

The Talmid



Talmid תלמיד a Hebrew word that means “a true disciple who desires to be what the Rabbi Jesus is.”

Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6 (NIV)

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 1, 2016

STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY
DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15



Dr. Eddie Ildelfonso

*West Los Angeles Living Word Christian Center
Los Angeles, California*

*Professor, Covington Theological Seminary
Executive Vice President and Dean of
Covington Theological International Studies*

What is the gospel of Jesus Christ? Part 2

GOD THE RIGHTEOUS CREATOR

Let me introduce you to god. (Note the lowercase g.)

You might want to lower your voice a little before we go in. He might be sleeping now. He's old, you know, and doesn't much understand or like this “newfangled” modern world. His golden days—the ones he talks about when you really get him going—were a long time ago, before most of us were even born. That was back when people

cared what he thought about things, and considered him pretty important to their lives.

Of course all that's changed now, though, and god—poor fellow—just never adjusted very well. Life's moved on and passed him by. Now, he spends most of his time just hanging in the garden out back. I go there sometimes to see him, and there we tarry, walking and talking softly and tenderly among the roses....

Anyway, a lot of people still like him, it seems—or at least he manages to keep his poll numbers pretty high. And you'd be surprised how many people even drop by to visit and ask for things every once in a while. But of course that's alright with him. He's here to help.

Thank goodness, all the crankiness you read about sometimes in his old books—you know, having the earth swallow people up, raining fire down on cities, that sort of thing—all that seems to have faded in his old age. Now he's just a good-natured, low-maintenance friend who's really easy to talk to—especially since he almost never talks back, and when he does, it's usually to tell me through some slightly weird “sign” that what I want to do regardless is alright by him. That really is the best kind of friend, isn't it?

You know the best thing about him, though? He doesn't judge me. Ever, for anything. Oh sure, I know that deep down he wishes I'd be better—more loving, less selfish, and all that—but he's realistic. He knows I'm human and nobody's perfect. And I'm totally sure he's fine with that. Besides, forgiving people

is his job. It's what he *does*. After all, he's love, right? And I like to think of love as "never judging, only forgiving." That's the god *I* know. And I wouldn't have him any other way.

Alright, hold on a second... Okay, we can go in now. And don't worry, we don't have to stay long. Really. He's grateful for any time he can get.

Assumptions about God

Okay, okay. That little riff is a bit on the ridiculous side. But I wonder if it's really so far from what many people, even those who call themselves Christians, think about God. For the most part, He's a kind, affable, slightly dazed and needy but very loving grandfather who has wishes but no demands, can be safely ignored if you don't have time for Him, and is very, very, *very* understanding of the fact that human beings make mistakes—much more understanding, in fact, than the rest of us are.

It used to be that even if people didn't call themselves Christians, they had a basic understanding of the Bible's teaching about God and His character. It was just part of the atmosphere people breathed, and—much like the apostles did with their fellow Jews—you could make some assumptions about what people knew when you presented the gospel to them.

That's not true anymore, at least in most of the world. I grew up in New York City, and most of the time telling someone the gospel amounted to rehearsing a message they'd already heard a thousand times. It was a different world altogether, though, when I started college in Iowa City, Iowa. Then I moved to Los Angeles, California. All of a sudden I was surrounded by people who hadn't grown up hearing about God, and who in fact would challenge me on the idea right from the start. I remember the first time I met someone who greeted my mention of God with, "You've got to be kidding me. You believe that?" And then he laughed.

That episode played itself out dozens of times over the next few years, and I eventually learned to just say, "Yep, I do." But I also learned pretty quickly that I couldn't make assumptions about what people know about God. If I'm going to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ today, I'm going to have to start at the very beginning—at God himself.

Of course, you could (and really should!) spend a lifetime studying what God has revealed to us

about Himself, and you don't have to say everything you know about God in order to present the gospel faithfully. But there are a few basic truths about God that a person *has* to understand in order to grasp what is going on in the good news of Christianity. Think of it as the good news behind the bad news behind the Good News!

