

Word in Life Ministries

Biblical, Historical, and Philosophical Studies Institute

Personal & Family Life Seminar

I. Our Personal Life

A. Our spiritual life

1. Prayer – this is the most important, and yet the hardest aspect of our spiritual life because of the emotional struggle associated with praying.
 - a. Praying actually has nothing to do with how we feel emotionally – in fact, our need to pray most often is absolutely contrary to our emotional state (either very happy, or very sad).
 - b. However, it is in this area of our emotions that Satan so effectively misdirects us through discouragement, loneliness, feeling rejected, and questioning the promises and certainty of God’s love and care in the midst of personal loss.
 - c. Thus, prayer is a decision we make to follow through with, regardless of our circumstances or emotional state. I personally have never been blessed or succeeded in the long run when I have rejected prayer because of being busy, distracted, or through the emotional and mental deception that I really don’t need to pray about a matter because I can handle it.
 - d. On the other hand, whenever I have persevered through simply choosing to pray, regardless of my circumstances or emotional state, I have always eventually found peace, direction, and God’s truth that has sustained me in whatever I am facing.
 - e. The following verses give clear and encouraging admonitions about prayer that we as believers need and must take heed to if we are going to succeed in our spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical walk:
 - (1) II Chronicles 7:12-14 – this is God’s promise to His people of what He will do as we call on Him and trust Him, regardless of what we see or hear.

- (2) Psalm 5:1-3 – this is as good a picture of the discipline of prayer, apart from our circumstances and feelings that I know of.
- (a) Verse 3 sets the tone for the priority and consistency and discipline of the Psalmist’s prayer time “in the morning.”
 - (b) In addition, the phrase, “I will order *my prayer* (these last two words are in italics because they are not in the actual text)” is significant, in that here too, we see the spiritual and mental discipline of prayer with the verb “order.”
 - [1] The verb in the Hebrew is שָׁרַק (‘ārak), and this means “to lay, put, set in rows or layers; to stack, or set out.”
 - [2] Thus, what we have is a presentation of a consistent, systematic approach to prayer that transcends our vacillating emotions and circumstances and is based on the eternal and consistent truth of God and His Word.
- (3) Philippians 4:6-7 – This passage is one of the most inclusive, if not the most inclusive on prayer in the Bible.
- (a) The first exhortation is to “Be anxious for nothing,” that is, do not let worry and anxiety consume and control your mind and emotional response to any and all situations.
 - (b) The second point is, “but in everything,” and in Greek that means, “in everything.” Thus, every concern and situation in our lives is included, and NONE are exempt!
 - (c) The third phrase tells us how we are not to be anxious about anything, and that is “by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”
 - [1] The word for “prayer” is προσευχή (proseuchē), and it basically is referring to a developed conversation with God, as you would have with another person.
 - [2] The word for “supplication” is δέησις (deēsis), and it is referring more to one pouring his or her

heart out to the Lord, perhaps in deep agony or pain.

- [3] The key to this passage is this next word, “thanksgiving,” which unlocks the chains of despair, self-pity, hopelessness, etc. The word for “thanksgiving” is *εὐχαριστία* (*eucharistia*), and this thankfulness is not based on “thanksgiving” because the “prayer and supplication” have already been answered, but rather this “thanksgiving” is based on seeing nothing with the natural eyes, but worshiping and praising God for His lovingkindness and faithfulness (II Chronicles 20: 1-25; Acts 16:16-34; I Thessalonians 5:16-18).
- (4) Matthew 6:9-13 – This has been termed the ‘Lord’s Prayer’, but in actuality, it is the believer’s prayer that Jesus has given us as a grid and model of what our prayer life should consist of.
 - (a) For most of us, however, this prayer has become the very thing that Jesus was saying prayer should not be – “meaningless repetition” (Mat. 6:7). That is, this prayer model has actually become an end in itself whereby we, through rote memory and in a liturgical manner, have simply repeated it, thinking by the repetition in and of itself, we will be blessed, protected, etc. by God.
 - (b) On the other hand, this is not to say that if a person prays this prayer from his or her heart at a time of great need that God will not hear and respond – for God looks and hears the true brokenness of one’s heart – but it is to say that the mere rote, liturgical repetition of this prayer is akin to the “meaningless repetition” Jesus speaks of in verse 7: “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.”
 - (c) Therefore, what Jesus has given us here is the grid, skeleton, or outline of the direction our prayers should take:

