

Lesson 2: Respond with Fruitful, Christian Living



Christ-Centered Lives of Thankfulness

Pray Continually

Hear God Speak About Your Holy Life

Learn About Spiritual Gifts

Introduction

Richly fed with the Word, motivated by the gospel, and empowered by the Spirit, you are renewed to live in a strong relationship with God, grow in faith, and serve him with your gifts. This is the work of God through the Word. God has uniquely designed you and continues to equip you to live for his glory.

You continue to learn about Christian living as you study God's Word. You hear God's invitation to pray continually, especially as you meditate on Scripture. The Spirit calls you to listen to God's law and apply it with a yielded heart—heed his wisdom. As you grow in faith you will seek ways to respond in love and then find that God has equipped you with the spiritual gifts you need to serve.

PRAY CONTINUALLY

Christians regularly pray together in worship and frequently pray for others—we cherish the privilege of prayer. Scripture’s key teachings about prayer give both a foundation and freedom to the prayer life of Christians.

Prayer is an act of worship in which we speak to God from our hearts.

It is important for you to know that God only listens to the prayers of those who approach him through the merits of Christ. That is why prayers often end with the phrase, “in Jesus’ name.” Those words help believers remember why their prayers are heard. The actual words are not required, but faith in the work of Christ is essential. You can only approach the Lord in prayer because of Jesus.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. (1 Peter 3:12)

Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

*The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles. (Psalm 34:17)*

And God wants you to pray.



God Invites and Commands You To Pray

We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. (Daniel 9:18)

May my prayer linger before you like incense, the lifting up of my hands like an evening offering. (Psalm 141:2)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

Pray continually. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (Colossians 4:2)

Your prayers may bring a sense of comfort, peace, or contentment as you share your burdens or express your joy—you have spoken to the Almighty God! But visualize an upward arrow to understand what happens in prayer. You offer prayers to God from a heart of faith and they rise to heaven like incense. Your prayers are an upward arrow as you speak to God. But it is a one way arrow—nothing is coming down.

Now visualize a downward arrow and remember that your communication with God is most certainly a dialogue—God does speak to you! But Scripture teaches that God only speaks to you through the inspired (literally, “God-breathed”) words of Scripture. When he gives strength, hope, faith, and comfort, it will come to you through the Word. When you long for fellowship with Christ and the power of his voice, you will find him in Scripture where he comes to you. The downward arrow brings the fullness of God to you through Word and sacrament.

Lutherans summarize the truths of these two separate arrows by emphasizing that “prayer is not a means of grace.” Faith is not strengthened through the act of prayer, God strengthens his people through the means of grace.

Discover More About Prayer

Very simply, prayer is an act of worship in which we speak to God from our hearts. But what we say and how we say it will vary greatly.

Prayers may have a specific focus such as thanksgiving for a blessing, a specific request, or confession of sin. But most often, prayers include all these and more. It is not essential that every prayer includes each type of petition. Overall, you will see your prayers cover a broad spectrum of themes and topics, especially as they are shaped by Scripture. You will learn more about that soon.

Prayers also vary in style—you are familiar with many types of spoken prayers:

- Prayers spontaneously spoken from the heart
- Memorized prayers
- Written prayers that are read
- Scripture verses that are read as prayers

Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are also prayers.

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. (Colossians 3:16)

Sadly, there are also moments of silence when your heart and mind are drawn to God yet there are no words to express your thoughts. In times of silent weeping when you cannot find words to speak, God gives this assurance:

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27)

Prayers will also be offered in many settings. Christians pray alone, in small groups, or publicly in worship (this is sometimes called "corporate prayer"). Within these settings, some prayers will be more formal and others will be less formal. This does not impact the value or effectiveness of a prayer. All your prayers are heard by God because of Christ. Your prayers are effective because you have been given the righteousness of Christ—his righteousness makes your prayers powerful.

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

You will also want to understand the words of Ephesians 6:18, "*Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.*" As your prayer life develops, there may be times that you feel inadequate, clumsy, or awkward. With a desire to "*pray in the Spirit,*" you may be misled about what that term means.

To "*pray in the Spirit*" is not a reference to the flowery, lyrical nature of a prayer. Nor does it indicate an emotional experience or overwhelming sense of deep spirituality. The Holy Spirit dwells in you as a believer in Christ, and he gives you the desire and ability to pray. Because you are praying in faith, you are praying "*in the Spirit.*" Don't worry about stumbling over your words—your prayers are an act of faith blessed by the Spirit. God is listening to your heart of faith.

And the Lord knows your heart. He understands your thoughts, concerns, and questions. He sees your heart and all the emotions that either burden or bless you. You don't need to hide them—you won't tell him anything he doesn't already know. Speak freely with him like you would talk to a friend at the end of a day. It will become more natural as you continue to pray.

*Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.*

*⁴ I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.*

*⁵ I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you. (Psalm 63:3-5)*



Words Commonly Used in Discussions About Prayer

Address – The first words of the Lord’s Prayer, indicating to whom the prayer is spoken. Prayers can be addressed to the Lord using any of his names. Prayers can be addressed to any person of the Trinity.

