

DEVOTIONS WITH DAD

While at the Blue Mountain Gospel Festival (Kempton, Pa) September 1-3, 1995, God strongly impressed it upon my heart that I should get together with each child for devotions once a week. The purpose is to help them learn how to have meaningful devotions and to help their prayer lives, but also to speak specifically with them about issues and truths that will help them as they grow spiritually.

If these can help anyone else feel free to use them any way you can. Use them in any order, picking those you feel that apply to your family to use first. Mothers or fathers (or both) can do them with their children, individually or as a group. They can be used for family devotions, too.

I would appreciate any comments, suggestions, topics to cover, or any of your own you come up with.

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CONTENTMENT

Phil 4:11-13

11 *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*

12 *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*

13 *I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

Define contentment:

Name someone who is content?

Name someone who is not content?

Are you content?

In what areas or about what things do you have a hard time being content?

Why these?

If you had them would you be content?

Story: An employer overheard an employee telling another how much he needed \$100 and if he had \$100 all his problems would be over, he'd be happy and content. Boss wanted to make someone content so gave him \$100. As boss left he said to his friend: "Why didn't I ask for \$200?"

Why doesn't God give us everything we want?

Parable of man who wanted to tear down his large barns so he could have more, but who died that night (Luke 12:15-21)

What would happen if He did?

Midas, king who wanted to have everything he touched turn to gold. Fine, until touched apple, bread, own daughter! Then regretted it!

Why are some people content with little while others aren't satisfied no matter how much they have?

How did Paul become more content?

Paul said he *"learned"* to be content. How do we learn it?

Does it come suddenly or as a process over time?

What went on in Paul's mind that enabled him to be more content?

How can we be more content?

1. God knows best, trust His provision (accept what you have/don't have) as from God

2. "Things" will never make you happy or content

What can you do, think about, remember, etc., to be more content?

What should we pray together to help you be more content?

DEVOTIONS (Prayer)

Matt 14:23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, (NIV)

Matt 26:36 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." (NIV)

Mark 1:35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. (NIV)

Luke 9:18 Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" (NIV)

Luke 9:29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. (NIV)

What are we talking about when we talk about "devotions"?

Why does God want us to have devotions?

What did Jesus pray about?

Why did He pray?

When during the day is the best time to have devotions?

How often during the day should you spend time with God?

Dan 6:10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. (NIV)

What should be included in devotions?

How are devotions different than prayer time?

How are devotions different than Bible study?

What elements should you include in prayer?

1. Confession (I John 1:9)
2. Praise (Daniel 2:19-23)
3. Thanksgiving (I Thes. 5:19)
4. Others (Eph. 6:18)
5. Own needs (Heb. 4:16)

Why is this a good order to follow when praying?

Is it better to pray with a list of things or to pray for or just what you think of?

How can you make sure you remember to thank God for answered prayers?

Spending time with God also means listening to him: how can you best do that?

What can you do to keep your mind from wandering during devotions?

What can you do when you are having a hard time having meaningful devotions?

Is it better to do devotions if you don't feel like it or just wait until you do?

Would God rather have you be a hypocrite or be honest & not do it?

(Doing it is best, make best effort to reach out to God. If you skip them won't ever 'feel' like it.)

Does it make any difference for you if you have them the same place & time each day or not?

How long should devotions me? Does it matter?

DEVOTIONS (Praise & Worship)

What does 'worship' mean?

Dan 2:19-23

19 *During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven*

20 *and said: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his.*

21 *He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.*

22 *He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.*

23 *I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king."*

Is worship the same as praise?

What is the difference between worship and thanksgiving?

(worship focuses on Who & what God is, thanksgiving focuses on me, what He did for me)

Why does God want us to worship Him?

Our sake: focus on Him, not problem, develop trust/faith

His sake: enjoy relationship with us (reason He created man to begin with)

What is 'worship' to you? (How do you know when you've worshipped?)

When did you have a good time of worship that you remember well?

What made that such a good time of worship?

Do you worship in church Sunday mornings? Why or why not?

Do you worship in your personal devotions? Why or why not?

What role does music play in your worship?

Do you use music in your devotions?

How can you use music to improve your devotions?

Is God pleased with your worship of Him? Why or why not?

What can you do to make your devotions more of a worship time?

What can you do to make Sunday church more worshipful for you?

What will you do starting now to improve your worship?

(Suggestion: include worship one day in our family devotions)

let each child take turns leading worship devotions one week

KNOWING GOD'S WILL

Does God have an opinion on everything we do in each area of our lives?

Does it really matter what God wants?

How do you know what God wants you to do or not do?

