

Reflecting God's Glory

*"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold, but let God re-mold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity." - Romans 12:2
[Phillips Translation]*

Whenever anyone accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior, God tells us that they are "*a babe in Christ Jesus*," spiritually born into a new life. Now that they are spiritually "*born-again*," - born into the kingdom of God - they must "*mature*," from being a babe in Christ to a full "stature in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 4:13).

How to attain this "*maturity in Christ Jesus*" is what this study is all about.

God has made it clear in His Word the process whereby "*spiritual maturity*" is attained. This spiritual growth is **not** *automatic* just because someone has accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior, but, rather, spiritual growth involves co-operation. The born-again believer must actively participate in the plan God has outlined in His Word ***if he is ever to mature in Christ Jesus!***

Spiritual maturity is not something that *just happens* to some believers and not to others, but, rather, it happens as the result of the believer living in harmony with God's basic principles of life - by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The conflicts one faces in their personal life can inevitably be traced back a violation of a principle which is found in God's Word.

The purpose of this series of messages is to trace our conflicts back to the violation of God's "*principles for living*," discovering God's principles and resolving our conflicts.

Faith in Jesus Christ is all that is essential for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. One's "***spirit***" is made alive, he is born-again. However, he is a "babe in Christ" and needs to grow into the image of Jesus Christ. There is not some blind-force acting within the believer to mature him but, rather, he must actively participate in God's pattern for growth.

God's plan for our lives is not, so much in what we **DO**, as it is what we **ARE**. God is vitally concerned with the **WITNESS** our life leaves with the world around us! Our life is constantly sending a message to those around us and, it isn't what we *say* with our mouth that is our witness, but our *mannerisms*.

The Biblical word "*witness*," does not necessarily mean "*to speak*," but, rather, it has the meaning of **our life being a reflection of God's glory to the world around us**. It is as we develop insight into God's "***Principles of Living***" that our life will grow into a reflection of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

The word translated as "*witness*" in our Bibles is a word which means, "*to show forth*," or "*to display*," such as a shop owner may "*display*" some item in his shop window, or someone may "*exhibit*" a trophy, putting it on display.

Even though it is often subconscious, our lives are controlled by our emotions and reactions. These inner emotions and reactions are controlled by deep-seated **ATTITUDES** which we have toward God . . . toward ourselves . . . toward our family . . . toward our employer, our teachers, our friends . . . and toward all others around us.

HOW CAN THESE ATTITUDES BE CHANGED?

The purpose of these messages is to look into God's Word and find out what kind of attitudes we should have. God has promised that when we have the right kind of attitudes in life, we will have fulfillment, satisfaction and true happiness.

"We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory (Christ's characteristics) are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
[2 Corinthians 3:18].

Our lives should be "*reflections*" of the life of Jesus Christ! The Holy Spirit within us will give us all the capability and competence we need to reflect the character of Jesus Christ.

*"We Christians have no veil over our faces; we can be mirrors that brightly **reflect** the glory (the characteristics) of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him."*
2 Corinthians 3:18 [Living Translation]

2 Corinthians 4:7, "*But this precious treasure - this light and power that now shine within us - is held in a perishable container, that is, in our weak bodies. Everyone can see that the glorious power within must be from God and is not our own.*"

The "*glorious power within*" us is the Holy Spirit producing this "*precious treasure, this light and power that now shines within us.*" All people must realize that it is not our power, but God working within us.

(8-9) *We are pressed on every side by troubles, but not crushed and broken. We are perplexed because we don't know why things happen as they do, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted*

Our problems do not have to overcome us, but, rather, they can become opportunities which God will use to develop the "*witness*" He desires to reflect His glory through us to our world!

