

*WitnessKit Bible Study:
Bible Doctrines As a System of
Thought*

Class 11: Disciplines For
Spiritual Growth: Building
A Database Of Bible,
Church Involvement,
Giving, & Witnessing

Jeremiah 32:17, 37b-41

Jeremiah prayed: “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by Thy great power and by Thine outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for Thee.”

The LORD answered: “I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. And they shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good, and for the good of their children after them.

Jeremiah 32:17, 37b-41

And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good;

and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.

And I will rejoice over them to do them good,
and I will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul.”

God Is One

Deuteronomy 6: 4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. (NKJV)

In all our studies so far

- Our focus has been on the basics. What are the big truths of Scripture that enable us to understand the details? We've built a framework of important ideas that make the rest of the puzzle fit together. Today we embark on a different matter—practical plans for our own spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is like growing a garden. Just as a garden must be tended on a regular basis, our spiritual growth depends upon regular disciplines—upon developing regular habits that promote growth.

In all our studies so far

The doctrines of the Bible—the themes that form a framework for understanding the whole—are directly from God. The disciplines for growth are indirectly from God. They are a matter of applying the doctrines as time and life events allow. So disciplines are not LAWS. They are suggestions, or approaches, or ideas about structuring one's life with God at the center.

- Spiritual growth is a lifetime process. It will proceed best if time and space are created for it. So in this study we seek wisdom.

Each of us can grow spiritually

Disciplines for Spiritual Growth

To reach God's potential for our lives by commitment to the following disciplines.

1. Building a database of Bible
2. Church involvement
3. Giving
4. Witnessing

Building a database of Bible: Is there a contradiction here?

The New Testament rejects legalism—a religion of trying to please God through our own efforts.

It seems obvious to us, since God judges based upon works, that good works are necessary to please Him. But that is not quite correct.

Even though judgment is by works, salvation and fellowship are by grace—NOT by works. So how do grace and works weave into our daily decisions?

- What is the difference between forming good spiritual habits and being legalistic?
- Is God pleased by our good works? If so, which kinds of good works?

Lifetime Learning Question

How do I keep Christ at the center of my life by grace rather than attempting to do so by works?

Building a database of Bible

One difference between walking in legalism and walking in grace is the fear factor. “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.”—Proverbs 9:10. **“Perfect love casts out fear.”**—1 John 4:18.

Fear of God is right. We should fear offending God, who is Holy and all-wise.

Yet as we fellowship with God daily, we learn to love Him more than to fear. The daily Bible time becomes a refreshing mini-vacation from the cares of the day.

Building a database of Bible

The Bible contains a massive amount of good advice. That implies that God is pleased if we follow it, since the book is from Him.

We are told to learn how to please Him, in Colossians 1:10. ¹⁰ **that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; (NKJV)**

Building a database of Bible

We are also told not to be “men-pleasers”—meaning not to allow other people to influence us away from God. Our happiness should be centered in pleasing God, not in pleasing people.

That means “conflict avoidance” is not a spiritual virtue—not that we are to be contentious either! It is right to care about other people and to wish to reach them. It is NOT right to depend upon them for your happiness, or to let their approval lead you to compromise your principles.

Building a database of Bible

- Another aspect of avoiding legalism: What is motivating the action?
- Our motive should be love for God and love for other people.
- Because we love God and love people, we should desire wisdom. The source of wisdom is His Word.
- That means we can be flexible as well as disciplined. We don't have to read the Bible at a set time in order to please God. But we want to work it into the schedule because we love Him.
- If we don't schedule it, we won't get around to it.

Building a database of Bible

Some of us are prone to worry.

Philippians 4:6-9 promises peace to worriers.

- **if we pray** for the things we are concerned about,
- and **focus** on what is true and right and lovely, honorable and pure, excellent, and praiseworthy.

The Bible is a great help for our focus.

- Daily time with God in His word is a discipline we can develop no matter what our circumstance. Even if there is no church nearby, we can study daily on our own.

Building a database of Bible

Much of our time in a typical church service gives us detailed instructions regarding a particular issue or two. Time constraints make that likely.

We also need to keep the big picture in mind. For that, we need a database of Bible to guide us. We can only build that through regular time in the word.

The Bible has advice about how regular that time should be.

The Ten Commandments show that one day per week is the minimum, but what is the ideal?

Building a database of Bible

Proverbs 8:22-36²² "The LORD possessed me (Wisdom) at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. ²³ I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth. ²⁴ When *there were* no depths I was brought forth, When *there were* no fountains abounding with water. ²⁵ Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills, I was brought forth; ²⁶ While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, Or the primeval dust of the world.

Building a database of Bible

²⁷ When He prepared the heavens, I *was* there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, ²⁸ When He established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep, ²⁹ When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth, ³⁰ Then I was beside Him *as* a master craftsman; And I was daily *His* delight, Rejoicing always before Him, ³¹ Rejoicing in His inhabited world, And my delight *was* with the sons of men.

Building a database of Bible

Proverbs 8:22-36 ³² "Now therefore, listen to me, *my* children, For blessed *are those who* keep my ways. ³³ Hear instruction and be wise, And do not disdain *it*. ³⁴ Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors. ³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life, And obtains favor from the LORD; ³⁶ But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; All those who hate me love death." (NKJV)

This passage recommends daily seeking God's wisdom. A failure to appreciate and seek God's wisdom is equivalent to loving death.

Building a database of Bible

Luke 9:23-26 ²³ Then He (Jesus) said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. ²⁵ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His *own* glory, and *in His* Father's, and of the holy angels. (NKJV)

Building a database of Bible

Romans 12:1-2 ¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (NKJV)

We renew our minds through His word.