What is the difference between God's perfect and permissive wills?

Acts 11:5-16 Peter directed to go to Cornelius (1st Gentile believer)

PRAYER 5 *"I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, it came down to where I was.*

How/what should you pray when wanting to know God's will?

OWN RATIONAL DISCERNMENT 6 *I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air.*

How can you tell the difference between what God wants and what you want?

Just because you want something, does that mean God automatically doesn't?

GOD'S WORD 7 *Then I heard a voice telling me, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.'* 8 *"I replied, 'Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'* 9 *"The voice spoke from heaven a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.'* 10 *This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again.*

How are we to hear God's word today?

If the Bible tells us to do or not do something, should we pray and ask anyway?

PROVIDENTIAL CIRCUMSTANCES 11 *"Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying.*

How can we tell what is God's sovereign control and what is Satan's counterfeits?

What does it mean to wait for God to "open the door"?

Should you 'put out a fleece' to try and check out God's will?

Will God lead you to do things quickly & impulsively or slowly after thought & prayer?

HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN 12 *The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house.*

How can you tell when God's Spirit speaks to you?

How can you know if it is God or your own desires or Satan?

ADVICE FROM OTHERS 13 *He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. 14He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.'* 15 *"As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.*

Who specifically should you be open to taking advice from?

Who specifically shouldn't you be open to taking advice from?

What if you don't agree with the advice of your parents or pastor?

MEMORIZED SCRIPTURE 16 *Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'*

When can you do to memorize more Scripture?

What in your life right now do you need to know God's will about?

How can you apply this about Peter to your situation?

The most important factor in knowing God's will is REALLY wanting to do it no matter what. If that is your attitude God will make sure you end up doing His will.

CONFESSION OF SIN

Define 'sin.' (miss the mark)

Are some sins worst than others? (not in God's sight, but as to consequences in this life, yes;
also it depends on our accountability)

What should you do when (after) you sin?

What verses tell us to confess our sins?

1 Jn 1:8-10

8 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

10 *If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.*

Ps 51:4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. (NIV)

Ps 32: Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah (NIV)

Define 'confess.' (admit to the sin, agree with God about sin)

Why does God tell us to confess our sin?

What should be your reason/motive for confessing sin?

What if we don't confess sin?

Do we lose salvation?

What do we lose?

Tell me about your response to sin?

(do you confess right away, punish self, make excuses, blame others, ignore sin, etc.?)

Why don't we always confess sin right away? (pride)

Which sins are easiest for you to confess?

Which sins are hardest for you to confess?

Can you think of any sins you've committed that you've never confessed?

Does pride ever keep you from confessing?

Do you always feel forgiven after confessing sin?

Do you ever have a hard time forgiving yourself?

When does this affect you most?

Should you confess your sins to others or just God?

How should you know which sins to confess to others or not?

(confession only as public as the sin -- no more, no less)

FEAR OF DEATH

Are afraid of dying?

Was there ever a time you were afraid of dying?

(If "YES" to either of above questions:)

When does fear of death seem to affect you most?

What do you do about those fears?

(If "NO" to both of the above questions:)

Why don't you have a fear of death, for many do?

Why do you think some people are afraid of dying?

Satan's demons put thoughts of fear of death into us - why?

What does the Bible say about death?

What happens after a person dies? (to his body, to his soul;/spirit)

Ps 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Ps 49:15 But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself.

Ps 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

What would you tell someone who was afraid of dying?

If you are afraid of dying, what should you do about it?

(among other things, memorize verses like those above; also Read I Cor. 15))

Closing prayer: thank God we don't have to fear death

CONSCIENCE

What is a 'conscience'?

How does it work?

Why did God create it?

Is it always trustworthy?

How can you know if you can trust your conscience?

Is your conscience the same as the Holy Spirit?

What is the difference?

Which is more trustworthy?

How can you tell one from the other?

Acts 24:16 So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

What does it mean to have a clean conscience?

What can we do to keep our conscience clean before God?

What can we do to keep our conscience clean before man?

Rom 14:2-3 One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him.

Rom 14:14 As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.

Some things are neither right or wrong, it depends on how the person feels about them.

Can you name some examples (music, drinking, dancing, etc.)

Rom 14:21 It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

What should you do when someone feels differently about something than you do?

Give an example of when this happened to you?

Rom 14:23 But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

If you feel something is wrong (or right) and someone else doesn't, who is right?

What does it mean that we must do everything from 'faith'?

Titus 1:15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

What does it mean to have a 'corrupted conscience'?

Give some examples of a corrupted conscience?

How does this happen in a person?

In what areas may your conscience be corrupted? (what sin doesn't bother you as it did or should?)

