

LESSON 6 Elements That Build Christian Maturity

What could a workman do without his tools? No matter how beautiful the plans for his building. No matter how wonderful the seed for his planting. He must have tools to accomplish his task.

Christian maturity, as we have seen, is a goal for the believer. The Bible provides us with many helpful motivations for growth. Growing up in Christ will enable you to assume adult privilege and responsibility. It will preserve you from being tossed and blown about as a child. Maturing Christians are able to receive teaching that the Holy Spirit has for them. This teaching leads to goals of Christ. The growing Christian must be aware of the final exam he must take before his Lord.

Reaching these goals is the problem. We must become a grand building of God. We are to be His fruitful field. Mature family responsibility is a position that must be attained. But how do we accomplish these goals? This chapter deals with practical steps for accomplishing them. The following outline presents human actions and attitudes God can use to bring transform into the likeness of His Son.

lesson outline

Total Commitment to Jesus Christ
Growth through Bible Study and Living
Spiritual Power of Prayer
Recognition of Servanthood Under Christ
 Sanctified Living
 Living by Will
Understanding the Ministries of the Holy Spirit
Cooperation with the Holy Spirit's Leadership
Relationship with Other Christians
 Mutual Help and Growth
 Sharing Faith with Others

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- Explain the relationship of our position to Christ's position.
- State how the Bible can keep us from sinning against God.
- Describe the results of the believers' prayer in Acts 4:24–31.
- Use Colossians 1:10 to describe the life and deeds of the believer.
- Point out how a believer's sin affects his Christian maturity.
- State how we relate our wills to God's will in order to mature in Christ.
- Relate the Holy Spirit's ministry of truth to the believer's growth in Christ.
- Relate the believer's cooperation with the Spirit to his spiritual growth.
- Explain why Christ placed ministers in the church.
- List four helpful directions for Christian witnessing.

learning activities

1. Read the lesson.
2. Do the exercises in the lesson development, referring as needed to the textbook. Check your answers with those in the textbook.

3. Turn to the notebook chart you made in Lesson 2. Under the heading *Spiritual* write the Scriptures that seem most helpful to you for spiritual growth.
4. Take the self-test at the end of this lesson, and check your answers carefully with those given in this textbook. Review items answered incorrectly.

key words

audience
direction
excellent
interact
lens

obvious
prevail
remarkable
response
sacred

tool
vital
weapon

lesson development

In this lesson, I wish to share some simple, practical tools. These tools are the main headings of the lesson outline. They have greatly helped me in my own effort to attain Christian maturity. I would like to suggest that you write these headings on a card and carry them with you, or perhaps copy them in the front of your Bible. Use them to examine your own life. I hope you will find these tools helpful.

TOTAL COMMITMENT TO JESUS CHRIST

Objective 1. *Explain the relationship of our position to Christ's position.*

We are born again by the Spirit of God. This cannot happen until we humbly repent of our sins and trust Jesus Christ as our Savior. But, in addition, we must confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is our Lord. "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Kurios is the word for "lord" in the original language of the New Testament. In that day, it was used of an important person such as the Roman emperor. In fact, by the time the book of Romans was written, each Roman citizen had to go once a year to the temple. There he threw a pinch of incense into the fire and shouted, "Caesar is Lord." The word *kurios* meant absolute king, unreserved ruler. When the Jews translated the Old Testament into the Greek language, they chose *kurios* and used it where "Jehovah" appeared in the Old Testament.

Do you see how meaningful it is for a Christian to say, "Jesus is Lord"? This means Jesus is king, master, and ruler. When we say "Jesus Christ is Lord," we are not just repeating a creed. We are saying: "For me, Jesus Christ has a unique and powerful place as my Master and sovereign ruler. He is my Lord."

Now, please turn to Colossians 1:9–20. This is a wonderful Scripture which lifts up Jesus. Here we find that Jesus is called “the firstborn over all creation.” In fact, God made the world through Him.