There are two main points that we must make clear right from the outset—that God is Creator, and that He is holy and righteous.

God the Creator

The beginning of the Christian message—indeed the beginning of the Christian Bible—is that **"God created the heavens and the earth."** Everything starts from that point, and like an arrow fired from a badly aimed bow, if you get that point wrong, then everything else that follows will be wrong too.

The book of Genesis opens with the story of God creating the world: its mountains and valleys, animals and fish, birds and reptiles, everything. God created the rest of the universe too: stars and moon, planets and galaxies. All of it came about through His spoken word, and all of it came from *nothing*. It's not as if God took some preexisting material and molded it like clay into all the different things we see in the world. No, Genesis tells us that He spoke, and it was. **"Let there be light!"** He said. And there was light.

Many biblical passages tell us how creation testifies to God's glory and power. **"The heavens declare the glory of God,"** [Psalm 19:1](#) says. **"The sky above proclaims his handiwork."** Paul says in [Romans 1:20](#) that God's **"invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made."**

If you've ever stood at the edge of a canyon and seen the birds swooping below you and the clouds stretched out over your head, or if you've ever stood in a field and felt a tiny rush of fear as you've watched a thunderstorm roll in over the horizon, then you know what this means. There is something about the grandeur of creation that calls out to the human heart, saying, "You are not all there is!"

The creation story in [Genesis](#) expands in both scope and importance with each new day. First is the creation of light, then the sea, then land, then moon and sun, then birds and fishes and animals, and then at the very pinna-

cle of God’s creating work—man and woman.

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

(Genesis 1:26–27)

Whatever else you think about the story of creation, the implications of this claim—that God created the world, and especially that God created *you*—are enormous. That the world itself is not ultimate, but that it sprang from the mind, word, and hand of *Someone Else* is a revolutionary idea, especially in our day. Contrary to the nihilism that dominates so much human thinking, it means that everything in the universe has a purpose—including human beings. We are not the result of random chance and genetic mutations, gene re-assortments, and chromosomal accidents. We are created! Every one of us is the result of an idea, a plan, and an action of God himself. And that brings both meaning and responsibility to human life (**Genesis 1:26–28**).

Genesis 1:26-28 (NASB)

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

None of us is autonomous, and understanding that fact is key to understanding the gospel. Despite our constant talk of rights and liberty, we are not really as free as we would like to think. *We are created. We are made. And therefore we are owned.*

Because He created us, God has the right to tell us how to live. So in the garden of Eden, He told Adam and Eve which trees were theirs to eat from, and which they could not eat (**Genesis 2:16–17**).

Genesis 2:16-17 (NASB)

16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

It’s not that God was acting like a child on a power trip, bossing His little brother around and making arbitrary rules just to see what would happen. No, the Bible tells us that God is good. He knew what was best for His people, and He gave them laws that would preserve and increase their happiness and well-being.

Some understanding of this is absolutely necessary if a person wants to understand the good news of Christianity. The gospel is God’s response to the bad news of sin, and sin is a person’s rejection of God’s Creator-rights over him. Thus the fundamental truth of human existence, the well from which all else flows, is that God created us, and therefore God owns us.

God the Holy and Righteous One

If you had to describe God’s character in just a few words, what would you say? That He is loving and good? That He is compassionate and forgiving? All true. When Moses asks God to show him His glory and proclaim His name to him, this is what God said:

Exodus 34:6-7 (NASB)

6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

How amazing is that! When God wants to tell us His name and show us His glory—which is really to show us His very heart—what does He say? That He is loving and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

But there’s something else in that passage that often gets left out, and it’s not quite so comforting. Do you know what God says to Moses right after He says that He is compassionate and loving?

Exodus 34:7 (NASB)

⁷ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

Take another look at that, because it explodes about 90 percent of what people today *think* they know about God. The loving and compassionate God *does not leave the guilty unpunished*.