- [1] “Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name” (Mt. 6:7). The word “Hallowed” in Greek is from ἁγιάζω (*hagiadzō*), which means “to sanctify, dedicate, and consecrate” – that is, let your name, O Lord, be set apart as who you are in your grace and mercy toward us. The following is a list of who He is toward us in the manifestations of His name: **Jehovah**-He is the eternal God; **Jehovah Jireh**-He is the God who *sees* all things and provides (Genesis 22:5-19); **Jehovah Rophe**-He is the God who *heals, cures, and restores* (Exodus 15:22-26); **Jehovah Nissi**-He is the God who will give us *victory over our enemies*, and especially our spiritual enemy, Satan (Exodus 17:8-16); **Jehovah M’kaddesh**-He is the God who *sanctifies* and *sets us apart* (Leviticus 20:6-8); **Jehovah Shalom**-He is the ***God of Peace*** (Philippians 4:6-7); **Jehovah Tsidkenu**-He is the ***God of our righteousness*** (Jeremiah 23:5-6-it is His righteousness alone that saves us, through Jesus, because we have none of our own – II Corinthians 5:21: “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”); **Jehovah Rohi**-He is the God who is our continual shepherd (Psalm 23:1-6: “The Lord is my *continual* shepherd, I shall not want.”); **Jehovah Shammah**-He is the ***God who is there/here*** (Ezekiel 48:30-35 – This is a picture of the returning Messiah and the New Jerusalem, which is also for us today, in that God has promised that He will never leave nor forsake us – Hebrews 13:5-6; Deuteronomy 31:6-8; Psalm 118:6). For me, I include in this part of my prayer thanksgiving for my salvation and that of my family, as well as thanksgiving for our physical health and all of our material blessings, including work and income.
- [2] “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10). This covers our

requests in every area of our lives – for our family members; the leaders of our country, state, city, and world; our military; our church, business, educational leaders; missionaries; and whatever else God may place on your heart to pray for.

- [3] “Give us this day our daily bread” (Mt. 6:11). This has to do with our financial and material needs, and I pray for everything from annual bills, such as our homeowner’s insurance, down to our weekly expenditures for groceries, gas, etc.
- [4] “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Mt. 6:12). Forgiveness is foundational to our spiritual, mental, emotional, and even physical health, and it is **ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL** in a marriage that you walk and live in this state on a daily basis. For me personally, I begin by blessing those who have hurt me over the years as Jesus says to do in Matthew 5:43-48. This is indeed the antithesis of what we feel like doing at times, but as we obey Him in faith, you will experience the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical health God has intended for you. The following passages buttress this truth: Hebrews 12:14-15; Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32; Colossians 3:12-13). In addition, where there has been deep hurt and pain caused by someone, Romans 12:19 is especially important: “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath *of God*, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.” Thus, I pray for those people who have caused me great hurt and pain “God’s perfect and complete grace and mercy, and His perfect and complete wrath and vengeance.” I pray for His mercy and grace in their lives, just as He has been merciful and gracious to me in my sin and failure, but if they do not repent, but rather choose to continue to pursue their own

narcissistic evil, schemes, and rebellion, I give them over to the Lord for Him to carry out Psalm 5:8-10 and 35:1-8. In other words, I let go of the hurt and pain and give over to the Lord His ministry of grace and mercy, as well as wrath and vengeance, and in doing so, as difficult as it is at times, I am free and walk in peace, strength, and spiritual, mental, and emotional stability.

Otherwise, as Hebrews 12:14-15 warns, I, through my unforgiveness and bitterness, release and ingest a spiritual, mental, and emotional poison within my own life that will spill over and infect others in a very detrimental way.

- [5] “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Mt. 6:13). What this is literally saying in the Greek is: “And You, O Lord, do not allow me to be led into temptation, but You, O Lord, deliver me from the evil one.” That first clause is very important, because it requires something on my part, and that is a surrender to His will and obedience in faith to what He calls me to do (e.g., blessing and forgiveness of those who have hurt me, versus living in anger and bitterness, constantly craving vengeance and retribution). Therefore, as I surrender to Him in this fashion, He will deliver me from the snares and deceptions of the enemy because in my own strength and ability, I AM COMPLETELY UNABLE TO DO SO!