Building a database of Bible

- **Deuteronomy 4:29-31** ²⁹ But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. ³⁰ When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice ³¹ (for the LORD your God *is* a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them. (NKJV)

Building a database of Bible

- **Deuteronomy 17:18-20**¹⁸ "Also it shall be, when he (the human king) sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites.¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes,²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment *to* the right hand or *to* the left, and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel. **NKJV**

Building a database of Bible

- **2 Timothy 2:1-2**¹ You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (NKJV)
- **2 Timothy 3:14-17**¹⁴ But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,

Building a database of Bible

- ¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NKJV)
- This passage says knowing the Bible equips us for good works.

Building a database of Bible

- **Acts** 2:42-47⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. **Acts 2:42-47 (NKJV)**

Building a database of Bible

- The Bible is not legalistic about Bible study, but it does recommend daily study.
- It recommended daily study for kings, to make them effective and to remind them that they were equal to their citizens.
- The New Testament demonstrated daily fellowship and study in the church at its most effective moment.
- I Timothy recommends and demonstrates continuing in study with other newer believers, to equip them for service, and to multiply the faith.

Building a database of Bible

- If we read 3 chapters in the Old Testament and one chapter in the New Testament each day, we can read the entire Bible in one year or less.
- This is a good habit for building a database of Bible. It enables us to put matters into perspective, and to begin to grasp the ways God's eternal message applies in different times and places.

Building a database of Bible

In addition, it fills our memory with His thoughts. The Holy Spirit can bring the right idea to mind when we need it.

If 4 chapters daily are too many, one chapter per day allows completion in less than 4 years time, 2 chapters/ day in less than 2 years time. The advantage of the one year method is being able to receive spiritual nourishment from both Testaments every day.

- Many Bibles have a reading plan in their special helps.

Building a database of Bible

Often we use television to unwind at the end of the day, or to wake up at the beginning of the day. Afterwards, we realize we have “zoned out” for that time, without learning anything of value.

The Bible can work as a means of unwinding. One way to work Bible reading into the schedule: put Bible reading ahead of television, or put it on the schedule instead of a certain amount of television time. God is faithful to meet with us when we take the time to meet with Him. A good cup of coffee or tea or fruit juice can make this a pleasant routine.

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Church involvement/ Sabbath Keeping

The New Testament does not focus on Sabbath keeping, because the spontaneous reaction of the people to the good news of the resurrection was to want to spend **much** time together in fellowship and discussion.

Yet in our more formal life-schedules, setting aside a regular Sabbath is necessary.

In addition, the New Testament ushered in an era of persecution under the Romans, which made Sabbath keeping sometimes dangerous.

Church involvement

Hebrews 10:23-25. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ **not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together**, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (NKJV)

Church involvement

This passage tells us to continue in regular assembly, even as we see the day approaching. That day is the day of Christ's return, and we know from the Scriptures that persecution will increase near that time.

So this passage encourages us to continue in assembled Sabbath-keeping even during times of persecution.

It does not specify the details, meaning that there is flexibility for safety during persecution.

Church involvement: The LAW

- Deuteronomy 5:12-15 ¹² 'Observe the Sabbath day, **to keep it holy**, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant **may rest** as well as you. ¹⁵ And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. (NKJV) **3 emphases: holiness, rest, equality before God.**

Church involvement: To Whom was the Law of the Covenant Given?

- Deuteronomy 29:10-15¹⁰ "All of you stand today before the LORD your God: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, ¹¹ your little ones and your wives--also the stranger who *is* in your camp, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water-- ¹² that you may enter into covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath, which the LORD your God makes with you today, ¹³ that He may establish you today as a people for Himself, and that He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ¹⁴ "I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone, ¹⁵ but with *him* who stands here with us today before the LORD our God, as well as with *him* who *is not here* with us today. (NKJV)
- Those here + those not here = everybody. So anyone could sign on to this covenant.

Church involvement

- Matthew 5:17-19¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.
¹⁸ For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
(NKJV)
- Keeping the 10 commandments—the Law of the Covenant—is not optional. That includes Sabbath keeping.

Church involvement

Galatians 3:24 ²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (NKJV)

Proper Sabbath keeping will serve as a tutor to bring us to Christ.

It will fulfill the other goals of Sabbath keeping as well—a day to rest and be refreshed, a day to recognize human equality before God, a day to recognize the importance of having God in your life.

Church involvement

Romans 10:4⁴ For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (NKJV)

Here the passage says Jesus is the end of the law. Sometimes we misunderstand that word “**end.**” It is from the Greek word *telos*, meaning PURPOSE. “For Christ is the end (or purpose) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

This agrees with Galatians 3:24, which states that the law is our tutor to bring us to Christ. Certainly Sabbath keeping is in that category.

Church involvement

Isaiah 56:1-8¹ Thus says the LORD: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, For My salvation *is* about to come, And My righteousness to be revealed. ² Blessed *is* the man *who* does this, And the son of man *who* lays hold on it; Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil."

This passage promises blessing for Sabbath keeping—and is inclusive toward the people in Babylonian captivity, where **synagogues** developed for that purpose.

Church involvement

Isaiah ³ Do not let the son of the foreigner Who has joined himself to the LORD Speak, saying, "The LORD has utterly separated me from His people"; Nor let the eunuch say, "Here I am, a dry tree."
⁴ For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, ⁵ Even to them I will give in My house And within My walls a place and a name Better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name That shall not be cut off.

This foreshadowed Daniel and his friends and the people to whom they witnessed. This promised eternal life for people not allowed formerly into temple worship. The everlasting covenant extended beyond temple worship.