A common view of God is that He’s much like an unscrupulous janitor. Instead of really dealing with the world’s dirt—its sin, evil, and wickedness—He simply sweeps it under the rug, ignores it, and hopes no one will notice. In fact, many people cannot conceive of a God who would do anything else. “God judge sin?” they say. “Punish me for wickedness? Of course he wouldn’t do that. It wouldn’t be loving.”

We’ll see later how the seemingly impenetrable contradiction in [Exodus 34:6–7](#)—a God who “forgiv[es] wickedness, rebellion and sin” and yet “does not leave the guilty unpunished”—is resolved by the death of Jesus on the cross. But long before we get there, we must understand that despite all protests to the contrary, God’s love does not cancel out His justice and righteousness.

Scripture proclaims over and over that our God is a God of perfect justice and unassailable righteousness. [Psalm 11:7](#) says,

[Psalm 11:7 \(NASB\)](#)

⁷ For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face.

[Psalm 33:5](#) declares, “He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.”

And two psalms go so far as to proclaim, “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne” ([Psalm 89:14](#); [Psalm 97:2](#))!

[Psalm 89:14 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁴ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.

[Psalm 97:2 \(NASB\)](#)

² Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.

Do you see what those verses are saying? God’s rule over the universe, His sovereign lordship over creation, is founded upon His remaining forever perfectly righteous and just.

That’s why the idea of God as an unscrupulous janitor is finally so unsatisfying. It makes God out to be unjust and unrighteous. It makes Him a god who simply hides sin—or even hides *from* sin—rather than confronting it and destroying it. It makes Him a moral coward.

And who wants a God like that? It’s always interesting to watch what happens when people who insist that God would never judge *them* come face to face with undeniable evil. Confronted with some truly horrific evil, *then* they want a God of justice—and they want Him *now*. They want God to overlook their own sin, but not the terrorist’s. “Forgive me,” they say, “but don’t you dare forgive him!” You see, nobody wants a God who declines to deal with evil. They just want a God who declines to deal with *their* evil.

Scripture tells us, however, that because he is perfectly just and righteous, God will deal decisively with all evil. [Habakkuk 1:13](#) says,

[Habakkuk 1:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³ Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?

To do so would be to renounce the very foundation of His throne. Even more, it would be to renounce His Very Self, and that God will not do.

Most people have no problem at all thinking of God as loving and compassionate. We Christians have done a bang-up job convincing the world that God loves them. But if we’re going to understand just how glorious and life-giving the gospel of Jesus Christ is, we have to understand that this loving and compassionate God is also holy and righteous, and that He is determined never to overlook, ignore, or tolerate sin.

Including our own. Which of course brings us to the bad news.

Continued in next edition...

CORAM DEO (Before the face of God)

The New Testament is in the Old concealed; the Old Testament is in the New revealed.
—Augustine

The tension between doctrine and experience is common in the Christian life. What we believe and know as fact doesn't always match up with what is happening in our lives. Objective truth often conflicts with subjective experience. More often than not our experience becomes more credible than our doctrine, and this creates the tension in our hearts.

This tension extends even to the Scripture, which is the source of everything we believe and the rule of everything we are to do. We believe the Bible is God's Word. We believe that it is a living Word that is **"powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword"** ([Hebrew 4:12](#)).

But notwithstanding that confession of faith, Christians far too frequently read the Bible and get nothing from it. Apart from a few familiar stories or a few favorite verses, the majority of the Bible, even for believers, seems irrelevant. Few know anything of what David experienced when he confessed God's Word to be more desired than gold and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb ([Psalm 19:10](#)).

[Psalm 19:10 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁰ **They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.**

This disconnect between confession and experience regarding Scripture is nowhere more evident than in the Old Testament. For various reasons, the Old Testament is a closed book for many Christians today. There is something about the Old Testament that corresponds to Peter's assessment of Paul's epistles as containing some things hard to understand ([2 Peter 3:16](#)).