Adoration or Praise – To speak joyfully and admirably about God’s goodness or gifts.

Amen – Spoken at the end of a prayer, it means “so be it.”

Confession of Sins – An admission of sin. Believers may confess specific sins they have committed and/or they may confess that they are by nature sinful. Believers may also confess their failure to do the good works God has commanded—these are sins of omission.

Ex corde (x-cord-ay) – To pray “from the heart” without a printed prayer.

Doxology – an expression of praise to God.

Imprecatory Prayers – A prayer to invoke God’s wrath and judgment on someone who has done evil. (Talk to your pastor if you have questions.)

Intercession – To intercede, to pray on behalf of someone else.

Petition – A request.

Supplication – To ask or beg for something earnestly.

Thanksgiving – To speak words of gratitude; to thank and acknowledge the one who gives blessings and gifts.



Learn More About Prayer

“[Prayer, An Audience With the King](#)” by Pastor Joel Petermann is an excellent resource to learn more about what Scripture teaches regarding prayer—it is part of the People’s Bible Teaching series. WELS Women’s Ministry has a coordinating Bible study written by Marilyn Miller that is available as a free download.

Let Scripture Shape Your Prayers

Think back to the imagery of the two separate but parallel arrows. You speak to God in prayer, and God speaks to you through the Word.

As your prayer life grows, Scripture will increasingly influence your prayers. You will certainly continue to pray about your thoughts, thankfulness, and concerns—but you will also begin to pray about God's thoughts. In a deepening pattern of spiritual life, your own thoughts, words, and desires will become more and more like God's thoughts, words, and desires. Your prayers "*in the Spirit*" will increasingly reflect the Holy Spirit who dwells within you.

The Spirit will urge you to pray for strong faith, godly wisdom, and opportunities to serve. You will find yourself praying for a generous and hospitable heart, an outpouring of spiritual gifts, and willingness to suffer for the gospel. You will pray for strength to love others unconditionally and courage to share the gospel with everyone. These are all prayers of the Spirit—they reflect God's Word and will.

Remember this is not about style or emotion—this is about learning how your prayer life grows in connection to God's Word.

The greatest place to receive guidance for prayer is in the Word—and the Lord's Prayer is the perfect place to start. Luther's writings on the Lord's Prayer are a magnificent guide as you learn to pray. Study and learn about each part (or petition) of the Lord's Prayer. Luther's beloved explanation of the address is a shining example of the rich treasures in the catechism:

Our Father in heaven.

What does this mean?

With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children, so that we may pray to him as boldly and confidently as dear children ask their dear father.

The Lord's Prayer doesn't just teach you the words to use in prayer—it teaches you what to pray. Praise God, ask for strength, forgiveness, daily bread, and more. There are many ways to pray the Lord's Prayer. Follow the Savior's pattern.

- Recite the Lord's Prayer, honoring the holy words of Christ as he taught his disciples to pray.
- Study Luther's Catechism to understand the concepts that Jesus teaches you about prayer. Pray about what you have learned.
- Pray a single petition. There are seven petitions, so you could pray one petition each day of the week (e.g. pray the first petition "Hallowed be your name" every Sunday).



An Example of Praying a Single Petition: Hallowed be your name.

Great King and Lord of all, we praise you for the holiness of your name.

You are the great I AM—the holy one filled with compassion, grace, love, and faithfulness. Your name is who you are—and you have revealed yourself in Scripture with majesty, honor, and righteousness. The heavens declare your glory, and creation begs to speak your name.

In your great mercy, you have boldly written your name on our hearts. You have redeemed us with the blood of your Son and inscribed upon us the name above all names. The image of the Most Holy Lord is imprinted within us by the power of your Spirit.

With awe and humility we lift our voices to praise you and give you our deepest adoration. We pray that our lives are a continual testimony of your righteousness, everlasting love, and unfailing faithfulness. We eagerly look for the day you will return to gather us to your Holy City and dwell in your eternal presence. Amen, Lord God—let it be done.

The book of Psalms is a collection of songs that are expressive and beautiful prayers. A psalm is a sacred song—although the words can be sung or spoken. The psalms were originally used in worship, incorporated into daily living, and accompanied God's people on their religious journeys. Pray the psalms by singing or reading them aloud and memorizing verses to pray spontaneously:

Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. (Ps. 103:1)



An Example of Praying a Psalm Verse: Psalm 103:1

I praise you, Lord! All my inmost being praises your holy name. Every part of my soul dances with joy at your greatness. I am in awe of your majesty—and the deepest treasure of my heart is your name. You are the Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end of all that is and is to be.

I am humbled by the holiness of your name and lift my voice in praise of who you are. You are the Shepherd of my soul and the Lion of Judah—you are my God. One day, every knee will bow at the sound of your name to acknowledge that you are Lord. All glory and honor will be given to you and the heavens will delight in exalting your name.
Amen.