Church involvement

Isaiah 56:1-8⁶ "Also the sons of the foreigner Who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, And to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants-- Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And holds fast My covenant-- ⁷ Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *Will be* accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." ⁸ The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, "Yet I will gather to him *Others* besides those who are gathered to him." (NKJV)

This extends the Sabbath to Gentile believers, for the purpose of serving God.

Church involvement: The Spirit of the Law Rather Than the Letter

- Luke 14:1-5¹ Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. ² And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. ³ And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" ⁴ But they kept silent. And He took *him* and healed him, and let him go. ⁵ Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" (NKJV)

Church involvement: The Spirit of the Law Rather Than the Letter

Mark 2:23-28 ²³ Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. ²⁴ And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" ²⁵ But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: ²⁶ how he went into the house of God *in the days* of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?" ²⁷ And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."
(NKJV)

Church involvement: a complicated word-picture of “rest”

- Hebrews 4:10-11 ¹⁰ For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His. ¹¹ Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. (NKJV)
- The Sabbath rest was an example, as was the “rest of the conquest”—where God fought their battles and gave them the promised land.
- The Source of power for good works is God’s power, so our “resting in faith” releases His power. Good works require faith—diligent faith.

Church involvement

- We know that the early church met on the first day of the week, according to Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2. We know that Jesus arose on the first day of the week, as in Luke 24:1, and holding our assembly on that day commemorates His resurrection.
- This is not a command, however, and I believe it allows flexibility because of persecution issues.
- Not legalism, not license, but disciplined flexibility.

Church involvement

- We also know that we are to serve in the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law.
- 2 Corinthians 3:5-6. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, ⁶ who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (NKJV)
- Serving God in the spirit of the law gives us flexibility. Yet we are still responsible to keep the Sabbath.

Church involvement

- Colossians 2:16 says we are not allowed to judge each other about this. The whole passage in Colossians 2:11-17 is very helpful. It places Sabbath keeping in the realm of “shadow of the good things to come,” where the “substance”—the eternal blessing of fellowship with Christ and others—belongs to Christ. It implies that there is room for seeking God’s individual plan for your life in this matter, and that it is not a rules and regulations matter but a matter of the heart.

Church involvement

Here is an example of how that plays out in Scripture.

The letter of the law of the Sabbath in the Old Testament prohibited lighting a fire on the Sabbath, because the Sabbath was ALSO a labor law for every person to have the day off in Israel.

In the New Testament, Christians often celebrated the Sabbath on the first day of the week with a fellowship meal. So the prohibition against lighting a fire was unlikely to be observed.

Church involvement

- In our time, then, it is acceptable to have people working in the church kitchen (or at home) to provide a fellowship meal on Sunday.
- **However**, if every Sunday the same people work all the time in the kitchen and never have the rest time to go to worship, that practice would violate the spirit of the law.
- So there is flexibility, yet we are still responsible to keep the Sabbath set aside for God and for rest.

Church involvement

- ❑ Church involvement goes back to the requirement to use our spiritual gifts for the purpose of building up the church.
- ❑ It also gives encouragement to do what is right. We are stronger together than alone.
- ❑ We **SHOULD** be involved in a local congregation.
- ❑ There is no minimum size requirement for that congregation.

Church involvement

- Colossians 2:11-17 says we are not to allow anyone to judge us regarding Sabbath keeping. Rather, these things are shadow of what is to come, and the substance belongs to Jesus Christ. Sabbath keeping should be a taste of heaven rather than a duty.
- We have freedom, without conformity to regulations, and with that freedom comes a responsibility to search for God's wishes for our individual lives.

Church involvement

- We should seek a place where God's word is respected, believed, and taught,
- where He is truly worshipped,
- where the truth of salvation by grace through faith is proclaimed,
- where real fellowship exists.
- Other places are probably a waste of time, and may lead astray. However, even those places may provide opportunity to witness.

Complications

- You may have the responsibility of children and other family members.
- Their response to influences in their lives will make the choice of a place to worship even more challenging and important.
- They are more important than others at church because they are your spiritual responsibility. So the church you choose should not lead them astray.

Family Bible study is also vital—Deuteronomy 6.

While they are at home, your
Children are your congregation.

You have a calling from God to teach your own children according to Deuteronomy 6. That is far above and beyond anything delegated to a church or Sunday School.

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Giving

Another responsibility of faith is the responsibility of giving. The Temple worship system of the Old Testament had required giving for every family **on a proportional basis** called the tithe, or tenth, as well as fixed items for certain occasions.

Giving in the Old Testament included “saintly vacations” several times of the year, to travel to the temple for festivals. The giving included sacrifices that provided meat for the meals.

Giving

Giving was required to provide for the priests and Levites.

Giving was required to provide for the poor.

Great blessings were promised for that kind of giving.

Giving

- Malachi 3:6-12 ⁸ "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, *Even* this whole nation. ¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, The emphasis is that God is a great King, and as His citizens, we owe Him proportional giving—for the purpose of the well-being of His house. They were in process of rebuilding His temple at that time. His house at present is the church, by analogy—the dwelling of His Holy Spirit on earth. This is a startling analogy, yet fits the idea of the New Covenant.

Giving

- Malachi 3:6-12 And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you *such* blessing That *there will not be room enough to receive it.*
- This is the one arena where God tells people to test Him. God promises concrete results of our faith. If we tithe, He promises to demonstrate His faithfulness by blessing us.
- We see our money buy stuff. We cannot see God. When we give, we are worshiping God rather than our money. We are trusting God rather than our money.

Giving

- Malachi 3:6-12 " "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the LORD of hosts; ¹² "And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land," Says the LORD of hosts. (NKJV)
- The promise is very extensive. This passage relates to Israel rather than the church, so we need to see if the New Testament gives the same principles.

