entry

◊ **Today:** Date: _____ What I read: _____ Best Verse: _____

What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

Read and mark the passage that corresponds with your birthday, then fill out the sample journal entry that follows:

Birthday is October 1 – December 31

1 Thessalonians 1

1. Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you. 2. We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. 3. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5. because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia--your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9. for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10. and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. (NIV)

Practice Journal Entry

◊ **Today:** Date: _____ What I read: _____ Best Verse: _____

What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

Assignment for next week

1. Get a paperback Bible or New Testament in a version you prefer and begin reading in it daily wherever you like. You have just read an entire chapter of one of the books of the Bible during our practice time. You may want to continue in the same book by reading the next chapter in that book. The book of John is also a good place to start if the Bible is new to you. (Note that the Bible actually consists of numerous individual "books". Use the table of contents in your Bible or New Testament to find a particular "book".) Each day, underline what stands out to you, pick one underlined verse and complete a journal record. Be ready to share at least one journal entry next week.
2. Complete as much of the lesson for next week as you can before your group meets. The group will look up some of the verses next week during your small group time, but will allow for group members to share what they have learned from their preparation. It has been shown that adults learn best by discovering for themselves rather than simply being taught. Taking the time to answer the questions will allow you to learn key truths on your own and then be able to share them with others in the group. This will allow you to share not only your own opinion, but also the knowledge you are gaining from getting in the Word. Remember, the more you put into your study, the more you will get out of it. As 2 Timothy 2:15 says "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

WEEK 2

Get further acquainted

Open in prayer

Time for Group Members to share from their Quiet Time

Read the material on Scripture Memory and Meditation

Discuss Lesson 1, Having a “Heart” for God, Part 1

Discuss assignment for next week

Close in Prayer

SCRIPTURE MEMORY AND MEDITATION

There are particular verses that you will find that mean so much to you or impact your life in such a significant way that it makes sense to commit them to memory so you can carry them with you everywhere! During this study you will learn 4 verses. They are:

1. Having a Heart for God, Psalms 42:1-2
2. Obedience and Love, John 14:21
3. Importance of the Word, Psalms 119:105
4. Christ’s Example, Mark 1:35

These verses are printed out on cards in the back of the book. Please cut them out this week and carry them with you. (Also in the front of this study is a bookmark you can cut out and use.) Begin to memorize and put them in your heart and mind. Learn a phrase at a time, adding phrases until you can say it all from memory. And also learn the reference (or address) of the verse as well (e.g., John 3:16) so you can show someone else where it is. Topics to a verse can also be helpful, so learn the topics as well. Work on one verse at a time until you know it, then go on to the next one, continuing to review the verses you’ve already learned.

Research has shown that once you can say a verse from memory, however, you will be unable to do so in about an hour. But you will find that it will then take much less time to re-learn it. The same thing then occurs about a day later, a week later, etc., but

each time taking less and less time to re-learn. Eventually it will be in there for good. I know verses I learned 42 years ago, and it's made such an impact on my life that I'm still learning new ones today. So the key to remembering a verse is not only to memorize it, but also to review. So review your verses daily. You can put a check mark through the small diamond symbol in front of the day of the week on your Quiet Time Journal entry to show you've reviewed your verses that day. That will help with consistency. Reviewing with another person is also helpful, and will be an encouragement to them.

Think about this, if the Bible is ever banned, the verses we've memorized will be the only ones we'll have. But even now, with Bibles in every book store and home, there are times during the day when we don't have one with us, or it is impractical to pull out our Bibles. So at those times, the verses you've memorized are all that you have at that particular moment. The Holy Spirit will then use the verses you've memorized in your life and help you to be a ministry to others at any time! God bless you as you memorize His Word.

Lesson 1 Having a Heart for God, Part 1

In Acts 13:22, David is described as a man after God's own heart. He wrote many of the Psalms which speak of his love for God, and he was deemed so upright that the kings of Israel and Judah were judged against David. He was certainly devoted to God, and had a heart for Him, yet he still sinned (see 2 Samuel 11). David wasn't perfect, only Jesus was. And Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." So we want to begin our study of being a person after God's own heart by studying the "heart". What is the "heart", what does it do, how do we reach it, and what issues does our heart have problems with? Finally we want to look at how God touches our heart and how we can have a heart for God.

What is our “Heart” and What does it Do?

1. How does the Bible say about our “heart”?

Jeremiah 17:9

Proverbs 4:23

How do you think it does this (determines the course of our life)?

We start out with a deceitful heart, but what does God want to give us? Ezekiel 36:26

2. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being hard-hearted, 10 being soft-hearted) how would you rate your heart? _____

Why is this important? (Luke 6:45)

3. What are some of the many things a good “heart” can do?

Deuteronomy 4:29

Deuteronomy 5:29

Psalms 15:2

Proverbs 17:22

Jeremiah 24:7

Romans 1:9

Romans 10:1

Which of these are the hardest for you to do and why?

Which of the above are most important to you and why?

In what ways do you recognize God during your day? What helps you do this?

4. When we become Christians what does God want our “heart” to become?

Psalms 19:14

2 Corinthians 3:3

Our “heart” is a well that everything else in our life pours out from. If good goes into it, then good comes out. If bad goes into it, then bad comes out. Our “heart” can do many things: find God, fear Him, speak the truth (or lies), etc. When we become a Christian, our “heart” then becomes one of God’s “love letters” to be read by others. Is your “heart love letter” on the “top 10” (or bestseller) list? Or is your “heart” still a stone? How would you rate your heart now?

Issues with Our “Heart”

5. What are some of the things our “heart” can go after besides God?

Ezekiel 20:16

Ezekiel 28:5

Matthew 5:28

Matthew 6:21

Luke 21:34

Which of these do you struggle with?

6. What can our “heart” become if NOT “right” with God?
2 Chronicles 32:25

Psalm 17:10

Matthew 15:19

Luke 6:45

What does God give us to help? 1 John 1:9

7. What happens when our “heart” IS RIGHT with God?
Ezekiel 11:19

Luke 6:45

Our “heart” is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked says Jeremiah 17:9. Our “heart” can lust after money, women (or men), or idols instead of after God. Our “heart” often becomes proud, troubled, calloused, or “stony”. The outcome can become a variety of evil acts apart from Christ. However with God it produces good fruit. Next week in Part 2 of this study we’ll see what can be done to improve our “Heart” and also how we can get a “Heart” for God.

Application: Look back over this lesson. What do you think God would have you do in regards to your heart?

