

# The Growth Group Studies

*After publishing the Discover Lessons in Tools for Muslim Evangelism, many readers requested the follow-up lesson for new believers. These were originally available only in the Arabic language, but they have been translated and made available here for anyone looking for basic discipleship material for new believers.*

## Growth Group Study One God's Love (Luke 15:11-32, The Prodigal Son)

### Introduction (Read the story)

Q: What is the context? Why did Jesus give this parable? [Pharisee's view of God was stern, proud, unforgiving versus. compassionate, longing for his lost children, full of love]

Q: What is Jesus' main purpose in teaching this parable? [to show God's willingness to quickly receive the person who turns to him, regardless of his life]

Q: The father represents whom?

Q: The bad son represents whom?

### Verses 11-13

Q: Was what he did right or honorable? What would be a modern day equivalent?

### Verses 14-16

Q: Was what happened to him good or bad? Did he bring this on himself?

### Verses 17-19

Q: Was he repentant? [yes, v.18] He was right in that he didn't deserve his father's forgiveness. He was wrong in not understanding the compassion of the father's heart.

### Verses 20-24

Q: What's the difference between the son in the pigpen and the pig? [No pig ever said, "I will arise and go to my father." We are God's children. Even after we've been through all the garbage of the world and our sin, he will receive us back as sons, when we come with repentant hearts.] Put yourself in the place of the father. How you have grieved. Wondered. Assuming the worst. Longed for some word, to see his face. Many of the Pharisees would also have been fathers.

Q: What do the robe and ring indicate? [full acceptance as a son, in spite of what the son had done]

### Application

Q: In your life, have you been like this prodigal son? How?

Q: Is this how you have learned that God was like?

Q: How does this story apply to your life, today?

### 1 John 4:7-11 (read)

Q: Why are we obligated to love others? [First, God love us. Not a disinterested God who threw down a book. with lots of requirements (Therefore we had better be good, religious people.) That picture of God is not biblical. Rather, we are obligated to love others because God took the first step. His example. His sacrifice and giving. How it cost him so we could be rescued from an eternity of condemnation and misery. That's why we say Gospel is not focused on what we do for God, but on what God did (and does) for us. It turns religion completely around.

Q: How can it say here, "The one who does not love does not know God"? [When a person is not loving others, it's a clear sign that he hasn't really understood the truth, the Gospel, and internalized it for himself]

Q: What is the motivation for us to love others? Because people will see it and think we're good? Merit before God?

Q: (v.9) If Christ had never come to earth, and died for our sins, what would have been our fate, in this life, and after death? Did it cost God and Christ to do that?

Q: Will loving others be easy?

Q: Does this passage change your view of God?

# Growth Group Study Two

## Fellowship with God (1 John 1)

### Introduction

- Two issues: 1) fellowship with God on personal level; 2) what happens to that fellowship when we sin and feel guilty; Is there a solution to when we feel distant from Him.
- Read through 1 :1-2:2 by yourself.

### Verses 1-4 (READ)

- John was an important disciple. Of main 3 among the twelve. Seems he had closest personal relationship. with Jesus during life on earth.
- He says he writes from real personal experience. Some may teach from empty theology. Not him.
- Q: What is the meaning of verse 3? fellowship? Do you see a triangle here? For the rest of your life you will live in this triangle. Who is outside this triangle in your life? (unbelievers). Not that we do not love unbelievers, though.

### Verse 5 (READ)

God is also love (4:8)-seen last week.

Q: John here uses the metaphor of light to describe God. What does it mean or symbolize? I.e. what is the literal reality he is describing with the symbol?

- He is the source of all true understanding. It's through Him that we may see things as they really are, and not have a misconception about life, or about ourselves, or about life after death, etc.
- He is completely pure, holy; without the slightest bit of unrighteousness or compromise
- Note the absence of darkness. God cannot tolerate sin (Ps. 66:18). So how does he accept us? Not because he just decided to accept us, to forget our sinfulness; not just out of mercy. He didn't just say, "OK, come on." But through the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:22; 2 Cor. 5:21)

### Verse 6 (READ)

- John is talking about something incredible here: fellowship with God; that the infinite Creator or all the universe, God Himself; is ready to relate to us personally Like father to a son, or friend to friend. Personal relationship. Even though He is infinite and we are very finite, even though He is working, upholding all the universe. For the believer, He's not far away, and not just a judge that we will face someday. But rather we relate with Him personally, in fellowship. We can walk with God, day after day.
- Q: So how does this apply to how we pray? Not going through some ritual prayer, many times a day, in order to impress a god who is far away. But we communicate from our hearts to the God we know, who accepts us.
- Q: What does it mean to "walk in darkness"? [not just sin, but accepting sin as ok.. Being distant from God, the light.]

### Verse 7 (READ)

Q: So what does it mean to "walk in light? not just avoiding bad things and trying to do good things. But accepting God's word about life, believing it, and trying to live accordingly. Staying close to Him.

Q: Why is fellowship with other believers connected to fellowship with God?

(Use the triangle illustration)

- "cleansing" by Jesus' blood refers to washing away our sins in the eyes of God, and especially in our own eyes, i.e. our consciences (cf. Heb.9,10). The point is, we now have confidence in approaching God.

Q: Why is this cleansing of our conscience important? [A man feeling guilty will not draw close to God. One feeling ashamed will avoid God.-remember Adam's reaction to God's approach after he sinned. You mustn't forget the blood of Christ on a daily level.]

### Verses 8-10

- Read 8-10. What two verses are very similar? [8+10, like sandwich]

Q: What's the difference in what 8 and 10 are saying? 8 is failure to acknowledge sinful nature. 10 is failure to acknowledge specific sins that I am aware of, failure to deal with them as I am supposed to.

Q: What are the results practically if I do 8 or 10? broken fellowship with God; I

leave the truth - become deceived about my condition a: V.9, What does it mean to confess our sins?

[When I become aware of any sin, I immediately admit it before God. I renounce it, repent from it.]

- Note, this is a continually practice for the believer, if he is to walk with Christ. When I stop doing this, then I stop fellowshiping with God, because I am not dealing with my sin as God says I must. I fall into 8 or 10.

Q: If you are walking in fellowship with God one day, and then you sin (e.g. lie,

have a fight with someone), are you then out of fellowship? Answer: No. Only

if you then choose

not to confess it, not to deal with it.

- This is not a religion of pretending to be self-righteous. Rather we know we tend toward sin, and we deal with it honestly, freely, and realistically.
- This is the only way to keep consistency between our outer confession and inner life with God.
- WARNING: If we stop confessing sin in our lives then it is guaranteed that we will stop growing and shrivel up spiritually. Why? Because we are no longer walking in fellowship with God. Jesus said (John 15:5), "Abide in me... for apart from me you can do nothing." But if we do practice this, we will continue to grow. That is also guaranteed.