Giving

- 2 Corinthians 9:5-15 ⁵ Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which *you had* previously promised, that it may be ready as *a matter of* generosity and not as a grudging obligation. ⁶ But this *I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.* ⁷ *So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*

Giving

- 2 Corinthians ⁸ And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work. ⁹ As it is written: "*He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.*" ¹⁰ Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have *sown* and increase the fruits of your righteousness, ¹¹ while *you are* enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. (NKJV)

Giving

- 2 Corinthians ¹² For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, ¹³ while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal sharing with them and all *men*, ¹⁴ and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. ¹⁵ Thanks *be* to God for His indescribable gift! (NKJV)

Giving

- The New Testament does not command a law of giving, but does reveal the same principles as the Malachi passage. God is still the great King, worthy of our offerings. He still promises to bless those who give.
- God will supply more seed for sowing and will increase the harvest of righteousness. The giver will be enriched for more liberality, and the results will be more thanksgiving to God. The receivers will pray for and want fellowship with the givers. These are promises.

New Testament Giving=

Bountiful giving,

- ▣ with preparation beforehand,
- ▣ not marked by covetousness,
- ▣ as sowing bountifully in order to reap bountifully, for the purpose of the bountiful results.

In response, God is able to make all grace abound to the giver, so that he always has all sufficiency in everything, so that he has an abundance for every good deed.

Giving

Sometimes a wife becomes a believer before her husband does. Her husband may not be willing to give.

Sometimes a wife is married to a church member who does not want to give.

In my opinion, if she has a budget that is a portion of their income she controls, she could request to be able to give a portion of that budget, BUT if her husband is hostile to the idea, his salvation or change of heart is more important than her small gift.

Giving

- A man who is hostile toward giving is likely to be pushed away from God if His wife pushes him to give.
- In that situation, she should go with the instructions in 1 Peter 3:1 and be quiet about it, and not worry about it.
- Rather she should pray for his salvation—or for God to open his eyes or to give him faith for giving if he is a believer who does not want to give.

Giving

- So here again, we are accountable to the spirit of the law, not the letter. We have flexibility.
- Yet we should seek to give according to Biblical guidelines as much as our life situation permits.
- And we will receive God's blessing for giving.
- Jesus noticed the widow's mite. He sees the amount we give, not by numerical value, but by its cost to our lives.

Each of us can grow spiritually

Disciplines for Spiritual Growth

To reach God's potential for our lives by commitment to the following disciplines.

1. Building a database of Bible
2. Church involvement
3. Giving
4. Witnessing

Witnessing

“Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary.”—Psalm 107:2.

Studies have shown that new believers are very effective as witnesses to bring others into the faith.

They are the ones who KNOW other people who need the LORD.

We should encourage them to bring their friends to the Lord.

Witnessing

We all have a sphere of influence, and it can be helpful to map out your own sphere.

One approach is called “concentric circles of concern” where you draw a grid on a piece of paper, with names of family members who are close to you near the center, and good friends a little farther out, and acquaintances a bit farther out, and business associates as well.

This is a suggestion—not a law—to enable you to keep the spiritual needs of your friends in mind.