Assignment for next week

1. Continue your Bible reading and marking in your daily Quiet Time. Continue to record your daily journal entries and come prepared to share at least one entry from your journal next week.
2. Complete the Bible study lesson for next time. Next week we will continue to look up some verses in the group time, but the majority of the time will be spent sharing what we’ve already written down in preparation. Again, you will get much more out of the lesson, if you complete the Bible study for next week ahead of time, using your regular Bible to look up the verses and then write down your answers to the questions.
3. Memorize the verse on Psalms 42:1-2. Then review it daily until you can quote it correctly without needing to look at it. You will say it next week to someone in your group.

WEEK 3

Open in prayer

Read Reviewing Verses with Someone

Review your memory verse with someone in your group

Time for Members to share from their Quiet Time Journal

Discuss Part 2 of Having a “Heart” for God

Read the material on Setting Goals

Discuss assignment for next week

Close in Prayer

Reviewing Verses with Someone

When reviewing verses in your group, pair up, and one person should say their verses first, saying the topic, reference, verse, and reference aloud from memory. If a mistake is made, the other person should wait until that particular verse has been quoted and then point out any mistakes (if any). Repeat that verse until it is said correctly. Then go on to the next verse. When the first person is done with all of his or her verses, then the other person should say each of their verses in the same way.

Lesson 1, Having a Heart for God Part 2

Last week we looked at what is our “heart” and what does it do. We also saw what are some issues with our “heart” that should be dealt with. This week we will see how we impact our “heart” and how we can have a “heart” for God.

How do we Reach (or Improve) our “Heart”?

8. What do we need to do in order to make our “heart” into what God intends?

Romans 10:9

Proverbs 3:5

When and how did you do that? Briefly tell your story here.

9. What are some specific ways we can improve our “heart”?

Deuteronomy 30:14

Psalms 119:11

Ephesians 6:6

Colossians 3:16

10. What are some attitudes we need to improve our “heart”?

Colossians 3:1

Hebrews 12:3

1 Peter 1:22

1 Peter 3:15

Which of the items in questions 9 and 10 do you need to work on?

In order to improve our “heart” we need to first come near to God and trust Him by receiving Christ. Then we need to get into His Word and let it impact our life through obedience. Finally, we need to not be afraid or troubled, but set our “heart” on Him, and love God and love others from our “heart”.

How does God Touch Our “Heart”?

11. What does God do with our “heart”?

1 Samuel 16:7

1 Chronicles 28:9

2 Chronicles 16:9a

How has God strengthened your heart?

Jeremiah 24:7

Ezekiel 11:19

1 Samuel 10:26

Acts 15:9

How has God “touched your heart lately?

12. How specifically, does God impact our “heart”?
Psalms 73:26

Luke 24:32

Philippians 4:7

13. What has God given us to positively impact our “heart”? Hebrews 4:12

How does it do this?

How do you feel about your time in the Word? Are you getting enough of it?

God is working in our “heart”. He searches it, purifies it, strengthens it, and convicts it. The Word of God is an instrument in His hands to help shape our “heart” into what it should become.

A “Heart” for God

14. David is described as a man after God’s own heart. What do these passages bring out about David’s heart for God?

1 Kings 9:4

1 Kings 14:8

Acts 13:22

15. Jesus is the ultimate example of a Heart for God. What does this verse say about Jesus? Matthew 11:28-30

What else do we see regarding Him? Matthew 11:28

What do we see in Matthew 26:38&42?

16. Being a person after God's own heart demands we follow what's on His heart. What do the following say is on God's heart?

Micah 6:8

Matthew 9:36-38

John 3:16

Obedience is key to being a person after God's own heart. David tried to exemplify it, and Jesus certainly did. God's heart is that the world would come to Christ. Will you pursue after that too, with all your heart? What would it take for you to do that?

Setting Goals

We set goals in many areas of life. It may be to get a new job, to save for a down payment on a house, to start a family, to lose 10

pounds, to start college, etc. It is often helpful to set goals in the Christian life as well. During this study we have made it a priority to have daily Quiet Times, to read the Bible, to do Bible study, and regularly attend small group. Hebrews 10:24 says, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.” And Proverbs 27:17 says, “Iron sharpens iron and one person sharpens another.” We want to be an encouragement and help to each other. Part of that is to set some goals and help each other achieve them.

In the back of this study there is a page you can use to set spiritual goals for this quarter, semester, or some other period. A Quiet Time goal is already given of 7 consecutive days. Note that it may take several attempts to get 7 days in a row, but that is OK, for as you continue to try and eventually succeed your walk with God will be greatly strengthened. In future journals you may want to increase the number of consecutive days as experience has shown it takes 21 days to form a new habit. So moving up to 14 and eventually 21 consecutive days can help build this habit into your walk with God for a lifetime. Just remember that the ultimate goal is spending time with God, not some legalistic number of days.

Another goal that is already given is to memorize four verses that can be used for meditation. Memorizing verses takes some effort, but if you are diligent in this you will reap tremendous benefits from the amount of time put into it.

Another goal you might set would be to read certain books of the New Testament, or even the entire New Testament. It could be to complete all the questions in the Bible study lessons. It could also be to pray for a specific person or for something specific to happen. Another goal could be to bring someone to church, or to get involved in a specific ministry. It is sometimes good to set long-term goals, but to begin we recommend setting goals you can achieve in one to three months. This helps make your goals more achievable and help build on success. As Proverbs 13:19 says, “A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul.” During the rest of this study we will be weekly checking each other on our progress towards meeting our goals. And your group leader may also want

to see your progress and write a specific note of encouragement about the growth evidenced in your walk with God during this study. Prayerfully consider what goals you should set and work towards achieving them. Remember, goals are not an end in themselves, but an aid to help each of us grow to spiritual maturity.

Assignment for next week

1. Continue your Bible reading and marking in your daily Quiet Time. Continue to record your daily journal entries and come prepared to share at least one entry from your journal next week.
2. Complete the lesson for next week on the Sermon on the Mount. This is very reflective. You will read three chapters in Matthew and answer some very thought-provoking questions. **You will not be compelled to share anything you don't want to.** But you are encouraged to share as God leads.
3. Look over the Goals page in the back of this study and prayerfully consider what goals God would have you set for your Christian life for this quarter or semester. Write down some goals for the next month or so. Come prepared to share next week what you've written down.
4. Memorize John 14:21. Then review it daily until you can quote it correctly without needing to look at it. Continue to review Psalms 42:1-2 daily.