Read the book of Psalms repeatedly until you can easily find psalms that bring comfort, confess guilt, and offer words of praise and adoration to God. This will be helpful for you—and equip you to encourage others with God's Word.

You can learn about prayer and you can memorize prayers—but the best way to learn to pray is to pray.



Other Ways To Pray

A.C.T.S. or “*C.A.S.T. all your anxiety on him for he cares for you*”
(1 Peter 5:7): Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.

- Adoration offers God praise for his majesty, power, mercy, and the countless ways he has revealed himself as a holy God.
- Confession includes your personal sins (confessed individually or collectively). It may include the sins of a group such as the nation or God’s people (this is called “corporate confession”).
- Thanksgiving is offered with gratitude for God’s many gifts.
- Supplications (or requests) are offered humbly but boldly—and according to God’s will.

Hymns are beautiful prayers with rich truths that can be sung or spoken:

- Hymns of Worship and Praise (e.g., All Praise to God Who Reigns Above, Let All Things Now Living).
- Hymns about Baptism are a wonderful way to recall your baptism and its rich blessings (e.g., Baptized into Your Name Most Holy, All Who Believe and Are Baptized).
- Hymns of Confession and Absolution (e.g., With Broken Heart and Contrite Sigh, Jesus Sinners Does Receive).
- Evening Hymns are especially calming (e.g., Abide With Me, Now Rest Beneath Night’s Shadow).

The Scriptures are also filled with believers who also teach us about prayer. Some of the great prayers of the Bible include:

- Daniel’s prayer of repentance (Daniel 9:4-19).
- Hannah’s prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-10).
- Dedication of the Temple (2 Chronicles 6:14-42).
- Nehemiah’s prayer of repentance (Nehemiah 1:5-11).
- Mary’s prayer (Luke 1:46-55).
- Simeon’s prayer (Luke 2:29-32).
- Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians (Ephesians 1:15-23).

Memorized prayers such as the common table prayers or Luther’s Morning and Evening prayers are also meaningful. You can add personal prayers at the end of those prayers. See the appendix for Luther’s prayers.

Pray At Bible Study

As you teach God's Word you will mentor others and lead by your example with many opportunities to teach and model prayer.

Pray with others often, especially at Bible study, to nurture a culture of prayer that is influenced by Scripture, compelled by love for one another, and confident in God's invitation.

The topic of Bible study, the Scripture verses read, and the discussions that follow are all things to pray about at the end of Bible study. Make notes during Bible study of things to pray about—or ask someone to write it down and remind you when it is time to pray. If you know someone who is comfortable leading others in prayer, you could say, "Mattie, would you mind praying about that at the end of Bible study?" This gives her some time to gather her thoughts and gives others a chance to lead in prayer.

There may be an especially painful or personal conversation that comes up in Bible study, and you should feel comfortable stopping at that moment to pray for the situation. Certainly this wouldn't happen often, but there are times when the compulsion to pray is overwhelming. Don't feel awkward about stopping to pray.

Encourage participants to pray for one another, then watch the Spirit move them to acts of love and kindness. Personal concerns and support for each other are often shared before Bible study, and women frequently assure one another of their continued prayer support. Indeed, believers are commanded to pray for others and remain steadfast in concern for them:

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:16)

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (Colossians 4:2)

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. (Ephesians 6:18)

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. (Romans 15:30)

Your prayers as a Bible study leader do not need to be poetic and lovely. You need to pray as a daughter speaks to her dear father. It may help others to know what simple, heart-felt prayers sound like. There may not be many opportunities for women to hear the prayers of other women. Bible study provides a perfect place to allow others a glimpse of your personal prayer life.

Your example of confidence in God's listening ear and trust in his powerful arm will be a wonderful encouragement for women learning about the Father who desires their prayers. It is also helpful to remind believers that with God's invitation to pray, no concern is too small.

A community of women who study the Word and pray together is an exceptional blessing and powerful witness.



Activity: Pray Continually

It's your turn to Pray Continually

Step One: Write down the one requirement for prayer.

Step Two: Write a prayer based on an element of ACTS/CAST (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication) or a petition of the Lord's Prayer.

Step Three: List several benefits of spending time in prayer at the end of Bible study.

HEAR GOD SPEAK ABOUT YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE

Introduction

You are likely excited to respond to God's grace with a life of humble thanksgiving. The apostle Paul pens the thought beautifully as he unveils the true motive for Christian living.

Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

Paul's very first letter, written to the congregation in Galatia, joyfully teaches you about the Lord's work in believers as the Holy Spirit bears fruit in their lives.

What I am saying is this: Walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out what the sinful flesh desires. ¹⁷ For the sinful flesh desires what is contrary to the spirit, and the spirit what is contrary to the sinful flesh. In fact, these two continually oppose one another, so that you do not continue to do these things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the control of the law.

²² But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the spirit, let us also walk in step with it. (Galatians 5:16-18, 22-25 EHV)

Christian living flourishes under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, given to you through the Word and sacraments. Luther writes about the work of the Holy Spirit in his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. His words give us clear assurance and unquestionable evidence of the Spirit's work. Luther captures the activity, outcome, and faithfulness of God the Holy Spirit.