Witnessing

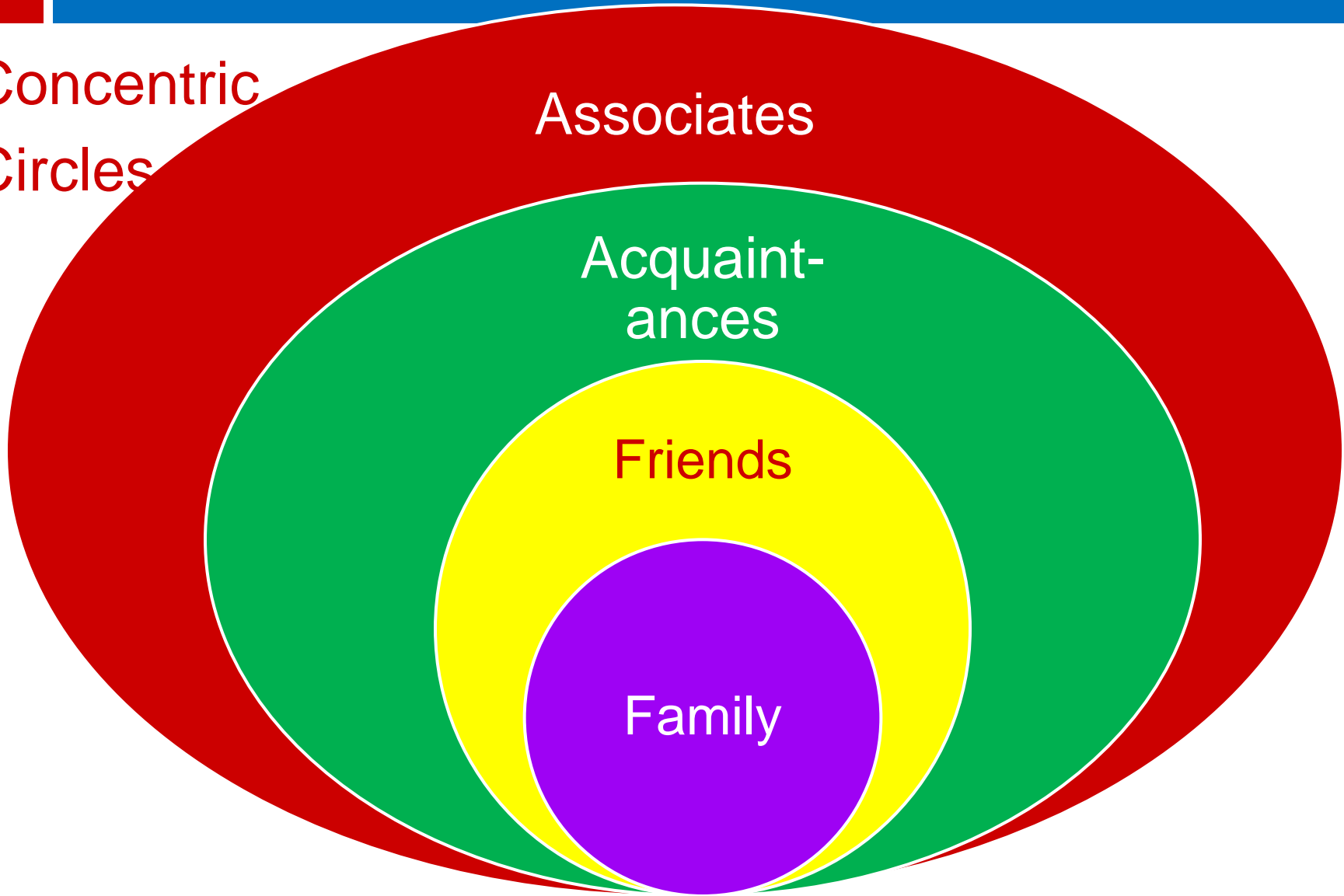
Concentric
Circles

Associates

Acquaint-
ances

Friends

Family



Witnessing

The map can be used first as an aid to pray for each person, and especially to ask for good opportunities to witness to those who need to hear.

Each person on your map is worthy of receiving some level of ministry from you. When your children live at home, they are automatically your disciples.

When they are out of the nest, they are major recipients of your prayer ministry.

Everyone on your map should be on your prayer list.

Witnessing

Being alert to the spiritual needs of others should become automatic—including things like shopping for helpful gifts and cards.

Even little things like handcrafted bookmarks can have an impact. All of us have a ministry, and we need to ask God to open our eyes to see it.

Witnessing demands being able to talk about matters of faith. We have to be open and vulnerable to accomplish the task. We also need wisdom.

Witnessing

Some people on the map will be delighted to learn what has happened to you spiritually. Opportunities to talk to them about the LORD will occur spontaneously—with the Holy Spirit at work all the time to make them happen.

Other people on the map will be less well known to you in their spiritual thinking. It can help to make a plan for approaching the subject.

Witnessing

You may want to think about the worldview of each person on the map.

If you do not know their worldview, it might be helpful to think of good questions you can ask them to help you find out their worldview.

These should be non-threatening “what do you think about this topic” sorts of questions. So the most important beginning of witnessing is LISTENING.

Witnessing

Then you can think of ideas that bridge the gap between their worldview and the Biblical view as starter topics for discussion or letter writing, or emails.

Or you may want to include helpful DVDs or books, or even a Bible, at gift giving time. One thing to ask God to give you is eyes to see and ears to hear those opportune moments.

Witnessing

If you practice talking to those who are eager to listen first, then your comfort zone gets bigger.

Remember that the other person does not have to agree with you for the discussion to be productive.

Often the Holy Spirit will take a phrase or a sentence out of the discussion, and keep bringing it to their mind, so that further discussion takes place later.

Witnessing

Sometimes God will place someone on your heart to pray for, and even to go talk to. Obey. You may be the only one they will hear, or you may be the one with exactly the right insight for their situation.

Acts 1:8 ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (NKJV) The concentric circles idea applies this verse to individual lives.

Witnessing

The circles in Acts 1:8 start where the disciples were—Jerusalem, and extend outward to the whole world and to the end of time. We are still participants in those original circles of concern. They are not just circles of our concern. They are circles of God's concern. Success belongs to Him.

Clarity is tremendously important in witnessing. Sometimes an outline of ideas can help with clarity, when you sense that your friend is ready to hear the gospel.

Witnessing

- We should have a grasp of the various elements involved in the Spiritual transformation everyone needs. We should work on sound bites that tell the information in memorable ways.
- Bible verses fit that category, and we need topic sentences to go with them, or to explain them. God promises to use His word for His purpose.
- The sketch in the homework, called the Bridge Illustration can help you remember which verses to use, if you “locate them on the sketch.”

Witnessing

- Homework for this class will help you find verses that fit each topic on the next few slides. Those verses are helpful to memorize or to learn in condensed form.
- Tips for memorizing: If you remember the chapter and Book name, you can find a verse and show it to someone else. You don't have to remember the verse numbers to be able to find the verses in a chapter.
- You want a system that is usable.

Witnessing

- Sometimes witnessing booklets, such as The Four Spiritual Laws can be helpful and easy to use.
- The Bridge Illustration allows you to draw a little sketch when talking to a friend about Jesus' purpose for the cross.
- The sketch can help you remember the topics your friend needs to understand.
- The sketch also can be given to your friend at the end of a conversation, so they can think about it later.