WEEK 4

Open in prayer

Review your memory verses with someone in your group

Time for Members to share from their Quiet Time Journal

Share Goals you have set for yourself with your group

Discuss the Lesson

Discuss assignment for next week

Close in Prayer

LESSON 2 - The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)

The greatest sermon ever given was that by our Lord. It is a sermon to His Jewish Disciples, not about the Law, but about the Heart. It's about how God requires us to look not only at our actions, but much deeper, at our thoughts, our intentions, and our reasons for what we do. As you study this sermon, we hope you will catch what it must have been like that single solitary day in history, to be on that mountain with him, hearing these words from the Master. Pretend it was sunny, 72 degrees, with a slight breeze.

A. "Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying" ... (NIV)

Please read Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7, taking any notes you want below or on separate paper:

B. The sermon can be divided into a number of sections. What follows is one such subdivision with summarized insights from the New Living Translation (NLT). **Look over each summary and answer the questions that are embedded:**

1. We think it's the rich and powerful that are blessed, but Jesus paints a different picture in Matthew 5:3-12.

Beatitudes - Blessings on... (and the Result)

- The Poor - those who realize their need of God (Kingdom of heaven is theirs)
- Those who Mourn (Comforted)
- The Humble (Inherit the earth)
- Those who Hunger and Thirst for Justice (Satisfied)
- The Merciful (Shown mercy)
- The Pure in Heart (See God)
- Those who Work for Peace (Called God's children)
- Those who are Persecuted for Doing Right (Kingdom of Heaven is theirs)
- You, when people Mock and Persecute and Lie about you because you are a Follower of Christ (A great award awaits you in Heaven)

Question: What would God bless you for? How is it evident?

2. We sometimes feel our lives don't matter. Jesus says in Matthew 5:13-16 we are the Salt of the Earth, Light of the World.

- You are Salt - Don't Lose Your Taste
- You are Light - Don't Hide It

Question: What do you think it means for people to see your light and taste your salt? How?

3. Christians sometimes think the Old Testament no longer applies. But Jesus says in Matthew 5:17-20 about “The Law”:

- Jesus fulfills it
- All will be accomplished
- Don’t ignore it
- Obey it

Question: How do you treat the Bible? Should you treat it differently and how?

4. We know we shouldn’t kill, but Jesus says in Matthew 5:21-26

- Anger viewed by God as same as Murder
- Demeaning others or cursing are also serious sins
- Be reconciled with others first. Make it a priority!

Question: Do you harbor any ill will toward others? If so, what will you do about it?

5. The Bible says adultery (having sex outside of marriage) is wrong. Jesus expands this in Matthew 5:27-30 by saying...

- Don’t look at someone lustfully
- Lust is the same as adultery in God’s eyes
- Think of a way to stop it if you are tempted in this area

Question: How pure is your thought life? If you have a problem, write out a plan to address it.

6. The Old Testament allowed for divorce under certain circumstances. Jesus says in Matthew 5:31-32 regarding divorce:

- Divorce = Adultery (except unfaithfulness by your spouse)
Note: See also Malachi 3:16, Romans 7:2-3, and 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 for other Scriptures on divorce.

Question: Are you in your marriage for the long-haul? Or is divorce an option in your marriage?

7. We've all promised to do something and then broken that promise. But Matthew 5:33-37 says that's wrong. Instead:

- Don't make it a habit to make vows
- Just say "Yes" or "No". Make your word be something God and others can trust.

Question: How trustworthy are you really? Do you keep promises?

8. We know that capital punishment is proper, and penalties should fit crimes. But Jesus says in Matthew 5:38-42 that personally our attitude should be different. Don't seek revenge, but instead:

- Don't resist an evil person
- Be willing to give in to others to make peace

Question: Do you hold grudges? Do you like to fight?

9. We know we should love our neighbor, but enemies we should hate, right? Jesus turns that upside down in Matthew 5:43-48:

- Love your enemies
- Pray for those who persecute you
- God loves everyone, True children of God do too
- Be different, stand out from the crowd, love everyone!

Question: Are there people you hate or dislike? If so, spend some time praying for them...and for you!

10. Jesus says in Matthew 6:1-4 we should do good to others, but

- Don't do good deeds or give publicly, or you may become proud
- Give in secret, God will reward

Question: What are your true motives in giving or helping others? Should you give or help more? What would it take for you to do so?

11. In Matthew 6:5-18 Jesus says about Prayer and Fasting

- Don't pray so others will take notice
- Pray between you and God
- Don't use long words
- Follow the Lord's Prayer format
- Forgive others so your prayers won't be hindered
- When you fast, don't look like it, God will reward you

Question: Be honest, what is your prayer life really like?

12. In Matthew 6:19-34 Jesus says about Money and Possessions

- Store up treasures in heaven, not on earth
- You can't serve two masters – God and money
- Don't worry about your everyday needs (food, clothing, tomorrow)
- God will provide

Question: Where is your treasure and who is your master? Do you really trust God for your needs? Have you gotten your needs mixed up with your wants?

13. Jesus says in Matthew 7:1-6 regarding Judging Others

- Don't judge, or you'll be judged
- Clean up your own life before trying to clean up others

Question: What needs to be cleaned up in your life? How will you do so?

14. Jesus says in Matthew 7:7-11 what Effective Prayer is:

- Keep on Asking, Seeking, Knocking and God will give, locate, and open doors
- God gives good gifts to His children

Question: Do you persevere or do you give up on prayer? What would it take for you to persevere in this area?

15. In Matthew 7:12 Jesus lays out what is called The Golden Rule

- Do to others as you'd have them do to you

- This is the essence of the entire Bible

Question: What are your motives? Are you truly unselfish?

16. In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus says there is a Narrow Gate

- Enter His Kingdom only by the Narrow Gate
- There is another “easy way”, but it leads to hell

Question: Which road are you really on, the Narrow one or the Broad one? Where would you like to be?

17. In Matthew 7:15-20 He uses an analogy of a Tree and It's Fruit

- False prophets produce bad fruit
- Good trees produce good fruit
- Recognize the good people by their actions (their fruit)

Question: What kind of fruit have you produced? What does your fruit tell about what you are really like?

18. In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus tells who are His True Disciples

- Not all who call Me Lord will enter God's Kingdom
- Only those who do God's will and obey Him enter

Question: Will God let you in? What would make you a better disciple?

19. In Matthew 7:24-27 He says to Build on a Solid Foundation

- Anyone who hears My Words and obeys, is wise like a house built on rock
- The storms of life require a solid foundation
- Anyone who hears but doesn't obey, is foolish like a house built on sand

Question: What are you building your life on? What storms of life have made you question your foundation? In what ways might your life be characterized as shifting sand? Spend some time committing these areas to God.

C. Read (and even pray) Matthew 5, 6, and 7 slowly out loud, one more time, visualizing that Jesus is talking directly to you. Write down any additional thoughts that come to mind.