<p>(10) <i>These bodies of ours are constantly facing death just as Jesus did; so it is clear to all that it is only the living Christ within (who keeps us safe).</i></p>	<p>We must be constantly "<i>dying to our natural inclination</i> (or reactions) in order to let Jesus produce His life within us. We let Jesus Christ live in us!</p>
<p>(11) <i>Yes, we live under constant danger to our lives because we serve the Lord, but this gives us constant opportunities to show forth the power of Jesus Christ within our dying bodies</i></p>	<p>The conflicts of life gives us an opportunity to "<i>reflect</i>" Christ in that situation, to reflect God's glory!. They give us an opportunity to "<i>show forth the power of Jesus Christ within our dying bodies.</i>"</p>
<p>(12-13) <i>Because of our preaching we face death, but it has resulted in eternal life for you. We boldly say what we believe (trusting God to care for us), just as the psalm writer did when He said, 'I believe and therefore I speak'</i></p>	<p>The word "<i>preaching</i>" here means that we have an opportunity to <i>proclaim</i> (reflect) Christ's witness. As we "<i>die</i>" to our natural reactions and let Christ live through us, we are presenting "<i>eternal life</i>" to others.</p>
<p>(14) <i>We know that the same God who brought the Lord Jesus back from death will also bring us back to life again with Jesus and present us to him along with you</i></p>	<p>The same power that raised Christ from the dead (the greatest display of God's power according to Ephesians 1:19-20) is NOW presently at work within us enabling us to reflect Christ's life to our world. = Hallelujah!</p>
<p>(15) <i>These sufferings of ours are for your benefit. And the more of you who are won to Christ, the more there are to thank him for his great kindness, and the more the Lord is glorified.</i></p>	<p>Our problems can be of tremendous benefit to others when we learn to respond to them from God's point of view. God is "<i>glorified</i>" in our lives when we become a reflection of Christ's character, showing forth His image to our world.</p>
<p>(16) <i>That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our inner strength in the Lord is growing every day.</i></p>	<p>We may fail at times, but we never give up, as the "<i>inner strength of the Lord grows every day.</i>"</p>
<p>(17) <i>These troubles and sufferings of ours are, after all, quite small and won't last very long. Yet this short time of distress will result in God's richest blessing upon us forever and ever!</i></p>	<p>God's defined purpose for us, with every problem which He allows, will not last long when examined in the light of eternity. Through it all, we must let God's eternal plan for us to exhibit itself.</p>
<p>18) <i>So we do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all around us, but we look forward to the joys in heaven which we have not yet seen. The troubles will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever</i></p>	<p>We must live NOW for the eternal joys of eternity. Our life here is not to be controlled by "<i>things which can see now,</i>" but, rather by the "<i>joys that await us in heaven</i>" and the purpose God is seeking to bring about in our life.</p>

2 Corinthians 3:2-3 *"The only letter I need is you yourselves! By looking at the good change in your hearts, everyone can see that we have done a good work among you. They can see that you are a letter from Christ, written by us. It is not a letter written with pen and ink, but by the Spirit of the living God; not one carved on stone, but in human hearts.*

Our life is God's "letter" to our world, to display His glory. As we allow God to develop us through heartache, conflicts and disappointments, our life very well could be the only "epistle" they will ever read

It is through these experiences that we "reflect" the image of Jesus Christ. Through these conflicts of life our responses become the "letter" from Christ that our world reads.

What Causes the Boredom Factor?

First of all, we must remember that God created man with three dimensions:

Body, Soul and Spirit!

Each one of these dimensions have certain aptitudes, interests and capacities and, for man to be the person God intended him to be, he must develop 100% in the possible potential on all three of these dimensions.

For instance, it is impossible for a job to fulfill all the aptitudes, capacities and interests that God has placed in our life. Because we are three dimensional, all areas must be developed. So, if our work cultivates 30% of our potential, it still leaves us with a 70% boredom factor. To be fulfilled, we must develop all three dimensions which God created man for.

The question of life is . . . **WHAT ARE WE LIVING FOR?**

Many are dissatisfied in life because they fail to realize the full potential on all three levels of life. They look for something more satisfying and cannot find complete fulfillment because total fulfillment can only be found when one's life is built on God's purposes.

OUR LIFE'S GOAL, SINCE COMING TO CHRIST, IS TO REFLECT GOD'S GLORY TO OUR WORLD.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE ORDER OF OUR PRIORITY?

Our responsibility, according to God's Word is:

First, our own relationship with God

Second, our family - wife, children, etc.

Third, the local body of believes, the church

Fourth, Our job, our employment, providing for the household

If we attempt to find fulfillment in priorities other than God's order, we will be disappointed - and we will be bored!

HOW TO FIND GOD'S WILL IN A MATTER . . .

George Muller, that mighty man of faith, once said, "*If you want God's will for your life, then your heart must be in such a state as to have **no will** of its own.*"

To find God's will in a matter, list why it would **NOT** be good for you and, then, list why that same thing **would be** beneficial to you. If you are honest in your search for God's will in the matter . . . and you balance the scale of anticipation with the reasons why this thing would **not** be beneficial with reasons why it would be right and would achieve God's purpose in your life . . . **THEN** you would be in a beautiful position to **DISSOLVE ALL DISCONTENT**.

Paul said that, "*He **learned** to be content.*" We can dissolve discontent, by getting rid of all of our "*expectations.*" Only then can we be free to enjoy God working in our life, displaying His glory through us.

