Upward, Inward & Outward!

A Series of Lessons to Encourage Spiritual growth, and Increase congregational family relationships at the Studebaker congregation.

Lesson outlines by Lonnie Fritz
Introduction to Upward, Inward & Outward series of lessons.

This series of lessons will be designed to encourage both young in the faith, and experienced Christians. Our goal is to focus our attention on several aspects of our walk with the Lord.

1. In our first lesson we will look at our need to upward, to focus on God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. We will study our need to continually give the praise and honor that is due them.

2. Lesson two will be an Inward look at ourselves. Christianity is a matter of constant growth and reexamination of our life and goals. The lesson will touch on morality and the need to be holy as God is holy.

3. The third lesson will look outward toward our brethren. The need to love one another, the need to serve one another, and the need to help one another get to heaven will all be covered in this lesson.

4. The last lesson will deal with another type of outward look, a look at the lost. How can we teach them, and how can we lead them to the Lord?

You are encouraged to attend all of the four meetings. If you can not make it for some reason on your regular night, please check the schedule and join one of the other classes for the lesson that you missed.
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Lesson One – Upward - God

Introduction:

Our objective in this first lesson is to focus our thoughts on our need to look upward to God as we think about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Why do we need to continually give praise and honor to God? How can we keep our love for God fervent all of the time?

The Goal of the Upward Call

- “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 3:14)
- “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Col 3:1-3)

Discuss what the “upward call of God in Christ Jesus” means and how “seeking things above” and “setting our mind on things above” is going to help us complete the upward call. (Write your thoughts below)

God and Love

- Why do you love God?

- How do you know you love God?

- Read all of the following scriptures and then discuss in the group what God’s love has done for you and what He desires from mankind: Matt 22:37-38; Luke 11:42; Luke 16:13; John 3:16; Rom 5:5-8; Rom 8:35-39; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Eph 2:4-5; Eph 5:2; 1 John 3:1 and 1 John 4:7-16.

- Which of these scriptures helps you best understand the love relationship that is to exist between God and Christians? Be prepared to discuss how one or more of these scriptures help you to truly love God as you should.

- If a non-Christian were to ask you to explain God’s love for you and your love for Him, what would you say?
• What should you do if you begin to feel your love for God growing weak? ________________

Grace

• Define grace in your own words: _______________________________________________________

• Grace is one of the key attributes of God. The Lord God is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth" (Ex 34:6). Therefore, grace is almost always associated with mercy, love, compassion, and patience as the source of help and with deliverance from distress.

• We are saved by grace! Salvation is first, foremost, and always a matter of grace! - Eph 2:5-8. Does God owe us anything? What do we deserve because all are sinners? Rom 3:23; 6:23

• No matter what God may call upon us to do in order to receive His grace, when we do those things (cf. believe, repent, confess Jesus, be baptized)... Can we ever say that we earned or merited salvation? ____ Discus this concept and what it should mean to us and how it should change our lives.

• God's grace requires holy living! Some people reason that since we are saved by grace, we are free to do whatever we wish. Read Titus 2:11-14 and list what the "grace of God...teaches us" to do: ____________________________________________________________

At the same time holy living requires God's grace! To live "soberly, righteously and godly" requires the grace of God. We cannot do it on our own, but with God's help we can! He works in us to do His good will -Read Phil 2:12-13 and discuss how God working in our lives helps us to understand grace.

Praise

• Read - Hebrews 13:15-16. Praise is the fruit of _______ _______. What do you suppose this means? __________________________________________________________________________

• What can we learn about praising God from Revelation 5:11-14?

• 1 Pet 2:5-9 says that Christians are a special people to God. What are we to “proclaim” as a result of being this special people chosen by God? ______________________________

• Read Phil 1:10-11 and Eph 1:12-14 and then discuss what they require of Christians.

• Use a concordance or other Bible help and find passages that relate to praising God. Which scriptures best helped your understanding of our need to praise God? __________
Lesson Two – Inward

Introduction:
Our objective in this lesson is to focus our thoughts on the need to look at who we are and be what God wants us to be. Probably every day we look in the mirror to see what we look like, and fix, to the best of our ability those things that are out of place. In a spiritual way, we also need to look in the mirror of God’s word and see the things that we need to fix about ourselves and then fix them.

