

Great Commission



Baptist Church

Dr. Douglas E. Brown, Pastor/Teacher



Making Positional Sanctification Practical

I Corinthians
Life Group Curriculum
May – June 2023

The Book of I Corinthians

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Lesson I

Date: May 7, 2023

Lesson Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 12:12-19

THE BODY IS ONE WITH MANY MEMBERS - PART 1

Lesson Aim: To demonstrate that each person's spiritual gift is a blessing from God and should be used to build up the body of Christ.

Open It

1. When have you felt insignificant in an organization?

Explore It

1. In what ways are Christians like a human body?

2. Why should outward appearances or status not matter to us?

3. What makes Christians unified and dependent on one another?

4. Who arranged the parts of the body of Christ?

Get It

1. How might you compare your place in the body of Christ to a part of the human body?

2. How well do you interact with other members in the body of Christ?

3. When have you felt like an important or insignificant part of the body?

4. What part do you serve in the body of Christ?

Apply It

1. What is one way you can show concern and love for another member of your church?
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Summary:

In these verses, the apostle Paul compares the body of Christ to a human body. Each part has a specific function that is necessary to the body as a whole. The body's parts are diverse for a purpose, and in their differences, they must operate together. Paul writes in verse 13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Paul wants us to know that all who the Holy Spirit indwells are members of the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit totally fills and seals our innermost being until the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).

There are many members, but there is only one body. In other words, the church is made up of many different types of people from various backgrounds, each with a unique set of skills and abilities. Our gifts have the potential to divide us/people (as they did in the instance of Corinth). Regardless of our differences, all believers share one thing in common: our faith in Jesus Christ. And it is on this fundamental fact that the church derives her unity, for we are all enlightened by the same Spirit.

One member of a body does *not* make up the whole body. Each member of the body has different functions. Paul writes in verse 18, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." The Father has strategically placed us in different areas. He has gifted us according to His good pleasure; "I may be an ear, but who could hear without the ear?" Amen! The diversity of the body adds to the beauty of the church. As a result, the church's beauty and effectiveness are enhanced by the multiplicity of spiritual gifts and offices. Diversity in the body of Christ contributes to the beauty of the church. So, it is for the beauty and good appearance of the church that there be diversity of gifts and offices in it.

We are assigned to our stations in the body of believers and given the gifts that God desires. And, as Christians, we must avoid being overly confident in our talents or believing that we have little to offer the body of Christ. Rather of comparing ourselves, we should all use our unique talents and spiritual gifts to share the Good News of Salvation.

Lesson summary by Glendoria P. Boyd, AdvDip.TH.
New King James Bible
Bible Knowledge Commentary
Life Application NIV Commentary

Lesson II

Date: May 14, 2023

Lesson Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 12:20-31

THE BODY IS ONE WITH MANY MEMBERS - PART 2

Lesson Aim: To demonstrate that our gifts are to be used in unity with the spiritual gifts of others to build up the body of Christ.

Open It

1. What functions in the church do you feel are most important? Why?

Explore It

1. Why should members of the body of Christ not say to each other, "I don't need you"?

2. Why should the less honorable parts be treated with special attention?

3. Who is part of the body of Christ?

4. What are the greater gifts?

Get It

1. What has God appointed you to be in the body of Christ?

2. How can you treat the "weaker" members of your fellowship as indispensable?

3. What should we do when there is division among Christians in a local church?

4. What do you think are your personal responsibilities in the body of Christ?

Apply It

1. What would be the best way to use your unique abilities in the body of Christ this year?
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Summary:

Again, using the analogy of the human body, Paul emphasizes the importance of each member. Paul says that those parts of the body that seem to be the weaker, are in fact, indispensable. If a seemingly insignificant part of the body is taken away, the whole body becomes less effective. All the members of the body are in some respect useful and necessary to each other. God has so joined or tempered them together that all are necessary to one another. There is no part that is redundant or unnecessary. Each member serves some good purpose or another. It is useful to its fellow members and necessary to the good state of the whole body.