God, Who created us, knows how to satisfy all our undeveloped aptitudes, interests and capacities. God accomplishes this by allowing problems to come into our life. Irritations, difficulties, heart-aches and sorrows are **opportunities** for God to reflect His glory through us to our world. These problems are not accidents but, rather, they have come for a purpose and they are an essential part of our life's witness. If we focus-in on what God's glory is which He desires to display through our life by these problems, it is only then that we can discover God's **solution** to solve them and, develop correct spiritual and psychological aptitudes.

God knows what each one of us needs and, without problems, we would never develop in *some* dimension of our life. You could have the best job in the world and everything that money could buy and still be *bored and unfulfilled*, simply because the aptitudes, interests and capacities in any one of the three levels which God has created within us is not being completely fulfilled.

We must allow God's "*glory*" through our life to be reflected to the people and the circumstances...which He allows to come into our life. God's will is not so much what we "**DO**" but, rather it is ever expanding insight into the basic witness God desires to develop in our life.

HOW DO I DISPLAY "GOD'S GLORY" IN MY LIFE?

1. REFLECTING GOD'S GLORY INVOLVES PEOPLE

Jesus died on the Cross – because "*God so loved people!*"

We, sometimes, have a fear of people. How do we get rid that fear? A certain amount of fear is advantageous because it prevents us from pushing into people's lives and being discourteous. If we see people in their home, it is this beneficial fear that keeps us from barging into their homes - *unless* their house was on fire - then we know we have a "*message*" they will thank us for later. It is the urgency of the message that causes us to lose our fear.

God's glory is reflected through our life is the expressing of mature love, Expressing mature-love casts out fear - "*Perfect love casts out fear.*"

2. REFLECTING GOD'S GLORY IN OUR LIFE CONCERNS FIRST OF ALL - CHRISTIANS

Galatians 6:10, "*Do good unto all men, **especially** those of the household of faith.*"

Why is God so concerned that we "*do good, especially*, unto the Christians?

God teaches that what the world needs is not more exposure to talking [verbalizing] the Gospel but, rather a **demonstration** of Christians who will live the Gospel!

Some non-Christians says, "*If so-and -so is a Christian, I **never** want to be one! He did me wrong and has never tried to make it right and, if his life is an example of what Christianity is all about, I never want to be one.*"

1 Peter 4:12-19 tells us that we are to rejoice in fiery trials, in sufferings, in reproaches - unjustly received. We must "*suffer as a Christ did*" because the time is come that judgment must begin in the house of God [with God's own children]."

IMMATURE CHRISTIAN ARE KEEPING NON-CHRISTIANS FROM COMING TO GOD

3. REFLECTING GOD'S GLORY INVOLVES REACTING IN LOVE TO THE IRRITATIONS OF OTHER CHRISTIANS

John 15:13 teaches, "*Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends [brethren].*"

Every born-again believer is a member of the family of God, the Body of Christ!

When there is an infection in our physical body, there is an irritation. **Why?** Because the cells around that infection are bringing a healing substances to the infected area - **in order to confine the infection**. The cells are "laying down their lives for the body," building a wall around the infected area, so the infection will not spread and hurt the rest of the body. This brings healing, as well as a sense of irritation.

4. REFLECTING GOD'S GLORY INVOLVES ALLOWING GOD TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS REPUTATION IN OUR LIFE.