[2 Peter 3:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶ **As also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.**

From [Genesis](#) to [Malachi](#), the reader encounters hard sayings, obscure details, unfamiliar and enigmatic expressions, forgotten customs, family trees

with unpronounceable names, and detailed laws that have no immediately discernible application or relevance to modern life. Much of the Old Testament seems to have no apparent value or purpose, and much seems to be outdated both theologically and culturally. The Old Testament provides a lot of hard reading without a lot of blessing—or so it seems.

Frustrations with the Old Testament often drive Bible readers to more familiar and more obviously devotional texts. Familiar and devotional texts are good, but when believers ignore the Old Testament, they are ignoring the majority of God's revelation and missing the blessing of finding nuggets of truth that are just as vital for modern Christians as they were for Old Testament saints. Indeed, that God's Word is compared to silver and hidden treasure suggests that the prize is not always lying on the surface. Part of the problem in most Bible study is that unless the message is on the surface, the average reader moves on in his reading, kicking up dust until coming across an obvious surface lesson. Shuffling along does not typically result in discovered treasures; sometimes we have to dig.

[Proverbs 2](#) says that if we seek truth as silver and search for it as hidden treasure, we will not be disappointed, for the Lord promises to give wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Even the digging becomes profitable and enjoyable when we realize we are handling the very Word of God—the Word without which we cannot survive. From [Genesis](#) to [Malachi](#) to [Revelation](#), the Word of God reveals changeless and eternal truth.

We should keep our Bibles open and not give up until we discover the truth, because we know that God rewards those who diligently seek Him. He promises that when we seek Him with all our heart, we will find Him ([Jeremiah 29:13](#)). That is the truth.

[Jeremiah 29:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³ **You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.**





Pastor Gary C. Fleetwood
Chime Bell Baptist Church
Windsor, South Carolina

*Professor, Covington Theological Seminary
Aiken, South Carolina Extension
Dean, Covington Theological Seminary
Country of Romania*

Hebrews 12 – Overview Part 5

Hebrews 12:12-17 – Avoiding Bitterness

The goal of this study is to look at what the Scriptures call a “**root of bitterness**” in [Hebrews 12:15](#), and will focus primarily on what the believer has to do to actually **avoid** bitterness. Then in the next study, some of the primary causes and results of bitterness as well as what it means to “**fall short of the grace of God**” – a very, very important concept to understand – will be reviewed. The more of God’s grace that someone rejects, the more prone they will become to bitterness, to resentment, to anger, to hatred, and even to physical illness. Medical science has discovered that the emotion of bitterness actually damages a person’s immune system and makes them much more susceptible to being physically ill. If they have ever been bitter toward someone, then they know from personal experience that it drains them emotionally. There is nothing more defiling to the cause of Christ than a Christian who is consumed with bitterness.

The first thing to do is to define the term “**bitterness**”. The actual Greek word is “*pikria*” and it carries the idea of something that is poisonous. For instance, [Acts 8:23](#) says,

Acts 8:23 **For I see that they are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.**

I.e., when “**bitterness**” becomes a part of someone’s life, one of the first things that it does is to poison both them and those around them. That is why v15 says that when it springs up that it causes “**trouble**” and that many become “**defiled**”. The idea of the word “**trouble**” is that of being annoyed, of being disturbed, of being agitated, and thus actually causing trouble. One of the best things that a believer can do (if possible) is to avoid trouble, not create it or agitate it. The word “**defiled**” means to contaminate. It means to pollute something, to soil it, to stain it.

The actual word for “**bitterness**” comes “from the root ‘*pik*’, meaning to cut, to prick. It is something that is pointed and sharp. To make it worse, “**bitterness**” **ALWAYS** creates bitter results. It carries the idea of being spiteful, resentful, harsh, and carrying and expressing very bitter feelings toward someone. [Hebrews 12:15](#) actually describes it as being defiling. “**Bitterness**” is generally characterized by the individual becoming sharp, cynical, unforgiving, and unpleasant. As can be sensed in this very short overview of the word “**bitterness**”, it simply is not a good thing and does not produce good results. All that it does is poison a person’s life, both internally and externally.

