

Marks of Maturity
Biblical Characteristics of a Christian Leader

Additional Reading Suggestions

- Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor*, Fleming H. Revell, Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1988
- Charles Swindoll, *Hand Me Another Brick*, Thomas Nelson, 1978
- Charles Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, Word Books,
- Charles Swindoll, *Quest For Character* Multonomah, Portland,
- Charles Swindoll, *Strengthening Your Grip, Essentials in an Aimless World*, Word, Waco, 1982
- Erwin W. Lutzer, *Failure, the Backdoor to Success*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1975, 1984
- Erwin W. Lutzer, *Triumph and Tears at the Judgment Seat of Christ, Your Eternal Reward*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1998
- J. Dwight Pentecost, *Design for Discipleship*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids
- J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove
- Joseph M. Stowell, *Perilous Pursuits*, Moody Press, Chicago
- Oswald J Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, Moody Press, Chicago
- Paul Meier, *Renewing Your Mind in a Secular World*, Edited by John D. Woodbridge, Moody Press, Chicago
- Robert B. Deffinbaugh, *The Glory of Suffering: A Study of 1 Peter*, The Biblical Studies Press, www.bible.org
- Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr. and Dan B. Allender, *Encouragement, The Key to Caring*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1984
- Ted W. Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, **1976**

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Session 1

Marks of Maturity *Biblical Characteristics of a Christian Leader* Discussion Questions

Introduction (pg. 1 – 3)

1. What three elements are necessary to achieve spiritual maturity?

2. What was one of Paul's primary personal goals?

3. How is the goal of evangelism described?

4. What are the five agents God uses for growth?

5. Describe the three defining marks of maturity.

6. In Philippians 3:12-16, Paul describes his constant pursuit of growth toward spiritual perfection. Please describe your pursuit of growth toward spiritual perfection and share with the group your successes and failures.

Session 2

Mark #1: An Example for Others to Imitate Discussion Questions

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1. Describe the four principles related to being a true Christian example to others and discuss the roles these principles play in your life.

2. What problems do we face in being Christ-like examples to others?

3. What specific problems do you face in being an authentic Christian example to others?

- In your home?

- In your church?

- In your workplace?

- In your community?

- With your non-Christian friends?

4. What conclusions about Christ and Christianity would others draw from watching you conduct your everyday life?

5. In Philippians 3:17-18, what two exhortations does Paul give us if we are to be mature follows of Christ?

6. What are the two responsibilities we must fulfill in order to heed Paul's directive?

7. What three things does a biblical understanding of Christ's finished work on the cross and our union with him produce?

8. In 1 Timothy 4:11-16, what is Paul's directive to Timothy.

9. Describe how you nourish your soul.

10. What is the direct consequence when we become "controllers", seeking people to follow us to fulfill our own motives?

11. What are the four components of the biblical plan and order for modeling and following?

12. What areas of your life would you like others to imitate? Why?

13. Are there parts of your life that you would not want others to imitate? Please describe?

14. What will you do to change?

15. Who will you ask to help you?

Group Discussion

- Who are the personalities in the cultures that your children are imitating in their language, dress, and lifestyles?
- Whose lifestyles do you find yourself imitating?

Session 3

Mark #2 Full of the Spirit and Wisdom Discussion Questions

1. What is indispensable, and the ultimate source, of spiritual maturity and godly leadership?

2. In calling His disciples, to what two major responsibilities did Christ commission them?

3. What do men manifest when they are filled with God's Spirit?

4. In Acts 6, the apostles selected seven men of good report and full of the Spirit and wisdom to serve the needs of the widows and needy. What was the critical importance of the following?

- Seven:

- Men of good report:

- Full of the Spirit:

- Full of wisdom:

5. If a church has unmet needs, and no men who are full of God's Spirit and wisdom, what must they do?

6. What is the consequence of selecting men who are not full of God's Spirit and wisdom to serve these unmet needs?

7. Describe the criteria that Oswald Sanders identifies as necessary for choosing church leaders.

8. What happens when this criteria is ignored?

9. Using the definitions on page 17 of the article on Mark #2, how would you evaluate yourself in the following? Be specific.