### Application

Questions?

Memory Verse: 1:9

- Think of any and all sins in your life today. Write them down on a piece of paper.
- Then pray, and confess to God each of them, specifically.
- Then write out the words of 1 :9 over your list of sins.
- Then thank Him that you are forgiven by the blood of Christ, and that you are in proper fellowship with Him.

## Growth Group Study Three An Introduction to Prayer

### Introduction

- 2 Pet. 3:18... last words Peter wrote (in Scripture). Putting main thing in front of the believers.
- Grow! (don't be carried away, don't fall, but grow!) This is my message to you now also. In what way?
- Grace (learn to receive God's grace; learn how He loves you; you are His delight) AND learn to deal with other people in God's grace. treating them.
- Love. With kindness. When we see other's sin and weaknesses, we have grace, knowing we are the same, no better.
- Knowledge-who He is, what He is like; esp. knowing him more and more in personal relationship
- Growth wheel: 3 spokes = Bible study, prayer, fellowship (Jesus=hub; Holy Spirit is the rim).
- Today 6 vv. on prayer, principles, some practical ideas
- Next week: how to put these things of prayer and Bible study together practically into a daily practice (not as religious obligation or routine, but as a discipline I undertake voluntarily and eagerly because I want to grow in Christ).

### (1) Mark 1:35-37

Q: What do you observe here? [finding a quiet, private place, at an appropriate

time, is essential; Normally where we live or work there are many distractions,

interruptions. Quiet Time can seem impossible. Find a place, perhaps in a park

or in the country.

Choose a strategic time.

- This was a regular practice for Jesus.

**(2) Col. 4:2-4**

Q: Observations?

- Keeping alert. Why?
- Thanksgiving as major theme. Why?
- Pray for spread of gospel

**(3) Psalm 5:3**

- morning prayer/specific requests/watching what God will do with expectation [evening too]

**(4) 66:18-20**

- If you are keeping sin in your heart, your prayer is worthless. How does one keep sin? [Not dealing with it through confession and repentance]

**(5) 100:4-5**

- like coming into the presence of a great king
- thanksgiving and praise

**(6) Phil. 4:6-7**

- God wants you to pray for things, to ask, to call on Him about your needs or desires. He cares.
- Perfect cure for worry.

**Application**

- Confession, Thanksgiving, Praise/worship, Supplication
- Imagine coming into the presence of a great king.
- Bodily position? (sit, kneel, stand, walk) (eyes) (hands) There are many suggestions in Scripture, but basically we're free. Do what seems most worshipful, comfortable, staying alert.
- Next week: more on how to put this all together. But don't wait till then.
- Jesus died on cross so you could have daily personal fellowship with God. Take hold of that. It's the greatest privilege in your life.

## **Growth Group Study Four Personal Prayer & Bible Study**

**Introduction**

- These are the two primary areas for our daily, ongoing communion with God. And they are two foundational activities that help us to grow.
- In prayer we communicate with God. We express from our hearts our deepest feelings, thoughts, and needs. We experience His greatness in praising Him. And we continually express our dependence on Him.
- In the Bible we have God's communication to man. Anyone with an open and honest heart sees that these writings are not merely the writing of man, but the perfect wisdom of God, which transcends generations and cultures.
- It is not a book to read once and then go on to something else, like a novel.
- But we continue to read it, study it, and receive teaching on it all our lives. By it we learn about God, about what He wants us to know about the spiritual realm, how to live life, and wisdom about how to face every situation in the best way. Peter says, "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation." Such should be our hunger for taking in God's word. It's the key to our growth.
- We are going to look at a few verses in each area. But we are not going to concentrate on theology or theory. Rather we will concentrate on how to make these things realities in our lives. Our goal in this

- is a regular, consistent practice in personal prayer and Bible study for each of us.
- Please write down verse references, so you can read them again later on your own.

## **\*\*PRAYER\*\***

### **Mark 1 :35**

- priority for Jesus (although He was very busy)
- sought privacy ( very early while dark, solitary place)
- regularity of this in his life (gospels say this often)

### **Col. 4:2-3**

- devote (priority; worth whatever it takes)
- watchful, alert, earnest
- thankful
- with a view toward propagation of the gospel

### **Psalms 66:18-20**

- necessity of confessing, repenting from any sin we are aware of. If we are
- aware of a sin, but “cherishing it”, I’m wasting my time.
- God receives us, doesn’t reject us, even though we’ve sinned (because He’s redeemed us)

### **Psalms 5:3**

- morning is a good time (Bible speaks of evening prayer too)

### **Psalms 100:4**

- good to start with specific thanks, then move to praise (like at first we are mindful of the things outside - then we become caught up with the majesty of the King)

### **Ph. 4:6-7**

- Everyone on earth has things they can worry about, they feel they need, feel they want. We have a choice. We can either be anxious about them, like everybody else. Or we can tell our heavenly father about them, knowing that He takes care of us perfectly.
- about anything; be bold, and direct and clear about what you want
- in attitude of thanksgiving (for the situation, inc. problems)
- we will experience peace - in both thinking and feeling

### **How To's**

- Need for regular time each day; best if at the same time usually; best if you set some certain minimum of time to spend with the Lord. Try starting with 10 minutes minimum in the morning. Eventually you'll find that you need more time. But it is better to start with a small amount and stay with it, than to start with a large amount, and then quit because you can't keep it up.
- Basic elements: Confession - Thanksgiving - Praise - Supplication (for yourself, for others, and for the advancement of the gospel)
- Questions?

## **\*\*Bible Study \*\***

### **2 Tim. 2:15**

- The picture here is that of a workman, who works hard to learn his field and develops skills over the years
- God reviews how well we get to know His word and then how we use it (i.e. in evangelism. or teaching)
- possible to use it incorrectly (because we haven't learned it correctly)

### **3:16-17**

- This verse says more than we have time to observe right now.
- Bible is God-breathed
- God has work He wants to do in your life. He plans to do it by means of His Word (the Bible). If you are taking in the Word only a little, you are limiting what God wants to do in you.

### **Psalm 1**

- Also too much here. More another time.
- He rejects the world's way of thinking, attitudes, values, behavior. Takes his pattern from God's word. That might make him an oddball.
- Day and night, i.e. all the time, continually
- As a result, eventually his life prospers like a strong, healthy, fruitful tree.

### **How To's**

- Start with minimum 10-15 minutes/day.
- Read through book at a time. If your time is up one day, mark your place in the book, and then return there tomorrow and continue on.
- Recommendation: Read completely through NT before starting seriously in OT. Note suggested order.
- Good to make daily notes of significant points, questions (for asking a teacher or spiritual brother or sister in the Lord)
- Questions?
- Might be best to put prayer time and Bible reading time together.