Application

1 Read Colossians 1:9–20. Write the last sentence of verse 18 in your notebook. What position is Jesus to have?



This first-place position means my desires, relationships, and very life must be second to His place. Jesus becomes a *lens* through which I see my world and my personal life. A simple way to say this is:

CHRIST CONSTANTLY IN COMMAND — CHRIST COMPLETELY IN CONTROL

I receive instruction from Him by His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is in control of my life. Can you join me in the following prayer?

O God, help me to make Jesus Christ, Your Son and my Savior, truly Lord of all my life. I open every area to His command and control. My heart is open for the Holy Spirit to work and give Jesus first place in me. May others see only Jesus in my life. Amen.

GROWTH THROUGH BIBLE STUDY AND LIVING

Objective 2. *State how the Bible can keep us from sinning against God.*

My Christian growth is directly related to the time I have spent with the Word of God. The Bible is the Christian’s main textbook. It is your weapon, your map and guidebook, your daily food. The Scriptures will guard your spirit, give you light, and plan your life. We have already seen in 1 Peter 2:2 that new Christians should be like new babies, crying for the pure milk of the Word. We have further learned from Hebrews 5:11–15 that by use of the Word we grow from babies to mature adults.

Let us look at some basic statements about the Word of God.

Application

2 Read Hebrews 4:12. According to this passage, the Bible is compared to
and it judges



The Word of God has a way of cleansing to our lives. This is important for growth.

Application

3 Read John 15:1–4. Jesus uses the branch and vine to tell His disciples that because of His teaching, they can be
a) clean.
b) mature.
c) friendly.
d) Christian.



Psalm 119—the longest chapter in the Bible—is one of the most wonderful Scriptures about the Word of God. Almost every verse contains a reference to the Word of God. God’s Word is called His law, His command, His instruction, His teaching, etc. Now is a good time to read the entire psalm, and then answer questions to help your understanding of God’s Word.

Application

4 Psalm 119:9 asks, “How can a young man keep his way pure?” We can keep our lives pure by
a) reading books.
b) going to church.
c) obeying God’s commands.
5 Look at Psalm 119:11. How can we keep from sinning against God?
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A simple truth is that God’s Word will keep us from sinning, and sinning will keep us from God’s Word. His Word will also provide direction for our lives.

Application

6 Using Psalm 119:105, fill in the missing blanks. “Your word is a to my feet and a..... for my path.”

7 Using Psalm 119:130 fill in the missing blanks. “The unfolding of your words gives ; it givesto the simple.”



You can study the Bible in many ways. Some read a certain amount of the Scriptures every day. One suggested study is called “2-2-1.” Beginning with Genesis and Matthew, this plan calls for two chapters of the Old Testament and two chapters of the New Testament, plus one Psalm or chapter of Proverbs each day. Another plan is called “Topical Study.” This focuses on a subject, such as the Holy Spirit, and studies all available Scriptures on that subject.

Another ICI course, *Understanding the Bible*, teaches you how to use God’s Word. *Understanding the Bible* is a course in this same Christian Service Series. Perhaps that would be a good direction for you after the *Christian Maturity* study is completed.

Remember: Your Christian growth depends on God’s Word. Through the written Word, God reveals the Living Word—our Lord Jesus Christ. You will grow in relation to the amount of time you give to God’s Word, both in studying it and obeying it.

SPIRITUAL POWER OF PRAYER

Objective 3. Describe the results of the believers' prayer in Acts 4:24–31.

Prayer is talking with God. It is a privilege for the believer to have an audience with the King. Prayer is a powerful way a believer matures. Frequently time with the Father in prayer helps us grow to be more like Him.

The believer prays to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Seventeen words are translated “prayer” in the original languages of the Bible. Each has the definite meaning of *asking*. Prayer can best be illustrated by a child’s talking to his parents. As the child matures, the level of the conversation grows. Our emphasis in this study is on the necessity of being consistent in personal prayer life.

Application

- 8 Answer the following questions based on Hebrews 11:6:
- a What must we have when we come to God?
- b Whom does God reward?

God has ordained that man can communicate with Him through prayer. It is a sacred privilege and a great responsibility. It is most important to understand that our prayer makes a difference in our lives and the lives of others.