- A man of good report:

- A man full of the Spirit:

- A man full of wisdom:

10. Describe the obstacles in your life that prevent you from becoming full of the Spirit.

11. What must you do to change your willingness?

12. Describe the obstacles in your life that prevent you from being full of spiritual wisdom?

13. When men serve without having spiritual fitness, what does God do?

14. What is the inevitable result?

15. Describe, in your own words, the “evangelical essential”.

16. Explain the difference between spiritual wisdom and biblical knowledge.

17. What must you do, beginning today, to be filled with God’s Spirit and His spiritual wisdom?

Group Discussion: Who are the men that you rely on for biblical wisdom in your daily living?

Session 4

Mark #3 A Powerful and Productive Life Discussion Questions

1. Describe the “sinkhole phenomenon”.

2. What is the definition of a powerful private life?

3. What are the four truths of Scripture that pertain to private life?

4. List the three things that must take place in one’s personal time with God and describe their presence in your life.

5. Which of these areas is weakest in your life? Why?

6. How does this weakness affect your life and the lives of your family?

7. Which one is strongest and how does it impact your life? Please be specific.

8. In 1 Kings 17:2-3, why did God tell Elijah to “go away from here . . . and hide yourself”?

9. Why is it important to have extended periods of seclusion?

10. What obstacles keep you from setting aside regular time each day, other than bible study and reading, for quiet time with God?

11. How often do you spend quiet time with God?

12. How long is that time?

13. When you spend time with God, who is doing most of the talking?

14. On the days when you do not spend extended periods of time with God, who and what govern your thoughts and behavior?

15. What happens to our inner life when we truly get alone with God?

16. What needs to change or be strengthened in your inner life?

17. In Mark 1:35-39, why was it important for Jesus to rise early in the morning and depart for a lonely place for prayer?

18. In Mark 6:30-32, why did Jesus take his disciples to a remote place?

19. What do you think would happen to you if you did the same each day?

Session 5

Mark #4

A Biblical Concept of Oneself

Discovering Who You Are and How You Fit Into the Plan of God

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the paradox that the subject of self-image creates?

2. What is the result of acting “in harmony with our mental self-portrait”?

3. Two key things are needed if we are to effectively lead or minister to others. What are they?

4. Why is thinking in these terms so important?

5. List the five biblical truths that are needed for a mature concept of one’s self-image.

6. What are the three alternatives to worldly self-love, self-esteem, and self-fulfillment?

7. Describe, in your own words, the biblical concept of your self-image.

8. How does this differ from your actual self-image? Please be specific.

9. What are the five points that comprise a biblical standard for judging success?

10. Using the Scripture passages in the text, describe how each of these points are an integral part of your measurement of your successes.

11. What happens when we use the wrong standards of measurement?

12. Describe the four consequences of using false standards of measurement.

13. In what areas of your life do you use false standards as a measurement of your effectiveness and success? Please be specific.

14. What are the four false standards identified in the text that we often use to measure our personal feelings of significance?

15. Describe the circumstances in your life where you use these standards to measure your personal significance. Again, please be specific.

16. What are the five marks that identify a mature believer who lives by faith in biblical truths?

17. Please describe the following in detail:

- Your identity in Christ:

- Your God-given abilities, talents, and gifts:

- God's purpose for you in this life:

- Your God-confidence level:

- Your process of discovering and correcting your correctable weaknesses:

18. What four steps are necessary for discovering and correcting your weaknesses?

Group Discussion: What must we do, beginning now, to discover and correct the two problems we face in having a true biblical concept of ourselves? How must we help each other in this process?

- Our pride – the spirit of covetousness and the desire for public recognition, fame, and applause;
- Man's yardstick and scale of values.