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.

But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers.

On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

The Word guides you to express your joy and gratitude with Christian living—this is called your life of sanctification. The word “sanctify” means to set apart or make holy. In the Old Testament, God’s temple was furnished with items that were set apart and used only for holy purposes (see 1 Kings 7). Bowls, pots, and utensils were designed, created, and set apart for use in the temple. These items were not used anywhere else. In the New Testament, God talks about his people the same way. You are designed, created, and made holy by faith—even your Christian living sets you apart. Sanctified living comes as a result of justification.



The difference between justification and sanctification

Though these words might initially sound like theological jargon, they are actually very important points you need to understand.

“Justification” refers to the saving work of Christ that paid for the sins of the world—it is a “not guilty” verdict. A memory peg might be, “It’s just-as-if-I’d never sinned.” When God looks at you, he doesn’t see your sin because your debt has been paid. You are justified—this is God’s declaration and verdict because of the work of Christ. This work is done.

“Sanctification” is completely different as it refers to the work of the Holy Spirit as you respond to the gospel. Motivated by grace, believers bear the fruit of love and good deeds. As you grow in your understanding of the Word, the Spirit gives you the desire, ability, and guidance to live according to God’s will. This holy living is called your life of sanctification, and it flows from the justification you received in Christ.

Dr. Lyle Lange makes several helpful, clarifying distinctions between justification and sanctification in his book, [People’s Bible Teaching: Sanctification](#).

1. Whereas justification involves a change in people’s status before God, Christians’ sanctified lives involve a change in their hearts and lives in relation to God and their neighbor (p. 31).
2. Whereas justification excludes all human works, sanctification of the Christian life consists in the good works God enables the Christian to do (p. 36).
3. Whereas justification is complete and perfect in Christ, the Christian’s sanctified life in this world remains imperfect and incomplete (p.37).
4. Whereas justification embraces all people, sanctification takes place only in believers (p. 39).
5. Whereas justification gives us complete certainty of salvation, the sanctified Christian life produces evidence of faith but can never give us complete certainty of salvation (p. 40).

Reflect God's Image

This training began with an emphasis of God's redemptive love proclaimed in Scripture. It took you back to the Garden where the Lord created humanity in his image. Now, his Spirit works in you to restore the image of God first given in the Garden and lost through sin.

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds;²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (Colossians 3:9-10)

Knowledge and insights about the image of your Creator will only come from God's Word. Watch him work to help and save his people—see how he does it with faithfulness, love and, mercy. Learn about God's unchanging thoughts, holy desires, and divine characteristics (these are often called his "attributes").

The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. (Exodus 34:6-7)

Scripture points you to Jesus who is the fullness of God and the Word made flesh. God's holiness shines through the life of Jesus and as your faith matures, his image will continue to be restored in you. You grow to reflect Jesus more clearly.

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. (Romans 8:29)

"Yes," you pray, "Let your image be seen in me! Help me live like Christ!"

God answers that prayer as he works in you through the Word and sacraments. The Word nurtures you. Your baptism continually reminds you of the grace freely given for you. The body and blood of Christ strengthen you. Spiritual growth is God's miracle in you.

*"Blessed is the one
 who does not walk in step with the wicked
 or stand in the way that sinners take
 or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and who meditates on his law day and night.
³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season
 and whose leaf does not wither—
 whatever they do prospers." (Psalm 1:1-3)*

Pray the words of the hymnist,

Almighty Father, bless the Word
Which through Your grace we now have heard.
Oh, may the precious seed take root,
Spring up, and bear abundant fruit!

God's Word strengthens faith and guides believers with power and wisdom for holy living. God tells you how to live for his glory with his blessings.

*Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path.*

¹⁰⁶ *I have taken an oath and confirmed it,
that I will follow your righteous laws. (Psalm 119:105-106)*

Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. ⁴⁰ Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you for all time. (Deuteronomy 4:39-40)

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them." ²³ Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." (John 14:21, 23)



Your Joyful Holy Living

Your life is a reflection of God's image—it will reflect his love and holiness. It is your joy to bear the name and image of the Lord who saves!

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

How can you learn more about what it means to bear God's image in the world?

The answer is to simply study Scripture and learn about God. Learn about who God is and what he did to save the world. Every word of Scripture fills you with understanding because the Word is the place where you meet God.

With humble awe you will also listen to his law with a renewed heart. First you will be reminded of God's command and your need for a Savior, then with a grateful heart, meditate on what God is telling you to do.

Here is an example of how to listen to Scripture with a willing heart and be guided into holy living. Meditate on the words of Deuteronomy 11:18-20.

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ¹⁹ Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ²⁰ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Trusting in the forgiveness of Christ, you hear this teaching of the law with a desire to examine your life and follow God's will.