Application

- 9 Reserve a two-page section in your notebook for *Christian Maturity*, and entitle it: “Promises for Prayer.” For now, write in the following Scripture references, leaving room between them.
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Promises and Instructions for Prayer

Ephesians 2:18; 3:12; 6:18
Hebrews 4:16; 7:25; 10:9;10:19–20; 11:6
John 9:31; 14:13–14; 15:7, 16; 16:24
Romans 5:8; 12:12
1 Peter 3:7; 4:7; 5:7
Philippians 4:6, 7, 19
Psalms 3:4; 5:3; 62:8

These Scriptures give examples that are encouraging to our spirit and that teach us how the tool of prayer can become important to our growth.

Application

10 Read the earnest prayer in Acts 4:24–31.

- a** Who prayed this prayer?
- b** What were the results of this prayer?



George Mueller, a great Christian in the nineteenth century, cared for thousands of orphans, yet he never asked any man for support. He prayed and all the needs of the work were met. This great man of faith and prayer discovered it was better to begin the day with reading the Word of God than to try to begin by prayer. The reading of the Word of God in humility and meditation brings faith and power and the *desire to pray*.

An old Christian motto says, “Prayer changes things.” But we must remember that *prayer also changes people*. To be used of God, we must learn the lesson of prayer. It is a lesson learned more by practice than by study. The Holy Spirit teaches us to pray. Do not worry about how much or how little you know about prayer—begin *praying*. Pray every day.

Application

11 Read Daniel 6:10. How consistent was Daniel's prayer life?

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It is possible to pray anywhere and in any position. I can pray during the activities of life. It is, however, important to set aside times when you and the Lord are alone in communion. This is how you can be refreshed, made strong, and given direction for your day. Little prayer will equal little power; more prayer, more power; much prayer, much power.

RECOGNITION OF SERVANTHOOD UNDER CHRIST

Objective 4. Use *Colossians 1:10* to describe the life and deeds of the believer.

Consistent Christian living requires that we recognize that we are Christ's love-servants. The word *consistent* is important. It means "agreement" or "harmony." Our conduct cannot be consistent unless it is in agreement with what we profess. Stated simply, we must practice what we teach. We need to prove by our lives the faith we profess.

Application

12 Read *Colossians 1:9–14*. According to verse 10, how is the believer to live, and what will he always do?

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Pleasing the Lord means doing what the Master desires even before we are commanded to do it. Any servant does what he is commanded to do. But the love-servant, the believer, lives differently. He sees what he should do and does it even before being commanded. Thus, his life shows he really means it when he says, "Jesus Christ is my Lord."

Application

13 In 1 Chronicles 11:15–19 is a wonderful story of three of David’s mightiest men. Read the story and write a paragraph in your notebook about *walking worthy of the Lord*. The Holy Spirit can use your story. Do not go on until you have done this.

Now, read Colossians 3. If you are alone, read it aloud. This section of Scripture is a pattern for the Christian walk.

Remember our previous study. To have the likeness of Jesus Christ is to have His mind or attitude (Philippians 2:5–8). This means, as we have seen, acceptance of our servant relationship to our wonderful Lord. Our acceptance of this relationship is based on sincere *recognition of our servanthood under Christ*. This recognition produces not only enjoyable Christian blessings but also *Christian maturity that performs Christian duties. If Jesus is really my Lord, then I will do my duties gladly and to the best of my ability.*

Sanctified Living

Objective 5. *Point out how a believer’s sin affects his Christian maturity.*

Another aspect of consistent life concerns *sanctification*. This is an important word. It refers to our special relationship to God’s holiness. Romans 6 is an important chapter on this subject. The underlying thought behind the chapter is: “Since God has saved us by His grace and mercy, we should not keep on living in our sinful way.” The apostle teaches that we are to live as people *dead* to our old sinful desires. Our new life is to live for Christ.

Application

14 Read carefully Romans 6:11–13. Verses 11 and 13 speak of death to sin and life in Christ. According to verse 13 we are to surrender our whole being to God’s purposes. What are God’s purposes?