### **Final point**

These are not duties by which we try to earn God's favor. They are not another version of the 5 pillars (which one does to earn Paradise). Rather we spend time at them, even work at them, because:

- obedience (God says we should)
- to get to know God better and to commune with him
- to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18)

**Home Work:** review all verses on your own, think carefully how they are to effect you life personally

## **Having a Daily Quiet Time**

Practical Instruction

### **Why Daily**

- Not like filling up your car/or your heating or cooking oil.
- Like a marriage relationship.
- Like food and drink.
- Rom. 8:5-8

### **How Much Time**

- Same amount daily (with flex.)
- 50/50 (at same time)
- Less time that is successful, is better than a big block that you end up quitting (God isn't keeping a meter)

### **When**

- Discuss advantages and disadvantages of early morning; late night

### **Where**

- Home? Outside? University?

### **STOP**

- Everyone make a plan now (first pray)

### **Bible**

- Reading vs. studying (start with reading, until you feel you're ready for in-depth studying)
- Start journal (notes) of things you're learning, questions, encouragements, etc.
- What to read:
  - NT twice before really taking on OT
  - mixed order of NT (optional)
  - toss in Genesis, then Exodus (when you want break from NT)
- easiest to keep track if always finish whole chapters (next day, take up where you left off, through the book)

### **Prayer**

- Always start with getting your heart right with God.
- Review principles from Growth Group Study on Prayer.

### **Questions & Answers**

### **Conclusion**

- Seeking the Lord (2 Chron. 28:9; Josh. 1 :8; John 14:21; 1 Pet. 2:1-3)

## **Growth Group Study Five**

### **The Holy Spirit Part One**

#### **Romans 7:14-25**

### **NOTES FOR THE TEACHER**

#### **Procedure For Teaching This Passage**

1. Introduce the topic. We will take two weeks to study the Holy Spirit and how he begins to change our hearts and lives. At first we will look at our struggle with sin. Then next week we will examine how we can begin to have victory and joy in our lives because God has unlocked the door of our imprisonment in sin. You might begin by asking the new believer, "What are the three biggest enemies you have – not people - but the things that really harm your life?" It is common that one of the responses will be something like, "me", or "my heart", or "my flesh". Focus in on this one, and discuss how our own nature is sinful or hurtful, and how we don't seem to have the spiritual freedom to be and act the way we would like to. Draw out specifics from each others lives (e.g. lack of self -control; anger and losing one's temper; sexually impure thoughts or actions; lying; not always being kind and loving; not treating other family members the way I'd like to; etc.).
2. Read the section (7:14-25) through twice to yourselves, silently and carefully.
3. Deal with any difficulties he may have in understanding what is being said (see Notes below for help).
4. Discuss some questions that make this all practical, such as:
  - a. Can you relate to what Paul is saying from your own life? How?
  - b. Does the sinfulness of your flesh hurt you life a little? a lot? Do you see how this bondage robs your life of joy? (Develop the concept of our flesh being in a kind of imprisonment, because we don't have the freedom to be what we would really like to be.)
  - c. Imagine something: What would your life be like if you had the godly character that you would like, and had the full freedom to act in a righteous and loving way, like Jesus did?
5. Read Galatians 5: 16-23. The purpose is just to see another section from Paul that is similar. Don't try to study it or take much time with it at this time.
6. Spend time in prayer, thanking God that he has provided a solution to this bondage for the believer (even though you may not understand what it is yet). Pray that he would lead you to a full understanding of His work. You can pray on the basis of vv.24-25a: Paul doesn't explain here how it works, but he gives a glimmer of hope of how God has provided a solution in Jesus Christ to the spiritual bondage of the flesh.

### **The Context Of the Passage**

- Paul is describing his experience with sin. but in a way that is more or less true of every person. He does not distinguish between his experience with sin before knowing Christ and that of after being “born again”. This has made this section hard to interpret down through the centuries. But certainly only a saved person could say these things. Only one who is regenerated by the Holy Spirit could have these insights and perceptions into the bondage that sin creates. The unregenerate person is more completely in bondage to his sinful nature. But the regenerated person has been freed from sin’s grasp and can experience a measure of victory in living righteously. Nonetheless, what is described here is still, to a greater or lesser extent our experience with sin as believers.
- In the next section Paul describes how we can experience freedom from the coercion of our sinful nature (the “flesh”), how we can do what is pleasing to God, and thus experience “life and peace.” This is because of our new relationship with God’s Spirit in our lives. It is as if the door to our jail cell has been opened, and we can choose to go out to freedom.
- But first, our aim in studying 7: 14-25 is to understand the nature of spiritual bondage. Chapter 8 is a more encouraging section. But we must first understand the problem before we can understand and appreciate the solution.
- Here is a minor point. The section properly begins in v.13, and to understand that you would need to also study vv.7-12 (We’re not doing this at this time.) Anyway, Paul is simply explaining how our sinful nature uses God’s commandments to accomplish our spiritual death. Our flesh rebels against God’s authority, leading us into further sin. In spite of this, we should not conclude that the “Law” itself is evil. Rather, it is good. It is the sin in us that is evil.

### **Who is the Holy Spirit?**

This issue may not come up until chapter 8. But it may arise as you introduce this section as a whole (7:14-8:14). The understanding of who or what God’s Spirit is in Muslim thinking is different than what the Bible teaches. Because of this, the teacher may feel a need to thoroughly teach theology regarding the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, and so on. This should be avoided. Rather, our aim is simply to teach what the passage says enough so the new believer can have a basic understanding of it and begin to practically obey God’s word in his life, and begin to experience the new and abundant life. A fuller understanding of theology will come only through months and years of further Bible study, and especially by putting what God says into practice.

If the question comes up, simply say that the Holy Spirit is God himself, working in our hearts and lives in the unseen realm. While this may be incomplete, we are not seeking a complete understanding at this time. If he has difficulty accepting this “definition,” encourage him not to worry about it. It is very common for new believers, irregardless of their background, to struggle with things they encounter in the Bible. He should just continue to read and study God’s word, and pray for faith and understanding.

**“The Law”** (vv. 14. 16). This refers to God’s commandments in the Old Testament (for example, The Ten Commandments). Often the same or similar commandments are found in other religions. The point is, God is holy and righteous, and He has instructed us to live in ways that are right - in being devoted to Him, and treating other people in love. His commands are for our good. We want to be people of truth and integrity, who are pure, and who treat people right, the way Jesus always did. In that sense we “agree with the Law”.

Other verses use the word “law”, but the meaning is more like “principle” or “way”. There it does not refer to the Law of Moses.