- *Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds...*

God wants to bless you by saturating your soul with his Word and planting it deep in your heart. How can you eagerly follow this command and keep his Word near you? Meditate on the blessings God wants you to have by securing his Word in your heart and mind. Seek ways to set your life and faith on the foundation of the Word.

- *Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads...*

God encourages you to be surrounded and influenced by reminders of his love and truth. Keep his grace in sight at all times—remember God never loses sight of you. He engraved you on the palm of his hand before you were born. Let all your actions and thoughts be tied to his love. Bind his Word in your heart by memorizing Scripture.

- *Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up...*

Let God's grace spill from your heart with his words of truth. Share them with everyone around you! Bring Christ's love and grace into your conversations from morning until evening, sharing Scripture whenever you are able. Let him speak through you, wherever he has placed you.

- *Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

How can you be a witness and share God's truth in society? The world needs God's message of salvation and you are called to take his grace out into the world wherever you go. God wants to draw all people to himself and you point others to his grace in Christ. His name is written on your heart—let it also be proclaimed in your words and actions!

Study Scripture and be compelled to share Christ's love—it is indeed a joy and delight. Treasure those moments and appreciate the beauty of his perfect Word.

At other times you will be called upon to bear God's image in hardship.

You will have struggles as a sinner in a sinful world with sinful people—and it will result in hardship. Bitterness, pain, sickness, tragedy, and broken relationships are just a few things that disfigure our reflection of God's image. It is extremely difficult to bear up under hardship—it is even more difficult to bear God's image in hardship. Yet God promises he is faithful.

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Scripture teaches you about the spiritual refinement that comes through trials. God has the power and ability to work all things for the good of those who love him. He assures you that you are still under his care even as you are being refined.

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. (Romans 8:28)

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ¹ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:6-7)

*I will refine them like silver
and test them like gold.
They will call on my name
and I will answer them;
I will say, 'They are my people,'
and they will say, 'The Lord is our God.' (Zechariah 13:9)*

God can use the hardships and suffering of this world for good—he encourages you to trust in him even when it hurts. Some of your growth will come in the midst of hardships as God shows you his power, the certainty of his Word and the tenderness of his compassionate love.

The Lord is your Good Shepherd who watches over you. He guides you into green pastures to stay safe, flourish and live in peace with him. This is the holy life you are called to—a life under the Lord's faithful care.

*The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
³ he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake. (Psalm 23:1-3)*



Examples in Scripture

The lives of many people are recorded in Scripture to teach you about the blessing of godly living and the consequences of sin. Learn from those who have gone before you—watch the Lord keep his promises and protect his people.

Scripture will also show you the eroding work of the devil, the depths of depravity, the pain caused by sin, heartfelt confession, complete forgiveness, and the power of God through it all.

Resist Sin

It is often true that we need to say two things when talking about God's truth. First of all, it is a privilege for you to reflect God's image in the world and it is the gracious work of the Spirit through Word and sacrament. This is most certainly true.

But it is also true that as a leader and teacher of God's Word, you are accepting responsibility as a role model. As you step into this position, recognize the importance of your witness, words, and actions. You bear responsibility in representing your church as a leader.

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. (1 Corinthians 5:20)

Remember the name and image you bear as you step into this small spotlight.

Hear God urgently warn believers to turn from sin because he does not want his children to fall into danger. God knows that Satan's temptations are working to destroy faith and separate souls from God for all eternity.

When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:13-15)

Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. (Romans 6:11-14)

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. (Colossians 3:5-6)

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. ²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. (James 1:21-22)

God also does not want his children to dishonor or discredit his name.

You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴ As it is written: 'God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.' (Romans 2:23-24)

As you grow in faith and knowledge, the Spirit may urge you to address a specific sin in your life. You may become more aware of sinful thoughts, words, or actions. The word "sin" means to miss the mark—and the standard is God's perfect holiness. God's call to repentance doesn't mean you are just sorry for your sins, the word "repentance" means you turn away and go in a different direction.

Don't dismiss the prompting of the Spirit in addressing sin. Resist the temptation to excuse or downplay the seriousness of your sin. See the danger.

Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:3)

This is where you cling to God's Word.

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

Your life of obedience and struggle against sin does not secure your salvation in any way—but don't ever forget God's warning to Cain.

If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it. (Genesis 4:7)

Beware of the slippery slope of sin. Satan wants to rule you and keep you from eternal life with God. Satan wants to hurt the church and destroy believers.

Honestly—if you are struggling with a sin you should talk to your pastor.

That statement bears repeating.

If you are struggling with a sin you should talk to your pastor.

Everyone struggles with sin, but there are times it is best to wait before you step into a position of leadership. It doesn't mean you can't ever teach—it means you should talk to your pastor first and let him guide you. Such actions reflect a selfless heart that desires what is best for the kingdom.

Perhaps these words of Isaiah will help you understand the danger.

*This sin will become for you
like a high wall, cracked and bulging,
that collapses suddenly, in an instant.
14 It will break in pieces like pottery,
shattered so mercilessly
that among its pieces not a fragment will be found
for taking coals from a hearth
or scooping water out of a cistern. (Isaiah 30:13-14)*

As a Bible study leader, continue to examine your life and seek God's wisdom in Christian living. This is not a burden or expectation in ministry. It is the desire of your heart as you love the Lord and bear his image in thankfulness.