“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.” (Matthew 7:28) NIV

Application: Review all your notes. You may have uncovered several things you need to do. What would God have you do first from this study? How?

Assignment for next week

1. Continue your Bible reading and marking in your daily Quiet Time. Continue to record your daily journal entries and come prepared to share at least one entry from your journal next week. Mark the New Testament chapters that you've read on the New Testament Reading Chart if you like.
2. Complete the lesson for next week. It is on the Importance of the Word, Psalms 119.
3. Work towards achieving one of your goals in the next few weeks. Maybe it's having a Quiet Time for 7 consecutive days, or completing all the questions in the Bible studies. Maybe it's talking to a specific person. Maybe it's learning and reviewing the memory verses. Whatever it is, seeing God work to help you accomplish it will be an encouragement to you and to others in your group. Come prepared to share next week what you've seen God do in your life.
4. Memorize Psalms 119:105. Then review it daily until you can quote it correctly without needing to look at it. Continue to review John 14:21 and Psalms 42:1-2 daily.

WEEK 5

Open in prayer

Review your memory verses with someone in your group

Time for Members to share from their Quiet Time Journal

Share progress on your Goals

Read the material on Meditate on God's Word

Discuss the Lesson on the Importance of the Word, Psalms 119

Discuss assignment for next week

Close in Prayer

Meditate on God's Word.

Make it a rule to regularly meditate on God's Word. This can be a part of your daily devotions, your Bible study, your sermon note review time, etc. Here is one way to meditate on a verse of Scripture: D - I - C - E.

- Define words and phrases. Look up key words in a dictionary. Even if you think you know them, you will gain new insights.
- Inquire. Ask questions about the verse. Be a reporter - use WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY, and HOW.
- Content. Write out the verse in your own words.
- Emphasize words. Keep saying the verse over and over again, each time putting the emphasis on a different word.

For example:

- For **GOD** so loved the world...
- For God **SO** loved the world...
- For God so **LOVED** the world...
- For God so loved the **WORLD**...

As you do this, listen to the voice of God confirming how a specific word applies to you and your life.

LESSON 3 - The Importance of the Word (Psalms 119)

An important part of meditation is time in the Word. This helps focus our thoughts and also allows God to speak to us. Plus, as hopefully you've found, getting in the Bible can be a true joy! As Jeremiah 15:16 says in the NIV, "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty." Time in the Bible will greatly help our meditation as it refreshes our spirit. In this lesson we will focus in on one chapter in the Bible, Psalms 119. It is also the longest chapter, having 176 verses. It focuses entirely on the Word of God - what it is, what it does in our lives, and how we can get a better "handle" on it.

1. As initial preparation for your study, read Psalms 119 through once, reflect on it, and get a feel for what it is saying about the Bible. Do this before proceeding any further.

After you have read Psalms 119 for yourself, now go on to review the following short paraphrased statements from it based on reading in the New Living Translation (NLT). Some are left blank for you to fill in.

2. In Psalms 119 (NLT) the Bible is called:

Verse 1 – Instructions of the Lord

2 – Laws

4 – _____

5 – God's Decrees

7 – _____

37 – The Word

38 – _____

89 – _____

103 – Sweet Words

105 – _____

111 – _____

142 – Justice and Instructions

160 – _____

2A. Reflect on each of the previous statements. What do they personally speak to you about His Word?

3. In Psalms 119 (NLT) it also says what the Bible does is:

Verse 1 – Makes us joyful

3 – Walk only in god's paths

6 – _____

7 – Thank God by living rightly

9 – Keeps our way pure

24 – _____

28 – _____

32 – Expands our understanding

35 – _____

49 – _____

50 – Revives and comforts us

98 – _____

99 – Gives us insight

105 – _____

165 – _____

3A. Which of the above means the most to you and why? How does it do that?

4. Psalms 119 (NLT) also says our attitude towards the Bible

should be: Verse 1 – One of joy

4 – To keep his commands carefully

5 – Our actions should consistently reflect His Word

6 – _____

8 – Obedient

16 – Delight in it and not forget it

17 – _____

20 – Overwhelmed by a desire for it

24 – _____

27 – Meditate on it

29 – A privilege to know it

30 – _____

31 – Cling to it

32 – _____

34 – Obey it with all my heart

36 – _____

46 – Speak to others about it

48 – _____

60 – Hurry to obey it

61 – _____

66 – Believe it

74 – Put my hope in it

95 – _____

120 – Stand in awe of it

127 – _____

131 – Pant with expectation, long for it

136 – Sorrowful others don't obey it

143 – _____

161 – _____

174 – Delight in it

4A. Look over the above and list some attitudes you personally need to adopt in your life about the Bible, and pray for them.

5. Psalms 119 (NLT) lists some ways to get into the Bible:

Verse 7 – _____

11 – Hide it in our heart

12 – _____

13 – _____

15 – _____

18 – See it

23 – _____

55 – Reflect on it

71 – Pay attention to it

78 – _____

93 - Never forget it

97 – _____

5A. What other ways are there to get into His Word? (See Revelation 1:3)

5B. Of all the ways, which seems most effective and beneficial for you personally to get into the Bible?

5C. What would you like to do more regarding your time in the Word?

6. Read Psalms 119 a second time and pick a favorite verse. Complete the meditation method D-I-C-E explained earlier in this lesson on this verse: Favorite Verse – Psalms 119: _____

- Define words and phrases using a dictionary.

- Inquire. Ask questions about the verse (and find answers):

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

How?

- Content. Write out the verse in your own words.

- Emphasize. Say it repeatedly, each time emphasizing different words.

As you do this, listen to the voice of God confirming how a specific word applies to you and your life. What might that be?

7. Finally, reflect on John 1 verses 1-4 and verse 14a in the NIV:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men...*(and) The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*”

All the things we've learned about the written Word i.e., that they are a lamp/light, makes us happy, encourages us, our delight, makes us wise, revises us, etc.), are true of Jesus, the Living Word as well. God's Word sheds light on Christ! No wonder we need it so much!

7A. Spend some time in prayer, thanking God for who He is, His Word, and how the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Assignment for next week

1. Continue your Bible reading, marking, and recording.
2. There is no Bible study lesson for next week. Next week is an extended time of Celebrating God! Be rested, arrive early, and bring your study guide and verses. We trust it will be a fantastic time! Volunteers are needed for this time: a) Someone to provide music, either with CDs, song books, or musicians, b) Someone to do a little research and lead a short 5 minute prayer time for Your Church (Ask the pastor for requests), c) Another person to do the same for prayer for Governments (Check news articles for issues needing prayer), d) Another for prayer for Missionaries (Ask your church for specific requests), and e) Another to lead prayer for the Poor, Oppressed, and Helpless (Check with shelters, food banks, orphanages, etc. for prayer needs). **Assign volunteers now.**
3. Work towards achieving one of your goals next week.
4. Memorize Mark 1:35 then review it daily along with the others. Work on being able to say all four verses correctly at one time.