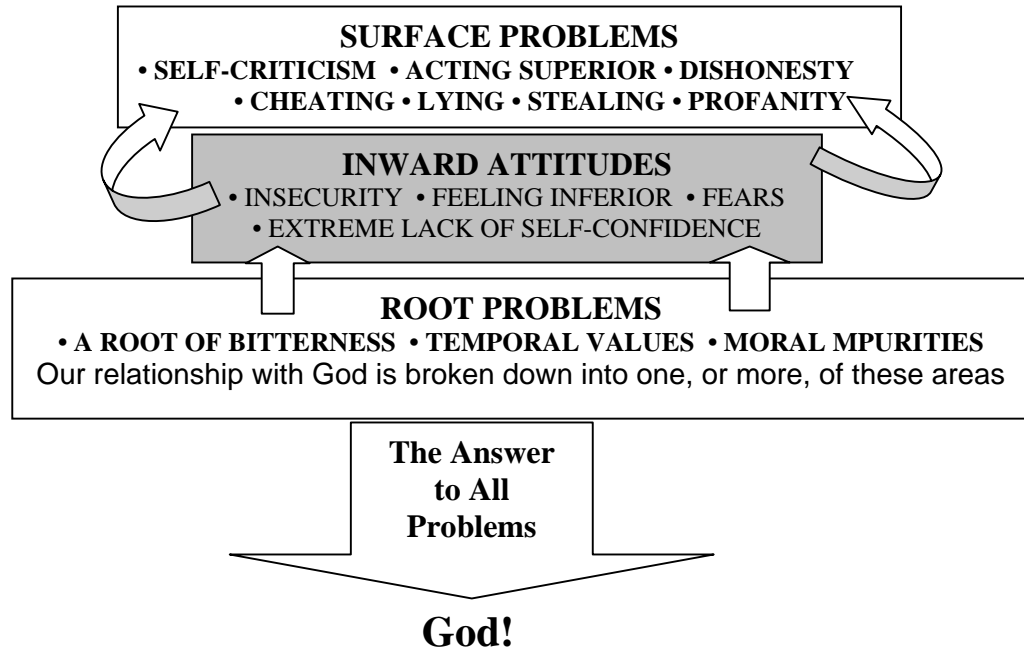
Revelation 3:15-20, "*I know you well - you are neither hot nor cold; I wish you were one or the other! But since you are merely lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth! You say, 'I am rich, with everything I want; I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that spiritually you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. My advice to you is to buy pure gold from Me, gold purified by fire - only then will you truly be rich. And to purchase from Me white garments, clean and pure, so you won't be naked and ashamed; and to get medicine from Me to heal your eyes and give you back your sight. I continually discipline and punish everyone I love; so I must punish you unless you turn from your indifference and become enthusiastic about the things of God. Look! I have been standing at the door, and I am constantly knocking. If anyone hears Me calling him and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him and he with Me.*"

These believers were "lukewarm," - neither "hot" nor "cold" - yet, they say that they have need of nothing. God says, "*They nauseate Him.*" **Why?** Because their lives

bring a reproach to His cause and stop others from accepting Christ as their Savior. God wants us to assume responsibility to be red-hot, displaying His glory, so that others will say, "*The Christian life is wonderful. I want it too. Please tell me how!*"

We must display God's glory so that others will want what we have!

5. REFLECTING GOD'S GLORY IS SEEING THE NEED AROUND US . . . DISCOVERING THE ROOT CAUSE . . . AND, FINDING THE SCRIPTURAL SOLUTION.



God created man and knows how man operates. He knows what it takes to make him happy, successful and fulfilled. So He has prescribed certain precise principles for man to live by. These principles are found in God's Word!

To be successful in arithmetic one must follow the rules. To be successful in one's Christian life, he must follow the principles God has given in His Word.

Many believers live haphazard lives, without any purpose. There is no attempt to "*work out their salvation,*" develop their character, or to display God's glory! There is very little outward evidence of God's power governing their lives.

Paul said, "*I pray that ye might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*" [Colossians 1:9-10].

- **WISDOM** is seeing life from God's point of view,
 - **UNDERSTANDING** is responding to life's situation as Christ would respond
 —▶ ***Reflecting God's Glory!***

If we were to look at life from "*our point of view,*" we will develop all kinds of wrong attitudes, such as bitterness, discouragement, disharmony, despair, etc. However, when these

same life experiences are seen from "God's point of view," we will develop attitudes of encouragement, excitement, hope, gratefulness and anticipation.

When we learn to respond correctly to life's experiences, we will not only develop right attitudes in our own life, but we will also reproduce them in other lives.

"Let this same attitude and purpose and mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus."
(Philippians 2:5).

Our goal and purpose in life is "to be like Jesus" . . . to understand how He thought . . . to know the basic set of principles by which He made decisions. We are to be reflections of His image!

What is "The Grace of God?"

To understand what God desires to accomplish in our life, we must have a comprehension of what "God's grace" is. God's grace is an active power which God gives to us, through the Holy Spirit, giving us the "*desire and the power*" to respond to situations God's way.

God's grace brought us to salvation first, however, it does **not** stop there but, rather, continues to give us the **DESIRE** and the **POWER** to respond correctly to life's situations. We can "resist" God's grace as He seeks to lead us to respond properly to the circumstances we face in life, however, we are exhorted to "*use oversight lest any one of you fail of the grace of God*" [Hebrews 12:15].

1 Peter 3:7 helps us to understand what God's grace is. It says that husband and wife are "heirs together of the **grace** of life," meaning that God made husband and wife with the ability to have the **DESIRE** and the **POWER** to reproduce "physical" life.

- "*The grace of life*" is the **DESIRE** and the **POWER** to reproduce physical life.
- "*The grace of God*" is the **DESIRE** and the **POWER** to reproduce God's life!