Now, what the writer does, however, is to provide three positive attributes every believer should have in their life to help them avoid “**bitterness**”. “**Bitterness**” is a very cruel taskmaster in those whom it controls, and it never produces the fruit that someone thinks that it will produce – never. It will always produce very destructive consequences in the individual’s life. The three attributes are provided in [Hebrews 12:12-14](#) and are needed for any believer to over “**bitterness**” in their life:

“**Strengthen**” what needs to be strengthened in their life (v12).

“**Make straight paths**” for their life (v13).

“**Pursue peace**” with all people (v14).

Each of these attributes is in the imperative mood which makes them commands that are positive, constructive, and helpful. Each represents a particular spiritual quality that needs to be developed in every believer’s life because these three attributes form a biblical foundation for being able to weather those difficult circumstances that generally create bitterness in a person’s life. People become bitter, angry, and resentful when other people violate and disrespect them in some way. Someone does something to them that they do not feel that they

deserve. They say something about them that may not be accurate and in the process they misrepresent both the individual and their integrity. Someone may take advantage of them or they may disappoint them in some way. It is not difficult to become bitter any more than it is not difficult to become angry. So, one of God's solutions to overcoming "**bitterness**" is a believer doing certain things in their life that replenishes and restores their spiritual integrity and strength. It would be similar to getting an education. If someone wants to get an education, then they have to do certain things to ultimately achieve that goal. A person does not just get an education without some level of effort. It is very critical to appreciate that whatever a person reads in the Bible as a command is something that has to ultimately be implemented in their life. They may not always understand the long term benefits of what God is doing, but they can be fully assured that when God provides an imperative tense command in His Word, that its purpose is to strengthen them in an area that they need to be strengthened. No believer is exempt from God's spiritual demands on their life. Many believers think that they can make it on their own wisdom, but the folly of that kind of fatal thinking is spiritual disaster in their life. They are not wiser than God, and He knows much better what they need for their lives than they do.

ATTRIBUTE ONE: "Strengthen"

The first attribute to avoid "**bitterness**" is the believer strengthening certain areas of their life. The "**therefore**" points back to what has just been said, and the context of [Hebrews 12:4-11](#) was that of someone who had to be chastened by God for an area of spiritual neglect and disobedience in their life. Spiritual neglect ultimately leads to spiritual disobedience.

The Greek word for "**strengthen**" is "*anorthoo*" and literally means to make straight and comes from the same phrase used in v13 – "**make straight**". In this verse it is referring specifically to restoring those areas of the believer's life that they have both neglected and allowed to become "**feeble**". The idea of restoring what has been neglected comes from the phrase "**hang down**" which originally meant "to let pass, to disregard, to neglect." The word "**feeble**" refers to something that is weak. It is actually the Greek word from where the English word "paralyzed" or "paralytic" is derived. Any believer who just neglects what God has instructed them to do will become spiritually weak. It is unavoidable. An individual cannot be godly without God.

In every believer's life there are certain areas of their life that need to be strengthened and adjustments that need to be made. It could be any kind of adjustment – spiritual, moral, physical, financial, relational, verbal. When they know of an area in their life that they have neglected, it is their spiritual responsibility to do what they need to do to strengthen and restore that area of their life. If they do not strengthen that area, then it has the potential of paralyzing a vital area of their Christian life. There are many people who have neglected and avoided correcting a critical area of their life, and in the end they suffered almost irreparable damage in their life. They just ignored and avoided an obvious area of their life that needed God's work, and in the process they lost the motivation to even make an effort to correct what was lacking in their life. Please be aware that this is not always an easy task simply because many Christians are spiritually lazy and seem to have little motivation whatsoever to make the necessary adjustments that they need to make in their life. One of the hardest tasks as a pastor is trying to help someone who has no interest in being helped. They have a certain stubborn mindset and simply do not want to change, and no matter how many times they talk to them and encourage them, nothing ever changes. No believer who wants to grow and mature in their life can do so without making consistent and meaningful changes and adjustments in their life. Why would they ever think that they can be changed without changing? An authentic Christian life is never static, but is always developing and maturing more and more into Christlikeness.