None of us should despise and envy one another seeing that God has made the distinctions between us as He pleases. Thinking that your gift is more valuable than someone else's is an indication of spiritual pride, a problem of arrogance and self-righteousness that Jesus condemned (Matt. 5:20; Lk. 18:9-14). We should never look down on individuals who appear minuscule, nor should we be envious of those who possess great talents and spiritual gifts. Instead, we should use our spiritual gifts we have been given and encourage others to use theirs. When we choose not to encourage others, the body of believers is less effective. We are called to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15). Too often we are jealous of those who rejoice and apathetic of those who weep. As believers, we are in this world together and there is just no such thing as private individualistic Christianity (Heb. 10:25). We can't just enjoy our own relationship with God alone. We are *one* Body! It is imperative that we get involved in the lives of other believers and work as a team to honor and glorify the True and Living God (1 Cor. 10:31).

All of God's blessings are wonderful! All are beneficial to the body. Paul writes in verse 31, "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." The believer is instructed to seek the greater gift, but Paul makes it clear he will demonstrate to them a way of life which transcends all others. He urges us/the believer, to discover how we can serve Christ's body with the spiritual gifts God has given us. Our spiritual gifts are not for our own self advancement. They were given to us for serving God and enhancing the spiritual growth of the body of believers. In the following chapter, Paul discusses the superior method. True charity, he says, is the most precious gift. It is far preferable for our hearts to glow with mutual love for one another than to attain the most pompous titles, offices, and/or powers. Amen!

Lesson summary by Glendoria P. Boyd, AdvDip.TH.
New King James Bible
Bible Knowledge Commentary
Life Application NIV Commentary

Lesson III

Date: May 21, 2023

Lesson Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE

Lesson Aim: The student will learn the way of love and its importance in our walk with Christ.

Open It

1. Who is the most loving person you know? Why do you think so?

Explore It

1. What makes speaking in tongues, faith, generosity, and even martyrdom worthless?

2. How could a person use spiritual gifts in a useless manner?

3. What do we gain if we don't have love?

4. What qualities does love have?

Get It

1. Why do you think Paul wrote about love to the Corinthians?

2. Why might it be easy to use a spiritual gift without love?

3. How should Christians demonstrate love for each other?

4. In what practical ways can you show a love that never fails?

Apply It

1. What will help you to remember to use your gifts in a loving way?
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Summary:

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, it was not a letter written in chapters. Some of the thoughts were answers to questions, and others were to clear minds. He leaps from spiritual gifts to love in this section to illustrate how spiritual gifts should be employed. Paul begins by discussing how spiritual gifts are meaningless and even dangerous when not used in love. Whatever gift you have, whether it be speaking in tongues, prophetic powers, miraculous spiritual understanding, or anything else that impresses the intellect, it is meaningless if not used as God intended. They are supposed to come from a place of love for Him and the believers. This encompasses, but is not limited to, spiritual actions like selling everything to give to the needy and even sacrificing one's own life (Acts 2:45; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 9:26). It is not the love of inflated feelings that come and go. It is not a love for flowery or eloquent language. This is God's love which is described by the Greek noun *agape*. It simply describes a perfect, unconditional love that has been fully demonstrated by all the members of the Godhead (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 8:26-27). It is unconditional in the sense that it does not depend on the one being loved, but on the commitment of the one acting.

God bestows spiritual gifts on us in order to enable us to communicate through the Spirit, revealing His love to a lost and dying world. It serves no purpose to keep His love to ourselves or to benefit from it, let alone to earn or profit from it. Looking at the times we live in, the best example for personal gain would be using selfies, videos, and social media platforms to boastfully show our benevolence to the less fortunate. God is not charging us for love and is not asking us to contribute, in fact He Gave, so that we could live eternally. Most importantly, His giving to us is so that the lost can see Him and His love in us through our actions and appreciation for His love.

Lesson aim and summary by Victor Kirkpatrick, Dip. TH.

Lesson IV

Date: May 28, 2023

Lesson Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE

Lesson Aim: The student will realize that love is unbreakable and never fails.