Session 6

Mark #5 Single-Minded Devotion to God Discussion Questions

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1. What is the broad definition of being a disciple of Christ?

 2. What is the narrow definition?

 3. According to Luke 14 and Romans 12:1, what is meant by the term “commitment”?

 4. Describe, in your own words, what is fundamental to having a single-minded devotion to God?

 5. In light of these fundamentals, how would you describe your devotion to God?

 6. What persons and/or things, other than God, are drawing your devotion?

 7. Describe the occasions in which you find yourself focused, driven, immersed, or devoted to your job, your hobby, your recreation, or any other interest other than God.

8. Do you find yourself dividing your time between God and your worldly desires? Please explain.

9. If a believer lacks commitment to a single-minded devotion to God, what happens to his ability to serve the Lord?

10. Describe, in your own words, what a single-minded disciple looks like.

11. What would you have to do to become a single-minded disciple? What would you have to give up? What would you have to accept?

12. What are some of the motivations for commitment according to 1 Corinthians 6:19, Jeremiah 12:23, Romans 12:1-2, 1 John 2:15-17, and Titus 2:11-15?

13. Is commitment an evidence of maturity and insight to life? If so, how?

14. Why does the Lord mention family in two passages (Matthew 10:37 and Luke 14:26) in connection with one's ability to be a devoted disciple?

15. Where are you in the matter of commitment or devotion to the Lord?

16. What is there in your life that hinders your availability to the Lord (drives, goals, treasures, values, fears, longings, understanding, unbelief, lack of faith, etc.)? Please refer to Matthew 6:30, 1 Kings 18:21, 1 Peter 1:13, John 2:17, Revelation 3:10, James 4:7-10, Jeremiah 2:13, and Philippians 3:7-11 for your answers.

17. How much private time do you spend getting to know the Lord intimately?

Group Discussion

Read James 1:7-8. Who and what has your allegiance and devotion?

Session 7

Mark #6 Biblical Conviction Discussion Questions

1. Using the text and a dictionary, please write a definition for the word “conviction”.

2. What is the definition of “biblical conviction”?

3. What stands opposite of conviction?

4. Please give a detailed description of a man of biblical conviction.

5. What three components are necessary to produce true biblical conviction?

6. Please answer this question carefully and accurately. How much time do you spend each week doing the following activities?

- Watching TV:
- Playing golf:
- Engaging in a hobby:
- On your computer (*not Bible-related*):

- Reading newspapers and books:
- Taking work home:
- Reading the Bible:

7. How would you describe yourself as a man of biblical conviction? (evidences)

8. Which teachings in Scripture do you have difficulty accepting or believing?

9. Are there commands or teachings in the New Testament that you believe are not relevant today? If so, which ones?

10. *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).*

Do you believe that the only way to eternal life with God in heaven is through faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Please explain your answer.

11. *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).*

Do you believe that each element of this passage is true? Please explain your answer.

12. . . . *Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (James 4:4).*

What does it mean to be a friend of the world?

13. *A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety (1 Timothy 2:11-15).*

Knowing that God is speaking through Paul and makes this statement without condition, please explain how the church must be obedient to this command.

14. *But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep (2 Peter 2:1-3).*

How are false prophets infiltrating the church today and where have their teachings been adopted by today's church? What about your church?

15. What happens when we do not protect ourselves against false teachers by a right position and behavior toward the Word?

16. In 2 Peter 1, what two components of biblical maturity are presented?

17. Please explain, in your own words, the Law of Spiritual Deterioration.

18. What three elements are necessary for a commitment to Scripture? Please describe them in detail.

19. What happens when Scripture is not a priority over our opinions, experiences, and background?

Session 8

Mark #7 Moral Excellence Discussion Questions

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1. What is mankind's natural tendency regarding morals and why?