ENCOURAGEMENT ONE: Every believer should make a list of those primary areas in their life that they know that they have spiritually neglected, and then take them one by one and develop a personal plan by which they will do what God wants them to do to strengthen and restore those areas of their life.

ATTRIBUTE TWO: "Make straight paths"

The word "**straight**" is the Greek word "*orthos*" and simply means straight. It is a specific "line of direction". It is not so much a distinction between straight and crooked as it is between doing that which is right versus doing that which is wrong. That nuance of the meaning makes it a moral issue in the believer's life. It is an adjective, so it is modifying the word "**paths**" which in reality is the key word. In the first encouragement the word for "**strengthen**" meant to make straight, but this word for "**straight**" is descriptive of the kind of spiritual changes that need to take place in their lives – right vs. wrong. It is every Christian's responsibility to determine if what they are doing before God is right or

if it is wrong. It is a moral issue – right vs. wrong. There is a very important spiritual lesson in this word that a person can never get what is right by doing what is wrong. That may seem like a very simplistic statement, but so many people are doing things in their life that they know are inherently wrong, and then wondering why their life is not turning out like they wanted it to turn out. It would seem obvious, but to the contrary people begin to blame God for their misfortune when in reality their wounds are self-inflicted and the consequences are inevitable. Why? It is because they cannot get what is right by doing what is wrong.

The key word, however, is the word “**paths**”. It is the Greek word “*trochia*” and comes from the word that means a wheel rut, or the track of a wheel. In a figurative sense, it is referring to a specific course of conduct to achieve a specific goal. The technical definitions actually call it a “**track**”. To use the illustration of getting an education again, it is absolutely essential that the believer place themselves on a track and on a path that will help them get there. If someone wanted to lose weight or bulk up as an athlete, in order to do that they would have to have a specific program that they could follow for that to happen. My oldest son eats healthy and has a very strong exercise program that he follows and he is as bulked up as he has ever been in his life – but it has not been without very strenuous effort. He works out every morning for an hour before being at work at 6:00am. A believer cannot and will not become what God wants them to become without developing some kind of meaningful spiritual “**track**” that they can follow. If it can be said this way, the believer needs a good spiritual rut that they can get into.

Metaphorically, this word refers to developing a godly lifestyle. A lifestyle involves the major things that a person does with their time, their energies, and their resources. Every believer understands much too well that it does not take much effort whatsoever to crowd God out of their life with other less important things. Generally, that happens because they have developed a certain kind of lifestyle over an extended period of time, and they did not take into consideration those areas of their life that needed to be spiritually developed. They are always pampering their physical needs and neglecting their spiritual needs in the process.

ENCOURAGEMENT TWO: The believer should evaluate if there are any areas of their life that are counterproductive to their maintaining a godly lifestyle, and then purpose to adjust their life in those areas. It could be anything that they know has become a hindrance to their spiritual growth. It could be anything from anger to being addicted to soap operas in the afternoon. It could be playing too much golf or just casually ignoring a personal time in God’s Word. Only the believer can identify what it is for thmy personally and only they can correct it.

ATTRIBUTE THREE: “**Pursue peace**” with all people.

The word “**pursue**” means to eagerly seek something. It carries with it the idea of following or pressing hard after something with earnestness and diligence in order to obtain something. At a very personal level, I have known Christians who were simply troublemakers, grumblers, complainers, gossipers, criticizers; and full of pride. However, none of that relieves a committed believer from doing what God wants them to do. This is an attribute that has to be cultivated in the believer’s life. There is nowhere in Scripture where believers are given a green light to treat difficult people indifferently. That is their natural tendency, but in the process they lose the critical Christ-like development that God wants to create in their life through someone who is difficult. God will adjust their character as much through people who are difficult to deal with as much as anything in their life. So, they have to make a decision. What do they want God to do in their life – surround their life with nice people who always treat them kindly and with deep respect, or change their character so that He can use them? If they want God to change their character, then one of His primary tools in doing that is allowing various people and circumstances into their life that are difficult to deal with. When someone that they know, and maybe do not even like, begins to trespass on their life, at that point they have to make a critical decision – will they allow their transgression against them to make them bitter or will they allow God to use it to make them like Christ? This is a spiritual mindset that the believer has to follow hard after with earnestness and diligence. Every believer has to develop a spiritual mentality and a spiritual way of thinking that is always pointing them in the direction of Christlikeness. Prov-erbs 23:7 declares that “**as a man thinks in his heart, so is he**”. How someone thinks will ultimately determine what they become. Pursuing peace with difficult people is simply one of God’s tools for developing Christlikeness and it is critical that the believer embrace that truth in their life.

