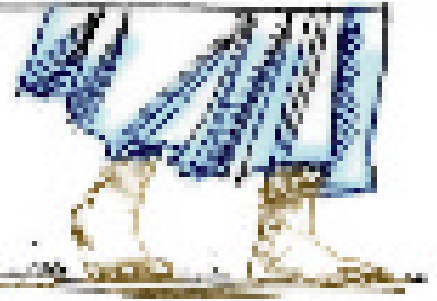


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Lesson 7 / Page 1

Loving our Lord

The fact that God is good is a core belief of a follower of Jesus. Let's meditate on His attribute of goodness by reading through Psalm 100.

As we learn about the character of the One we are following, we need to remember that *He is good all of the time*. It is one of His amazing attributes. Another way to put this is that there is nothing wrong, no error, or no evil in anything God does.

1. According to Psalm 100:1-5, why is the Lord worthy of our praise and thanksgiving? _____

a. We learn about God's goodness through the good things He does. What are two characteristics of God that you learn about from verse five? _____

b. How has God shown His goodness to you personally? _____

2. As we think about God's goodness, consider the idea that God is good all the time. How can we view God as truly good when we are experiencing difficult or even painful times? _____

3. Read James 1:2-18, and answer the questions below.
 - a. What does verse three say about our faith related to trials we go through? _____

 - b. What are we told to do in the middle of trials, according to verse four? _____

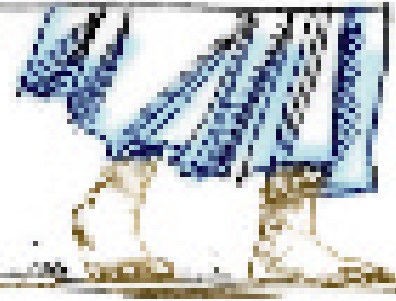
 - c. How does James 1:5 direct us? _____

 - d. How has God used the hard things you have gone through as tools in your walk with Him? _____

 - e. In what way does James 1:12 encourage you to persevere through trials? _____

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4. According to II Timothy 3:15, where can we look for wisdom when we are struggling? _____

5. Trials can come in the form of temptations to sin. We can feel like perhaps blaming God for the temptations, which could imply that He is not truly good.
 - a. Who does James 1:13-15 say is responsible for the temptations we face? _____

 - b. What good things do we experience from God, according to verse 17? _____

 - c. What are some of the good gifts God has given to you? _____

God is always doing good, even when He allows suffering because God is good. God uses all the difficulties we go through to train us as His disciples and show us His goodness in the midst of things we are suffering as we mature in Him. Ask God to help you see His goodness through the things you have struggled with this past week. You can know by faith in His character that God is truly good. Take time now to praise Him for His goodness.

Learning His Word

Dallas Willard in his book, *Renovation of the Heart*, writes this in the preface:

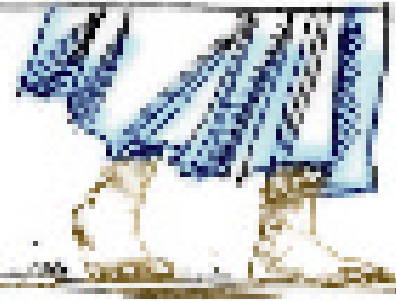
"He (*Jesus*) invites us to leave our burdensome ways of heavy labor—especially the 'religious' ones—and step into the yoke of training with him. This is a way of gentleness and lowliness, a way of soul rest. It is a way of inner transformation that proves pulling His load and carrying His burden *with Him* to be a life that is easy and light (Matthew 11:28-30). The perceived distance and difficulty of entering fully into the divine world and its life is due entirely to *our failure to understand 'the way in' is the way of pervasive inner transformation and our failure to take the small steps that quietly and certainly lead to it.*" (Nav Press 2002, p.10)

1. In what ways are you seeing this principle manifested in your personal experience? _____

2. In Philippians 2:12-13 the apostle Paul speaks about this same concept. Paul knows we have nothing to do with our own salvation (see also Ephesians 2:8-9). However, Scripture is clear that for our spiritual transformation, God has chosen to work with us and in us. Read these verses from Philippians chapter two, and answer the following questions.
 - a. Who is it that is working in believers to give them even the desire to obey? _____

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b. On the other hand, what does Paul encourage believers to do? _____

c. How does this relate to Mr. Willard's quote above? _____

3. God has birthed His spirit in us giving us the ability to become a disciple (student or apprentice) of Christ in a process of spiritual transformation. Instead of magically zapping us into Christ-like clones, *He has chosen to work with us* in a very orderly process. Philippians 2:13 promises that the process works. In Matthew 7:24-27, what does Jesus promise those who choose to obey His Word? _____

4. At the time of Matthew seven, Jesus was at the end of His life-changing sermon on the mount teaching his listeners how to be disciples. Jesus calls us to be His, and then instructs us on how to live as one belonging to Him and living for His kingdom. Read Matthew 6:19-24.