2 Peter 3:18 instructs us to "*grow in grace*," that is, allow this new life which we receive at the new-birth . . . Christ's divine life . . . to continue to give us the **DESIRE** and the **POWER** to respond to life's situation God's way. We allow God's grace - [the desire and the power] to increase in our life.

Hebrews 12:15 states, "*See to it that you do not fail to respond to this desire and power . . . (the grace of God)* – that is, don't fail to respond to life's situations God's way. This passage in Hebrews is warning the believer not to fail to respond to "*the grace of God!*"

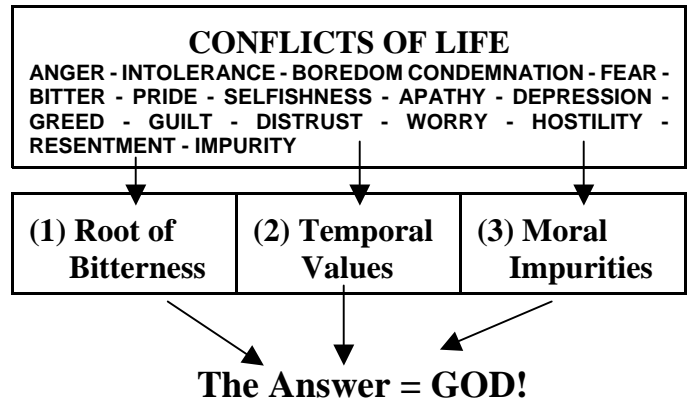
How Does a Believer "fail to respond to the Grace of God?"

This passage reveals what causes one to "*fail of the grace of God.*" It states that there are three things that will cause us to flounder and not allow God's grace to function in our life. There are:

1. A root of bitterness
2. Moral impurities
3. Temporal Values

Hebrews 12:15-17, "Look after each other so that not one of you will fail of the grace of God. Watch out that (1) no bitterness takes root among you, for as it springs up it causes deep trouble, hurting many in their spiritual lives. (2) Watch out that no one becomes involved in sexual sin or (3) becomes careless about God as Esau did: he traded his rights as the oldest son for a single meal.

Hebrews 12:15-17 exposes the three conflicts in life that result in not responding correctly to the "grace of God." Here we see the three basic problems that keep man from responding correctly to the grace of God. The believe fails in responding correctly to the "grace of God" because of one of these three **Root Problems**: (1) A Root of Bitterness; (2) Temporal Values system, or (3) Moral Impurities. The **ROOT CAUSE** is an improper relationship with God.



As we to read in Hebrews 12, the word "profane," means, "to be careless about the things of God." Esau lived for the present with no thought of tomorrow, selling his birthright for a mess of pottage.

The greatest commandment of all is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. (Matthew 22:37).

It is God's intention that our life be successful and fulfilling and He has given specific principles in His Word for man to live by. God has promised spiritual prosperity, joy, happiness and total satisfaction regardless of any outward circumstances.

Jesus said, "I am come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly." He also said, "Whoso drinketh of the water that I will give him, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water."

The Greek word translated as "blessed" in most Bible, is a very difficult word to translate. This Greek word could be translated as "bliss-filled life," "ecstasy of delight," "ultimate happiness," "thoroughly satisfied," "intensive fulfillment," or "crowning successfulness." There just isn't an English word to describe all that this Greek word conveys. This is what Jesus desires for every believer and He has set forth in Scripture the basic principles of this life. As we learn to live in harmony with these "Principles of Life," God's ultimate intention for us will be realized.

**There is a traceable relation to our problems
and a violation to one, or more, of God's principles.**

There is a "philosophy of life" which seems so logical to the natural mind, however, 2 Corinthians 2:14 tells us that the natural man can never figure out God's principles, they must come by divine revelation - that is, insight into God's Word. God's "Principles of Life" are very often just the **opposite** the natural inclination of man. They are "contrary (Galatians 5:17) to man's reasonings.

Whenever anyone hurts you, it is natural to want to "hurt" back, however, God tells us to forgive and to "do good" unto them.
Many says the way to get ahead is to get above everyone else, however God says, "He that is greatest, let him be the servant of all."
Natural reasoning tells us, "To increase your possessions is to hang on to what you have and add all you can to it." God says, "Give."
Man's idea of independence is to get out from under all authority, however, God tells us that the way to be independent is to learn how to be creative under the authority which He allows.