What can a person do to restore a corrupted conscience?

LYING & DECEIT

What Bible verses do you know that forbid lying?
Why does the Bible say lying is wrong? What's so wrong about it?
What's the difference between lying and deceiving?
Does God see them as different?
Is lying the same as being dishonest? Why or why not?

Eph 4:25

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

What would happen if everyone lied?

- pride, thinking you can meet own need better than God can meet it

- society will fall apart if all are dishonest

What if your parents lied to you or deceived you the same amount as you do to them?

What if God lied to you or was dishonest to you the same as you are to others?

When do you find yourself lying most?

What can you do about it?

Do you lie more or less now than a few years ago? Why?

John 8:44

44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

What does it mean that Satan is the "father of lies"?

Give some examples of lies he tells?

Which lies does he tell to you?

Why are they so bad?

Why does he use these particular lies?

What can you do to better help recognize them as from Satan?

Worst kind of lying, deceiving, is when we lie/deceive ourselves (this sin is OK, I didn't really mean that so its all right, convince self didn't so something you did so not get in trouble, etc.)

What about when telling the truth will hurt someone, should you lie or deceive?

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Do you think most people do or don't take good care of their bodies today?

Why don't you think people are more careful about their health (exercise, diet, weight, etc.)

Why does God want us to take good care of our bodies?

1 Cor 3:16-17 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

1 Cor 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Is it a sin to not take care of your body?

What if a person doesn't take care of their body, what results?

In what ways do you take care of your body?

What can you do to take better care of your body?

Is it possible for exercise and taking care of your body to become too important?

Can you think of some people or ways this happens?

What is more important than a strong, healthy body?

1 Tim 4:8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

When it says physical training is of "some value" it implies it isn't the most important thing?

What is more important, according to Paul?

Which is first in your life (most time and thought spent on your health/sports or your soul)?

Which do you put more into developing - your body or your soul?

Is your problem not doing enough for your body's sake or spending more time and energy on your body than your soul?

What can you do starting today to have a more godly balance?

'FLESH' - OLD SIN NATURE

Have you ever noticed a battle going on within you, one part wanting to do what God wants/what you know is right and another part wanting to do what seems the most pleasurable at the moment?

Rom 7:15-25 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Over what things do you most often have this conflict? Which usually wins?

Why does that win? What is the key to it winning and not the other?

Does it make any difference which of these you give in to?

What happens when you give in to the impulse to sin?

What happens when you resist and don't sin?

What is the part of you that wants to do right and obey God?

When did you first get this part?

What is the part of you that wants to do what is easiest and feels best now?

When did you first get this part?

The part that sins is called the "flesh" or "old sin nature." Why does Satan use this so much?

Is just trying harder enough to have victory over the flesh?

Matt 26:40-41 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

What is the key to victory over our flesh?

Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law. (Romans 8:30-31)

What if we don't make the choice in our minds to obey God and ask for His help?

Gal 6:8 j The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Rom 8:5-10 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

DECIDING ABOUT DOUBTFUL THINGS (LAW OF CHRIST)

What do you think of when someone uses the word "law"?

What is the difference between law and grace?

Does being under grace mean we can do anything we want?

A 'disadvantage' of grace is that we must decide for ourselves what to do and not do. That's why there is so much difference among Christians about some things. How can we know if God wants to do or not do a certain activity?

1. POSITIVE COMMANDS ("do")

2. NEGATIVE COMMANDS ("don't")

3. RULES OF CHURCH LEADERS (Eph 4:11-12; I Tim 3:5; Heb 13:7,17)

4. PRINCIPLES

a. WILL IT HOLD ME BACK IN MY CHRISTIAN LIFE?

Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Name some things that aren't sinful in themselves but can hold you back in your Christian life? (sports, money, music)

b. IS IT A HABIT?

1 Cor 6:12 "Everything is permissible for me"-- but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"-- but I will not be mastered by anything.

What habits can control Christians today? (soda, coffee, nail-biting)

c. DOES IT HAVE A GOOD TESTIMONY TO UNBELIEVERS?

Col 4:5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

What expectations do unbelievers have of Christians?

Do we have to keep them all or can we have freedom to do as we desire?

Why must we be careful to keep those expectations?

In what ways are we most in danger of confusing or misleading unbelievers?

d. DOES IT HAVE A GOOD TESTIMONY TO OTHER BELIEVERS?

1 Cor 8:13 Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.

What freedoms should you be willing to give up so they don't mislead other Christians? (type music, fashions to fit in, language in talk)

e. WILL IT DISPLAY CHRIST EFFECTIVELY? CAN I ASK HIM TO HELP ME DO IT?