Witnessing

People

- **Sin**
- **Repentance**
- Faith
- Commitment

God

Perfection

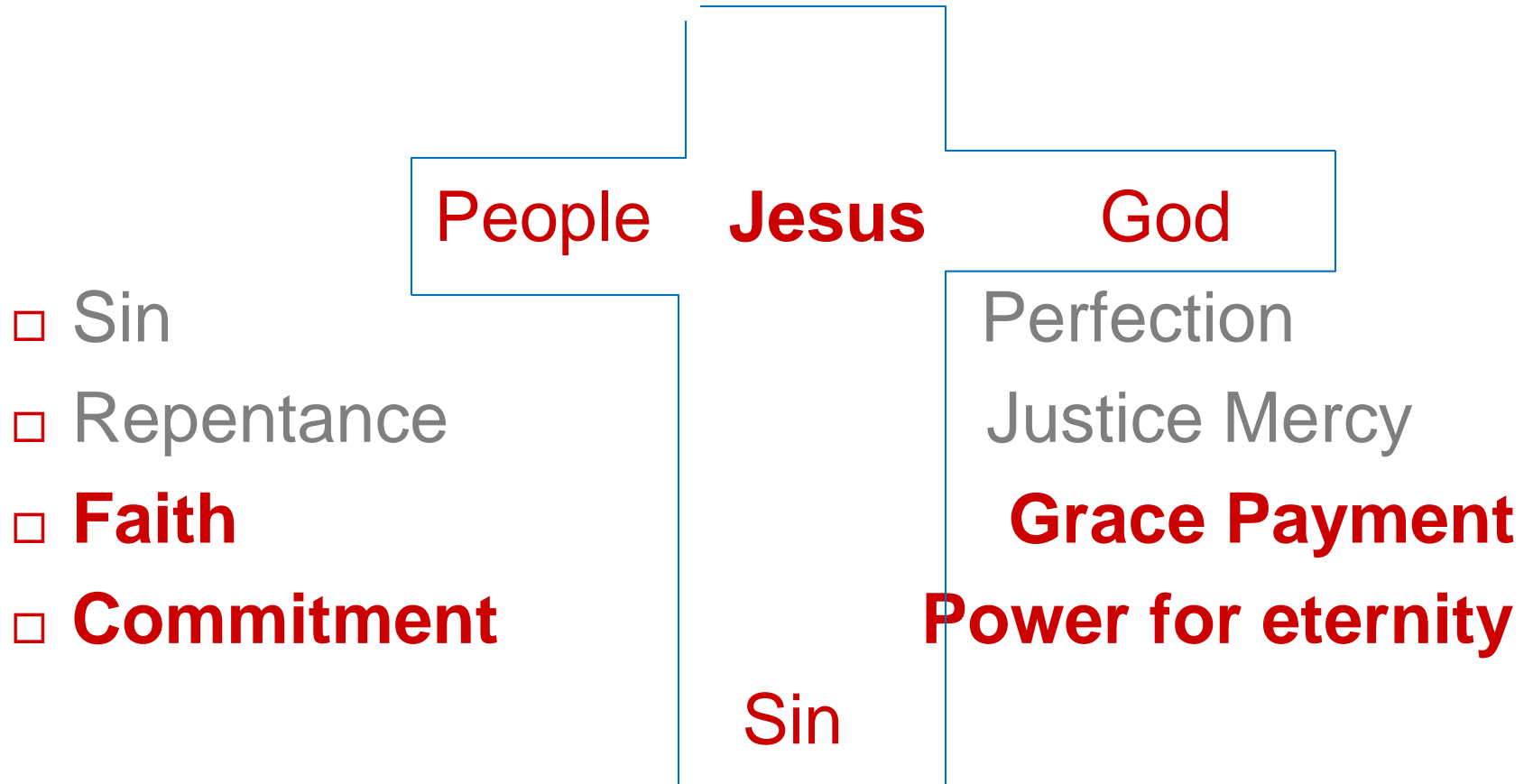
Justice&Mercy

Grace Payment

Power for eternity

Sin

Witnessing



Today's Homework

Will show how to use the sketch.

The things we have talked about today really matter.

I believe these topics are vital for our progress in the Gospel.

They are vital for growing the church in both number and in depth of understanding.

Our culture needs the church to grow. Our world needs the church to grow.

The ideas that unify people in the church also are good for the world.

The world presents a caricature of these ideas, so we need to know them well, to counter that false picture.

Romans 8:1-2

- There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Micah 7:18

- ¹⁸ Who *is* a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?
- He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights *in* mercy. ¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. (NKJV)

A horizontal bar at the top of the slide, divided into a red section on the left and a blue section on the right.

Homework

In 3 sets

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- Read Acts 1:1-8. Do you see the concentric circles of concern described here? How big are they?
- What did Jesus tell His followers to wait for and what would be the results
- What does that tell us about our efforts to witness?

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- **Courage:** the Holy Spirit gives courage. So staying in His fellowship by keeping all sins confessed and forgiven is critically important. The disciples of Jesus went from timid people hiding out to bold spokespersons for Christ after the Holy Spirit came upon them. We have the same Holy Spirit living in our hearts, so we have the same Source of courage.
- In addition, according to 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 tells us the Holy Spirit gives us something extremely important for being able to witness. What is that?
- This passage sounds like the Apostle Paul is saying “Just wing it in the power of the Spirit.” But we have to realize Paul spent a great amount of time studying God’s word. He also was well versed in the cultural thinking of his era. So this passage is not saying “Don’t bother to prepare.”

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- **Preparation of the Gospel of Peace** is the footgear for the spiritual battle, as described in Ephesians 6:10-20—and the “battle prayer” in verse 19 is for what?
- So we are supposed to “put our shoes on” to go out to witness. And we are supposed to pray about it—trusting God’s strength and wisdom rather than our own.
- So what is the appropriate preparation? Several steps of preparation: First we need to know how the other person thinks about things. Do they understand the concept of God as Creator? Do they understand that God is GOOD? Do they understand the concept of sin?

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- These ideas formerly permeated our culture, but that is no longer the case. If they do not understand these foundational ideas, they will not be able to understand the cross. So the first step is to find out what they know or think they know. Misconceptions may need to be addressed. **The first part of witnessing is careful listening.**
- The second part is asking good questions to clarify when you are not sure what the person means by what they say.