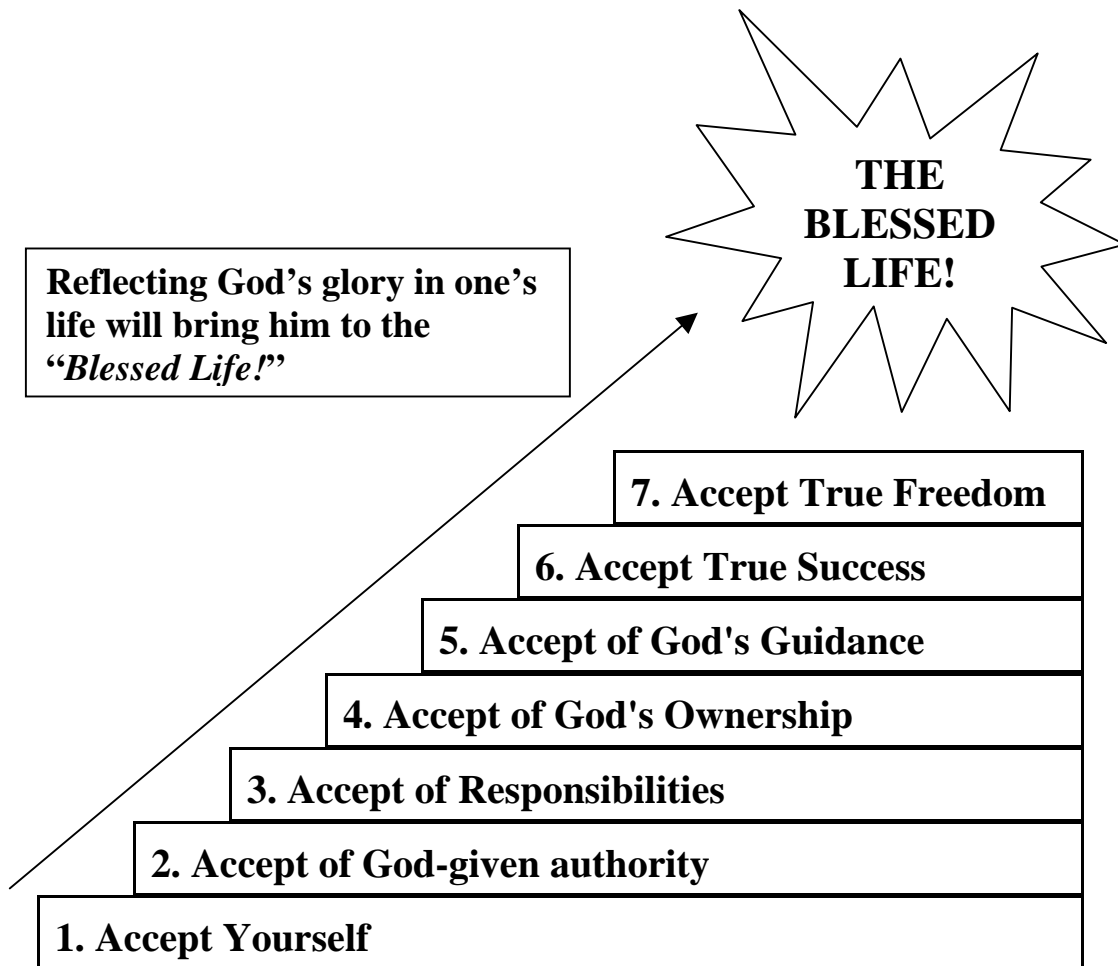
The purpose of this series of studies is to share God's "Principles of Life,"
or, **How To Display God's Gory**

- If you took all the principles of life and put them into one book, that book would be the Bible!
- If you took all these principles and put them into one life, that life would be Jesus Christ!
- If you took all these principles and put them together in one system, that system of faith would be Christianity!

When we are offended, the natural response is bitterness, which produces rebellion. And, though many fail to realize it, this is the cause of many visible conflicts and problems.

The natural inclination to fulfill our sensual desires is to discover all the sensual pleasure we can and "Live it up!" When we do, however, we have moral impurity, which, in turn, produces guilt, frustration and damaging habits

God's "Principles of Life" are exactly contrary to man's natural reactions or responses. **Do you want to know God's way?**



The above "*Principles-of-Life*" are based on seven universal, non-optional regulations given to us by God in His divine Word. As we study each of them, we will come to realize how the conflicts we face in life can be traced back to the violation of one, or more, of these principles, and we will find practical steps on how to resolve these conflicts.

Successful and fulfilled living is *directly related* to these "*Principles of Life*" given in God's Word. *When anyone violates anyone of these principles there is a corresponding breakdown in one of these key relationships of life!*

BASIC RELATIONSHIPS OF LIFE

1. Self
2. God
3. Family
4. Friends
5. Our Future
6. Dating

In this series of studies possible conflicts in one, or more, of these basic relationships will be traced back to principles which have been violated, or neglected. Also, specific steps will be provided for you to resolve these conflicts successfully.