3. Fasting – this is an area of our lives that is too often overlooked, but one that is vital to our spiritual, mental, and emotional growth. There are numerous passages in both the Old and New Testaments with regard to fasting, but I want only to look at two:
 - a. Matthew 17:19-21 – this passage is dealing with the disciples’ inability to cast demons out of young boy who had some form of seizures, and the disciples were asking Jesus why they could not cast them out. Jesus responds in verse 21 with, “this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.” This verse is not found in some of the earliest manuscripts, but it is found in others. I personally believe that this verse represents the truth

of spiritual warfare in our everyday lives as God has proven it true in my life. I can say, unequivocally, that whenever I have prayed and fasted, positive spiritual, mental, and emotional results have always been the outcome.

- b. Acts 14:19-23 – Paul was on his first missionary journey, and while at Lystra, he was stoned, but he was prayed for and he recovered. He then went to Derbe, but returned to the churches in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, and in each of those churches, they “appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting.” Thus, fasting was an integral part of the early believers’ lives, and so should it be for ours because today, in our country and around the world, we are facing a level of darkness as great as the early church, and we desperately need the power of the Lord as much as they did 2000 years ago.
2. The Word of God – this is the second, essential component to our personal, spiritual growth in the Lord.
 - a. One of the most important aspects of reading Scripture is a consistent, disciplined approach, versus just skipping through it randomly.
 - b. The following are Scripture passages that lay forth the importance of God’s Word in our daily diet:
 - (1) Psalm 1 – this is the premier passage in the Bible about being in and studying God’s Word.
 - (a) “Walk,” “stand,” or “sit” are the three positions that we are all in as human beings during every waking hour of our day, with the only position left out being that of lying down, which would be considered a sleeping position. Thus, each one of these positions represents a spiritual and mental state as well.
 - [1] The Hebrew verb “walk” also means “to follow or adhere to” something or someone – thus, in this instance the “counsel,” or the “advice, plans, or schemes” of the “wicked.”
 - [2] The Hebrew verb “stand” means to “take one’s stand or position” on certain issues, thus, in this instance, to “take one’s positions” on the issues of life from the “path of sinners.” The word for “path” also means “business, custom, manner, conduct, and behavior,” and thus, in this context,

the “business, custom, manner, conduct, and behavior” of sinners.

- [3] The Hebrew verb for “sit” also means “to dwell, live, and inhabit,” and the word for “seat” also refers to a “place of residence and dwelling.” Thus, when coupled with the Hebrew word for “scoffers,” which implies someone who can only see the faults and flaws in others, but is unwilling and incapable of receiving discipline and criticism of himself or herself, you have a picture of the quintessential narcissist – that is, a person who “scoffs” and “belittles” others, but who totally resents and rejects any criticism of himself or herself. Consequently, if someone is spiritually, mentally, and emotionally ‘dwelling’ in this state, they are indeed dwelling in darkness.
 - (b) The “blessed” man, however, does not remain in any of those areas, but rather “his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.”
 - [1] The Hebrew word for “delight” also means “treasure, jewel, or pleasure” and thus, the Word of God is this man’s or woman’s foundational source of security, identity, and peace.
 - [2] The Hebrew verb for “meditate” also means “to growl, muse, ponder, plan, and devise,” and thus, the picture presented here is that of one having a conversation within himself or herself with the Spirit of God in what the Word means in personal application in one’s own life.
 - (c) The contrast between the blessed man, who abides in God’s Word, versus the wicked man who does not is quite clear, although the blessings and the consequences may not be seen immediately.
- (2) Psalm 119:9-16 – this is one of the most important passages in the Bible with regard to the practical application of God’s Word in our lives, as well as the truth that God is the One who must superintend our reception of

His Word into our hearts as we surrender to His Lordship over our lives (Matthew 6:9-13; I John 2:26-27).