ENCOURAGEMENT THREE: Believers should express gratitude to God for His allowing difficult people to be a part of their life. Many believers' maladjustments to difficult people and circumstances are directly related to their inability to appreciate and thank God for His deeper work in their life.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Strong's, 1239.
- ² Vine's, 278.
- ³ Vine's, 121.
- ⁴ Practical, NA.
- ⁵ Strong's, 961.
- ⁶ Wuest, 221.
- ⁷ Wuest, 221.
- ⁸ Vine's, 1091.
- ⁹ Vincent's, 546-547.
- ¹⁰ Strong's, 1419.
- ¹¹ Renn's, 717.
- ¹² Vine's, 906.
- ¹³ Zodhiates, 474


BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Practical Word Studies in the New Testament.* n.d.
- Renn, Stephen D., ed. *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words.* Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005.
- Strong, James. *The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words.* Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001.
- Vincent, Marvin R. *Word Studies in the New Testament.* Vol. Four. Four vols. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.
- Vine, W.E. *The Expanded Vines: Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.* Edited by John R. Kohlenberger III. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1984.
- Wuest, Kenneth. *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament: Hebrews.* Vol. 2. 3 vols. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973.
- Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary.* Revised Edition, 1993. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1992.

Covington
 Dr. Steve Sullivan, President
Theological Seminary
Conservative in Theology : Liberal in Love and Service

Quality education through home study for those who cannot attend a campus setting.

Associate, Bachelor, Master and Doctorate Degrees offered



Areas of study Available:
 · Theology
 · Bible
 · Pastoral
 · Christian Education
 · Counseling
 · Music
 · Ethnic Studies
 Accredited by ACI

**Training Leaders
 Impacting Eternity**

For more information contact us today: P.O. Box 176, Rossville, GA, 30741
 Located at 1168 Cross St, Fort Oglethorpe, GA, 30742
 Ph: 706-866-5826 Fax: 706-861-3550 Email: registrar@covingtonseminary.org
 To request a catalogue give us a call or email: info@covingtonseminary.org

International Extension Schools

- The North Andros Bible Institute
- Barbados, Bahamas
- Covington Theological Seminary of Brazil
- Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Covington Theological Seminary of Chile
- Talagante Santiago, Chile
- The Ghana Baptist Institute & Bible College
- Accra, Ghana
- Covington Theological Seminary of Honduras
- Tegucigalpa, Honduras
- Covington Theological Seminary of Gudiwada
- Krishna-Andhrapradesh, India
- The International Extension of Indonesia
- Jakarta, Indonesia
- Covington Theological Seminary of Indonesia
- Papua, Indonesia
- Blue Mountain Baptist Bible College
- Ogbomosho, Oyo State, Nigeria
- Covington Theological Seminary of Pakistan
- Lahore, Pakistan
- Covington Theological Seminary of the Philippines
- Bohol, Philippines
- Covington Theological Seminary of Romania
- Susani, Romania
- Covington Theological Seminary of South Africa
- Johannesburg, South Africa
- Covington Theological Seminary of Zimbabwe
- Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

The Talmid is published by:



*West Los Angeles
 Living Word Christian Center*

6520 Arizona Avenue
 Los Angeles, CA 90045 USA
 (310) 645-2522 or (310) 665-0137

Email: admin@wlawcc.org
 Web Site: www.wlawcc.org