What conflicts are we talking about?

- *Inferiority* • *Anger* • *Worry* • *Guilt* • *Uncontrolled thought life* • *Resentments*
- *Communication in Marriage* • *Temporal Values* • *Fears* • *Timidity* • *Failure!*

Let's look again at the steps to "*The Principles of Life*" given on the previous page:

- (1) Fully accept the Biblical truth that God made me just like I am, with a precise design. To receive God's *Blessed Life*, I must **accept myself!**
- (2) I must realize that God allows certain authorities in my life. They are appointed by Him for a purpose to mold my life into His image.
- (3) I must assume God-given responsibilities and act responsible in four major areas: **My Words - My Actions - My Attitudes - and My Thoughts!**
- (4) I must recognize God's ownership of *everything*

If we build our life around anything that lasts only for time, we are setting our affections, interests and future around some- thing which can be taken away from us - and we are building **insecurity** into our life..

- (5) I must comprehend God's guidance in everything, especially those things which bring irritations to my life and learn how to turn them into victories!
- (6) I must come to understand what God's idea concerning what true success is
- (7) I must grasp the Biblical concept that true freedom comes, not doing as I please, but, rather, it is God-given power to do what is *right*

2 Timothy 3:16-17

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished into all good works."

Throughout 2 Timothy God speaks of the conflicts of life and, then, He motivates us to put His principles into operation in our life.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 teaches that God gave us His Word for:

1. DOCTRINE

Doctrine was never intended to be just truths that the church adheres to but, rather, doctrine was given as practical, relevant principles for us to live by.
THEY ARE GOD'S PRINCIPLES OF LIFE!

2. REPROOF

A "*reproof*" is something that refutes, or conflicts. Reproof are conflicts in our life, which God allows, in order to mature us.

3. CORRECTION

As we acquire insight into God's Word, it gives us steps of action to take in

order to resolve the conflicts. We use these truths of Scripture to CORRECT the violations we commit.

4. INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS - (The right acts of God)

God, in His Word, gives us basic "*instructions*" on how we are to live in order to gain the benefits He has promised to us.

These four principles seen in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, are given "*that the man (or woman) of God may be perfect . . . (complete, proficient, adequate or mature) . . . thoroughly furnished . . . (equipped) . . . for every good work!*"

God's purpose is that our life be a display of His glory - *a reflection of the character of Jesus Christ!* As God matures us into a complete being, we could well be the *only* reflection of God's glory that the world around us may ever witness.

God wants you to be a display of His glory in the world you live in!

We must become the most effective *translation* of God's spiritual truth. To accomplish this, God gives eight ingredients which are essential to display His glory. They are found in 2 Peter 1:1-11: "*Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your **faith** goodness; and to **goodness**, knowledge; and to **knowledge**, self-control; and to **self-control**, perseverance; and to **perseverance**, godliness; and to **godliness**, brotherly kindness; and to **brotherly kindness**, **love**. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does **NOT** have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*"

A paraphrase of the verse 3-4 would be, "*God, by His divine power, has given us everything that is needful to be a display of His glory. As we get to know the ways of Him who has called us to share His glory . . . (reflect His character) . . . we will mature. It was for this very reason that He gave such highly treasured promises, and by the promises of His Word we can be partakers of **HIS DIVINE NATURE**. Now we are free from the moral decay that is in the world, resulting from human passions.*" (2 Peter 1:3-4)

These first 4 verses of 2 Peter 1, tells us what God's has done, and will do, for us. God gives us His own *divine nature* in order for us to live a victorious life!

Note that verse 5 begins by saying, "*And beside this . . .*" (that is, in addition to what God has done for us) . . . here is what **WE** must do. We understand that what God allows to come into our life is what it takes to develop our maturity – and we will spiritual mature – **IF** – we respond correctly.

The King James Translation of 2 Peter 1:5-11 states, "*And beside this, giving all diligence (1) add to your faith virtue; and (2) to virtue knowledge; and (3) to knowledge temperance; and (4) to temperance patience; and (5) to patience godliness; and (6) to godliness brother kindness; and (7) to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you will neither be barren (idle) nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! But he that lacketh these things is BLIND, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that HE WAS PURGED FROM HIS OLD SINS. Where-fore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for IF you do these things, you will never fall: For so an entrance will be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*"

Let's consider these ingredients listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7:

1. FAITH

Faith is giving God His rightful place at the center of our life.
[Study Romans 10:8-10 and 17]

2. VIRTUE

Virtue is separation from all evil and, if we do not separate from all evil, we blemish the display of God's grace and distort the witness our life is to proclaim to our world. We discredit our Lord.