WEEK 6

CELEBRATE GOD!

This week we are going to spend the entire time Celebrating God! It is a time to focus on Him and let God speak to our hearts, however He wants. It will be a time of reading His Word, a time of praying, a time of singing, and maybe a time of weeping. **Get a drink and get comfortable before we begin. Write several prayer requests on a card and also the name(s) of someone you want to see come to Christ. Keep it handy. Then quiet your hearts by meditating on Psalms 42:1-2 as others arrive.**

Now, let's begin Celebrating God! There will be four 25-30 minute parts with a 5-minute intermission after the first hour:

1. GOD, We Praise You!
2. GOD, We Come Before You!
3. GOD, We Lift Others Up To You!
4. GOD, We Thank You!

Leader open in prayer, asking God to be in your midst (Matthew 18:20) and to bless the time together.

Part 1 - GOD, We Praise You!

- Stand and sing a few songs of Praise (Use a CD, Hymnal, and/or musicians.) At end, please sit down.
- Let's meditate on the following passages from Psalms 106:1-2, Psalms 18:1-3, and Romans 8:35-39 (NIV) as our group leader reads each aloud. At the end of each one someone should praise God based on that passage:
 - Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD or fully declare his praise?
 - Have someone pray based on the above passage.

- I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.
 - Someone pray based on the above passage.
- Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - Someone pray based on the above passage.
- Now let's have one person pray aloud these verses from 1 Chronicles 29:10-13 (NIV). Pray along in your heart.
 - "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.

- Read silently the following passage and underline what stands out to you.
 - Psalms 103¹ Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. ² Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits-- ³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. ⁶ The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. ⁷ He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: ⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; ¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. ¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; ¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. ¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children-- ¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. ¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. ²⁰ Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. ²¹ Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. ²² Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul. (NIV)

- Let's have several share something that stood out to them from the previous passage.

- Look over this list of characteristics of God:

Holy	Eternal	Infinite	Immortal
Invisible	All-Knowing	Omni-Present	All-Powerful
Unchanging	Incomparable	Righteous	Perfect
Awesome	Majestic	Gracious	Spirit
Compassionate (Loving)	Kind		Thoughtful

- Several share which mean the most to them and why? What others would you add?
- **Write below a short “Love Letter to God”.** From your heart, tell God how much He means to you. When through writing, spend some time silently praying this to God:

- When done, leader should ask people to stand up and stretch.

Part 2 - GOD, We Come Before You!

Focus on PRAYER for US – Confession and Supplication

- Take 5-10 minutes and silently reflect on your life. Ask yourself, Do I truly love God? Do I truly obey His Word? What is keeping me from doing so? What would God have me do differently? What questions or concerns do I have of God? You may want to think about your recent Bible studies, devotions, or sermons, as well as any verses you have memorized. **Write down any thoughts here and then pray silently regarding anything He shows you. At the end if someone feels lead they can share a thought from this.**

- Let's stand and read aloud together these passages in Psalms 32:1-5, Psalms 103:12, and 1 John 1:9 (NIV):
 - Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

- As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
- Bow your head. Think of any sins you need to confess. Silently confess those to God. Leader close in a minute or two.
- Sit down and someone pray aloud the following passage from Psalms 51:1-17 (NIV) as a prayer to God for the group. Others, pray along silently in your heart as it is being read aloud:
 - Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.. Surely I was sinful at birth...Surely you desire truth in the inner parts...Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow...Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me...You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- God wants us all to pray. In prayer we lift up our hearts to Him. But there are things we need to learn about prayer. Someone read aloud this passage from Philippians 4:6-8 (NIV):
 - Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your

requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.

Discuss:

1. What are some things worthy of praise?
2. How would focusing on these help your life?
3. Sometimes our thoughts aren't so good, however.
In fact we may feel bad about our thoughts or what we do. Romans 8:1 says "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
How does this make you feel? Rejoice in Him!
4. How does prayer help in our thought life?
5. Is anything inappropriate to talk with God about?

- Now let's get into groups of two or three and each person share a few prayer requests and pray together for each other and these needs. Use your prayer card to help you pray if desired.
- Optional: Sing a song or two to end the first half.

5 minute INTERMISSION – Please be prompt in returning.

**Part 3 - GOD, We Lift Up Others To You!
Focus on PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

- **GOVERNMENT LEADERS:** The individual pre-selected should **first read aloud these passages** in 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NIV) and **then pray for our Government Leaders (city, state, country) focusing in on specific prayer needs or requests.** Others can participate. (Plan on up to 5 minutes.)
 - I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live

peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

- Lord, we pray for our leaders...

- **THE CHURCH;** The individual pre-selected should **first read aloud this passage** in Acts 2:42-47 (NIV) and **then pray for the Church focusing in on known specific prayer needs or requests.** Others can participate. (Plan on up to 5 minutes.)

- They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

- God, we pray for our church...

- **MISSIONARIES AND THE WORLD:** The individual pre-selected should **first read aloud this passage** in Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV) and **then pray for Missionaries and the World focusing in on specific needs and requests.** Others can participate. (Plan on up to 5 minutes.)

- Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- Jesus, we pray for missionaries...

- **THE POOR, OPPRESSED, AND HELPLESS:** The individual pre-selected should **first read aloud these passages** in Psalms 72:12, Acts 20:35, Psalms 9:9, and Psalms 82:3 (NIV) and **then pray for the Poor, Oppressed, and Helpless focusing in on specific needs and requests.** Others can participate. (Plan on up to 5 minutes.)
 - The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble ... In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'... For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help... Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.
 - Father, we pray for these in need...
- Now **the leader will read each of the following passages about some other key areas for prayer.** Spend about 2 minutes in prayer for each area below after reading the verse. The leader and others can pray as God leads. An opening prayer is given for each. The leader will guide, taking them one at a time before moving on to the next.
 - **Marriages** Ephesians 5:22-25, 28, 31, 33 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ...In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself... "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ...However,

each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

- Lord, we pray for marriages to be strengthened...
- **Families** Ephesians 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise-- "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.
 - Fathers, we pray for families to honor you God...
- **Singles** 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs--how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world--how he can please his wife-- and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world--how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.
 - God, we pray for singles to be used of you in a great way...
- **Others** Proverbs 17:17 and Mark 12:31 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity....Love your neighbor as yourself...
 - Jesus, we pray for believers to impact others through Christian love...