2. What is the result of an absence of virtue?

Isaiah 5:20

*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;
Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness;
Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! (v. 20)*

3. Describe situations in which you are aware of evil being called good.

4. Where is good being called evil?

5. What are some of the subtle areas where evil is defined as good?

6. How are you and your family being affected by the redefinition of evil as good, and good as evil?

7. What actions are you taking in maintaining moral excellence in your household?

Isaiah 5:21

*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes
And clever in their own sight! (v.21)*

8. In your own words, describe what it means to be wise in one's own eyes and clever in one's own sight.

9. In what areas or instances do you find yourself relying on your own wisdom and cleverness?

10. What must you do to rely on God's wisdom and His will?

Isaiah 5:22

*Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine
And valiant men in mixing strong drink, (v. 22)*

11. How does this verse apply to today's culture, entertainment, and sports?

12. What role does alcohol consumption play in your life or in the lives of your family?

13. Describe the impact that alcohol or substance abuse has had on you?

Isaiah 5:23

Who justify the wicked for a bribe,

And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right! (v. 23)

14. Have you ever compromised moral or ethical principles in the conduct of your job, paying your taxes, or in achieving a personal or family goal? If, yes, please elaborate.

15. How does this verse apply to today's culture?

16. How do you react when you see the wicked being justified and the God-given rights of others being violated?

17. To what do the Bible, and the new life God gives you in Christ, call you?

18. List the Christ-like qualities we must possess and increase that are in 2 Peter 1:5-11.

19. Describe Peter's four phases which are necessary for the development of moral excellence.

20. In the pyramid example, why must we start with faith before we can develop moral excellence and, ultimately, love?

21. How is mediocrity defined in the text?

Group Discussion: How does each of the following statements apply to your life?

- "I am committed to moral excellence, true spiritual growth, and change through my new life in Christ."

- "I cling to my own self-centered strategies to run my life in an attempt to find significance, security, and satisfaction."

Session 9

Mark #8 The Heart of a Servant Discussion Questions

1. What is the definition of servanthood?

2. How can servanthood be selfish?

3. What are the two options regarding servanthood that Jesus gives us in Mat 20:20-28?

4. In Luke 22:24-30, what do we learn about our preoccupation with self-centered interests?

5. What is the result of our impatience and our desire to be served now?

6. How does Jesus model servanthood in John 13:1-5 and 12-17?

7. What is Paul's warning to us in Philippians 2:3-5?

8. In developing a servant's heart, what two concerns might stand in our way?

9. What does the search for personal significance produce?

10. If we are not constantly checking our motives for serving, what might our results be?

11. What happens if we do not find our significance in Christ?

12. Please list the four conditions that hinder servanthood?

13. What are the seven consequences of the absence of servanthood? Be specific.

14. According to Philippians 2:5-8, why did God the Father exalt His Son, Jesus?

15. In developing a servant's heart, what reality must we face and how do we deal with it?

16. In what areas are you serving the Body of Christ?

17. What drew you to serve in these areas?

18. Describe the feelings you experience when serving in these areas?

19. What motivates you to continue serving?

20. What kind of praise do you receive from others for the service you perform?

21. How does praise make you feel?

22. Would you continue to serve in an area where your work was not recognized? Why?

23. List the areas of your life in which you are served?

24. How do you react when others fail to serve you in these areas?

25. How does servanthood play a role in your position as:

- Husband:

- Father:

- Leader:

- Employee/employer:

26. What must you do, beginning today, to acquire an authentic heart of a servant?

Group Discussion: Following the example of the Savior, believers are to function as servants who seek to minister to one another in loving and selfless service. Are you, in submission to the Lord and to others, seeking to serve, or are you seeking to be served in the pursuit of your wants?