## **FIRST STUDY ON THE HOLY SPIRIT**

### **Introduction**

- We begin a 3-week series on the Holy Spirit and his role in our lives as believers. Have you heard of the Holy Spirit? Confused? Who is He? What is He? What does it mean that He dwells in the believer?
- You might think that this is an intellectual topic. Theology. Mainly for our minds. In fact, no other subject is more practical for your life. Perhaps a bit mysterious or hard to understand. But application to your daily life very real. Because for the believer, He is the source of spiritual power! Do you want more power in your life?

- This is just an introduction. We have to look at a lot of different passages and Scriptures. Don't think this study is complete. It's just an attempt to survey the major principles that we must know.
- Personally I don't like to teach in this way. Most of the time a teacher should stick with one or two passages and exposit what they mean. To jump around here and there is dangerous. He takes verses out of context, and you have to trust his interpretation. So I urge you today to take notes, esp. of the references, so you can study them on your own in their proper context.

### **Who He Is**

- (1) A person, not a thing or force (Not "What is the Holy Spirit"?)
  - not just an aspect of God, but a person, with individual mind, emotion, will
- (2) He is God. Deity, eternal (Gen. 1 :2; 2 Cor. 3:17f; many verses, proofs of this, but would take lots of time). Not a separate god!
- (3) "Spirit of God" = "Spirit of Christ" (Rom.8:9)
  - The Bible teaches us that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God. And there is some distinction between the three. Three "persons". But Bible very clear that there is only One God. Three persons; one essence. To us this seems like a contradiction. Only because our human minds are so limited. But how can finite minds comprehend the incomprehensible God? There is a special name for this question: Holy Trinity.

### **What He Does In the World**

- In. 16:8-11; He convicts of sin, so people might know they need to be saved.
- glorify Christ, not Himself, In. 16:14

### **What He Does In the Believer**

#### ***Regarding ministry***

- Gives us power to be witnesses (Ac. 1 :8)
- Gifts to serve others in the Body; He works through us to effectively build up others (Ex. 31 :1-5; 1 Cor. 4:4-11)
- Notice that the purpose of all the gifts is to serve others, not to build up myself
- There can be times when the Holy Spirit comes on a person in a special way, and there may be unusual effects (Judges 6:34; 14:5,6; 1 Samuel 10:9-11; Pentecost in Acts 4:8, 31)
  - However, the unusual effects or miraculous signs were unusual. They were usually not expected when they happened, or were not sought after. But there is no indication that it happens to all believers (in fact very few).

### **His Work in Us Personally**

- He gives us the faith to believe and be saved (1 Cor. 12:1-3)
- joy; In. 7:37-39
- From Him comes the ability to be godly, to walk with God (not merely from our own efforts); 2 Cor. 3:4-6
  - over time come the fruits of the Spirit; Gal. 5:22f
  - Are we walking according to the Spirit (Rom.8:5-10. esp. 5-6). That's the most important thing, moment-by-moment.

### **Conclusion**

- Not true that some believers have a lot of the HS and others only a little. All true believers, who are born again have the HS in them. But some are more aware of what the Spirit wants to do in and through them, and therefore are more yielded to the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is able to be more powerful through them.
  - Illustration about the man who bought a new car, but didn't know about the engine.
- Mainly we must know that in our own strength we will fail - fail to walk in the light, to do right, to be men and women of love, of strength, or joy, of effective witness. Without the Holy Spirit active in us we will not experience the fruit of the Spirit (which are...) For that we need God working through us moment-by-moment. Jesus says walk by the Spirit. Live in His power. Let him live through you a godly and joyful life.
- All of us called to be filled, continuously (Eph.5:18). The tense in the Greek is present continuous - an

ongoing experience.

- Let's pray for God to fill us all, and to control us from today, and every day.

## Holy Spirit (Optional Lesson/Material)

### Introduction

- We could begin with study of "Who is the Holy Spirit?" But that would lead us into a lot of complicated theology. Don't want to do that. Suffice it to say the He is God Himself, working in our hearts and lives in the unseen realm.

Q: How does the HS work in our lives?

- made us born again
- fills us
- gives us gifts for ministry, for building up other believers
- enables us to overcome sin and live righteously; to bring about in our lives the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
- It is this last one (power over sin, freedom for righteous living, joy) that we want to focus in on tonight and next week.

Q: Name the 3 biggest problems in your life.

- Read 8:2,6. This speaks of the kind of victory that all of us desire. Next week we'll study chapter 8. It says a lot about our liberation from spiritual bondage, the solution to the problem of sin. But first we must really understand the problem. C.7 describes very well the bondage of sin, its power. First we must start there to appreciate the solution.
- Read 7:14-25 (twice)

### Discussion

Q: Difficulties in understanding what Paul is meaning? (esp. v.15, 19)

Q: Can you relate to what Paul is saying from your own experience?

Examples? (i.e. problems you have continually, even though you don't want to; good things you want to do or be, but can't).

Q: Does this hurt your life a little or a lot? Can you see this as a kind of spiritual bondage or imprisonment?

- Imagine your life with the full freedom to avoid the evil or sin you don't want (e.g. anger, lustful thoughts, lying), and the ability to be the good person you want (e.g. patience, kindness, complete integrity, consistent joy) - in other words, the spiritual ability to be the way Jesus was.

### Gal. 5:16-23

- Let's look at another section of Paul's writing that is similar.
- Memory Verse 16-17 (?)
- Next week, we'll look more at the solution to spiritual imprisonment

### Prayer

- On basis of 24-25a. Paul says that God can set us free through Christ. Here he doesn't explain how. But he gives us a glimmer of hope. Let's pray for:
  - understanding of these things
  - application to our lives practically
  - thanks for hope of a solution, in the Holy Spirit

### Miscellaneous

Q: What does Paul mean by the "law"? (cf. 14, 16)

Q: Is it good or bad? Good, but dual nature in its effects. Our sinful nature reacts against God's demands on our lives. Rebellious nature.

## Growth Group Study Six

### The Holy Spirit Part II

#### Introduction

- Previously we studied Rom.7 together. Do you remember? It was about the kind of spiritual bondage we are in often because of the flesh. Read 7:14-19.
- But God provides a solution, a way of escape from the bondage of the flesh. There is a way in which we can live in victory and freedom and righteousness. Last time I promised that we would look at that later, in ch.8. That's what we are going to do today.

**Read Romans 8:1-14** through to yourselves, silently and carefully

- Imagine that you had multiple sclerosis, where your muscles slowly deteriorate over time and you become incapacitated. Then one day you discover a treatment that over time recovers your strength and abilities and physical freedom. Over time, more and more, you start to become what you want to be physically. How valuable would that be to you? Today, that is what we are talking about on the spiritual level. Through the truths of the Holy Spirit, His work in us, we begin to become what we need to be spiritually. Over time we become healed, restored, whole. We begin to experience victory, freedom, spiritual power, healing from the effects of sin in our lives.
- Read together. again, silently, carefully, slowly.