- (3) John 8:31-32 – this is one of the most succinct, yet one of the most inclusive passages of the importance of God’s Word with regard to our knowing and walking in His liberating truth.
- (a) The verb for “continue” in the Greek also means to “remain, stay, abide, live, stand, and sojourn,” and it also implies the possibility that one may choose to not “continue” in His Word.
- [1] Thus, if one does “continue,” he or she will reap the blessings of that continuance, which is ‘knowing the truth’, resulting in ‘freedom’.
- [2] However, if one does not “continue,” then the converse will occur – that is, one will neither know the truth, nor the freedom that comes with that knowledge.
- (b) The verb for “know” in the Greek implies a personal, intimate, and first-hand understanding of the truth of God’s Word as it applies to one’s own life, and the world around him or her. This intimate knowledge in turn leads one into liberating truth that will begin to set one free in those very difficult areas of his or her life.

B. Our Mental, Intellectual, and Physical life

1. Mental & Intellectual Life

- a. Our mental health is certainly an outgrowth of our spiritual health, and if we do not have our spiritual life in order, our mental and emotional health will certainly suffer. That being said, therefore, our mental and emotional state is also integrally entwined with what occurs in our intellectual input. That is, as believers, the development of the “mind of Christ” within us is only going to occur as our “mind” exercises its intellectual capacities.
- b. There is a statement that I make that has great practical implications, and it is, “There is nothing spiritual about being ignorant and uninformed.” The idea that it is spiritual to only read the Bible and eschew all other forms of literature, except Christian literature, is well-meaning, but very misdirected. The very fact that we are able to sit here in this beautiful and

comfortable building, on this beautiful campus is because men read and studied about construction, wiring, plumbing, pouring and laying concrete, etc. In addition, the very freedom we have to worship in this country is because early Christian pastors, including Isaac Backus, who were very well read and understood not only biblical theology, but also western philosophy, science, economics, and the political science of their day, came together and helped to draft our Constitution, which contains the Bill of Rights, which in turn contains the 1st Amendment, which is why we are able to be here and do what we are doing!

- c. One interesting thing to note is that, if we were to read nothing but the Bible, then everyone of us would need to ask the question, “Which Bible should I then read, and which translation?” If someone responded, “We need to go to the original Bible,” then that would mean we would all need to read the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts, which would in turn imply that we would all need to learn those languages, which would mean we would need to purchase textbooks of those languages, which would in turn mean that someone had to study and learn those languages well enough to write a textbook, which tells me that genuine education is involved in the whole process of the very Bibles we hold in our hands!
- d. The following are scripture passages that are used to both support, as well as negate reading and studying in other areas of education:
 - (1) Pro-study
 - (a) II Timothy 2:15 – this passage is exhorting believers to be “diligent” in the pursuit of the knowledge of God’s Word, and everything related to it.
 - (b) I Corinthians 9:19-23 – in this passage, Paul is stating that he has become “all things to all men, that I may by all means save some” (vs. 22). In order to that with the Jews and the educated Greeks and Romans, then he must know where they are coming from with regard to their world view through which they look at and understand the world.
 - (c) Acts 17:16-34 – this passage presents Paul sharing the Gospel with Greek philosophers, the Stoics and Epicureans, as well as in the Areopagus, and in doing

so, he refers to and quotes a Greek philosopher, “for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His offspring.’” The point to be made from this passage is that Paul was apparently well-versed enough in Greek philosophy to be able to carry on an intelligent and legitimate conversation with the Greek philosophers in Athens, the result being that as he shared the Gospel, “some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.”

- (d) Acts 7:22 – this verse is referring to Moses’ upbringing in Egypt, and it states, “and Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.” The reason I refer to this passage is that without that type of academic training Moses received, he would not have been able to record and write all the things God gave him on Mt. Sinai, as well as throughout his Wilderness journeys with the Israelites.

- (e) II Peter 3:14-16 – Peter is exhorting the believers to be “be diligent to be found by Him in peace,” and this is clearly referring to the spiritual, emotional, mental, intellectual, and physical aspects of our lives. However, he also makes reference to Paul’s writings, and he states that the “untaught and unstable distort” the things Paul has written, “as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

[1] The Greek word translated “untaught” is ἀμαθής (*amathēs*), and this comes from the Greek verb μανθάνω (*manthanō*), which means “to learn, to be apprised, and to increase one’s knowledge.” Thus, the criticism of, not the approval of being “ignorant and uninformed” is what Peter is unequivocally stating, and this certainly holds true for today as well.

