

NURTURE COURSE NOTES.

ASSURANCE

Is it possible to be lost again?

1 Jn.5:13 You may know that you have eternal life. God wants us to be sure that we have eternal life, which obviously lasts forever.

Jn.6:37-40 Jesus will not lose what He has been given by the Father.

Jn.6:44 God the Father draws us to Jesus and He knows our future and cannot make a mistake.

Eph.1:3-6 God chose us to be in Christ and will continue His eternal purpose in us.

Phil.1:6 God will complete what He has begun in us.

Rom.8:29-30 God predestined us to be made into the image of Jesus and our glorification in Heaven is put in the past tense- to God, who is outside of time, it has already happened.

Rom.8:38-39 Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus.

Eph.1:13-14 The Holy Spirit within us is a guarantee. The picture is of being sealed as belonging to Jesus as letters used to be sealed with a wax mark of the sender. The change in our lives produced by the Holy Spirit within us is a down payment on Heaven and should encourage us to look forward in faith to what God has in store for us there, (if someone promised to give you £10 million pounds, you would be more likely to believe them if they gave you £100,000 straight away as a down payment!).

How can I maintain the Christian life?

Jn.10:27-30 God holds onto us and nothing can snatch us away from Him. There is a double hold on us by Jesus and the Father, who is stronger than anyone else.

Jude 24-25 God keeps us from falling.

1Thess.5:23-24 God will keep us sanctified to the end.

2 Tim.2:11-13 God remains faithful even when we are not

Gal.2:20 We live by faith in Christ's power within us and not by our own strength.

Phil.2:12-13 God is at work within us to produce the will and action-- all we need to do is to cooperate with His Spirit. We need to "work out" all the implications of our salvation in every area of our lives-- it is an enormous gift of God's life that we have been given and we need to grow into all the things that He wants us to do with it, (like receiving a very complicated computer as a gift and needing to find out all the things that it can do).

Mt.11:28-30 His yoke is easy and His burden is light because when we are joined to Him, He takes all the strain and gives us the strength to walk beside Him. The picture is of two oxen being yoked together to pull a plough-- the stronger, more experienced one would take all the strain and set the direction to make a straight furrow and the weaker one would only have to walk alongside.

How do I understand the Bible?

2Tim.3:16-17 The Bible is God's Word and is a firm base for our instruction and contains all that we need to be completely equipped for what God wants us to do.

Pro.3:5-6 Trust in what God says and do not rely on our own insight and He will make our path straight ahead of us.

Mt.11-25 The Truth is revealed to little children through their simple trust. Little children do not demand to see their father's driving licence or to learn how a car works before taking a trip in the car to the beach; they just jump in the back because they trust their father to know what he's doing-- we need to have such simple trust in God when we don't always understand what He says in His Word.

1Cor.1:18-25 Man does not know God by human wisdom, (or by looking for signs), but through faith. God is opposed to human philosophy and has set traps for that kind of approach in the Bible, which is not set out systematically and contains many things that are hard to understand, such as predestination and free will, and leaves other things unspecified, such as the precise form of church meetings and leadership etc. Focussing on a human intellectual approach to the Bible has resulted in centuries of largely fruitless debate and has caused much division between churches on many different issues, which remain open to discussion. This is not what God wants.

1Cor.3:18-20 Must actively set aside human wisdom in order to become truly wise. This does not mean that we do not think but that we must trust what God says even when we do not understand, (which will be quite often!).

1Cor.8:1-3 Knowledge of facts can produce pride but it is love that builds up in the Christian life. We must realise that our knowledge is not perfect and concentrate on loving and obeying God.

1Cor.13:2 Knowledge without love is spiritually useless.

Jn.5:39-40 The Pharisees diligently studied the Old Testament and yet ended up crucifying Jesus. The Bible is like a signpost to Jesus who is the Truth; we must not just study and memorise the signpost, we must follow it!

PURITY.

What are the rules in the Christian life?

Mt.19:16-26 God's way of life is to keep His laws to the maximum limit which is impossible for us.

Mt.5:43-48 God's standard of what is right is way above ours, (loving one's enemies goes against human nature), and is perfection.

Mt.22:36-40 Jesus summarises God's law as "Love God with all your heart and love your neighbour as you love yourself".