“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you — unless indeed you fail the test? But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.” (2 Cor 13:5-6) NASU

Self-Examination

• Why should we examine ourselves? By what standard should we examine ourselves? What sort of questions should we be asking ourselves?

• One of the early explorers to the North Pole charted his journey hourly to ensure that he stayed on course through the white wasteland. At one point a strange phenomenon began to occur. As he checked his position, his instruments indicated that even though he had been moving northward, he was actually farther south than he had been an hour before. Regardless of the speed at which he walked in the direction of the Pole, he continued to get farther from it. Finally he discovered that he had ventured onto an enormous iceberg that was drifting in one direction as he was walking in the other. There is a world of difference between activity and progress. That is as true on a Christian’s journey toward heaven as it is on a North Pole expedition. The Christian life is meant to be one of growth and progress.

• Read 2 Peter 3:18: What does it tell us to do? ____________________ How can we know that we are growing in grace—that we are making real progress and not merely deceiving ourselves with activity?

• Read 2 Cor. 10:12, 18 and Eph 4:13. What should not be our measurement standard? What should our measurement standard be?

Questions To Help Us Examine Ourselves.

1. Is Christ In Me? ______ Have I put Him on in baptism? - Gal 3:27 ________.
2. Am I keeping His commandments? - Jn 14:21__________.
3. Am I abiding in His word? - Jn 8:31__________.
5. Am I bearing fruit? - Jn 15:8 Such as the fruit of the Spirit - Ga 5:22-23? The fruit of our lips in praising God? Heb 13:15 Do I bear the fruit of good works - Tit 2:14; 3:8,14__________?

• Discuss all of these scriptures and questions that help us examine our walk with the Lord.

• Now, write your own self examination question(s) that you can share with the group:

________________________________________________________________________
Morality

One of the areas that we must continually examine ourselves is in the area of morality. When we become a Christian, we do not automatically become a person of high moral standards.

- **Discuss the question:** Why does God care about what we do as it relates to living a moral life? (These scriptures may help the discussion – 1 Peter 1:13-16; 2 Pet 1:3-4)
- What does the apostle Paul say about the Corinthians in 1 Cor 6:9-11? What does this tell us about living right today?

In Galatians 5:16-26, there is a contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Write down the works of the flesh that should be removed from the lives of Christians:

- Now, write down the fruit of the Spirit:

Try to find similar lists of things that Christians are to remove from their lives, and characteristics that should be striving to add to their lives:

What do these passages teach us about HOW we can live moral, godly lives?

Despite the fact that there are many people not living godly, moral lives today, there are many people that do try to live with high morals. Clearly, God desires that people live with high morality as an important part of their lives. However, is living a moral life enough? If not, why does it fall short of what God wants people to be?

Overcoming Temptation

- Read James 1:13-16 and discuss what this tells us about temptation to sin?
- Even though God does not tempt us, will he help the Christian that wants to escape temptation (1 Cor 10:12-13)? What does this scripture say that God is doing? What do we have to do?

- List and discuss some ways that Christians can with God’s help, overcome temptation to sin.

“Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.” (1 Tim 4:16)
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Lesson Three – Outward to our Brethren

Introduction:
Our objective in this lesson is to focus our thoughts on the need to encourage and serve other Christians.

We concluded our last lesson with a discussion about overcoming temptation. One of the most important ways that we become what God would have us to be is by being with God’s people. A wonderful blessing we enjoy in Christ is fellowship with other Christians. There is no way in one lesson to completely cover the relationship that should exist between brethren, especially in a local congregation.

A Relationship Commanded by the Lord

“\textit{A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.}” (John 13:34-35) Also read 1 John 3:11-24 & 1 Peter 4:8-10.

- From these scriptures, what reasons are given for Christians loving each other?
- How will people know that we are the disciples of Jesus if we love one another?

One Another Scriptures

- There are over 50 specific “one another” references scattered throughout the New Testament letters. The phrase “one another” indicates, a Responsibility and Relationship to another, and that it is Reciprocal in nature. \textit{“So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”} (Rom 12:5) There in an interdependence felt and expressed most keenly in the local church.
- What is meant by the expression that we are, “Individually members of one another?”
- How do you feel when someone takes time to encourage you or to show you their love?
- Read the following passages Romans 15:14; 1 Thess 4:18; James 5:16; Romans 12:10; 1 John 1:6-7; Rom 16:16.
- What do these scriptures indicate about our relationship and responsibility to each other?
Encourage One Another

- One of the most important things we do as Christians is encourage and edify other Christians. The word “encourage” means to “call to one’s side” and the word “edify” has the meaning of “to build up.” So in effect, these words are telling us to be close enough to one another to make the other person stronger. When we have a close relationship, we will see each other’s needs, strengths and weaknesses.