[2] The Greek word translated “unstable” is ἀστέρικτος (*astēriktos*), and it comes from the Greek verb στηρίζω (*stēridzō*), which means “to make stable, place firmly, set fast, fix, and to set

one's face steadfastly.” Thus, what follows “ignorance and the inability to discern misinformation” is “spiritual, mental, emotional, and intellectual” instability.

(2) Anti-study

- (a) Colossians 2:8 – This verse is often used to state that we should not study any philosophy at all, or any history, science, etc., which would all come under the category of “the tradition of men.” However, every human being lives by a “philosophy” that is an accumulation of his or her family, ethnic, religious, educational, athletic, musical, racial, and cultural heritage (i.e., from a particular area of the country, etc.). All of these “philosophies,” therefore, color and effect the way we make decisions, judge people, establish values, etc. Therefore, the question is not, do we have a “philosophy,” but rather what kind of “philosophy” do we have? Thus, the most important “philosophy” anyone can have is that one based on the person of Jesus Christ and the whole counsel of God’s Word. Once that is well established, then you have a very good ‘filter’ through which you can read and study the “philosophies” of the world and see through their lies, distortions, and misdirection. In conclusion, what we have in this verse is not an admonition to be “ignorant and uninformed,” but rather an admonition to know the truth as well as we can so that we can distinguish between the true and false and respond intelligently when the truth is challenged. However, if we do not read and understand where others are coming from in their false “philosophies and traditions,” then we will not be able to respond to them.
- (b) I Corinthians 2:1-2 – I have heard this passage used to suggest that Paul was here refuting his attempt to share the Gospel in Athens by referring to the Greek philosophers of their time (Acts 17:22-31). Those who support this position say the reason not many came to Christ is because he didn’t preach the ‘pure Gospel’, but rather he ‘contaminated’ it by bringing in

‘worldly’ sources to support the Gospel truth. First of all, I have seen and heard those who hold to such a position do just the opposite – that is, I have both seen and heard them use ‘worldly’ examples to support their biblical and theological emphases, and there was nothing wrong with it at all, but they are blind to their own hypocrisy. I knew one man who said we should not study any books other than the Bible, and he ended up writing a book with a title that told people how to do a particular thing God’s way. When I confronted this gentleman with what he was saying, versus what he was doing, I asked him, “So we should not read any other book but the Bible and your book, is that right? And if that is the case, then you are saying that you are the only person who can correctly interpret Scripture, because you are the only one who should write a book.” At that he thought, and he said, “I see your point.” This man is a dear brother in the Lord, but he was blind to his self-righteous hypocrisy, which I have also been blind too in my life, as have we all at one time or another, but the important thing is to see our hypocrisy, repent, and turn from it! The truth of the matter is that Paul was saying THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR HIM TO KNOW IS “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” in his own life, so that he can in turn share the true reality of that life with others. Thus, this is not a question of “either knowing the Bible or study other subjects,” but rather “know the Bible and other subjects”!

2. Physical Health

- a. In I Thessalonians 5:23, we read: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As believers, we are oftentimes so focused on the “spirit and soul” (i.e., spirit and mind, including the intellect) that we forget and completely overlook our body. Did you know that unlike a used car, we cannot trade our bodies in for new ones? The body we have on this earth is the only one we will ever have here, until we get to heaven and receive our ‘heavenly body’. Consequently, if we do not take

care of our own body, then nobody else will! We cannot, therefore, blame anyone else for our good or bad health but ourselves, and to have and maintain good health requires work, discipline, and sacrifice that pay huge dividends in both the short and long run. However, as in any other area of our lives with regard to Scripture, there are those who say that maintaining our health through proper diet, exercise, and rest is unspiritual and unnecessary. This is a corollary to what I used to hear as a young man that it was unspiritual to be educated and know the original languages of the Scripture, etc. In other words, it is spiritual to be “ignorant and uninformed,” but it is unspiritual to be “educated and well-informed.” And thus, according to this logic, it is spiritual to not be concerned about your health by ignoring proper diet, exercise, and rest, but it is unspiritual to be concerned about your health through embracing a disciplined regimen of proper diet, exercise, and rest. I am convinced that the above two definitions of what it means to be spiritual are unequivocally false, skewed, and misdirected, and those who embrace such a pseudo-spirituality will pay a dear price of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual misinformation and instability, as well as a physical price of bad health and severe health limitations brought on by such things as obesity, diabetes, heart and blood pressure problems, abnormal fatigue, and many other physical maladies.