Session 10

Mark #9 Surrender and Self-Sacrifice Discussion Questions

1. What is the definition of surrender?

2. Why are the marks of surrender and self-sacrifice being discussed together?

3. According to Philippians 2:5-8, how did Jesus Christ demonstrate the act of surrendering?

4. How would you describe your condition of surrender to the will, purpose, and plan of God?

5. What areas of your life have you surrendered to God?

6. Which ones are you still holding onto?

7. Why is it difficult for you to release them?

8. What would it mean for you to “empty yourself” in your act of total surrender to God?

9. Why is sacrifice the “fruit” of surrender?

10. Referring to Philippians 2:5-8, when did Jesus begin His sacrificial life?

11. In what other areas of His life did Jesus make sacrifices?

12. Why do you think He made these additional sacrifices before making His ultimate sacrifice on the cross?

13. In your own words, what are some of the principles and imperatives the following passages teach about self-sacrifice as one of the marks of spiritual maturity needed in the Christian life? (Matthew 6:19ff; 10:37-38; 19:29; 16:24; Luke 9:23; 1 Corinthians 9:15-23; Romans 12:1ff; 14:1-15:3; 1 Corinthians 8:13; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18).

14. Based on scriptural principles, what are some of the guiding factors and motivations or reasons for the necessity of self-sacrifice in the Christian's life?

15. Describe how you live sacrificially in:

- Your home:

- Your church:

- Your workplace:

- Your community:

16. Reflecting on your own life, what are some of the things the Lord may be calling on you to sacrifice or give up in order to fulfill His will and purpose or to minister to someone in need?

17. What in your life would be most difficult to sacrifice?

Group Discussion: Paying the price through dying to self or self-sacrifice means the power or liberty to make right choices in submission as a servant to God and others.

Are you willing to deny yourself or pay the price so that you are free to follow the Lord and become the person God has saved you and called you to be?

Session 11

Mark #10 Self-Control Discussion Questions

1. What are habits and behavior the products of?

2. Please define self-control. Refer to 1 John 2:16 and Galatians 5:19-21.

3. What are we to be in control of and how are we to achieve it?

4. Describe the results of giving in to the cravings of the flesh and worldly appeals and temptations?

5. What is the essence of self-control?

6. In using the terms “lusts” and “intense desires of the flesh”, what is the apostle Paul referring to?

7. What examples does he give in Ephesians 2:1-3 and 4:17-19?

8. In 1 John 2:16, what are the three powerful energies of the inner man?

9. What are the five spiritual dynamics involved in biblical self-control?

10. How are the pursuit of personal significance and the absence of self-control linked? (Please refer back to the segment on Mark #4, A Biblical Concept of Oneself.)

11. Where do we find our true significance in this life?

12. In what areas of your life do you struggle with self-control?

13. Are you most vulnerable to giving in to these sins during times of success, or times of stress and self-doubt? Please explain.

14. In taking an honest look at yourself, what is it that drives your life personally in your pursuit of earthly goals (career, wealth, possessions, status, reputation, acceptance by others, etc.)?

15. It is stated on page 70 of the text that a “man’s obsession with significance forms a tremendous obstacle to self-control and the joyous life and rest God wants us to have in Christ”. How is your pursuit of significance linked to your inability to control your lusts of your flesh, your eyes, and your pride?

16. How does this impact your ability to enjoy the joyous life and rest God wants you to have in Christ?

17. Describe how the areas in your life where you lack self-control impact your ability to be effective as a biblical leader in your home, church, workplace, or community.

18. What are the three key resources for change that form the means and basis for inner control?

Group Discussion: *“If we are not training ourselves in the life of godliness and self-control, we will become trained and skilled in greed and covetousness, which is idolatry, the worship of the flesh and its appetites. (pg.78)*

- What are the biblical motivations for have self control and how should you use them in your life beginning now?
- What steps will you take to deal with the areas of your life that are out of control?

Session 12

Mark #11 The Pursuit of Excellence Discussion Questions

1. Using your dictionary, please define “excellence”.

2. How is “excellence” defined from a biblical standpoint?

3. What, then, is the difference between “success” and excellence”?

4. Describe, in detail, the biblical pursuit of excellence.

5. What is the pursuit of excellence always connected to?

6. Make a list of as many areas you can think of where the pursuit of excellence should touch and change your life.

7. Are there any areas or tasks that you have not really taken seriously and need to work on?

8. According to Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 23:37, what is the pursuit of excellence a matter of?