A way for me to keep sanctified and holy is to be sensitive to sin in my life. The Holy Spirit is always faithful to convict of sin, but we sometimes allow pride, self, and excuses to cover the rays of conviction. If we choose to respond in humility to conviction, we have two wonderful promises in 1 John 1:7, 9.

Application

15 According to 1 John 1:7, we are purified from every sin by the

- a) Word of God.
- b) blood of Jesus.
- c) light.

16 According to 1 John 1:9, when we confess our sins, God's two-fold response will be to

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How does *sin* in a Christian's life relate to his growth in Christ? It *prevents* that *growth* by blocking the way to spiritual maturity. If I am to be consistent—if I am to “practice what I teach”—I must keep my life emptied and cleansed of sin. Sanctified living is essential to Christian maturity.

Living by Will

Objective 6. *State how we relate our wills to God's will in order to mature in Christ.*

Truly consistent Christian life depends largely upon the use of our human will. God will not do for us what we must do. We have already said the human will is part of the “inner man.” Every Christian must have definite “I will’s” and some equally definite “I will not’s.” God promises His help and power to support our decisions.

Application

17 For each of the following verses, state in your own words how human will relates to human action. (The answer to the first verse is provided.)

- a) Daniel 1:8Daniel willed not to become unclean.
- b) Daniel 3:18
- c) Luke 15:18
- d) Esther 4:16



Philippians 2:12–13 says, “Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

These verses show us the cooperation between our part and God’s part in our accomplishing His desires for us. God wants our lives to have consistent growth, and He is willing to help us to bring about His purposes. *Through the submission of our wills to God’s will, we experience increasing Christian maturity.*

Application

18 Another verse for this area of our growth is Colossians 3:17. According to this verse, you should do in the name of the Lord Jesus

- a) everything you do or say.
- b) most of what you do or say.
- c) only those things that are spiritual.



UNDERSTANDING THE MINISTRIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Objective 7. *Relate the Holy Spirit’s ministry of truth to the believer’s growth in Christ.*

Since the human being is fundamentally spirit, Christian maturity is fundamentally spiritual. Spirit is our highest quality. It is in *spirit* that we find the image or likeness of God in people.

Application

- 19 John 4:24 points out that God is
- a) like man.
 - b) Spirit.
 - c) eternal.
 - d) kind.
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God and people are similar in that both are mind, personality, and spirit. Thus, they can have fellowship or communion. God is Spirit: the Holy Spirit. Inner man is also spirit. Man can only worship God through the spirit and truth of his own being.

We have already studied the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives in Lesson 4. Jesus told His disciples in John 16:7–15 that it was a good thing He was going away. Although this was shocking to His disciples, it was necessary to His sending the Holy Spirit. From that moment, believers were to “grow up” under the influence of the invisible Spirit—not the visible Jesus. Thus, increased faith would become necessary. Man is convicted of sin, shown the way to salvation, placed in Christ’s body (the church), taught spiritual truth, and given power for service—all through God’s Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the source of energy for the Christian life.

Jesus Christ can only be revealed and glorified through the Holy Spirit, and it is only through this same Spirit that the believer can mature. John 16:8 tells us the Holy Spirit will show people that they are wrong about *sin*, about what is *right*, and about God’s *judgment*.

Application

- 20 What two ministries of the Holy Spirit to the believer are pointed out in John 16:13?
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In the first part of the answer to the preceding exercise, the Spirit ministers knowledge of truth to the believer. In the second part of the answer, He helps the believer to practice (believe and obey) truth. We must know truth before we can practice it, and its practice must be added to knowledge to develop Christian maturity.

Application

21 Acts 1:8 teaches us about another ministry of the Holy Spirit, the work of

- a) destruction of sin by fire.
- b) inspiring us to worship.
- c) filling us with power to witness.



When you have completed this course, you may be interested in doing an entire course on *The Holy Spirit, Spiritual Gifts*, or the *Fruit of the Spirit*. They would help you greatly to mature in your Christian experience. There is not space enough in this course to cover each of these subjects.