Rom.3:10-24 But no-one keeps God's laws as they should and so salvation and righteousness is through faith in Jesus who died for our sins and rose from the dead to give us a new life.

Rom.6:4 By faith, we died with Christ and now live a new life.

Rom.7:1-6 We have died to the law and so are no longer bound by written rules but are to live by the power of the Holy Spirit within us.

Gal.5:13-24 We should not use our freedom from the law's demands to indulge sinful desires but rather to be filled with God's Holy Spirit of love. The Holy Spirit within us will prevent us from doing what we would have done before by opposing the desires of our sinful human nature giving us a strong conviction of sin when we go wrong. It is a good sign when a new believer feels much worse about the things that they do wrong than they did before they became a Christian because this shows that the Holy Spirit is at work to lead them in God's ways. Walk in the Spirit to bear fruit for God and so fulfil His law--- "Love and do what you like".

How can I overcome temptation?

Rom.7:14-25 Christians still have temptation from within from the old human nature which is at war with the desires of the new nature given by God's Spirit within us. The victory over temptation in this battle comes through faith in Jesus.

Rom.6:6-14 We have been set free from slavery to sin by Christ's death for us and so sin will no longer be our master if we offer ourselves to God for His use. Imagine a slave who after many years of serving a cruel master gains his freedom. One day in the market, he hears the familiar voice of his old master calling him and he automatically starts to go

towards him because he had been so used to obeying that voice for so many years. Suddenly, he remembers that this man is no longer his master and just walks away-- that is what it can be like with us--we start to do the old habits of sin but we need to remember that Christ has set us free from that and to offer ourselves to Him instead for His spirit to control us.

Gal.5:16-17 Walk in the Spirit and we will overcome the sinful nature.

Eph.6:10-18 The Christian life is spiritual warfare and so we need to continually pray and trust the Lord to be strong in His strength.It says “when the day of evil comes” not “if” meaning that we will be tested this way.We need to put on the armour of God of Truth,(because the Devil is the father of lies and his temptations are lies, for example, “you will be happy if only you always get what you want”), Righteousness,(because the Devil will use our sins to accuse us and try to make us doubt if we are really Christians or if God will really forgive us), Sharing the Gospel,(we gain strength when we obey God and share our faith with others), Faith,(our trust in God’s strength gives us the power to overcome temptations), Assurance of Salvation,(which gives us peace of mind), the Word of God, (which is the only offensive weapon in the armoury as the Devil is afraid of God’s Truth), and Prayer, (whereby we seek God’s will and power in any situation).

Jas.4:7 Resist the devil and he will flee from you.1Pet.5:8-10- God will restore us after a little while.

Mt.4:1-11 Jesus overcomes temptation with God’s Word.

1Cor.10:12-13 We should never be complacent about temptation and all temptations are common to man. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear but will always provide a way out. This means that we need not be afraid that we might one day face a situation that we could not cope with in God’s strength but it also leaves us without any excuse when we fall into temptation-- we cannot say that the temptation was too much for us.

What happens when we sin as Christians?

1Jn.1:8-10 All Christians still sin, (and anyone who thinks otherwise is deceiving themselves), and when we are convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, we should acknowledge it and turn from it in our hearts and then it is forgiven and forgotten by God.

Jn.13:3-10 We need to come to God for cleansing and forgiveness regularly even though we have been forgiven by God once and for all in Christ,(Jesus calls the disciples clean v.10 but still goes on to wash their feet). This is about keeping our relationship with God clear.

Ps.66:18 If we cherish sin and refuse to turn from it then our relationship with God becomes distant and He will not answer our prayers.

1Cor.3:10-15 If we live in our old human nature and carry on sinning, then we lose treasure in Heaven but we ourselves would be saved.

Gal.6:7-8 We reap what we sow spiritually in our Christian lives now and in Heaven.

2Pet.1:5-9 Sin would make us ineffective and unproductive, (not glorifying God by seeing change for the better in our lives and in the lives of those around us), in the Christian life.

2Sam.12:1-14 An example of how David’s sin was forgiven by God but still had terrible consequences for David’s spiritual life. God says that He would have done much more for David but not any longer, and although he remains king, there is never peace in his kingdom and his son Absalom later rebels against him and sleeps with David’s wives in a tent on the roof of the palace, (a case of the punishment fitting the crime). If we sin against the Lord, He will forgive us and we remain His people but it will have effects on His plan for our lives and will limit how God will bless us now and with treasure in Heaven.