9. What are the biblical motives for the pursuit of excellence?

10. Describe the areas of your life where you are pursuing excellence purely for the glory of God.

11. In what areas in your life are you pursuing excellence for your own success and not for the glory of God?

12. Why is it important to “redeem time” and to “use your opportunities”?

13. What are the goals you now pursue that are for rewards in this life and not for eternal rewards?

14. Read Philippians 1:12-22. Describe in detail the attitude of the apostle Paul.

15. What were his goals? Again, be specific.

16. How would you rearrange your priorities so that you would pursue biblical excellence in your role as a husband, father, member of the Body of Christ, and in your community?

17. What pursuits would you give up?

18. What specifically would you focus on?

Group Discussion:

What will be the most radical change in your life when you pursue excellence solely for the glory of God, for the redemption of your time and opportunities, and only for eternal rewards?

Session 13

Mark #12 Endurance or Perseverance and Patience Discussion Questions

1. Using your standard dictionary, please define:

- Endurance

- Perseverance

- Patience

2. How does endurance differ from perseverance?

3. In New Testament terms, what is associated with patience?

4. What is associated with endurance and perseverance?

5. In Hebrews 12:1, the writer teaches us that we have a “great cloud of witnesses surrounding us”. These witnesses are cited in Hebrews 11. In your own words, describe the endurance, perseverance, and patience of the following:

- Noah

- Abraham

- Moses

6. What trait is found in each one of these witnesses?

7. In Hebrews 12:1-3, we are told to “run with endurance the race that is set before us”. What example does the writer give us and why?

8. How does the writer link discipline with endurance (vv. 4-7)?

9. Read 2 Timothy 4:5-8

- What encouragement is Paul giving to Timothy?

- As Paul nears his “departure”, what allows him to persevere?

10. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

- How is love connected to patience?

- What fruit of patient love is mentioned in these verses?

11. Read James 5:7-11

- With what does James compare patience for the Lord’s return?

- What does he warn them will happen if they lose patience and complain about each another?

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- Who does he use as an example to encourage them in patience?

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- What example does he use for endurance?

12. What challenges or hardships are you enduring as a follower of Jesus Christ?

13. What hardships are you are trying to endure in which the goal is an earthly reward?

14. Describe situations in which you doubt you will persevere?

15. Write down the initials of fellow Christians with whom you have little or no patience and the reasons.

16. What will you do to love them as Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13?

Group Discussion:

The apostle Paul was driven by eternal values and biblical objectives. How can you acquire that same drive and cultivate biblical perseverance and patience to finish your race?

Session 14

Mark #13 Having Courage and Being an Encourager Discussion Questions

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3. Read Mark 15:42-47 along with the article. What three things demonstrated that Joseph of Arimathea was a man of courage?

4. Using a dictionary and the text of this article, write a definition of “courage” and “encouragement”.

- Courage

- Encouragement

3. How is encouragement defined in light of the whole of Scripture?

4. Where does God provide us with the greatest means of courage?

5. According to Romans 15:4, what is the purpose of Scripture?

6. What are the four fundamental principles that are vital to courage and encouragement, found in Joshua 1:1-9?

7. Whose battle was Joshua fighting?

8. How does knowing this give us courage in our daily challenges?

9. List some of the specific promises found in Scripture that are most important to you?

10. What is the principal way in which God can speak to us each day?

11. Read Ephesians 1:17-23. How are you encouraged in the following areas?

- The hope of His calling

- The wealth of His glorious inheritance

- The incomparable greatness of His power

- Christ's resurrection and ascension

12. What is God's promise to us in Hebrews 13:5 and Deuteronomy 4:24?

13. In what specific areas in your life do you need this encouragement?

14. Describe in your own words how the Holy Spirit is an encourager in the believer's life.

15. How is He an encourager in your life? Please be specific.

16. In what ways are we to be encouragers within the body of Christ?

17. Read Hebrews 10:15-25. Describe how and why we are encouraged to:

- Draw near with sincere hearts?