Open It

1. What qualities do you associate with love?

Explore It

1. Why will prophecy, tongues, and knowledge pass away?

2. What is our spiritual imperfection like?

3. How will our knowledge of God change when we see Christ?

4. What is the greatest of all gifts?

Get It

1. How did Jesus exemplify love?

2. Why won't prophecy, knowledge, and tongues be necessary when Jesus returns?

3. When have you received the love described in this passage?

4. What expectations do you have, knowing you will see Jesus' face one day?

Apply It

1. How could you show love to a difficult person this week?
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Summary:

The apostle Paul writes in verse 8, “Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” Even though some spiritual gifts will be cut off or even pass away, love will remain. God does not reveal all things at one time to us, but there is a promise that “When that is perfect is come, then that which is in part will be done away” (a state that will not exist until the perfect shall come). The phrase *the perfect shall come* has been interpreted in three ways: (1) a reference to dying and going to heaven, (2) a reference to when Jesus comes back to earth, (3) a reference to when the bible is completed. Depending on a person’s interpretation of this phrase determines what spiritual gifts are for today. Pastor Dr. Douglas E. Brown teaches the third way indicated above, which refers to the completion of the Bible. This viewpoint appears to have the most biblical support. Though certain spiritual gifts have ceased and will cease in the future, there is always a need for love.

Love is permanent. Specifically, Paul mentions that three items will continue and endure: faith, hope, and love (or charity). Of the three, Paul says that love is superior. Even the enduring permanent qualities of faith and hope will be of little value without love. When Jesus Christ returns for his church, we no longer need faith because He is that faith fulfilled. We no longer need hope because He is what we are hoping for. We no longer must hope for something once we receive it, but love, that love is never going away. Even though the hope is filled, and the faith is filled, the love is ongoing and never quits. Love should penetrate every relationship we have, not just romantic and family love. It is not confined to a boyfriend, and girlfriend relationship either. It should be shown on the job, in stores, school, even with competition. When we were young, we viewed everything through a young mind. As we grow and mature, we gain wisdom and should be mature enough to use that mind as God intended. A childish mind does not understand love, but a mature mind learns and respects its value and meaning. Do we hold grudges, keep reminding our loved ones of their mistakes in the past, hate people who are doing better? If we love as Christ commands us to love, then we have a positive answer for questions like these. Paul is not saying we must be perfect, but love is perfect. Love does not abuse, hurt, judge, misuse, or cause pain because that which is perfect comes from God.

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Eph.5:1-2).

Lesson aim and summary by Victor Kirkpatrick, Dip. TH.

Lesson V

Date: June 4, 2023

Lesson Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 14:1-5

A Charge to Spiritually Edify the Church

Lesson Aim: The believer will learn about the proper use of spiritual gifts within the local church.

Open It

1. When have you been confused by a lack of clear instructions?

Explore It

1. What did God want the Corinthians to follow?

2. What did God want the Corinthians to desire?

3. Why were the Corinthians to desire the gift of prophecy more than the gift of tongues?

4. In what circumstance is speaking in tongues as good as prophesying?

Get It

1. How would you summarize God's priorities concerning the spiritual gifts of prophecy and tongues?

2. What practices can every local church use to ensure that spiritual gifts are used to build up people?

3. What can we do to value spiritual gifts as God does?

Apply It

1. How could you use one spiritual gift this week to help another Christian?

Summary:

The opening verse sets the tone for this chapter. The believer must pursue love with haste. This is the first point of reflection. The apostle Paul uses two commands in this verse. He writes in verse 1, “Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.” The two commands are found in the words *follow* and *desire*. The commands are in the present tense which instructs believers to earnestly desire to love and to seek after spiritual gifts that promote love. Charity is at the center of both of these actions. The King James Version (KJV) translates the English word *charity* from the Greek noun *agape* which means the love of men to men; especially of that love of Christians toward Christians which is enjoined and prompted by their religion, whether the love be viewed as in the soul or as expressed.