- b. The following passages are referred to by both the proponents and the opponents of the view that maintaining good physical health is as much of a priority as maintaining good spiritual and mental health:
 - (1) Pro-exercise
 - (a) I Timothy 4:7-8 – this passage is an admonition by Paul to Timothy to exercise ‘critical thinking’ skills with regard to various teachings, and to encourage him to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” Then Paul does a comparative evaluation between “bodily discipline” and “godliness.” The literal translation of verse 8 is, “for bodily training is beneficial for a little *time* (i.e., for the time here on this earth), but godliness is beneficial for all things, having the promise of life now and of the life to come.” Thus, bodily training does have genuine

benefits for us now, in the brief time we are on this earth, but godliness should be our top priority because it not only has great blessing now, spiritually, mentally, and physically, but it also has the great promise for us into eternity!

- (b) I Corinthians 9:24-27 – this is a passage that employs athletic terminology to press an important point of personal discipline in the area of godliness. Thus, Paul in no way eschews bodily training and discipline, but rather he sees it as an means to glorify God through personal holiness, both spiritually and mentally, as well as physically.
- (c) Hebrews 12:4-11 – this whole passage is about God’s loving and corrective “discipline” of His children. However, in verse 11, we read: “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.” The Greek word for “trained” is *γυμνάζω* (*gumnadzō*), and it is an athletic term that refers to rigorous, physical discipline and training that was employed by athletes who were competing in the Greek games. Thus, metaphorically, this term can also apply to the intense spiritual, emotional, and mental discipline training God takes us through in order to “share His holiness” and to experience His “peaceful fruit of righteousness.” I can tell you personally that as an athlete, this passage has helped me greatly when I have experienced God’s intense, spiritual discipline because I can compare it to the intense mental and physical discipline I have to go through in order to get in physical condition for a contest, and the same is EXACTLY TRUE for the far more important spiritual contest! In addition, the word “trained” is written in such a way in the Greek that it is emphasizing a completed act with an ongoing, continuous state of realization – thus, the discipline that God effects in our lives at various times completes a work that has a continuously resulting change whereby God’s

“peaceful fruit of righteousness” is an ongoing manifestation in our lives.

(2) Anti-exercise

- (a) I Timothy 4:7-8 – this passage is also used to support the theory that physical exercise is unspiritual. The basis for this is the KJV translation: “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” If this was indeed the correct translation, then there would be some credibility to their position that physical exercise is unspiritual. However, as we have seen above in the Pro-exercise section, the correct translation of this passage actually supports physical exercise, but it does so with the view that the pursuit of godliness should be the overarching goal of a believer’s life, even in his or her exercise.
- (b) Galatians 5:16-24 – this passage contrasts the “deed of the flesh” with the “fruit of the Spirit,” and the anti-exercise proponents say that nothing delineated under the “fruit of the Spirit” would indicate that exercise and athletic competition is any way a part of that delineation. In fact, they say that the word “gentleness” precludes contact sports altogether! However, when we look at Jesus’ action within the Temple concerning the “money changers,” we see someone who, although ‘gentle in spirit’, had to use physical force and physical confrontation in order to take a stand for righteousness. Now whereas it is true, this was not an athletic contest, nevertheless, Jesus employed physical force and confrontation in order to accomplish His end of exposing the ungodliness of the “money changers” and other venders in the Temple. The point of all of this is that there are people who do not want to exercise or compete, and for some of these people, using Scripture to give ‘divine sanction’ to their view is a form of pseudo-comfort. However, I do not find in either of these passages, nor anywhere else in Scripture anything that

prohibits or condemns exercise and physical competition as being unspiritual and unbiblical.

- c. As far as rest is concerned, I only know of one verse in the Bible that actually encourages sleep as a positive thing that the Lord gives us, and that is found in Psalm 127:2: “It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved *even in his sleep*.”