- Hold unwaveringly to hope?

- Spur one another on?

18. What encouragement do you receive from the following verses?

- Galatians 2:20

- Philippians 1:18-21

- Philippians 3:10-11

- Philippians 4:11-13

19. How much time do you spend each day in God's Word so that you can be encouraged?

20. What will you do to intentionally increase your daily time with God in His Word?

Group Discussion: What are some practical things you can do, beginning now, to encourage others? Please be specific about real people who are in your lives now.

Session 15

Mark #14 Faithfulness Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe a person of absolute faithfulness?

2. What other words would you use as synonyms for faithfulness?

3. Faithfulness is one of the attributes of God. Using the text and Scripture references, please explain, in your own words, what the faithfulness of God means to you?

4. Using your explanation, please describe how God's faithfulness plays a role in your every day life?

5. During times when you are experiencing anxiety, distress, or despair, what are your experiences of God's faithfulness?

6. What is the relationship between faithfulness, success, and failure?

7. How are you expected to be faithful in your specific roles in the following categories?

- Home

- Church

- Workplace

- Community

8. What is faithfulness in the believer the product of?

9. Give the three primary sources of faithfulness.

10. List the secondary sources.

11. Using the example of Elijah in 1 Kings 17 – 19, what are the consequences of a lack of faithfulness during difficult circumstances or having false expectations?

12. Based on the text and your reading of 1 Kings 17 – 19, what do you think shattered Elijah’s focus, faith, and capacity for faithfulness?

13. What is the “Elijah Syndrome”?

14. Please describe a present, or recent, circumstance in your life in which your lack of faithfulness has produced the “Elijah Syndrome” in you?

15. How did God minister to Elijah in his failure and despair?

16. How does God minister to you in your failure and despair?

17. What motivates you to be faithful in your responsibilities in the following areas?

- Home

- Church

- Workplace

- Community

18. As Christians, what must guide our motives? Be specific.

19. What three fundamental principles did Jesus point to in Matthew 6:21-24 regarding our motives?

20. In 1 Thessalonians 2:1-7, what does the apostle Paul say about the motives of his ministry team?

21. The three motivations for faithfulness are discussed on pages 125 – 127. Please describe each one and explain why you believe they are fundamental in your life.

Group Discussion:

- How does your faithfulness produce blessings in the lives of people in your life? Be specific and include your home, church, workplace, and community.
- What are the consequences to these same people when you lack faithfulness?

Session 16

Mark #15 A Team Player Discussion Questions

1. After reading the text and your dictionary, define the following terms in your own words:

- Team

- Team effort

- Team player

- Teamwork

2. What are the five characteristics of the New Testament church model as portrayed in Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:12-16, 5:23; and Colossians 1:18, 1:24, 2:19?

3. What are the three implications of all man-made distinctions being removed when we have a new life in Christ?

4. Why does this impact teamwork?

5. How did Christ use teamwork in the work of His ministry?

6. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 and answer the questions below.

- What is the basic principle and reason for mutual support stated in verse 9?

- Explain our need for mutual support as stated in:

Verse 10

Verse 11

Verse 12

7. In what activities are you involved where you are part of a team? Beside each one, indicate if you are a leader or a member.

8. As a leader, describe in detail your process of delegating responsibilities.

9. What difficulties do you have in delegating key responsibilities to others?

10. As a team member, how well do you work with others?

11. Describe the times when you feel you are doing more work than is fair.

12. Have you asked for help? If not, why?

13. What happens when we fail to delegate or share responsibilities?

14. What blessings occur when we share responsibilities with others?

Group Discussion: Many people use work as an escape for their loneliness or unhappiness, or because they are afraid of allowing others to get too close.