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- Third, you need to know the basic categories of information that are necessary for salvation.
- The categories are **Repentance, Atonement, Faith, Prayer, and Commitment.** (One of the benefits of Sabbath keeping is that the listener hears those topics in small portions over time, and has opportunity to think about them. We can duplicate that among friends if we stay in tune with the Holy Spirit during ordinary conversations—but we have to be brave enough to talk about these things.)

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- You have to know the way the other person thinks to be able to get the ideas across. To make repentance understandable, you have to be able to explain the sin of people and the righteousness of God. Sometimes people think sin only refers to severe wrongdoing, and they will think they are completely good, not sinners, because they understand the standard incorrectly.

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- Sometimes they have an orientation to psychology that says calling oneself a sinner is a symptom of low self esteem, and an indicator of psychological maladjustment. So those sorts of ideas may need to be set to rest before they can understand what you are saying.
- One way to approach that issue is to talk about the difference between real guilt and imaginary guilt. Because God is totally good, if we break one of His rules, we experience real guilt, even if that rule is not one of the big ones. Real guilt reflects a separation from God's goodness.

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- Imaginary guilt can occur when someone has an overly severe conscience, perhaps due to a harsh upbringing. Because God is totally good, we need to find out how He views these matters. His definitions count. The healthiest conscience is the one most in tune with His goodness. We have to search for Him to get the rules right.
- That is where our understanding of the Bible is important. It is the very best source of understanding God's perspective.

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- The law of loving God is one our culture never seems to publicly address. Yet God views it as the MOST IMPORTANT commandment.
- The question a Sunday School teacher asked me, that made me aware of a problem between me and God— “Do you love God?”
- I had to admit that I did not, and I knew I SHOULD. That sense of alienation started my thinking on the way toward salvation.
- So your friend’s awareness of sin may not be consistent with God’s awareness of their sins.

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- When you are sure they are clear on the categories and concepts, then it is possible to talk them through the plan of salvation step by step. So preparing the way for that conversation may take a large amount of time.
- The fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ was often brought up by the first disciples. When you think about it, that is an AMAZING event. It is worthy of discussion. Read the Apostle Paul's sermon in Acts 17:16-33. Notice how Paul remarked about Jesus' resurrection, and how it got the listeners' attention.

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- Once you think another person might be ready to hear the whole set of ideas, you should have already prepared for that possibility.
- The easiest approach is the use of a witnessing booklet like the Four Spiritual Laws, and just to read it aloud page by page, and then ask your friend if each concept makes sense to them as you go through it. So obtaining that booklet and thoughtfully reading it is a good idea.