COOPERATION WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT'S LEADERSHIP

Objective 8. *Describe the believer's cooperation with the Spirit and relate it to his spiritual growth.*

Rewiew some of the truths on the Holy Spirit in Lesson 4. Now, we are ready to study Ephesians 5:18, which says, “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” Here, the word *filled* does not mean as water fills a bottle. It is from the Greek word that suggests “to pervade or take possession of.” The Holy Spirit is not a substance to fill an empty receptacle. He is a *Person* to control another personality—namely, the believer.

In Ephesians 5:18, the Greek word for “filled” represents a *moment by moment experience*. We are to be continually *filled or controlled* by the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with anything, we are controlled by it. This statement applies to being filled with love, filled with hate, filled with ambition, etc. We saw in Lesson 4 that there are certain evil works that prevail when

human nature controls us. But the believer filled with the Holy Spirit is controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:16–17 speaks forcefully of the necessity of our cooperating with the Holy Spirit’s leadership: “Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.”

Application

22 Describe briefly the fruit we might expect in our lives if we allow divine nature to *control* us (see Galatians 5:22–23).

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We can see that although the Spirit of God is within every believer, the individual believer must cooperate with Him by yielding to His leadership. If I completely surrender my spirit to God’s Spirit, I will become motivated, energized, taught, and strengthened toward my goal of spiritual maturity.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS

Mutual Help and Growth

Objective 9. *Explain why Christ placed ministers in the church.*

The individual believer does not grow up alone. Like the child maturing in a family, the Christian needs others to help him grow. We need the fellowship, encouragement, and contribution of others. God made us to need fellowship with each other as well as fellowship with Him.

Application

23 Hebrews 10:24–25 contains commands about the believers’ fellowship. Verse 25 states that we are NOT to give up the habit of

- a) meeting together.
- b) prayer.
- c) Bible reading.



It is wonderful when there are many believers in our home area. Many Christians meeting together is often enjoyable. But perhaps this is not possible where you live. Our Lord gave a helpful promise for even small meetings of believers: “Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20).

There is a remarkable strengthening of our lives when we meet with just one other person. When two believers pray and work for Christ together, they multiply their effectiveness. (See Leviticus 26:8 and Deuteronomy 32:30.) Jesus Christ sent His disciples to spread the gospel in teams.

Application

24 Read Luke 10:1. How were the first gospel teams sent out?

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There are many other passages on the principle of working together for God. See Acts 10:23, 11:12, and 15:36–41. When the Holy Spirit separated people unto ministry and witness in the early days of the church, He separated them by two’s, three’s, and four’s. There is an obvious reason for this: when two are together, they support each other. They encourage and help establish each other. It is scriptural to believe and ask God to bring one or more others to work closely with you in your Christian life.

Bible study comes alive when we can discuss and compare views with someone else. Our witness becomes bolder when two stand together. Life becomes more consistent when lived before another.

If you are fortunate enough to be part of a good church, you are in a helpful setting for growth. God has put excellent gifts in the body of Christ to strengthen the believer. Teachers are a gift of God for our growth. Even this course of study can help you mature.

Application

25 Read again Ephesians 4:11–12. Why did Christ give ministers to the church?

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In short, the believer is called to grow in the fellowship of others. *Koinonia* is an important Greek word that appears often in the New Testament. It means “to share, to fellowship, to contribute.” Look up the following references: 1 John 1:3, Philippians 1:5, Philemon 6, and 1 Corinthians 10:16–17. In each of these Scriptures *koinonia* appears.

Fellowship with God, with one another, witnessing before the world, and sharing the nature of Jesus Christ—what a wonderful way to grow!



Sharing Faith With Others

Objective 10. *List four helpful directions for Christian witnessing.*

Perhaps no area of Christian life is more confusing than witnessing. Many times we feel the need to share Christ with friends. We feel guilty when we do not. The witness of our faith is both an *expression of maturity and a means for more growing*. The first and greatest witness we give is our life itself. Second Corinthians 3:3 tells us that Christ writes a letter with the Spirit on human hearts. Everyone can know and read this kind of letter. In a certain sense it may be said that the believer’s life is a Bible, the only Bible that some people ever read!