II. Our Family Life

A. Husband & Wife (Ephesians 5:22-33)

- 1. The Role of the Wife – I begin with the role of the wife because she is the one who is first addressed in Ephesians 5:22-33.
 - a. The first responsibility of any wife, and any woman for that matter, is to be submitted to the Lordship of Jesus in her life.
 - b. The second area of responsibility is to be submitted to the leadership of her husband. I have discovered that one can measure the degree to which a woman is truly submitted to the Lord by how she submits to her husband.
 - c. The next important truth to see is that as Christ is the “head of the church,” so too is the husband the “head of the wife.”
 - (1) The word translated “head” in Greek is κεφαλή (*kephalē*), and it implies that which is “supreme, chief, and prominent.”
 - (2) However, this does not imply ‘tyrannical’ and ‘dictatorial’, but rather someone who leads and directs as a servant as did Jesus, but who is nonetheless the leader.
 - d. As Jesus is the “Savior of the body,” so too, metaphorically, is the husband the ‘savior of his wife’, in that he is the one to provide for her and be her protector.
 - e. Thus the wife is to be “subject” to her husband “in everything.”
 - (1) The verb “subject” in Greek is ὑποτάσσω (*hypotassō*), and its basic meaning is “to be subordinate and obey.”
 - (2) However, once again, this IN NO WAY GIVES A HUSBAND DICTATORIAL POWERS, but rather all the more, the husband is to lead his family in a servant capacity as did Jesus lead his disciples.
- 2. The Role of the Husband – Once again, the role of the husband is not that of a dictator, but rather that of a servant leader.
 - a. The husband is to love his wife “as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.” This is unequivocally not the picture of a tyrannical dictator, but rather of a servant leader

who sacrifices himself on behalf of those he leads, and that is the role of the husband. Indeed, for a husband to ‘give himself up for his wife’ is the absolute antithesis of narcissistic self-love. This action by the husband sets aside his pursuit of receiving emotional equity, fairness, and support from his wife in their marriage, but rather embraces the essence of Luke 9:23-24: “And He was saying to *them* all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.’” In other words, as Jesus ‘gives Himself up’ for us through His love in the midst of and in the face of our selfishness, self-centeredness, defensiveness, insecurity, fears, doubts, and at times, rebellion to His leadership in our lives, so too we, as husbands, are to love our wives and ‘give ourselves up for them’ in the same fashion. However, this in no way sets aside a husband’s responsibility to stand for God’s truth in his marriage. In fact, to do so as a husband and father may place you in a position of great loneliness, in the same way Jesus was alone. But as Jesus CONSTANTLY had the presence and companionship of His Heavenly Father with Him, so too will you have the companionship of Jesus, and He will sustain you by His grace, power, and love. Once again, this goes against everything in our ‘natural’ being to live in this fashion, but it is the key for you, dear husband, by which you will see personal victory in your life over your own carnal weaknesses and self-destructive temptations, as well as victory in your marriage that will bless and minister to your entire family. In other words, Jesus is calling us to a ‘supernatural’ lifestyle, versus a ‘natural’ lifestyle, and the blessings and rewards of this pursuit, both here in this life and in eternity, are incalculable.

- b. The husband is to be the one who ‘sets his wife apart’ (i.e., sanctify) from the contamination of the world in order that she might be able to be the wife and mother God has called and enabled her to be (Ephesians 5:26-27).
- c. As the husband cares for himself, so too should he care for his wife, and as he does that, he is indeed going to be blessed (Ephesians 5:28-30).

- d. When a husband marries his wife, he then becomes his wife's husband first and foremost, and secondly he is the son of his father and mother (Ephesians 5:31).
 - e. All of this represents the relationship Jesus has with the church, and in the final verse, Paul switches the emphasis by putting the husband's role first, and then the wife's role (Ephesians 5:32-33), thereby showing that the husband's and the wife's role is not dependent on the other's behavior.
3. Communication – The one last area of great importance is communication in a marriage. Typically, what I have observed is that when a person, husband or wife, is wanting to know and walk in God's truth in their lives, they will sincerely and respectfully listen to their mate, or their children, so as to understand where they are coming from, and they will do so without constantly interrupting them. Conversely, as we frequently see on TV News Programs, when a person is not really interested in hearing another person's position out of insecurity, pride, or other, carnal motivations, they will constantly interrupt because their only interest is their position, not the other person's. And interestingly, the vast majority of the time it is the 'liberals' who do the constant interrupting because they are unable to respond to the truth, and they are interested in defending their position, not really hearing any truth that might contradict their position. The following passages, therefore, are essential in practicing godly and respectful communication: Prov. 9:7-12; 15:1-2; James 1:19-20