Q. What is the overall topic? [Try to help the student arrive at the correct answer for himself.] Answer How to have a righteous and victorious life.

Q: What is it that “the Law could not do” (v.3), or what is “the requirement of the Law” (v.4) - same thing? Answer: righteous living.

- Notice how this works: (v.2) We were in spiritual bondage, as if in jail. We are now set free by “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”. Jesus came along and unlocked the door to our jail cell. We may chose to stay there, but we do not have to.
- No longer do we have to be controlled by anger, depression, anxiety, ruined relationships, fear, lying, feelings of guilt or shame, jealousy, pride, or selfishness. Rather our lives can more and more be characterized by love, joy, peace, self-control, integrity.

While Paul is also talking about being righteous in God's eyes “positionally” because of the cross, But more than that he is talking about having “life and peace” (v6) in our experience.

Some may see this kind of life as simply being “religious”: But this is not the point. Help the student to see that the issues here are crucial. God has set the believer free from living a life of struggle and failure and unhappiness, in order to experience the abundant life – to enjoy life and be satisfied to the full.

#### Verses 5-8

Q: How is the “Spirit-life” described? Answer: “life and peace”

Q: How is' the “flesh-life” described? Answer: mind set on things of the flesh (v5); death (v6); hostility toward God (v7); disobedient (v7); not able to please God (v8)

Q: (For Muslims) What does the word “muslim” mean? Answer: one submitted, or subordinate to God, to His authority, to His law.

- acc. to vv. 7-8, it is impossible to be a true muslim while in the flesh. To be truly subject to God, we need the Spirit of God, who comes into our lives only through Christ

#### Spiritual Death.

This section of Romans talks a lot about “spiritual death” (7:9-11, 13, 24, 8:2,6, 13). What are some of the manifestations or ways we experience this “death”?

Have the student think of things in these passages, in the Galatians 5:16-23 passage from last week, or anything else. Note that these things are not what causes spiritual death, but rather what we experience in our lives as a result of it.

Here are some examples.

Anger, fighting, not getting along with others. all kinds of sin (even if we don't really want to act that way), selfishness, pride and arrogance, boredom, depression, ruined relationships, being controlled by fears of spirits or curses, financial anxiety, fear of death, jealousy and envy, no self-control. nervousness, loneliness, bitterness toward those who have wronged us, feelings of guilt and shame, and fear.

These are the things that destroy the quality of life. No wonder the world has so many problems! No wonder people are searching for anything that might free them from this death! No wonder Paul cries out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (7:24)

### Religious Solutions

Nearly all religions promise solutions to this. But all of them (except the Gospel) focus on what man can do, our efforts, religious striving, etc. God's solution is the opposite.

: v.3? Answer: It is not we who accomplish righteousness, but God himself doing it for us! He washed away our sins by Christ dying on the cross. And he is working now inside us so we can experience righteousness in our lives. The emphasis is not on what we do, but on what God does!

Q: "What is the incredible, revolutionary truth in vv.9-11? Answer God Himself, In His Holy Spirit, has taken up residence in your heart and mine!

These two things then, are the secret of the abundant life. This is why believers, more than anyone else on earth, have the potential for lives of joy, freedom, love, and godliness. Let us see practically how this works out...

### An Important Distinction

- All believers are "in" the Spirit (v.9). At all times. Because you are a child of God. Even when you don't feel like it.
- But sometimes in my experience, I may be "walking according to the Spirit" or "...the flesh" (v.4-6). And I will always experience the results of either one or the other. Growing in Christ is a process of learning to walk according to the Spirit more consistently.
- Unfortunately we flip-flop back and forth. Like switching between AM and FM on a radio.

Q: What are the different ways the "Spirit-life" is described in this passage?

Q: What are the different ways the "flesh-life" is described in this passage?

Q: Explain at this point an important clarification. (In many different languages this may be difficult to understand as it is dealing with the prepositions. But it is very important.) Paul says that we are "in the Spirit", If we are truly believers (v.9). In other words, even when we are sinning, we are "in the Spirit", because we are still His children, and His Spirit is inside us Likewise, unbelievers are "in the flesh" at all times, even if they are doing something good - because "flesh" (the natural sinful nature of man) is the basic nature of all human beings who have not been regenerated by the Holy Spirit in Christ

However, the believer may at any given time be walking "according to the Spirit" (his true basic nature, now in Christ), or be "walking according to the flesh". In other words, he may fall into his old pattern of living, which is fleshly. The unbeliever has no choice. He is "in the flesh", and so always "walks according to the flesh". But the believer has a choice - to walk in the new ways of the Spirit, because God's Spirit is now in him - or to walk in the old ways of his former life. He can walk in freedom. Or he can go back and live for awhile in the old jail cell of the flesh.

As believers, we all tend to flip-flop back and forth, like flipping between AM and FM on the radio. Hopefully we do not intentionally choose to act "fleshly", but we often fall into it by force of habit. Over time, God teaches us to live more consistently "according to the Spirit"

Note: Try to think of illustrations and examples from your own life to discuss this with the new believers. Have you experienced both? Can you tell the difference? Have you experienced the "death" that comes from living for awhile "according to the flesh" (v.13)? Or the "life and peace" that comes from "walking according to the Spirit" (v.6)?

Verses 5-6

If at any given moment we are “according to the flesh”, we will begin to think and act in that mode. What are some things that characterizes that mode of thinking? (thinking of self first, comforts, pleasures, what people think about me, my honor, willingness to hurt others. if necessary..)

If I am “according to the Spirit”, I will begin to think and act in that new mode. What is that like? (thinking of God’s honor, being thankful for his blessings. wanting to do what is right, even if it costs me, loving others. and thinking of their needs and wants; wanting to know God more...)

### **Conclusion**

Conclude by discussing the question: If I have been “walking according to the flesh” for awhile, how can I change and start to walk “according to the Spirit” again? There is a three-part answer to this:

1. Because you now want to start walking with Christ again and experiencing the abundant life. this probably means that you already are now “according to the Spirit”
2. Repent and confess to God any sins that you are aware of (remember Lesson #’6 and 1 .John 1:9?).
3. Pray and ask God that you will be “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

Some have called these last two things “spiritual breathing”

- exhaling =confessing sins
- inhaling = being filled with His Spirit.