SPIRIT-LED.

How do we receive the Holy Spirit?

Jn.14:15-17 Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to be within His disciples.

Jn.16:7-14 The Holy Spirit convicts of what is right, guides into the Truth and glorifies Jesus.

1Jn.4:15 All believers receive the Spirit of God.

Eph.1:13-14 The Holy Spirit is a deposit in all believers guaranteeing our inheritance in Heaven.

Acts1:4-5 "Baptism" in the Holy Spirit ---a metaphor which speaks of being fully immersed in the life of the Spirit--the Bible more commonly talks of being filled with the Spirit.Occurs after seeking God in prayer.

Acts2:1-4 Holy Spirit falls upon the disciples to give power and boldness.

Acts4:23-31 The "baptism", "filling" with the Holy Spirit needed to be renewed and so is not just a "one off" event.

Eph.5:18 Be filled with the Spirit, continuously, (the verb is present continuous), and this is contrasted with being drunk-- just as too much alcohol will take control of someone in a bad way, so being filled with the Spirit results in being controlled by God to do good, (whilst still in our right mind of course, not in some kind of trance!).We need to constantly be in prayer to the Lord to be filled with His Holy Spirit of love.

What about the gifts and fruit of the Spirit?

Rom.8:3-11 Christians should be controlled by the Spirit in order to live Christ's life.In our old sinful nature, we cannot please God but we have received the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. If He can put life into a corpse, how much more will He put His life into us who, although we're hopelessly short of God's standards, are at least still breathing!

Gal.2:20 We live Christ's life by faith in Him. Our aim should always be to say with Paul that it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, (and have our thoughts and actions reflect that!).

1Cor.12:4-13:7 Different spiritual gifts given to different people to serve each other as parts of the same body. Not everybody has each gift, v.29-30,(including speaking in tongues), and a major part of the passage is concerned with teaching us not to feel left out or second class Christians in any way if we do not share certain gifts and not to feel superior to others if we have a gift that they do not have. God has made people in the church different so that we will learn to honour one another and work together in unity amidst diversity. In v28, less spectacular gifts such as helping others and administration are listed alongside the more spectacular gifts of prophecy and working miracles to show that all are valued by God. God's love at work in our lives is more important than anything else.The gifts without love are spiritually useless.

Gal.5:16-25 Result of living in the Spirit is the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Mt.7:15-23 The sign of the Holy Spirit in a person's life is the fruit of His love, not the gifts. You know what type of fruit tree a tree is by the type of fruit growing on it, an apple tree will grow apples and not pears for example, but a Christmas tree is not a chocolate reindeer tree because it has those gifts tied on it! We need to be reminded of this because it is human nature to be impressed by and so respect people who have spectacular gifts in the Lord's service rather than to take note of the fruit of someone's life.

How can we know God's guidance?

Eph.2:10 God has a specific plan for each of our lives-- it is exciting to realise that there are specific tasks that God wants each of us to do.

Rom.12:1-2 We are to offer ourselves to God, putting all that we have and are in His hands, for Him to transform our minds and then we will know more about His will for our lives, which will be good, (wholesome, worthy and right), pleasing, (fulfilling who we are and what we were made for), and perfect, (everything fitting exactly into place).

Ps.119:105 God's Word is a general guide to our path through life.

Jas.1:5 Ask God for wisdom in prayer.

Judges6:36-40 God can confirm His will through circumstances. This is not to try and test God but rather to genuinely look for confirmation of what He wants us to do.

Acts9:10-16 Direct vision/prophecy from the Lord. This should be clear and not just some "good idea"-- everywhere in the Bible where it describes how someone received a prophecy or vision, they clearly heard God's voice or saw a describable picture.

Acts13:2-3 Prophecy through other people. 1 Thess.5:19-21-- these should not be ignored but should be tested, especially against Scripture, rather than immediately accepted.

Pro.15:22 Advice of leaders and elders.

Col.3:15 Maintain God's inner peace and if there is no peace about something, pray until the Lord confirms it and peace is restored.

PRAYER.

How should we pray?