3. KNOWLEDGE

Not only are we to separate from all evil, we must build into our lives a dedication to the Word of God.

4. TEMPERANCE

Self-control is taking what we have discovered in the Word of God and discipline ourselves to display God's glory into a meaningful development of maturity in our life . . . and the lives of others.

5. PATIENCE

Endurance!

6. GODLINESS

Godliness is Christ-likeness, a reflection of the fruit of the Spirit, listed in Galatians 5:22-23

7. BROTHERLY KINDNESS

Brotherly kindness is being sensitive to the needs of others in our world

8. CHARITY

Becoming an expression of Godly love!

God's purpose of developing these ingredients in our life is to make our life into the most effect display of His glory possible to our world!

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING?

1 Peter 4:12-14

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when HIS GLORY is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."

1 Peter 4:12-14 is **NOT** referring to some future time in heaven, because in heaven we will not have "*fiery trials*." This passage of Scripture is speaking of God's glory being revealed **NOW**, in this life, through our lives!

Verse 14 states, "*If you are reproached (suffer, are insulted or denounced) because of the name of Christ, you are blessed **for the spirit of glory and of God rests on you.***"

WHAT DOES "THE SPIRIT OF GLORY AND OF GOD" MEAN?

In the conflicts that we face in life, that is, when we are hurt, rejected and face a "*fiery ordeal*" we are to rejoice, because **THE SPIRIT OF GLORY AND OF GOD RESTS ON US**! When we suffer, and we learn to respond the right way to suffering, then, the spirit of glory **and** the Spirit of God rests on us!

Some crucial Scriptures to enable us to understand what our reaction to suffer ought to be:

1 Peter 2:19-24, "*For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth. When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.*"

Romans 8:28-29, "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose – to be conformed to the likeness of His Son.*"

Romans 12:1-2, "*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.*"

Matthew 6:19, "*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.*"

Colossians 1:11-12, "*being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.*"

(Verse 29) "*To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me.*"

2 Corinthians 1:4-8, "*Who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient*"

endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life

Also a careful study of 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, would give insight into suffering.

What we go through in life is not as important as
how we respond to what we go through!

2 Corinthians 12:7-11 reveals a circumstance in Paul's life which he asked God to deliver him from. What happened?

Reading 2 Corinthians 12:7-11, Paul says, *"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the 'super-apostles,' even though I am nothing."*

- **What is a thorn?**
- **What three reactions are there?**
- **How important is "Countenance"?**
- **What are the 9 qualities of the God's glory does God desire to produce in us?**
- **What does Paul mean by, "I will glory in my infirmities?"**

The "thorn," Paul refers to here, is suffering of some kind brought on by "a messenger from Satan." What was Paul's thorn? In the preceding chapter, 2 Corinthians 11:23-30, Paul reveals what this "thorn" was. Paul says, *"I have in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness."*

THERE ARE THREE WAYS TO RESPOND TO A THORN IN YOUR LIFE!

1. You can correct your thorn

The basis of correcting a thorn in one's life is to ask,

"What is the best way for me to display God's glory though my life?"

One of the most effective parts of our entire being is our "*countenance*." God does not want anything about us to detract from the outward expression of the inward "*glory of God*." What is "*countenance*?" Our "*countenance*" is an inner attitude, shown by our expression, which should reflect Christ's character. Our *countenance* should be a radiance of God's glory shining through our expression. Our *countenance* is one a prized possession, a priceless treasure, we have, which nothing should ever be allowed to cheapen.

When Christ was transfigured, Scripture tells us, "*His countenance glistened*" - it was an expression that the Kingdom of God was reigning in His life. (Read carefully Luke 9:27-35)

When we do not have the *countenance* we should have, there is an over compensating with "*outward adorning, arrangement of the hair, wearing of jewelry and extremes in dress*" (1 Peter 3:3-4).

2. You can pray about your thorn

Prayer is not "*twisting God's arm*" to get Him to do something for us but, rather, prayer should be discerning through the Spirit what God's will is.

3. You can "*glory*" in your thorn

We can attach new meaning to old scars, and defects, of our life.

We accomplish this by:

(A) Allowing our thorn to become a "*mark of God's ownership*."

Paul speaks of the "*brand he bore for God*."

It was a mark of God's ownership

(B) Allowing our thorn to motivate us to finish the quality of God's glory which our life displays

(C) Allowing our thorn to become a basis for serving God and others

"God comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God"

- 2 Corinthians 1:4

Since we are "*a design*," we must have a relationship with our "*Designer*," and then allow His glory to be displayed through our lives!