The believer must deeply commit themselves to promoting love. This is the second point of reflection. Paul writes in verse 3, “But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” The KJV translates the English word *prophesieth* from the Greek verb *prophéteuó* which means in this context to teach, refute, reprove, admonish, or comfort. This is forthtelling God’s message and not foretelling future events or new revelations. This verse is in contrast to verse two because speaking the mysteries by the spirit does not edify, exhort, and comfort other believers. The latter results in edification, and the former results in self-gratification. Without an interpreter, speaking in tongues is called mysteries because the meaning has not been revealed to the hearers. This action negates the opening verse because the person speaking by the spirit is not edifying the body of Christ. The believer must edify the body of Christ to demonstrate their love. This is the third point of reflection. Paul writes in verse 4, “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.” The KJV translates the English word *edifieth* from the Greek verb *oikodomeó* which literally means to build someone up, helping them to stand and to be strong and sturdy. This is how a believer demonstrates their love. Divine love is not self-centered because it always has others in view. Paul uses the present tense which implies that the action is ongoing. The speakers should only speak in tongues if there is an interpretation of what is being spoken. In verse 5, the KJV translates the English word *interpret* from the Greek word *diर्मéneuó* which means to thoroughly interpret, accurately (fully) explain. This cannot be accomplished by speaking mysteriously by the spirit. Jesus thoroughly and accurately explained to the two men on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:27).

Lesson aim, topic, and summary by Joseph Ellzey Jr., PhD

Lesson VI

Date: June 11, 2023

Lesson Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 14:6-19

Communication that is Spiritually Beneficial to the Church

Lesson Aim: The believer will learn about the spiritual gifts that edifies others inside the local church.

Open It

1. What are some traditions or practices in your family that would seem strange to someone outside your family?

Explore It

1. What must be combined with the gift of tongues to make it useful to others?

2. In which gifts did Paul encourage the Corinthians to excel?

3. How should speaking in tongues be like praying and singing?

4. Why is it crucial that a message in tongues be interpreted?

5. What priority does God give to speaking in tongues?

Get It

1. For what reasons should we desire spiritual gifts?

2. How can you guard against desiring spiritual gifts for the wrong motives?

3. What more can your church or fellowship do to attract unbelievers?

Apply It

1. What personal action could you take this week to make your worship services more welcoming to visitors?
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Summary:

The apostle Paul writes a lengthy section on the usage of tongues inside the local church. It is imperative for the readers to make a distinction between the usage of biblical tongues and the modern-day usage of tongues. The modern-day usage of tongues does not follow the guidelines expressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:26-36. This will be covered in a later lesson (Lesson VIII). In this week's lesson, Paul is speaking about the biblical usage of tongues. Any usage of tongues outside the parameters of Scripture is invalid. The purpose of spiritual gifts is to edify the body of Christ. Paul writes in verse 12, "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church." This verse summarizes verses six to twelve. The believers must excel in what builds the church. This is the first point of reflection. The KJV translated the English word *seek* from the Greek verb *zéteó* which means to seek by inquiring; to investigate to reach a binding (terminal) resolution; to search, getting to the bottom of a matter. The Greek verb is in the imperative mood which implies a command. The believer must seek spiritual gifts that have the greatest possibility to go over and above in the church.

Paul continues his discussion about the usage of tongues inside the local church. He stresses that edification should be the number one priority in the church. Paul writes in verse 16, "Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" The KJV translates the English word *unlearned* from the Greek word *idiótēs* which means a person destitute of the gift of tongues. Simply put, they are not an interpreter of tongues. As a result, the person will be uninformed about what the person who is speaking in tongues is saying. Paul makes the point that the other person hearing should be able to say Amen. The person speaking, singing, and praying by the spirit inside the local church without an interpreter robs the uninformed person of edification. Believers must engage in speaking intelligently in the church. This is the third point of reflection. Paul writes in verse 19, "Yet in the church, I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." The KJV translates the English phrase *I might teach* from the Greek verb *katécheó* which means teaching foundational truths as they relate to progressing in the Christian life. Paul expresses his desire to teach believers the word of God. In order for him to accomplish this task, he has set aside his own speaking by the spirit in the presence of other believers for speaking intelligently in the church.

Lesson aim, topic, and summary by Joseph Ellzey Jr., PhD

Lesson VII

Date: June 18, 2023

Lesson Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 14:20-25

A Command to Demonstrate Spiritual Maturity within the Church

Lesson Aim: The believer will learn about the misuse of spiritual gifts within the local church.