Jer.33:3 "God's telephone number"--- prayer is communicating with God. The simplest prayer is the baby's prayer of "Waaah!"--- the baby does not know how to ask for what it needs in words and maybe is not even aware of exactly what is needed but it knows that it is in need and cries out to the parent for help. Our simplest prayers can be just cries from our hearts to God.

Mt.6:5-6 Mostly in private as each person's most important prayer times will be between themselves and God --- certainly not a matter for pride in public prayer.

Mt.6:7-8 Not a matter of just repeating words like the Sanskrit Hindu prayers, Arabic Muslim prayers, Gurmukhi Sikh prayers, Buddhist prayer wheels or Catholic rosaries which are meaningless as God knows what we need before we ask Him and does not have to be impressed by repetition.

Mt.6:9-13 The Lord's prayer is a prayer menu --- praise to God, our Father who loves us and who is in control in Heaven, prayer for His will to be done, prayer for our needs, prayer for forgiveness and prayer for protection from evil. We can pray for different things under each of these headings.

Eph.6:18 Pray in the Spirit at all times. This obviously cannot be in words but can be an attitude of heart that is looking in dependency on God to give us the strength we need to do His will.

Rom.8:26-27 The Spirit intercedes for us when we don't know how to pray.

Mt.7:7-11 Promise of good gifts for those who seek God --- if we really believe that Jesus is just waiting to bless us with good things if we spend time to seek Him in prayer, then prayer becomes a very exciting prospect. Imagine that Jesus was standing outside your door as a man waiting to tell you about His future plan for your life and to give you advice about your problems and love and spiritual gifts to serve Him. Would you go out to talk to Him? Well, He really is there, not as a man, but by His Spirit.

What makes prayer effective?

Heb.11:6 Must believe that God rewards those who seek Him, then we will really want to pray.

Jas.1:5-8 Must pray in faith and not be in two minds about whether to commit ourselves to trusting God in it.

Lk.17:5-6 It is not the size of our faith that is important but the size of the God that we have faith in ! Weak faith in a strong bridge is better than strong faith in a weak bridge!

Jn.14:14 Ask in Jesus' name means that whatever we ask should be something that Jesus would put His name to. When the Queen's servant comes to Parliament and asks them to open up in the name of the Queen, he means that she has asked him to do that and they open their doors because they respect her authority. Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth and everything must obey Him, or us if we are doing His will in His name!

Jas.4:2-3 Must ask with the right motive and not selfishly. We may lack some things because we haven't asked God for them.

Lk.11:5-8 Must persevere in prayer. If an unloving neighbour will give something because of persistent asking, how much more will God who loves us.

1Sam.14:6-15 An example of spiritual initiative in asking the Lord for confirmation of a plan to honour His name. Jonathan's faith results in a great victory. We need to have the kind of zeal for the Lord that will want to honour His name and will call on His help to do that.

How do we spend extended time in prayer?

Mk.1:35 Jesus prays in a quiet place early in the morning to seek God before the day's activities. It is good to spend some time to pray each day, (the Lord's prayer presumes this), and praying first thing in the morning focuses our mind on God and gives us the opportunity to seek Him for the strength to do His will in all the activities of the day ahead.

Lk.6:12 Jesus spends the whole night in prayer before the major decision of choosing His twelve apostles.

Mt.4:1-2 Jesus prayed and fasted for forty days before He started His ministry. If the Son of God Himself who was one with God the Father felt that He needed to spend that kind of time seeking God before His ministry, then how much more do we need to spend time in prayer and fasting!

Mt.6:16-18 These words assume that Christians will fast and that it should be done in secret and that it has its own reward. Prayer and especially fasting are mysterious but they do work. To try to understand fasting, imagine that someone you love very much was very ill in hospital and someone else invited you for a party; you probably would not feel like eating at all because of your concern for your loved one-- similarly, if we are so concerned about the things of God and really love those in need around us, then we will not want to eat and will fast out of that loving concern sometimes.

Dan.9:20-23 God gives revelations of His will during times of prayer.

1Sam.12-23 It is a duty of love to pray for people.

Eph.3:14-21 Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church centres on knowing the full extent of God's love for us and being filled with His fullness --- a mind-blowing concept! It also says that God is able to do far more than anything that we could ask or even imagine and if that does not excite us to pray then nothing will!