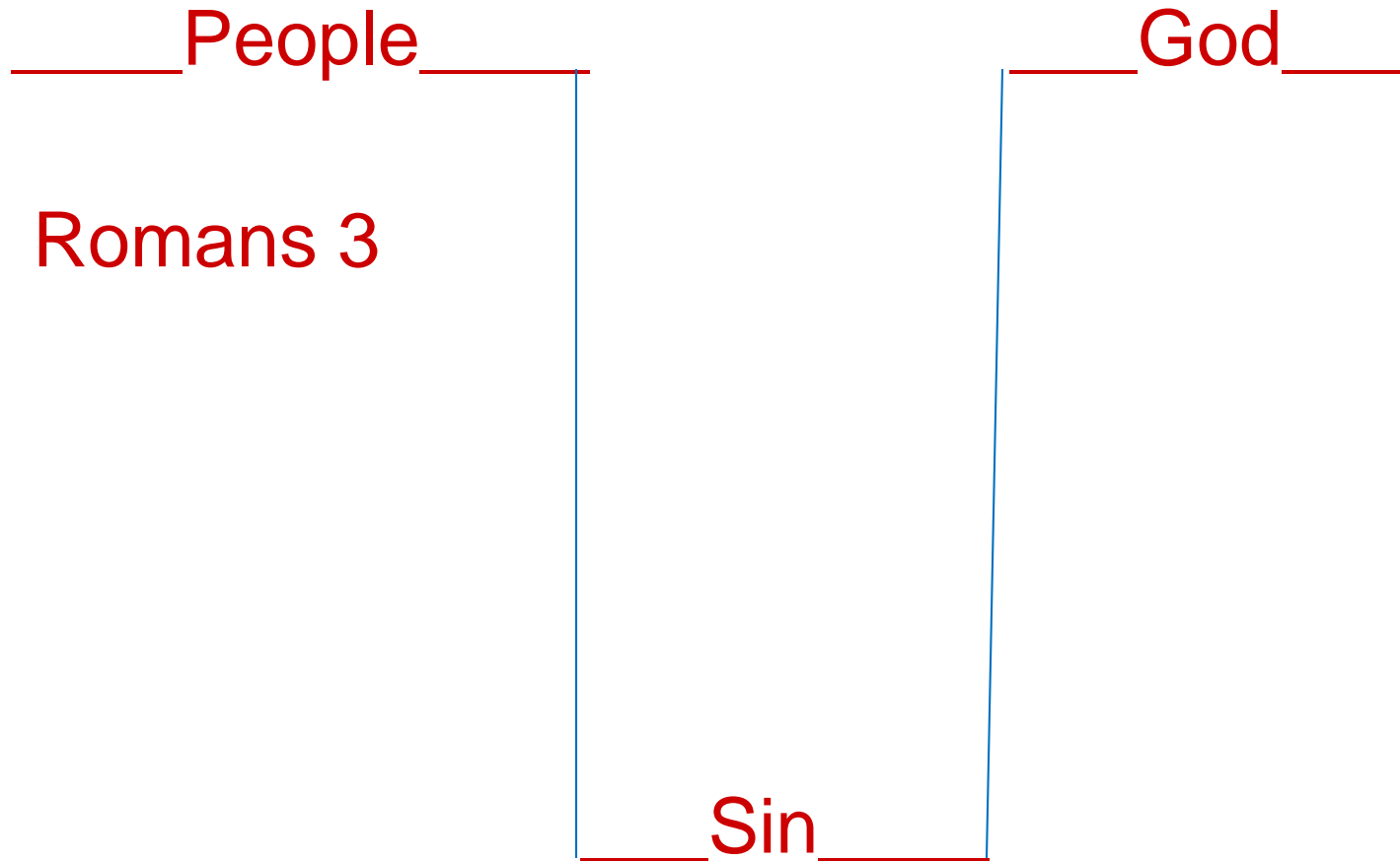
Homework Class 11 Set 1

- Another easy outline to cover all the concepts is called the Bridge Illustration. It goes like this.
- God is totally good. People are not totally good. People range in behavior from perfectionistic to pretty good to mediocre to pretty bad to terrible. The wonderful thing and problem is that God is **TOTALLY GOOD**, and His goodness includes perfect Justice all the time. Perfect Justice demands that every evil receive due punishment—and that every evil be separated from God's total Goodness.

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- This means there is a gulf of separation between us and God. That gulf is called Sin in the Bible. The Bible in Romans chapter 3 says “ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” So everyone has to face this gulf of separation between them and God. The gulf is a MORAL gulf. It’s most basic form is selfishness—and we each have a conscience that lets us know our areas of God’s concern.
- While you are talking you can draw an illustration starting about 1/3 of the way down from the top of the page.

Homework Class 11 Set 1



Homework Class 11 Set 1

- We cannot bridge that gulf of separation, but God can. In fact, He already did. He took the form of a human being, and took the punishment for all sins, for all persons, for all time, so that He could satisfy the demands of perfect Justice in our place.
- “God made Him who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” –2 Corinthians 5:21
- Then you can complete the drawing by adding the top portion:

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- God's part was to pay the price for our sins through the infinite death of His Son on the cross, and to defeat death in the process. He came back to life for us, to be the way for us to have eternal life, in His Presence.
- Our part is in two steps: Repentance and Faith. Our part is to repent of our sins, by facing them and being sorry for them and asking His forgiveness, and then to receive the payment He made on our behalf.

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- We receive that payment by asking for it in prayer, and asking Him to send His Holy Spirit into our lives.
- The process of believing that His payment is for us and that He is victorious over death is called faith.
- The process of receiving Him into our lives is also faith.

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- Because He is the Sovereign King of the Universe, when we invite His Holy Spirit into our lives, we are placing ourselves as citizens of His eternal kingdom. We are recognizing His right to be in charge.
- This is a serious commitment. We are actually receiving the Trinity into our lives, because that is who He is. Another way to think about it—we are placing ourselves and our present and eternal future in His hands. We can trust Him with our future because He is Good and the Source of all Goodness.

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- The Bible calls it passing from death into life, because from that moment onward, we have eternal life.
- John 5:24 quotes Jesus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears *My* word and believes Him who sent *Me* has eternal life, and does not come into condemnation, but has passed out of death into life.”
- Then the question to ask is “**Would you like to do this?**”

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- If the answer is no, then ask if they would like to pray together and offer to pray out loud for them. Ask God to bless them. Tell them you want them to have time to think about this, and if they have any questions or concerns, that you will be happy to listen to them any time.
- If the answer is yes, then offer to pray out loud first and then let them pray to God in their own words to tell Him these things. It is good to pray out loud for God to give them the words to express their thoughts to Him.

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- Your example of praying out loud may help them be comfortable praying in their own words. The prayer should be simple—not fancy. Also, don't be too concerned about the words of their prayer. God sees the heart, and He knows what they really mean.
- This is a good time to encourage them to come to church, no matter how they responded to the outline. It is important to keep on with your regular friendship activities, too, and to keep praying for them.

Homework Class 11 Set 1

- It is possible that they could become upset with you for trying to talk about this. I've experienced that—and one individual became a Christian about 5 years later. Even though I was sad for him to be upset, it was only temporary.
- People got upset with the Apostle Paul, and he was a great evangelist.
- It is worth the risk—especially if God impresses the idea upon you to open up with them.
- Their response is not your responsibility. Loving them is.

Homework Class 11 Set 2

- Write down the verses that go with the drawing. Begin to say the verses out loud and to put them into your own words.
- Practice drawing the bridge illustration and writing verses into the appropriate spaces on the sketch.
- Collect other verses that would be helpful, too.

Homework Class 11 Set 3

- Practice using the bridge illustration in front of a mirror, saying the words out loud and drawing the sketch.
- You can play both parts—the one drawing the sketch, and the mirror image listening and responding.

Homework Class 11 Set 3

- Practice using the bridge illustration with someone you trust. When I was first learning to get comfortable talking about these things, my grandfather came to visit. He was a great person to talk to about this.
- In fact, he responded beautifully, and I was reassured about what he believed as well. Not too many years later, he became unable to care for himself or to respond to conversations. The little time I spent with him talking about these things was very precious to me and I think, to him.

Homework Class 11 Set 3

- Suggestion: Create a “circles of concern” drawing, and put names or initials on each circle. (Initials offer respect for others’ privacy, if someone finds your list. If you have a good memory, the circles alone may be enough to prompt you to pray for each person.) Start praying for each person at least weekly—perhaps as part of Sabbath keeping.