There is an important likeness between conditions that keep humans from reproducing children and conditions that keep Christians from helping to reproduce more Christians. Let us consider some of those conditions.

1. Just as a small child cannot have a baby because of the lack of maturity necessary for reproduction, so immaturity in our Christian life will often prevent our witness from being effective.

2. Just as reproduction requires union between a man and a woman (a union the Bible says must be through marriage), so a believer only reproduces spiritually when living in vital union with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

3. Just as disease or impairment of vital body areas prevents reproduction, so sin and careless living affect the believer's ability to reproduce spiritually.

Application

26 Prayerfully read Colossians 4:5–6. In these verses are four simple directions to follow in our witnessing. List them here in the order they are mentioned.

- a
- b
- c
- d



Each of these directions could be expanded, but our space is limited. You may wish to list the following Scriptures in your notebook (under *spiritual*) for future reference on the subject of witnessing: 1 Peter 3:15, Matthew 5:13, and Luke 12:11–12. When you share your faith, it is strengthened. Witnessing not only brings others to the Lord but also increases our own spiritual maturity.

self-test

COMPLETION. Since our effectiveness for God and our growth depends on how we use the tools God has provided for us, examine yourself on these points. Complete the following statements by marking **S** if your use of the numbered “tool” is Strong, **M**, for Medium, **W** for Weak, and **N** for Needs change.

	S	M	W	N
1. TOTAL COMMITMENT TO JESUS CHRIST				
2. BIBLE STUDY				
3. PRAYER				
4. LIVING AS CHRIST’S SERVANT				
5. YIELDING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT				
6. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS				
7. WITNESSING				

TRUE-FALSE. Write **T** in the blank space preceding the following statement if the statement is true. Write **F** if the statement is false.

- **8** God will forgive our sins and purify us from wrongdoing whether or not we confess our sins.
- **9** According to George Mueller, a great prayer warrior, it is better to begin the day with prayer rather than by reading God’s Word.
- **10** Sanctification refers to the believer’s special relationship to God’s holiness.

MULTIPLE CHOICE. There is only one correct answer for the following question. Circle the letter of the correct answer.

- 11** The word *koinonia* in the original language of the New Testament is connected with which important concept?
- a) Spiritual as opposed to carnal
 - b) Fellowship sharing, contributing
 - c) Growth through suffering
 - d) The plan of God’s Word

SHORT ANSWER. Write the proper to the question on the lines provided.

12 Just as certain conditions prevent humans from reproducing children, certain conditions keep Christians from reproducing other Christians. List two of such conditions.

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answers to the study questions

- 1 First place in all things.
- 15 b) blood of Jesus.
- 2 a double-edged sword; the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
- 16 forgive our sins and purify us from wrongdoing.
- 3 a) clean.
- 17 a See example.
b Three men willed not to worship heathen gods.
c A man willed to go to his father.
d A woman willed to go to the king.
- 4 c) obeying God's commands.
- 18 a) everything you do or say.
- 5 By keeping God's Word in our heart
- 19 b) Spirit.
- 6 lamp, light.
- 20 Revelation of truth, and leading into truth.
- 7 light, understanding
- 21 c) filling us with power to witness.
- 8 a Faith.
b Those who seek Him.
- 22 The fruit of the Holy Spirit.
- 9 Your copy of these Scripture references.
- 23 a) meeting together.
- 10 a The believers
b The place was shaken and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim God's message with boldness.
- 24 Two by two
- 11 Daniel prayed three times every day.
- 25 To prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service
- 12 He is to live as the Lord wants and do what pleases the Lord.
- 13 Your paragraph on walking worthy of the Lord.
- 26 a Be wise in the way you act.
b Make good use of opportunity.
c Use pleasant and interesting speech.
d Know how to answer queries.
- 14 Yielding our bodies as instruments of righteousness