1 Cor 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

What activities do Christians do that they wouldn't do if Jesus were with them? (watch certain TV programs, angry at others, dress immodestly)

Which of these applies to you most?

What can/should you do this week to better apply this principle? (be exact)

UNWHOLESOME TALK

Eph 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

What does 'unwholesome talk' mean in this verse?

Should a Christian talk in an inappropriate way or joke about sexual things?

Should a Christian talk in an inappropriate way or joke about private body parts or functions?

Why do so many adolescents do this?

Is it because you are going through a time when you are more aware of these things?

Is it a way of understanding or talking about these things?

Is it a way of showing you are more 'adult'? of getting attention and impressing peers?

Eph 5:3-4 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

What does 'coarse joking' mean in this verse?

How do you know where to draw the line?

Which matters more: what you say or how and why you say it?

Where would Jesus draw the line on these things?

Eph 5:11-12 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.

Does this mean you can't ask questions of your parents about things you don't understand?

What is the difference between talk to your parents about these kinds of things and talking to others about them?

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Why did God invent something like the church (people, not building)?

How would your life be different if, although you were a Christian, you never were able to go to church?

Is it important for all Christians to get involved in a local church?

Heb 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Why does He want us to go to church?

Give several reasons for why He wants us to go for our sakes as well as others' sakes.

What happens to a Christian if they don't get involved in a local church?

Who will Satan have an easier time with, a Christian alone or one close to others?

Does this mean more than just sitting in a pew on Sunday morning? What all does it mean

What if you don't feel like going to church some Sunday, would God mind if you stayed home every once in awhile?

Should children be made to go to church if they don't want to?

Should teens be made to go to church if they don't want to?

What do you personally like best about church?

What would you miss most if you couldn't go anymore?

What do you personally like least about church?

What would you change if you could?

What would you change it to?

What contribution can YOU make to your church?

Why does God have you there for others?

What will you look for in a church when you have to find the one God wants your family to go to?

What can/should you do during the week to help church be more meaningful on Sunday?

What can you do when at church to make it a more profitable time?

FEAR (General)

Why doesn't God remove all fear so we don't have to deal with it?

Is there any good reason God allows fear?

What things SHOULD you be afraid of?

Are you?

What things shouldn't you be afraid of?

Are you?

Would you say you are a fearful person?

Would your family or those who know you say you are a fearful person?

What do you fear most?

When are you most often afraid?

How do you usually handle your fear (think about it, give in, try to forget it, pray, etc.)?

How can you go from being afraid to having peace with God's help?

(Confess, Claim a promise, Mind over Feelings, etc.)

What Bible promises do you know which can help when you are fearful?

What do the following promises say about fear?

How do they apply specifically to your fears?

Matt 10:28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Rom 8:28 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.

Rom 8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Phil 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

1 Jn 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

2 Tim 1:7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Which of these apply most to your problems with fear?

Memorize it so you can use it every time you get afraid.

OVEREATING

All statistics show that overweight is getting to be a bigger and bigger problem. Is there any connection between our weight and our Christian life? If so, what?

Why are so many people overweight today?

1 Cor 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

What are some problems/disadvantages of being overweight?

Is it a sin in God's sight? If you said yes, then why do you think it is a sin?

How important should appearances be that be to us as Christians?

How much does it influence what you think of someone when they are overweight?

Does it color your first impression?

Do you think less of them?

Do you feel better than them if they are heavier than you?

Is that a sin? Why or why not?

Is looking down on an overweight person in a proud way any less a sin than theirs?

Why might it be an even worse sin than theirs?

What if a person overeats or doesn't eat the right things but doesn't get fat, is that any less sin?

Does that ever apply to you?

Why is not taking care of our bodies (if it shows in us getting fat or not) a sin in God's sight?

Which fruit of the Spirit must you pray for if you tend to overeat?

1Thes 5:6, 8 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

It is very helpful to discover WHY you overeat. Is it to escape unpleasant feelings? Is it to make you feel good? Is it because you feel inferior and you deserve to be heavy (punishing yourself)? Pray and ask God to give you wisdom and insight about this, it's important!

If our bodies don't really belong to us, who do they belong to?

1 Cor 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

How can eating and drinking bring glory to God or not?

What will one day happen to these earthly bodies of ours?

Phil 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

GOD'S PERFECT & PERMISSIVE WILL

If God is in sovereign control of everything, does He still give us a free will choice?

Does He have a plan and purpose for everything in life?

Will He force us to always go according to His will and plan?

What if we choose to not go according to His will?