Scripture For Leaders To Study

The following books, chapters and letters will be especially helpful to you as you serve your church.

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John
- 1 & 2 Timothy
- Titus chapters 1 & 2
- Proverbs 31



Search Your Heart

Pray with King David,

Search me, God, and know my heart;

test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴ *See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)*

Test me, Lord, and try me,

examine my heart and my mind. (Psalm 26:2)

As you wrestle with Christian living, there are times a sister or brother in Christ may help you see areas of weakness. Stay humble and trust God to guide you through the Word.

Earlier in this training, you learned about worship and liturgy. In worship, a common liturgical response to the sermon includes King David's beautiful words from Psalm 51.

*Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

¹¹ *Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

¹² *Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

¹³ *Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.*

¹⁴ *Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.*

¹⁵ *Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise. (Psalm 51:10-15)*

Work To Build Love and Unity

You do not continue this pattern of Christian living alone. You have a family in Christ surrounding you with support and encouragement. Paul expressed the richness of this gift repeatedly in his letters to the New Testament churches.

I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:3-6)

Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. (Philippians 2:2-4)

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:12-14)

Paul paints a strikingly deep picture of how believers are yoked together in fellowship. Along with their joy and laughter there is commitment, support, and self-sacrifice. People are passionate about the gospel in a way that values, recognizes, and engages the gifts of others—it is never selfish. Like God's perfect love, it longs to bless and benefit others.



God's Agape Love

Agape is the special word for love in Scripture that captures God's love for humanity demonstrated by the sacrifice of his only Son.

"Agape" is a self-sacrificing love that serves and blesses others. It selflessly works for the benefit of others and does not expect anything in return. It is the highest love in Scripture—and it is the love you are called to reflect.

God is agape [love]. (1 John 4:8)



Other Words for Love in the Bible

The Bible uses three other unique words that are translated as “love” in English. These words reflect different types of relationships.

- **Phileo** is the love between friends (it reflects friendship—you may know the city of “Philadelphia” is named after this brotherly love).
- **Eros** is the love between and a man and a woman (it is a sexual love—it is the root for the English word “erotic”).
- **Storge** is the love of family (it is a love shared by parents, children, grandparents, or siblings).

You have partners in Christ who love you. They are praying and laboring with you so that Christ will be proclaimed. Seek out those believers, invest yourself in friendships and learn from them. Enjoy the rich blessing of Christian fellowship—it is personal, meaningful, and beneficial.

Those who share your faith and passion for ministry are not simply extra hands to lighten the work load. These partners in Christ are fellow-laborers who understand the importance and purpose of gospel work—they bear the weight of responsibility and stand together in the struggles of hardship and disappointment. They urge one another on to love and good deeds.

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

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (Galatians 6:9-10)

Scripture is filled with accounts of believers who worked together with personal, loving relationships to build God’s kingdom. The accounts of God’s people in the Old Testament is similar to the disciples of the New Testament—they are people who nurture, encourage, and equip one another with the Word of God.

You are familiar with the word “disciple.” A disciple is someone who follows another to be taught. In Christianity, it means to be taught or “discipled” in the teachings of Christ. Today, the church doesn’t use the same words to talk about discipleship but it continues to make disciples of Christ!

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Today, we commonly use the word “mentor” rather than “disciple.” Believers are mentored as they encourage one another with the Word of God and talk about it. Mentoring shapes thinking and behavior—you can see it in the Biblical account of Naomi mentoring Ruth or Elizabeth mentoring Mary.

The work of discipleship or mentoring continues whether you are in or out of the classroom. Your teaching and influence extend far beyond what you can imagine and the Spirit works in ways you will never know. Teaching and mentoring go hand in hand—and they will drive you to your knees in humility at the opportunity to share Christ with others.

In this rich rhythm of spiritual life, you will find yourself at the beginning of Lesson 1, learning about God’s redeeming love story in Scripture. You will be nurtured by the sacraments and taught by your pastor. The response of Christ-centered, thankful living presented in Lesson 2 will continue to bless you and build your love for Christ and his church. It will draw you back to Lesson 1 with a longing for the redemptive love story and compel you again to live for Christ.

To God be the glory!



Activity: Hear God Speak About Your Holy Life

It’s your turn to Hear God Speak About Your Holy Life.

Step One: Learn how God wants you to respond to the law. Write down the ways you have failed to live the 3rd Commandment, given by God in Exodus 20:8, “*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.*” This reflection will lead you to admit your guilt—don’t minimize your guilt—just confess it.

Step Two: Living in the grace of Christ, make a list of what you can do to follow the 3rd Commandment. Identify small, specific steps you will work toward as you live in the example of how Jesus showed love for God’s Word.

Step Three: List the name of one or two people who are good role models for you to live the 3rd Commandment. Express your appreciation for their example and encouragement. List two ways that they demonstrate a love for God’s Word.