- Read Hebrews 3:13; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Thessalonians 5:11. What do these scriptures tell us about our need to encourage each other? ________________________________

- When we assemble together as a church, how is your presence encouraging to others? Also, how could your absence be discouraging to others? ____________________________

- When we are busy encouraging and edifying others what is going to happen to our own spiritual strength? ________________________________

How Can I Encourage Others?

- Maybe we all know about our need to encourage and edify others, but maybe our question is, “How?” The following key scriptures I believe help answer that question. Read each passage and discuss how they answer the question, “How can I encourage others?”

  - Philippians 1:27 _________________________________________________
  - Philippians 2:1-4 _________________________________________________
  - Ephesians 4:14-16 _________________________________________________
  - Acts 4:32-35 _______________________________________________________
  - Is it possible to help each other get to heaven? _________________________
  - Make a list of things you can do to help encourage other Christians: ________________
    ________________________________________________________________
    ________________________________________________________________
    ________________________________________________________________

“To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.” (1 Peter 3:8-9)
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Lesson Four – Outward to the Lost

Introduction:
Our objective in this lesson is to focus our thoughts on the need to reach out to the lost. How can a lost person find his way to the truth? God’s design is that those who are Christians, share the Good News with those that do not know. In this lesson we will discuss ways to find and teach the lost.

According to recent surveys, 80% of Americans never go to church. Half of that 80% said they believe in God, and someday know they should "go to church" Of those who are converted, most of them are converted by someone taking the time to care about them and tell what they needed to do.

“Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” (Matt 9:36-38)

Compassion for the Lost

• The passage shows that Jesus was moved with compassion for lost souls, and also desires in us that we have the same compassion for the lost.

• Read Luke 19:10 – What was Jesus mission? ______________________________ Briefly discuss some examples of Jesus taking a personal concern for the souls of the lost (hint, start in this context): ________________________________________________________________

• How is our mission similar to Jesus’? ____________________________________________

• Read Matt 28:19-20 – How do we know that this command is something we should be doing? (Discuss the importance of this commission today). ___________________________

• If we have this same compassion for lost souls, we will not rest until we are doing something to save their souls! How can we develop or strengthen this compassion for lost souls? ________________________________________________________________

Seeking the Lost

In order for us to seek the lost, we need to know where to look to find the best prospects. I believe Jesus gives us some answers in Luke 15. He told three parables having to do with seeking the lost. Discuss Jesus’ parables recorded in Luke 15:1-32 and answer the following questions:
• Where are the sheep lost? ____________________ Who else has been in the same situation as the lost sheep (Isa.53:6; 1 Pet.2:25)? ________________________________

• Where was the Coin Lost? ____________________ What did the woman do? ________________________________

• What is the house of God? (1 Tim.3:15)________________ Are some “in the church” lost? (Rev 2:4; 3:15,16)

• Why did the lost boy (“Prodigal”) leave? ____________________ Why did he come back? ________________________________

• Does this parable show one more area to look for lost souls? ____________________

**How to Seek the Lost**

• Maybe it can be overwhelming to think of all those lost souls, how can we possibly reach out to all of them. Quite simply, you can’t. God does not instruct us to do so, He want us to begin where we are to have an influence on those around us. I like the following quotes: “Each One Teach One!” And, “Evangelism is not complete until the taught becomes the teacher.” Read 2 Timothy 2:2 to see how these expressions are borne out of that passage.

• Read 1 Cor 9:19-23 – What did Paul do in an attempt to teach people the gospel? ________________________________

• How can we do this same thing today? ________________________________

• Jesus healed a demon possessed man as recorded in Luke 8, in verse 39 he tells this man to go do something, what is it? ________________________________ How could this be something we could do in the interest of souls today? ________________

• “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” (1 Peter 3:15)

• Discuss ways that we could all be prepared to seek the Lost: ________________________________

*Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Mark 1:17*