- Now let's have a few moments of silent prayer and pray for any other requests God brings to your mind. You may want to look again at your card. Leader will close in a minute or two.

Part 4 - GOD, We Thank You!

- Let's stand and pray aloud together this passage in Psalms 118:21 (NIV):
 - I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.
- Have several thank God aloud for His gift of salvation.
- Have several people read these passages in Ephesians 5:20, Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, and Colossians 3:15-17 (NIV), reflecting on them as mentioned:
 - Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God...Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
 - Let's pause and silently reflect: What are some things you are thankful for?
 - Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
 - Again, pause and silently reflect: How could you be a better worshipper of God?

- Someone read Psalms 107:1-2, 8-9, 14-16 (NIV) below:
 - Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say this-- those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, ...Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things... He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains. Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he breaks down gates of bronze and cuts through bars of iron.
 - Pause and silently reflect: What “gates of bronze” and “bars of iron” has God broken down or cut through in your life?
- Sit down. Someone read 1 Chronicles 16:8-12,34 (NIV) below:
 - Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced... Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.
 - Pause and silently reflect: What wonders or miracles has God done in your life?
- Several share some spontaneous things they are thankful for.
- “One-Word” Prayers about God
 - The Group Leader reads, “We want to close out our time together by praising God with ‘one-word prayers’. ‘One-word’ can’t adequately capture who God is, but as we each take turns sharing one-word about God, we believe they will rise to God as a chorus of praise. So

we're going to pray spontaneously now, focusing in on His character as the Spirit leads, us each taking turns saying one (or sometimes two) words about God, one word after another. Things such as... Lord... Holy... Love... Faithful... All-Knowing... etc. I'll start, then others will follow as the Spirit leads. You can share several times, and we'd like everyone to share at least once. Any questions before we begin?"

- "God, we come before you now with 'one-word prayers'. We hope that these will show how much You truly mean to us! So Lord, we begin this chorus of praise by saying You are _____."
- Others follow, taking turns to spontaneously share one word about God as the Spirit leads.
- At the end, the group leader can close by saying something like, "Lord we thank you that you are all these things, and so much more. Amen".
- Optional: Sing or listen to a couple songs. (Suggested final song: "*I Can Only Imagine*" by MercyMe.)
- Stand and hold hands. Leader close in final prayer, thanking God for the time.

This ends our Celebrating God time. On your own, after this study, please look over the following material on the next page about Quarterly Personal Planning Retreats and the assignment for our final week together in this study.

QUARTERLY PERSONAL PLANNING RETREATS

Continue the momentum you've made during this study by having your own Quarterly Personal Planning Retreats. These are times when you get alone with God, enjoy His presence, get extended time in prayer and the Word, and also review and plan your schedule for the next 3 months. **During this time you will attempt to answer the questions, Who are you, Lord? and What would you have me do?** These will be times God will use to increase your love and effectiveness for Him and for others. (It is helpful if husband and wife also have an annual Planning Retreat together as a couple.) You will need to plan these on your calendar and find a location where you can be alone. Some prefer the solitude and beauty of the outside, such as a park, while others prefer a room somewhere such as a hotel, library, or a room in their church. Make sure there is a place you can sing, talk, or pray aloud to help keep you alert. Others like to get up from their reading and walk outside and pray softly for a change of pace.

Allow three hours for your Personal Planning Retreats. This will be long enough for God to speak to you, for you to be refreshed, and for you to review and plan your schedule. Some like to go longer than three hours. Bring several Bibles, prayer lists, missionary letters, your journal, a songbook, prayer lists, reading glasses, and a beverage. Get these ready the night before. Plan what you will do if you are meeting outside and the weather is bad. And don't get overly concerned with following a schedule or that you come away with any earth-shattering insights. Instead, **Let the Lord Direct.** Vary things: Read a while, then Pray some, then Sing, Walk, Sit, Review verses, etc. **A schedule you can follow your first time is given below and on the inside bookmark:**

1ST HOUR - FOCUS ON GOD

- **Realize His presence** – Read, meditate, and pray on passages about God, such as Isaiah 40:31, Psalms 27:13-14, Psalms 62:5-8, Psalms 139, and Genesis 28:16.
- **Grasp His Holiness and Our Need for Cleansing** – Read, meditate, and pray on such passages as Revelation 4, Isaiah

6:1-8, Psalms 139, Psalms 51, Psalms 32, and 1 John 1:9. Confess any sin that God reveals.

- **Worship Him** – Sing some Praise songs and read passages such as Psalms 103, Psalms 111, Revelation 5. Give thanks.

2ND HOUR – FOCUS ON PRAYER

A. PRAYER FOR OTHERS – Family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, missionaries, leaders, enemies, etc. Use prayer and missionary letters if you like.

- **Pray specific things** – Spiritual strength, physical stamina, mental alertness, salvation, spiritual growth, family, relationships, effective ministry.
- **Pray one of Paul's prayers for others** – Such as Philippians 1, Colossians 1, Ephesians 1, or Ephesians 3.
- **Pray for others what you pray for yourself.** – Think of your needs and pray for others.

B. PRAYER FOR YOURSELF (Could come 1st if facing an important issue.)

- **Guidance & wisdom** – Read and reflect on Psalms 119:18, Meditate on Scripture you've memorized or enjoyed from this or some other study.
- **Godliness** – Meditate on 1 John 1:9, Philippians 4:8, Galatians 5:22-23.
- **Concerns & needs** –Look into Scripture (Read a small book of the New Testament such as Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Titus, James, or 1 John), Look for specific direction or promises to claim. Then pray over issues facing you, asking for His help. Things such as your walk with God, your relationships, and your ministry.

3RD HOUR – FOCUS ON PLANNING

- **Review and meditate on Scripture** such as Philippians 4:13, Psalms 90:10&12, Psalms 119:105, Proverbs 16:9, Jeremiah 29:11, John 4:34, and 1 Chronicles 4:10.
- **Reflect on your Schedule and Activities (Write down any needed changes)**

- What am I not doing that I should do?
- What am I doing that I should stop, or do less?
- Who and what are my priorities?
- What should be my main objectives?
- **Have a Final Closing Prayer:** Read and pray one of the closing Psalms (145-150).