**Memorize** Romans 8:5-6

## **Growth Group Study Seven**

### **Baptism**

#### **Introduction**

Jesus commanded that all of his disciples be baptized - all followers, all believers. Therefore it is essential, if we are determined to follow Christ, that we learn what baptism is, and then be baptized in obedience. It is a physical act with symbolic meaning (and more: Romans 6) I do not want to lecture on this topic tonight. Rather, our approach is to look at several portions of Scripture, and observe together principles and applications

#### **Historical Background**

- Earliest idea is Levitical washing, if defiled, before offering sacrifice
- Talmud reference to a baptism in connection to turning from sin
- some pious groups, inc. Pharisees, began to use ablutions as symbols of spiritual cleansing a lot before and during the time of John
- a bath or kind of “self-baptism” was used as rite of Gentile becoming a Jew (“Jewish proselyte baptism”)

#### **John’s Baptism - Mark 1:1-5**

- in some ways, John’s baptism was similar to the ritual washings that some Jews were
- doing as acts to signify their turning to God, and being washed from sins It was also an act that Gentiles performed to signify coming into the covenant with God
- But in other ways, it was different, something new.
- repentance (4) - confessing sins (5) - receiving forgiveness of sins (4)
- Mt.3:8: “Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with your repentance.” – in others words, a changed life is the evidence of true repentance; change toward more and more righteousness
- vv.9-10: NB “coming up out of the water”
- a going down all the way into the water (as the baptizer lowers you into the water) and then coming up out of it (baptizer raises you) - of course you don’t stay down very long

- we'll see in a minute what these things symbolize
- Perhaps John was saying, in effect, that even Jews needed to convert, to enter God's true community, just as any Gentile would have to. This stressed the condition of one's heart rather than ethnically being a Jew, as the requirement for being a child of God.
- His was new in that John administered it to others.
- Central issue was repentance. The necessary sign of a truly repentant heart was good works.
- His objective was to have a "people prepared" (Luke 1: 17).
- Mt 3:6, "and the were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins."
- Mt 3:8, "bring[ing] forth fruit in keeping with [your] repentance"
- Mt 3:16, Jesus was clearly in the water, immersed
- Spirit comes upon J at baptism
- Mk. 1 :4, "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."
- Mk. 1:8 "he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" - not mention of fire.
- In. 1 :31 "I came baptizing in water" - same phraseology as v.33, 1Cor. 12:13 Re: Spirit baptism

#### **Matt. 28:18-20**

- recognizing Jesus' authority and Lordship
- ongoing process is implied: disciples go out, lead people to faith, baptized them, teach them, they in turn become obedient disciples, and also obey this commission - but with an ultimate end point, "the end of the age"
- one time event, signaling one's entrance into the Kingdom of God, and committing oneself to following Christ; receiving teaching is ongoing process
- in name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit - recognizing the proper existence of all three, and one's submission unto them

#### **Rom. 6:3-5**

- baptism as identification with death, burial and resurrection
- immersion implied

#### **In Acts**

- 2:38, still mainly symbolizes one's repentance and receiving forgiveness of sins. Now HS not a far off promise (vis. John), but an immediate reality upon conversion. J was now in the HS baptizing business.
- 8:12-17, first Samatan believers (through Philip) were baptized, but God evidently withheld the HS until Peter & John could pray over them.
- 8:36-39, Eth. Eunuch immed. received baptism. Imms. clearly implied.
- 9:17f, Paul's baptism by Ananias. Spirit-filling mention without any dramatic manifestations. Note also 22:16.
- 10:44-48, Spirit filling preceding water baptism
- 16:15 Lydia and her household were baptized
- 16:33 Philippian jailer and all his household were baptized
- 18:25, Apollos preached the Lord, knew things well, but was "acquainted only with the baptism of John", and needed further clarification from Aquila & Pricilla
- 19 :1- 7, baptized disciples of John were re-baptized by Paul into Jesus
- Conclusions
  - seems to be basically same repentance as John's, except that now it is expressly in Jesus Christ (probably why "in name of Jesus" is mentioned instead of "F, S, and HS", i.e. into God (Father) is assumed, but emphasized that it is in Jesus).
  - promise of HS is no longer down the road, but a reality to be experienced upon conversion

#### **Ephesians 1 :3**

- Baptism is a symbol of certain spiritual realities in Christ. Sometimes we may think that if something is symbolic, then it is not real. But that is faulty thinking. READ
- We have certain spiritual blessings, spiritual realities in Christ (e.g. new life, forgiveness, promise of eternal life, joy, HS). Sometimes physical, visible things may seem more real (e.g. our circumstances,.

people around us, a job, \$\$). But really in the long run, it is the spiritual blessings that will effect us the most, more than any physical thing. Spiritual things affect what happens inside us, what kind of person we become, and our eternal relationship with the One who created us.

- In a way, it is baptism that stands at the entrance to a right relationship with God, the entrance to all those spiritual realities and blessings.

### Miscellaneous Passages

- Jesus and His disciples baptized people during His ministry. In. 3:22-26. No particular difference is noted between His baptism and John's.
- 1 Pet. 3:20f, Peter draws parallel between Noah & Co. being brought safely through water (a kind of salvation, escaping judgment), and Christian baptism ("And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you..."). I.e. believers are saved by what baptism symbolizes – the death, burial and resurrection of C., and our identification with Him in that. The water is the symbol of death and judgment
- baptism stands at the entrance of the covenant with God. It symbolizes entering into all the blessings of union with Christ.
- connection with water baptism and Spirit baptism in In. 1 :30-34 (J's b.)
- J and John both carried on baptizing ministries in the West Bank. John was arrested there, and then taken to Machaerus (Ma'in), and later executed.
- See NIV SB note on Ez.36:25 RE water sprinkling as sign of cleansing from sin and impurities; also Heb. 10:22 and note there
- In. 4:1 f, baptizing and making disciples linked together
- Col. 2:11-12, tie with circ.; also baptism is being buried with Him
- 1 Cor. 10:2, her baptism used not signifying actual baptism, but more the root meaning of the word
- Gal. 3:26-29
  - unity and equality of all Christ's followers
  - we are "clothed with Christ"
  - we become Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise

### Passages

- Ez. 36:25ff - In. 3:5
- In. 3:22-26; 4:1 f
- Rom. 6:3f
- 2 Cor. 1 :21f; Eph. 1 :13, note "seal"
- Ac. 10:38
- Col. 2:11f - note parallel with circ. Also note reference to one's "putting off the sinful nature" and one's "faith in the power of God". This is not a good ground for infant baptism.
- 1 Cor. 10:2 - they were "baptized" into Moses
- In. 3:5; Ac. 2:38f; 9:17f; 10:47; 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; Tit. 3:5 - connection between b. and Spirit. He is the one who accomplishes the spiritual operations of which b. is the symbol.
- Heb. 10:22
- Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16; Ac. 18:16; 14:5; Gal. 3:27
- Ac. 18:13ff
- Ac. 8:38f