B. Parents and Children (Ephesians 6:1-4)

- 1. The children are admonished to obey their parents "in the Lord, for this is right."
- 2. The responsibility of obedience to the parents is the foundational building block of integrity and character in a child's life that will prepare them for their role as an adult in submitting to the Lord and respecting the authorities over them. On the other hand, if a child does not respect their parents, then rather than being blessed in their adult life, their rebellious and narcissistic attitude will bring tragedy to their lives (Ephesians 6:2-3).
- 3. The fathers are exhorted to not "provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."
 - a. The verb "provoke" in Greek means basically not "to make angry," and that covers a host of issues: hypocrisy, impatience, indifference, etc.

- b. The verb “bring up” in Greek literally means “to feed and nourish,” and this applies to the “discipline/training and instruction of the Lord.”
 - (1) This certainly has to do with all aspects of family life, from family outings, vacations, sports, education, music, drama, stamp collecting, hiking, camping, hunting, etc.
 - (2) One thing that a family cannot do, is spend too much time together doing things and supporting one another as a family, and this is especially true with regard to all of the activities that the children participate in.

C. Finances, Career Objectives, & College Plans for Children

- 1. One of the most important passages in the Bible with reference to finances is Matthew 6:19-34, and in particular verse 33: “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.”
 - a. I have discovered that giving to the Lord carries the same promise today as it did in the Old Testament.
 - b. For example, although we are not exhorted in the New Testament “to tithe” per se, the promise given in Malachi 3:8-12 is still as valid, real, and biblical as it was when given to Malachi in the late 5th century BC, and especially verse 10: “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test 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 a blessing until it overflows.”
- 2. With regard to career objectives, one of the most important verses I know with reference to that area is Colossians 3:23-24: “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.” The implications of this are broad and totally inclusive of whatever direction you feel your gifts and calling are leading you. However, the following passages also apply to the course of our direction in life:
 - a. Proverbs 6:6-11 – take heed to the example of the ant.
 - b. Matthew 6:1-4 – do your work as unto the Lord as though you were in a ‘grave’, and the Lord will reward you openly.
 - c. Matthew 23:5-12 – do not seek to be seen by men for your sense of identity and worth, whereby you are pursuing your own glory in your mind in the minds of others.

- d. Luke 22:24-27 – you will find your true significance as you seek to be insignificant in your mind in the minds of others.
 - e. Philippians 2:1-8 – look upon others as being more important than yourself, and be concerned about and rejoice in the success of others in your same field.
3. As far as planning for college for your children, every husband and wife must decide what they think is the best route for their children. In our family, we have chosen to help provide for our children only what they are not receiving through their own work, scholarships, etc. My wife and I went through college in this fashion, and we encourage our children to do the same, and where they are lacking, we will help them. In addition, I believe it is very important for parents to help guide their children with regard to college and their career goals, but as parents, we must be very careful that we do not try to mold our children in the career image we want them to have, or else you will have a very frustrated child that will lose interest and desire.

III. Spiritual Warfare

- A. The spiritual warfare that we all face is quite real, and this is especially true when we attempt to really put Christ first in our lives in all of the above areas we have discussed. However, to become victorious in this battle, Luke 9:23-24 is the key: “And He was saying to *them* all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.’”
- B. The premiere passage of spiritual warfare is Ephesians 6:10-20, and it is there that we will now turn and conclude our seminar:
 - 1. “Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.”
 - 2. “Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”
 - 3. “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.”
 - 4. “Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”
 - 5. “Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth,”
 - 6. “and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,”

7. “and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;”
8. “in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil *one*.”
(II Corinthians 10:3-5; Matthew 4:1-11)
9. “And take the helmet of salvation,”
10. “and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”
11. “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,”
12. “and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”