a. What specific instruction does Jesus give us? _____

b. When you read verse 21, what treasures in your life come to mind? _____

c. In what ways have you seen the truth of verse 24 realized in your own life? _____

5. Read Matthew 6:25-34. Although this passage is familiar to many, it is important to review it often and remind ourselves of its incredible truth.

a. What do you find yourself worrying about often? _____

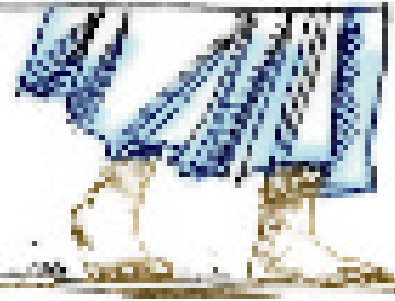
b. Perhaps you don't have the worry of basic physical needs, but the principle for all worry is the same. How does Jesus put it in verse 34? _____

c. What does worrying accomplish (see verse 27)? _____

d. What should be our primary concern according to verse 33? _____

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6. What instruction does Paul give his disciples regarding worry in Philippians 4:4-7? _____

a. Can we worry and have our souls at rest at the same time? _____

b. How might rejoicing in the Lord affect our worry? _____

c. What is the promise in verse five? _____

d. Paul says to pray with thanksgiving. How does knowing the core value that God is good help you to do this? _____

e. What will this type of prayer produce in us as believers (verse 7)? _____

f. When do you feel like your heart and mind need the most protection? _____

8. Paul continues with some very practical instruction for Jesus' students. What does he teach them to do in Philippians 4:8-9? _____

a. Where does your mind naturally want to dwell most days? _____

b. What are some practical ways you could apply this teaching to your life? _____

c. From your own life and walk with God name one thing that would fit under each category.

True- _____

Noble- _____

Right- _____

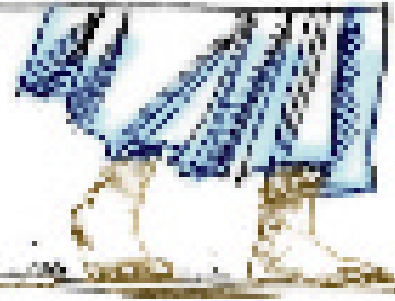
Pure- _____

Lovely- _____

Admirable- _____

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Excellent- _____

Praiseworthy- _____

7. Again, Paul reminds us (verse 9) that the God of peace will be with us. Are you becoming more aware of this fact as you learn about being a follower of Jesus Christ? How does this promise comfort and encourage you?

Living His Way

James taught that what we do begins with our minds. Jesus taught us to seek Him first with all of our minds. Paul trains us to discipline our minds. Sometimes simple tools help us apply God's truth. Here is one for you that seems to help us remember Philippians 4:8. Has anyone ever asked you *what planet are you on* as you daydream? An easy way to remember where to focus our minds uses the word *planet* as an acronym:

P—pure.

L—lovely

A—admirable

N—noble

E—excellent

T—true

1. Do you find yourself on the Philippians 4:8 *planet* very often? Take a moment and pray that God would help you to be more aware of your thought life. Do you see that there is a need to be intentional in this area? _____

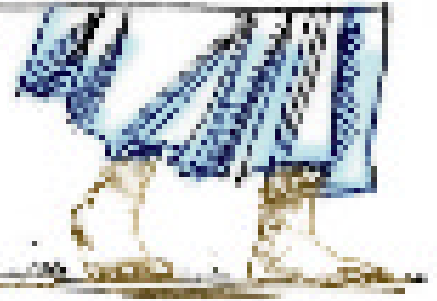
- a. Have you been worrying about your life? How will you apply Matthew 6:33 to your personal daily practice as a follower/disciple of Jesus Christ? _____

- b. How will your prayer time change as you put into practice Philippians 4:6? _____

Are you in awe of what our personal, good God desires for His children? He longs for us to experience His peace in any and all areas of our lives! He makes a way for us to be at rest in the midst of chaos. He Himself guards our hearts and minds as we trust Him with the circumstances we find ourselves in. He knows that in this world we have trouble, but He brings us peace—not tomorrow, not in heaven, but in the here and now. Do you know that peace? He offers it to you personally. What an incredible promise. Talk to your Father about your daily life. Invite Him to transform the way you think as you put into practice His Word.

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Lesson 7 / Page 6

In their book, *How People Grow*, Cloud and Townsend state this:

"God has designed a path of growth that leads us to Him and His ways. As we learn and experience that path, we enter his life. This changes our entire existence, encompassing emotions, behavior, relationships, career, and everything else in life." (Zondervan 2001, p. 9)

God is leading you down His path. Be aware of how this process is affecting every area of your life. What an amazing process! Thank God that it is *His* work.

Summary Statement:

What is one thing you want to remember and apply from this lesson?

Memory verse challenge:

Philippians 4:6-7— "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."