GOD'S PERFECT WILL

Balaam, a believer, was offered lots of money and prestige if he would pronounce a curse on God's people. He wanted the money, but wanted to do God's will, too.

Name some times when you know you should do God's will but want your will, too.

What did God tell Balaam?

Num 22:12 But God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed."

GOD'S PERMISSIVE WILL

Balaam decided to reject God's will and do what he wanted, explaining to himself it'd be OK.

When are you tempted to justify and convince yourself that what you want is OK with God?

What did God tell Balaam?

Num 22:20 That night God came to Balaam and said, "Since these men have come to summon you, go with them, but do only what I tell you."

GOD'S OVERRULING WILL

Balaam was so tempted by the money and prestige that he would have completely gone against God. Sometimes God allows that, but sometimes (for His greater purpose in the lives of others as well as us) sometimes He exercises sovereign control and has His will done anyway.

Num 23:5 The LORD put a message in Balaam's mouth and said, "Go back to Balak and give him this message."

Num 23:12 He answered, "Must I not speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"

Num 23:26 Balaam answered, "Did I not tell you I must do whatever the LORD says?"

There is no good ending when one disobeys God, though. Balaam exercised his free will and got the money and prestige, but shortly afterwards was killed and lost it all.

What lessons does this teach you about God's will in your life?

Which are you usually living under: God's perfect, permissive or overruling will?

What can you do to make sure you are always living in His perfect will?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Who is the Holy Spirit?
What does He do?

ACCORDING TO THESE VERSES WHAT DOES HE DO?

2 Cor 1:21-22 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

What difference would it make if He didn't do this?

John 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

How and when does the Holy Spirit counsel (give guidance and wisdom) to you?

How can you allow Him to do so more often?

How and when does the Holy Spirit comfort (another meaning of 'counselor') you?

How can you allow Him to do so more often?

John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

How and when does the Holy Spirit teach you?

How can you allow Him to do so more often?

ACCORDING TO THESE VERSES, WHAT CONDITIONS MUST BE MET FOR HIM TO WORK

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

What does it mean to 'grieve' the Holy Spirit?

How can we keep from doing this?

Gal 5:16-17 So I say, 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. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

What does it mean to 'live' by the Holy Spirit?

How can you better do this?

What can you do this week to become more aware of God's Holy Spirit and to better 'tap into' His resources to help you?

INFERIORITY FEELINGS

Do you ever feel inferior to others, as if God made you with more weaknesses than others?

Do you know others who feel this way?

Why do you think they feel this way? Why do you sometimes feel that way?

Why is that such a good tool for Satan to use against people today?

How can Satan use those lies to defeat you?

What can you do to protect yourself against those lies of Satan's?

How do you know you aren't inferior to other people?

How do you know God's love isn't conditional?

What does this verse say to contradict the lie that you are inferior?

Ps 139:13-16 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 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, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Jesus here assumes a person will 'love themselves' (accept themselves, strengths as well as weaknesses). Why is this important? What if we don't accept ourselves as God made us?

Matt 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

What can a person do if they feel inferior, what advice could you give them to accept themselves as God made them?

What can you start believing (and stop believing) so you feel secure with God's love?

What Bible verses can you memorize and use when feeling down on yourself?

JUDGING VS DISCERNING

JUDGING is forbidden. Why?

Rom 14:3-13 The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Rom 2:1-6 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will give to each person according to what he has done."

DISCERNING is commanded. Why?

Matt 18:15-18 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

1 Cor 5:12-13 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

What is the difference between judging and discerning? Which is sin? Why?

Which do you do most? Why?

Why are people so quick to judge others?

What can you do to make sure you only discern but never judge?

How should you handle it when others judge you?

SUFFERING

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Why must we have trials in this life? Why can't God keep His children from hurt and suffering?

What if He did, how would things be different?

Would everything be fine and perfect if we just had enough faith in God? Why not?

Why doesn't He make things easier for us, why allow things that are more than we can handle?

2 Cor 12:7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

What reason is given in these verses for why God allows difficulties to happen?

1 Pet 1:6-8 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith-- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

What should be your attitude when you have a hard time with things?

How should you pray - for God to remove it or to help you through it?

Is it wrong to pray for God to remove it (Paul prayed three times for God to remove his suffering - II Cor. 12:8)?

What if God doesn't remove the suffering?

What advice would you give some Christian going through a hard time?

What advice would you give some non-Christian going through a hard time?

What troubles and difficulties are you facing now in life that God could just remove but leaves there so you'll trust Him more?

How should you now face and think about that situation?

DEVOTIONS (Bible Study)

Listening to God speak to you through the Bible (how to read the Bible)

FUTURE TOPICS

Praying for others