LEARN ABOUT SPIRITUAL FRUIT AND GIFTS

Introduction

As the Holy Spirit continues to build your faith through the Word and sacraments, he will also bear fruit in your life and guide you in Christian living. Jesus told his disciples, *"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."*⁵ *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:4-5).

For the purpose of this training we will use these definitions:

- The gift of the Holy Spirit gives believers the gift of faith.
- The fruit of the Spirit is the Christian character produced in believers.
- Spiritual gifts are the special abilities given to equip believers for service.



The Gift of the Holy Spirit is Faith. Fruits of the Spirit and Spiritual Gifts Are Given to All Believers.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is faith, and he dwells in the heart of every believer. The assurance of his presence is given in the Word—no extraordinary experiences are needed to affirm this truth.

His divine presence will bear fruit in all Christians. Though every person is different, God's Spirit will produce fruits of faith.

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given to believers for service. The apostle Paul wrote, *"All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines"* (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Read and digest the following Scripture passages with the zeal of Jeremiah at your side, *"When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight"* (Jeremiah 15:16).

*For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.*⁴ *For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,*⁵ *so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*⁶ *We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;*⁷ *if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;*⁸ *if it is to*

encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. (Romans 12:3-8)

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:27-31)

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

What is a Spiritual Gift?

(See the appendix for a complete Bible study on spiritual gifts).

There are several familiar passages in Scripture about the gift of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit and spiritual gifts—but a careful study will explain how each of them are unique.

- **The gift of the Spirit** brings believers into the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13 tells us, *“For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink”* (also see Acts 2:38-39). In his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, Luther emphasizes that your call to faith is the work and power of the Spirit. *“The Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.”*
- **The fruit of the Spirit** is described in Galatians 5:22-23, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

²³*gentleness and self-control*" (Galatians 5:22-23). God depicts his image in the renewed character of believers as the Holy Spirit does his work. The Spirit shines through your life to reflect the love, joy and peace of God.

- **Spiritual responsibilities** are given to all believers. Every Christian has a responsibility to serve (Galatians 5:13), encourage (Hebrews 10:25), teach (Colossians 3:16), give (1 Corinthians 16:2), witness (Acts 1:8), show mercy (James 2:15, 16), and grow in knowledge and wisdom (2 Peter 3:18; James 1:5).
- **Spiritual gifts** are given in differing amounts with varying combinations to equip believers for service. These Spirit-given aptitudes, or gifts (charisma) come from one place, "*All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines*" (1 Corinthians 12:11). His unique gifts are prepared and tailored to fit each unique individual, they are given to "*each one.*"
- **Natural talents** are given to Christians and non-Christians.

God places a high value on the variety of gifts he gives. However, it is not only the gift that is valued, but especially you who belong and are chosen to use the gifts.



A Definition and Examples of Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are the special, God-given abilities that equip believers for service.

Examples of spiritual gifts include, but are not limited to:

- Prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, and showing mercy (Romans 12:3-8).
- Healing, helping, guiding, and speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:27-31).
- Speaking and serving (1 Peter 4:10-11).

Why Does God Give Spiritual Gifts?

God's purpose in giving gifts is expansive and generous, "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain*" (Psalm 139:6). Therefore God reveals his intentions to guide you in using your spiritual gifts. These are just a few of God's divine and eternal purposes:

1. Glorify God

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (John 15:8)

2. Common good and service to others

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

3. Build up the church

So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church. (1 Corinthians 14:12)

As you continue your work as a Bible study teacher, remember God's intentions for your gifts.

How are Spiritual Gifts to Be Used?

God's Word also provides encouragement about how he intends his gifts to be used. Scripture gives general and specific guidance:

1. Use them fully and diligently

We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given us. If the gift is prophecy, do it in complete agreement with the faith. ⁷ If it is serving, then serve. If it is teaching, then teach. ⁸ If it is encouraging, then encourage. If it is contributing, be generous. If it is leadership, be diligent. If it is showing mercy, do it cheerfully. (Romans 12:6-8)

2. In unity

Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

¹³ *This is to continue until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, resulting in a mature man with a stature reaching to the measure of the fullness of Christ.* ¹⁴ *The goal is that we would no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, when people use tricks and invent clever ways to lead us astray.* ¹⁵ *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we would in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head.* ¹⁶ *From him the whole body, being joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows in accordance with Christ's activity when he measured out each individual part. He causes the growth of the body so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:3, 13-16)*

3. With respect for others

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being united in spirit, and having one mind. ³ *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility consider one another better than yourselves.* ⁴ *Let each of you look carefully not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:1-4)*

So by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought, but think in a way that results in sound judgment, as God distributed a measure of faith to each of you. ⁴ *For we have many members in one body, and not all the members have the same function.* ⁵ *In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." (Romans 12:3-5)*

Be refreshed daily in the use of your gifts by remembering the grace you received in your baptism. All your service will have this Christ-centered motivation. Using God's gifts for his purpose and according to his guidance sets you on a path of grace to serve in harmony with others—honoring their gifts even above your own.