Assignment for next week

1. Continue your Bible reading and marking in your daily Quiet Time. Continue to record your daily journal entries and come prepared to share at least one entry from your journal next week.
2. Read Psalms 39-42 then complete the lesson. It is on Thirsting for God in the Midst of Troubles, and includes Personal Reflection.
3. Work towards achieving some of your goals in the next week. Come prepared to share next week what you've seen God do in your life. You may also want to ask your group leader to write something on your Goals page. This will be an encouragement to you and to your leader as well. Also, maintain your spiritual momentum by scheduling your own Quarterly Personal Planning Retreat. Put it on your calendar now.
4. Look over the questions on "How Has Your Life Changed?" and think through each of them. Come prepared to share what God has done in your life through this study and your time with Him.
5. Continue to review Mark 1:35, Psalms 119:105, John 14:21 and Psalms 42:1-2 daily. Work on being able to say all 4 verses correctly at one time. This will take regular review.

WEEK 7

Open in prayer

Review your memory verses with someone in your group

Time for Members to share from their Quiet Time Journal

Share progress on your Goals

Discuss the Lesson, Thirsting for God in the Midst of Troubles

Discuss How Has Your Life Changed?

Discuss Continuing On

Close in Prayer

Lesson 4, Thirsting for God in the Midst of Troubles

It seems like we often feel closest to God the most during times of trouble. David was pursued by Saul and his army, and also by his very own renegade son, but during those times he wrote many of the Psalms. Job lost everything he had yet he saw God clearly for the first time. Jesus was waiting to be crucified, and His prayers with the Father got so intense they resulted in Him praying tears like blood. Let's take a look at Psalms 39 to 42 and see what it felt like to the authors of these Psalms (called Psalmists) to be in trouble, how to grow during those times, and what God promises to those who are hurting. Read Psalms 39-42 before you begin. David wrote the first three of these Psalms, and the sons of Korah (who were part of the Levitical church choir) wrote the last one.

1. The Psalmists definitely had some hard times. How did these make them feel? Psalms 42:3-5

2. What did the Psalmists do as a result of their distress?

Psalm 39:1

Psalms 39:7

Psalms 40:1

Psalms 42:1-2

Psalms 40:8

Psalm 41:13

3. What did God do?

Psalms 40:1-3

Psalm 41:2

Psalm 42:8

4. What happened as a result of God's help?

Psalm 40:3

Psalm 40:8

Psalm 42:11

Personal Reflection: Think about your life. What troubles or difficulties are you now facing, or have faced in your past that has damaged you? What seems to be shifting in your life right now, instead of being stable as you would prefer? Realize that it's OK to feel bad or unsettled about those, to cry, or even shout! But also realize that God hears your cries, He understands your hurts, He lovingly spreads His arms around you, and that in Him you have solid ground. Realize too that your hurts, no matter how horrible or how benign they might be, as they are being healed by Him will become guideposts to lead others to Christ so that their hurts can too be addressed by Him! And remember that God is able to work in all situations far more abundantly than all that we can ask or even think. (Ephesians 3:20)

Write down an issue that is troubling you now.

What would you like God to do about it?

How could God give you a new “song” in this area of your life, to change it from a “sour note” to one that is beautiful?

Spend some time praying regarding your hurts. (In your group you may want to pray silently for people’s hurts.)

ED’S TINNITUS

In 2001 I had cataract surgery on my left eye and a couple of days later while driving home from work I noticed a ringing sound in my ears. It stopped by the time I got home, so I wasn’t concerned. Well this started to happen every day on my way home, and then a week later the ringing didn’t stop. Needless to say it was distressing.

I first went to my eye doctor to see if something done during my EYE surgery could have caused the ringing in my EARS. He assured me he knew of no reason eye surgery would cause my ears to start ringing. He recommended I go see my regular doctor which I did. He checked me for ear wax, ear and sinus infections, and other medical conditions, treating anything he found. Still my

ringing continued. Over the next few months I also went to two ear nose and throat doctors (ENTs) and two audiologists. I was diagnosed with tinnitus (pronounced “tin-eye-tis” or “tin-it-us”), told that there was no cure, and that I would have to learn to live with it. Well that was very hard for me!

At first I literally thought I was going to go crazy! I missed a month of work and actually couldn’t sleep for 30 straight days because of the noise. Thankfully, my body got so exhausted I finally fell asleep. Praise God, sleeping is no longer a problem.

But I’m an analyst, working inside, and I need quiet to think. That was extremely difficult for me with tinnitus. You see I hear it every waking moment. I can drown it out some with other noise, but because it sounds to me like a high-pitched screeching noise I still can hear it unless the outside noise is very, very loud.

They don’t know the cause for tinnitus. It can be a tumor or disease so I was checked for that. Stress makes it louder so I try to manage that. Loud noises can cause tinnitus, and for me makes it worse, and so I avoid that. When I first got tinnitus someone at work asked if I had known “Fred” (not his real name). I hadn’t known him, but this co-worker told me that “Fred” got tinnitus and it was so bad he finally committed suicide. That really unnerved me! After the doctors told me I had to “live with it”, I thought I can’t do that! That’s impossible! I really like quiet.

I tried pills, waterfall noise, music, ear plugs, all with no success. (Noise-canceling headphones don’t work either as they only cancel noise from outside the ear, not noise within your head!) Like Paul I prayed for my affliction, but my tinnitus didn’t go away! I thought I just can’t do this. There was no hope.

But I did know Philippians 4:13, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” So I began to pray that I could cope, that I could adjust, that I could learn to live with it.

Nine years later I can honestly say God answered those prayers! I still have it, wish it would go away, and hear it every waking moment, but it doesn't bother me as much anymore. God has been faithful and I have seen anew that all things are possible with Him. He has helped me have victory over my tinnitus, and He can help you have victory over any affliction, any difficulty, any problem you might face. When He is your only hope, you have real hope! Praise God!

As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." I can't handle my tinnitus on my own, I'm too weak. But praise God, He gets me out of the way so He can work in my life. As Jesus said in John 16:33, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." No matter what you are facing He has already overcome it. God is able to work in all situations far more abundantly than all that we can ever ask or even think (Ephesians 3:20). I needed to let Him prove it. He did. I pray you'll let Him do that in you.

How Has Your Life Changed?

1. Overall what have you thought of this study?
2. Since going through this study how has your life changed?
3. What new habits have you picked up?