- Discuss how this is occurring in your life now.
- Discuss how you will be free to develop your gifts and abilities, and be able to be innovative, share ideas, and learn from one another by maintaining a true team environment.

Session 17

Mark #16 Accountability Discussion Questions

1. Describe the result of either unbelief in God, or a distorted understanding of His truth.

2. What is the foundation for freedom and liberty?

3. How is freedom defined in the text?

4. Having read the text, how would you define accountability in your own words?

5. What should be the fruit of our Christian relationships?

6. In examining the five reasons for establishing accountability, please describe, in your own words, its impact in the following assertions:

- It is an essential part of a functional society.

- It helps promote biblical controls, checks, and balances.

- It is necessary because, like sheep, we tend to go our own way.

- It promotes servant-like leadership in keeping with the pastoral mandate to watch over the flock.

- It is protective to both leaders and to the flock.

7. Besides submitting to our authorities, the bible calls us to submit to one another. Please read the following verses and describe how you would practice their principles in your own life.

- Ephesians 5:21 *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

- 1 Peter 5:5 *In the same way, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 *Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, just as you are in fact doing.*

- 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14 *Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who labor among you and preside over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them most highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers and sisters, admonish the undisciplined, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient toward all.*

- Hebrews 13:7 and 17. *Remember your leaders, who spoke God's message to you; reflect on the outcome of their lives and imitate their faith. (v. 7)*
Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls and will give an account for their work. Let them do this with joy and not with complaints, for this would be no advantage for you. (v. 17)

8. Who occupies a role in your life similar to Paul's role in mentoring Timothy and Titus? If you do not have someone like this in your life, then explain why? If you do, describe your relationship with him in detail.

9. Who are the men in your life with whom you have "Paul and Barnabas" type relationships? Please describe in detail.

10. Describe the ways in which you are held accountable in the following:

- Your small group

- In your marriage

- As a member of your church

- With the triune God

11. To whom do you confess and reveal your deepest struggles, challenges, anxieties, and sins?

12. How does this person help you overcome your shortcomings and grow in your walk with Christ?

13. If you do not have a person like this in your life, what will you do, beginning now, to find him and ask for an accountability relationship?

Group Discussion:

- What is the most difficult obstacle in your character that hinders you from seeking true biblical accountability?

Session 18

Mark #17 The Wisdom to Deal with Failure Discussion Questions

It is stated in the text that “sometimes God must engineer failure in us before He can bring about success with us” (p. 152).

1. What are some of the significant failures you have experiences in your life?

2. How did you process these failures with the Lord?

3. Describe the lessons you learned through your experience and processing of these failures.

4. How did these failures prepare you to be a better servant of the Lord?

5. What successes have you experienced because of the lessons you learned during your times of failure?

6. What is it that allows a mature believer to succeed in spite of failure?

7. How does a mature believer use failure as lessons for growth and change?

8. What are the four key actions mature believers take when they fail?

9. The mature believer relies on three truths that allow them to grow through failure. What are they?

10. Describe, in your own words, the three different kinds of failure a mature believer understands.

11. In measuring success and failure, the mature believer uses a specific standard. Please describe this standard and how it is used.

12. What measurements of success and failure do you use in the following areas?

- Your home life and your family's growth

- Your areas of ministry

- Your workplace and the conduct of your responsibilities

13. To whom do you compare yourself as you succeed or fail in the following areas?

- Your home

- Your spiritual growth

- Your career development

- Your position in your community

14. How do you evaluate yourself when you see someone who:

- Makes more money than you

- Drives a nicer car than yours

- Lives in a bigger house than yours

- Has higher career achievements than you

- Takes more expensive vacations than you

15. As a mature believer, what standard must you use in any area of your life to measure your growth and success?

Group Discussion:

- How are the materialistic temptations and expectations of our culture seducing you away from measuring your success biblically?
- What daily disciplines do you need to practice so that you can use your failures as preparation for biblical success?