## Growth Group Study Eight

### The Cost of Being Disciple

#### Matthew 10:11-39

### Introduction

- Last week: baptism: Symbolic entry into right relationship with God through Christ; into all that God has for us. It symbolizes our participation in Christ's death, burial and resurrection.
- but it costs s. th. to be a disciple; not that we pay for salvation; but when we are joined with Christ, we begin to participate also in his sufferings, in hardships
- the person who determines to follow Christ (i.e. in baptism) should do so in full awareness of what he

- is getting involved in
- God loves us, and wants to bless us forever; he promises an abundant life; but not an easy life
- context
  - sending the disciples out on a short-term preaching tour
  - he speaks of things they will encounter during that time, but many things that relate to the long term of following Christ, and which speak to us just as much (He had us in mind too when He spoke these things)

#### Verse 11-15

- read

Q: What does it mean to shake the dust off your feet? Answer: a very solemn warning to the hearers that they were rejecting God's message, and were heading toward severe punishment, that God would reject them.

- Sometimes people (maybe family, whatever) will reject you, scorn you for your faith, not listen when you tell them about Christ. The problem is not you. Jesus says that the message is precious and worthy. The messenger, you, are worthy. Even though you may endure scorn or suffering. The problem is in them. In the end they will be judged, but you will be vindicated and exalted.
- Of course, many will believe and be saved. And Jesus commands us to go and preach. So in spite of certain opposition, we need to preach.

#### Verses 16-25

- Obviously some of this applied only to those disciples in first century Israel (e.g. it talks about synagogues). But it is clear that it also applies to us, though perhaps in different ways.
- Read silently, and ask yourself, "What are the risks I am taking by following Christ, by being a disciple? What things might happen to me at the hands of the government, Religious fanatics, employers, or even my family?" Then in a minute we'll share together our ideas.

#### Sharing

- Share several experiences of how followers of Jesus paid a price. Perhaps lost a job, expelled from their family, missionaries thrown out of the country etc. (v.22, "And you will be hated by all on account of My name")
- v.18 even if arrested, it can be for Christ's sake, and for a testimony (Give examples: Muslims note events in Egypt '85-86)
- 19-20, the promise that the Holy Spirit will give us words to say to witness effectively (mother of young twin girls in Cairo in jail. Judge tells her she can go free if she renounces Christ. She said, "Even if I never see my daughters again, I can never deny what Jesus has done for me")
- v.22 "It is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved." Implied that if we do not endure to the end, we won't be saved. Good verse for memorizing.
- Vs.24-25: Why will they hate us? Because they hated Jesus, and we are associated with him.

#### Verses 26-27

- Read
- Don't fear men! Pr.29:25, "The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted."
- The interpretation here is a bit hard. But I think it's like this: Don't try to hide what people are going to eventually find out anyway. Eventually those around you will learn that you are a follower of Christ. Therefore, don't spend a lot of effort trying to hide it.

#### Verses 28-31

- Read
- Three motivations for being faithful here. What are they?
  - Fear of God. If we forsake Christ, we will spend eternity in Hell.
  - I am very precious to God.
  - He is watching out for me and protecting me. He is intimately aware of everything that happens to me (v.30).
- What is the nature of His protection of you?

- That no harm will ever happen? No. See 2 Tim. 3:12
- No ultimate harm. Nothing that will effect your ultimate security with Christ and place in heaven. Lk. 21 :16-21. Notice the irony. Some may even be killed, but not a hair will perish. In other words, no ultimate harm. In the eternal view of things, it is just temporary hassles. And even in that, we should rejoice, because we are privileged to share in Jesus' sufferings. That's why all the apostles and so many early believers preached boldly, and were willing to die for Christ.
- nothing happens to us "apart from your Father" (v.29) I.e. nothing happens to us except if it is in God's sovereign plan for us, which is good.

#### Verses 32-33

- For a new believer, there may be a period of time in which he should not be real open about his new faith; he needs to grow, to learn more about the truth in Christ; and to learn how to explain what God has done in his life in a wise way. But eventually. he must be willing to openly declare that he is with Christ, and that Christ is his Savior and Lord of his life
- Jesus says here that if we can't do that, then we have not really made a true commitment to Him.

#### Verses 34-37

Q: Does Jesus want fighting and conflict?

- Ultimately our commitment to Christ must be stronger than even our commitment to family members

#### Verse 38

Q: What does it mean for a person to "take up his cross"?

- dying to himself
- a man on a cross no longer has future plans for himself; not concerned about having a nice. comfortable life
- This means to ending of our lives in the normal way that people live, i.e. for themselves or even their family. Now we live putting Christ's interests and goals in the world above everything else

#### Verse 39

- This is a perfect example of the reverse logic of the kingdom of God. It seems opposite of how we were brought up to think. . The one who lives to maximize his own interests and pleasures in life will ultimately lose out. He will fail at finding the satisfaction he seeks, and will achieve the abundant life or eternal life . The one who gives it all up for Christ will ultimately find everything that a man can want, in this life and in the next.
- Memorize Mark 8:35
- "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."

## Growth Group Study Nine

### Life in the Body of Christ: Acts 2:41-47

#### Introduction

- In the NT a very important theme is that our life now with Christ is with other believers. The role of other believers in our life is crucial to my growth. In fact, Christ is not interested in only developing individual believers but in developing a Body.
- Someone has said that 9 out of 10 Muslims who accept Christ, eventually go back. I am sure that that is because there usually is not a body, an appropriate family for most.
- What we are talking about here is the Church. But I have been reluctant to use that word. Why? Because I don't want you to think automatically of the groups you've seen, or buildings. Those are churches. But that is not the universal, worldwide church - the Body of Christ as a whole. Somehow when you here the work "church" you must visualize the Biblical concept, and not necessarily the local Christian culture.
- Original Greek. word ;= ekklesia. Best equivalent in Arabic would be ai-jam' or al-jam'iyye or al-jamaa'a or at-tajammu'. (Gathering)

- What the Bible teaches us about life in the Body of Christ is one of the most exciting truths. Humanly-speaking, it has changed the world, and is the key for changing our country.
- God gives us a picture here in Acts 2 of what the early Church was like. It is not very different than what we can have here in our fellowship. In fact, it should be the pattern for us.

#### Verse 41

- When did this happen?
- This is a huge response to the preaching of the gospel. Was that only possible back then?