4. What new attitudes are beginning to develop in your life?

5. Where would you like to see your Christian life in 1 year? 2?

Continuing On

We have reached the end of this study, but this really isn't the end, it's only the beginning, the beginning of hopefully a deeper walk with the Lord. We encourage you to keep having a daily Quiet Time in the Word and prayer. And if you continue in a small group, keep sharing what God shows you from your Quiet Times with each other as part of your small group time as well. Keep setting some spiritual goals for yourself and asking others to check you on the completion of those goals. Confess your sins when you talk with Him and don't forget to pray for others. Keep reading and applying the Word of God to your life. Continue to review your memory verses daily and use them in your personal meditation. Memorize new verses that stand out to you as you come across them. Meditate on those verses and others that God lays on your heart. We've personally seen that the verses we've put into our hearts and minds have greatly ministered to us in our daily lives and helped us to minister to others. We strongly recommend the *Topical Memory System* by NavPress as your next step. It gives you the tools to be successful in Scripture memory. It is available from your local Christian bookstore. And finally, plan some quarterly Personal Planning Retreats. These will be highpoints in your walk with God!

Yes, drink deeply of Him. God will bless you as you continue these disciplines and walk with God throughout your life!

QUIET TIME JOURNAL (Week 1)

GET STARTED: Pray for guidance. Pick a chapter in a **paperback Bible or New Testament**. (You may want to continue in the Bible book you read for practice in week one.) **Read and underline** what stands out to you. Pick what you consider to be the best verse and fill out the appropriate journal entry. Then talk to God about it. Do this daily. Then as God leads, share what God shows you with others.

◊ **SUNDAY** Date: _____ Read: _____ Best Verse: _____
What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

◊ **MONDAY** Date: _____ Read: _____ Best Verse: _____
What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

◊ **TUESDAY** Date: _____ Read: _____ Best Verse: _____
What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

◊ **WEDNESDAY** Date: _____ Read: _____ Best Verse: _____
What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

◊ **THURSDAY** Date: _____ Read: _____ Best Verse: _____
What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

◊ **FRIDAY** Date: _____ Read: _____ Best Verse: _____
What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

◊ **SATURDAY** Date: _____ Read: _____ Best Verse: _____
What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

QUIET TIME JOURNAL

◊ **SUNDAY** Date: _____ Read: _____ Best Verse: _____
What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

◊ **MONDAY** Date: _____ Read: _____ Best Verse: _____
What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

◊ **TUESDAY** Date: _____ Read: _____ Best Verse: _____
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What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

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◊ **FRIDAY** Date: _____ Read: _____ Best Verse: _____

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How it impressed me: _____

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PRAYER PAGES

"Very early in the morning, Jesus got up, went to a solitary place, where He prayed." Mark 1:35

Date/Request

Date/God's Answer

PRAYER PAGES

“Very early in the morning, Jesus got up, went to a solitary place, where He prayed.” Mark 1:35

Date/Request

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NEW TESTAMENT READING CHART

It is important for every Christian to read their Bible regularly both for encouragement and for guidance. Psalm 119:9 says that a person should guard his (or her) life according to God's Word. But to do so you must be in The Book, not just have it in your house! The New Testament is an excellent place to start. Some people like to keep track of where they read to record their progress. Use the chart below to keep track of your reading in the New Testament. Put an "X" through the chapter numbers as you read them. Our prayer is that this will encourage you to read through the entire New Testament. You should be able to do so in about 9 months if you read 1 chapter daily. 3 chapters a day will get you through the entire Bible in about a year. (A sheet like this listing all the chapters in the Old and New Testaments is found in the back of *Growing Strong in God's Family* by NavPress.)

Matthew	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28										
Mark	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
Luke	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24														
John	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21																	
Acts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28										
Romans	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
1 Corinthians	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
2 Corinthians	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13						
Galatians	1	2	3	4	5	6													
Ephesians	1	2	3	4	5	6													
Philippians	1	2	3	4															
Colossians	1	2	3	4															
1 Thess.	1	2	3	4	5														
2 Thess.	1	2	3																
1 Timothy	1	2	3	4	5	6													
2 Timothy	1	2	3	4															
Titus	1	2	3																
Philemon	1																		
Hebrews	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13						
James	1	2	3	4	5														
1 Peter	1	2	3	4	5														
2 Peter	1	2	3																
1 John	1	2	3	4	5														
2 John	1																		
3 John	1																		
Jude	1																		
Revelation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22																

My Goals

Set up specific goals in your spiritual life for this study. Two goals are given, one to have a Quiet Time for 7 consecutive days, the other to quote the 4 memory verses. Set up any others that you like. (We also encourage you to set up a Quarterly Prayer and Planning Retreat!) Then **have someone else in your group initial on the line before each goal as you complete them.** You may also want to show them to your leader and ask for him or her to write about the growth they have seen in your walk with God during this time.

 ***Have a Quiet Time daily for 7 consecutive days
(as shown by 7 consecutive journal entries)***

Say each verse from memory (initial when done):

 Ps 41:1-2 ***John 14:21*** ***Ps 119:105*** ***Mk 1:35***

 Able to quote at one time all 4 verses correctly

 ***Set up my first Prayer and Planning Retreat on _____
at _____***

 Pray for _____

 Tell _____ about Christ

 Invite/Bring _____ to church

 Complete the Bible studies

 Read _____

Other Goals

Leader Comments (Optional)

Other Verses to Memorize

There are particular verses that you will find that mean so much to you or impact your life in such a significant way that it makes sense to commit them to memory so you can carry them with you everywhere! This page is for you to write down these verses as you find them so you can begin to memorize and put them in your heart and mind. Learn the verse a phrase at a time, adding phrases until you can say it all from memory. And also learn the address (reference) of the verse as well (e.g., John 3:16) so you can show someone else where it is. I find it helpful to also write the verses out on small cards and carry them with me for review. Research has shown that once you can say a verse from memory, however, you will be unable to do so in about an hour. But you will find that it will then take much less time to re-learn it. The same thing then occurs about a day later, a week later, etc., but each time taking less and less time to re-learn. Eventually it will be in there for good. I know verses I learned 42 years ago, and it's made such an impact on my life that I'm still learning new ones today. So the key to remembering a verse is not only to memorize it, but also to review. Reviewing with another person is also helpful, and will be an encouragement to them. Think about this, if the Bible is ever banned, the verses we've memorized will be the only ones we'll have. But even now, with Bibles in every book store and home, there are times during the day when we don't have one with us, or it is impractical to pull out our Bibles. So at those times, the verses you've memorized are all that you have at that particular moment. The Holy Spirit will then use the verses you've memorized in your life and help you to be a ministry to others at any time! God bless you as you memorize His Word.

1. Having a Heart for God**Psalms 42:1-2 (NIV)**

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

Psalms 42:1-2**2. Obedience and Love****John 14:21 (NIV)**

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

John 14:21**3. Importance of the Word****Psalms 119:105 (NIV)**

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Psalms 119:105**4. Christ's Example****Mark 1:35 (NIV)**

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Mark 1:35