What Should You Watch Out For As You Use Spiritual Gifts?

As you respond to the gospel with fruitful, Christian living, don't be caught off guard when your sinful nature raises its ugly head—it is "*crouching at your door; it desires to have you*" (Genesis 4:7).

Satan, the world and your flesh will try to reduce the purpose of your service and God-given gifts to something small and self-centered. It will produce envy, jealousy, pride, or self-pity as you seek to grow spiritually and serve in God's kingdom.

Struggle against these temptations by immersing your heart and mind in the Word of God—especially in these verses about spiritual gifts.

Your love for God's Word and your gift of teaching are both blessings that God wants you to use! These important gifts are valued in Scripture, nurtured and built up in worship, and engaged with humility and respect.

Gifts are also meant to be used with confidence. When asked to lead a Bible study or use your gifts in any other way, don't look within yourself but keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and his promises. Psalm 139:13-16 declares,

For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;*

your works are wonderful,

I know that full well.

¹⁵ *My frame was not hidden from you*

when I was made in the secret place,

when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ *Your eyes saw my unformed body;*

all the days ordained for me were written in your book

before one of them came to be.

God has designed and knit you together with gifts—you are fearfully and wonderfully made to live what has been ordained for you! Prayerfully consider the invitation to serve as a teacher of the Word. Recognize the commitment and responsibility that come with teaching the Word, but don't be afraid. You have gifts to serve others, and you are not alone. Your pastor will guide you, the church will support you, and the kingdom has work to be done. God himself dwells within you.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to give you peace, not disaster, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)



Looking for Confidence?

Your confidence as a Bible study leader comes from the strength and direction of God. You are a priceless vessel that simply overflows with his powerful truths and loving mercy.

God's plan for Bible study leaders is clear: diligently learn the Word, receive guidance from your pastor, serve with the support of your congregation, and humbly teach Scripture.

God's Spirit will make it powerful and effective.

It is also important to ask and understand how the use of your gifts and Bible study teaching fit into your congregation's ministry. Remember the love and value God gives to his bride, the church? He wants her to grow! God nurtures his people through Word and sacrament administered in worship. Your service is an extension of your church's ministry. You are there to intentionally connect your Bible study participants with your pastor and congregation where they will continue to grow.

Make the effort to learn about your congregation's mission statement. Seek out leaders to show you how the various arms of ministry fit together following one mission. There is benefit to understanding the goals and how those goals are reached by others.

Understand the overall plan of teaching the Word and how your teaching complements what others are doing and have done. There may be a long-standing history of women's Bible study in your church, or it may be a new opportunity. Either way, there are foundations in place to support what you are doing. Your church's leadership can offer encouragement, validation, financial support and the authority of the church. These are blessings that come from being part of your congregation's ministry.

As you ponder the invitation to use your gift of teaching, ask your pastor and leaders about training opportunities. The wisdom and help of the church is available if struggles or difficult situations arise in your study group. The encouragement and appreciation of Christ's body is sincere. Your willingness to eagerly learn and partner will strengthen your working relationship to the glory of God.

Join with the church as she prays for and with one another. Pray that God would bless others in the use of their gifts with the words from Hebrews 13:20-21:

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



Activity: Learn About Spiritual Gifts

It's your turn to Learn About Spiritual Gifts.

Step One: Explain the difference between the gift of the Spirit and spiritual gifts. Select one or two of the spiritual gifts listed in the Bible passages from this lesson and describe several ways this gift is apparent and a blessing to the church.

Step Two: In Luke 10:38-42, the account of Mary and Martha provides an important lesson about serving. It shows us the sharp contrast in a struggle that is common to many of us. Discuss what happens when you make your service the priority over listening to your Savior. How does this story reflect the struggles and priorities in your life? Is there a personal situation from your life that could use the encouragement and redirection that Jesus gives to Martha?

As they went on their way, Jesus came into a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who was sitting at the Lord's feet and was listening to his word. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with all her serving. She came over and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me."

⁴¹ The Lord answered and told her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but one thing is needed. In fact, Mary has chosen that better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Step Three: List two or three things that you like doing or do well (you don't have to think of them as "spiritual" gifts). How would your church or other believers be blessed if you do those tasks? Add to the list as you are able.

Your Turn to Respond With Fruitful, Christian Living

It's your turn to Respond With Fruitful, Christian Living.

Review and Exercises

Review the following exercises from this lesson. If you are uncertain how to proceed, reread the appropriate section.

Pray Continually

- List several benefits of spending time in prayer at the end of Bible study.

Hear God Speak About Your Holy Life

- List the name of one or two people who are good role models for you to live the 3rd Commandment. Express your appreciation for their example and encouragement. List two ways that they demonstrate a love for God's Word.

Learn About Spiritual Gifts

- List two or three things that you like doing or do well (you don't have to think of them as "spiritual" gifts). How would your church or other believers be blessed if you do those tasks?