#### Verse 42

- The 4 most basic priorities for us in our life together.
- What does it mean, “continually”? “devoted themselves”?
  - (1) Apostles’ teaching (NT); first, perhaps most important. Q: How can you make sure you have this in your life? [Attend meetings where there is good Bible teaching. Study on your own.]
  - (2) The fellowship = commonness in Christ. Probably spiritual unity. They were from very different backgrounds. But they knew that basically they were one now And they shared that oneness in many ways.
  - (3) Breaking of bread. Often then they ate dinner together, then partook of the Lord’s Supper - s.th. special. Q: Have you partaken?
  - (4) Prayer. This is foundational, not optional. We spend time in God’s presence together, talking to Him. We are not a club that talks about God. But we are a family that talks with God together.
  - These four things were foundational priorities or essentials. The following are characteristics of the early Church.
  - (5) “wonders and signs” (v.43) sometimes God works slowly in our lives, sometimes quickly, miraculously. He still does both today. We shouldn’t chase after miracles. But we shouldn’t deny them either. The sign of a healthy fellowship is that some things are happening that only God can do. That is always a great encouragement.
  - (6) “sharing to meet needs” (vv.44-45) It is not that they no longer had private money or property or belongings. They did (note 4:37; 5:4). But they began to give, even valuable possessions or large amounts of cash, in order to meet the needs of other believers. Q: Why were they able to do this? Answer: They saw themselves as a family Q: How could our fellowship practice this? [Set up fund for needs of individuals and the ministry itself.] Q: Does this mean that it is not important to have a job and work hard?
  - (7) Unity through informal fellowship. Q: What is this? Answer: seeing each other a lot, in different contexts; they became very close friends; in each other’s homes . This phenomenon is not immediate, but is the product of time and the right atmosphere. Q: Why is this important, especially in a group of I. background? [Often will experience rejection; need new family; become kind of ‘umma]
  - (8) “praising God” . God’s people have always sought to praise God, even centuries before Christ. There have always been many different ways or methods. But the heart is the same. Each culture can praise God in ways that are indigenous to itself. Through music, using the Word to exalt God, meditating on who He is and what He has done ‘
  - (9) “having favor with all the people” Q: Does this mean that opposition is a sign that something is wrong? Answer: no. Both can happen. Sometimes even at the same time.
  - (10) continual converts . “healthy churches/fellowships grow” . God is concerned with growth in quality or strength of a group. But He is also concerned with quantity, because that means individuals getting saved. We need to pray that this will be reality among us.

#### Conclusion

- Imagine in your mind’s eyes for a moment, how this can be in your own life, in the life of the church (2nd Cir., M’s & C’s). Both in terms of quantity, and quality, maturity of the fellowship, teaching, worship. Is it exciting for you?
- Heb.10:23-25. Clearly shows that believers need one another, and must be regularly involved in a group, It’s not optional, it’s a commandment. God has no program for growth for isolated believers. He commands us to be actively involved in the

Body. And that is the best things for us.

- God plans to cause you to grow by using other believers in your life, like those in this room, And, God is planning to use you, as you serve, to help others to grow.
- Three commitments: to church, to discipleship, to special events together. Will continue to stress these, because we know it's so important.

## QUESTIONS?

# Growth Group Study Ten

## Being Ready to Explain your Faith: 1 Peter 3:15-17

### Introduction

- In this fell. group, we have already discussed the relationship between the believer and the unbelievers around him. What a practical and important topic! It's something we face everyday.
- What is the relationship between the Muslim believer and the members of his family? close friends? colleagues at work? What are the pressures?
- Too often these relationships are characterized by a tension, where the believer lives in fear, that someday his faith in Christ will be fully exposed, and that people will not understand it as a good thing, but as being a *kaafir*. (Unbelievers) As I have known many such believers, this is one of the biggest struggles they deal with.

### Verse 15, “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts”

- In other words, make sure in your deepest thoughts, that you are committed to Christ as the Lord of your life.
- Actually this verse is in the context of suffering for being a believer. That is perhaps the best test of our commitment to Christ.

### “Always being ready to give an explanation...”

- This means we have to become ready ahead of time. We have to think through how we can explain things to those in our lives. Each of us must individually prepare as to share our faith in a positive way.
- Eventually people around us will find out something about our attachment to Christ. They will either get the wrong idea, a misunderstanding, a bad opinion, or they will understand from us correctly, and, if God wills, have a positive concept So we must be prepared to explain things for when the opportunity arises, and seize it for our advantage and for the glory of Christ.
- This is especially important for the Muslim believer living and or working with other M's
- he says that we “give account for the hope that is in us”; That really is our message, isn't it. We have certainty RE Heaven, instead of doubt like they do. They know they face judgment, but we don't. They have fear, we have confidence before God, and hope.

### “With gentleness”

- not harsh, not proud
- 2 Tim. 2:24-26

### “And reverence”

- in other words, with respect for the person we are talking to, and respect for their feelings. We must show respect for their beliefs, even though we know they are not the Truth.

### Verse 16, “keeping a good conscience...”

- We can expect for people to revile us for our faith, and maybe even to make up false things about us. But eventually, living a good life with a clear conscience before them will vindicate us and show them a good testimony.

### Verse 17, Suffering for doing right

- Again, as we have seen before, the believer can expect to suffer because of his faith, even for doing right.

### Question & Answers Prerparation

- (1) Are you a Muslim?
  - yes (note two things: religion/culture vs. faith)
- (2) Have you become a Christian? A kaafir?
  - The Qur'an says we Muslims should search the Bible when we have questions.
  - I learned some things that have helped me know more about God, and to be a better Muslim, to be more submitted to God.
  - I am a "Muslim - believer in Christ".
- (3) Why do you go to Christian meetings?
  - I don't. I go meet with some other Muslims who are also learning about Christ.
- (4) Who do you think Muhammad. is?
  - Who do you think he is?
  - I don't know.
- (5) Do you believe the Qur'an?
  - Do you? Why don't you do what it says?
- (6) You seem different than before. What has happened to you?
  - Later we will have training on how to prepare a good, short personal testimony.

### Miscellaneous

- your own attitudes about them, Islam
- attitudes toward the government
- memorization Q verses
  - RE exalted view of Christ
    - al-i-imran (3): 45
    - Nisaa (4): 171
    - Maryam (19): 17, 19
    - 3:49
    - 21 :91
    - 2 :253
  - RE good view of Bible, Christians
    - Yuunum (10): 94
    - 2:136
    - 3: 184
    - 5:48
    - 7:159
    - 32:24
    - 46:11,12
    - 46:30
    - Bible changed? cf. 45:16,17
  - RE "great sacrifice"
  - RE the crucifixion
    - 4: 1 56-1 58
    - 19:33
    - 3:55
  - RE deity of Christ, Trinity
    - 5:116 (Muhammad. thought it was God, J, Mary)
- Perhaps include in another lesson:
  - Jesus was just a prophet, a man, no more
  - The Bible has been changed
  - Jesus didn't die
  - No one can pay for the sins of another