Open It

1. How did you feel when you were around people and did not know their language?

Explore It

1. Why did Paul quote from Isaiah in instructing the Corinthians on tongues?

2. How does the quotation from Isaiah 28:11-12 clarify the purpose of the spiritual gift of tongues?

3. What is the problem with speaking in tongues in church?

4. Why is it beneficial for unbelievers to hear prophesying in the church?

Get It

1. What was to be the purpose of each part of the meeting?

2. What edifies you during the worship service?

3. Do you see people misusing their gifts in worship? How?

Apply It

1. What can you do next Sunday to use your gifts in worship?

Summary:

The apostle Paul continues teaching on spiritual maturity within the local church with respect to the exercising of spiritual gifts. He presents the biblical principle that uninterpreted tongues in the church is a sign of judgment according to the Scripture. Paul writes in verse 21, “In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.” This is a quote from Isaiah 28:11–12. The context of that passage is about the northern tribe of Israel being judged by Jehovah because of their disobedience. The Almighty God used the Assyrian nation as His instruments to conquer the northern tribes and to take them into captivity. The message for them was spoken intelligently by the prophets but they rejected God. The judgment was them being taken into captivity by a nation who did not speak their language. Paul uses this Old Testament verse to compare the usage of uninterpreted tongues inside the local church. He stresses the point that it is a sign of judgment.

Paul shares a second biblical principle with the Corinthians in this section. He emphasizes that the church's understanding of the gifts of tongues and prophecy must be based on Scripture. Paul writes in verse 22, “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.” He stresses the point that tongues are for sign to them that do not believe. There are three declarations in Scripture that supports Paul’s conclusion (Acts 2:2-11; 10:44-48; 19:1-7). All three of these attestations demonstrates the miraculous power of the Almighty God by the gifting of believers to speak in tongues to allow them to prophesy about the mighty works of God in a language not known to the speaker but known to the hearer. In the last section of this lesson, Paul shares with the Corinthians a third biblical principle. He explains that unbelievers hearing uninterpreted tongues in the church is of no benefit according to Scripture. Paul writes in verse 23, “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?” The KJV translated the English words *unlearned* or *unbelievers* from the Greek words *idiótēs* and *apistos*. The first Greek word *idiótēs* means destitute of the gift of tongues, and the second Greek word *apistos* in this context speaks of those who refuse belief in the gospel. Therefore, the person who cannot interpret the tongues, and for the person who does not believe will think that the person speaking by the spirit is mad. This occurred on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:13). The gift of prophesy is the better choice within the local church because it may cause a person destitute of the gift of tongues and unbeliever to believe in the Almighty God.

Lesson aim, topic, and summary by Joseph Ellzey Jr., PhD

Lesson VIII

Date: June 25, 2023

Lesson Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Conduct for Spiritual Worship within the Church

Lesson Aim: The believer will learn about the proper use of spiritual gifts within the local church.

Open It

1. What is it like to attend a disorderly meeting or gathering?

Explore It

1. What contributions were the Corinthians to make when coming together?

2. What kind of order were the Corinthians to observe when speaking in tongues?

3. How is the gift of prophecy beneficial to the church?

Get It

1. How might a church exhibit disorder in its worship?

2. How can you improve your preparation for church services?

3. How could you participate in worship so as to strengthen the church?

4. How can you use your spiritual gift in a fitting and orderly manner?

Apply It

1. What part of your Saturday can you use to help you prepare for the worship service you attend?

Summary:

The apostle Paul preaches on orderly worship within the local church in this final section. The Church today is divided on whether tongue speaking is appropriate. Each side at times uses Scripture to proof text their arguments. Paul concludes this chapter by giving rules to prophesying and speaking in tongues. The question if tongues are for today will always be debated. There will always be believers for or against it. A question that is often neglected (with respect to speaking in tongues) is whether the body of Christ is being edified. Paul writes in verse 26, “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.” The last clause of this verse commands us to do all thing unto edifying. The KJV translates the English word *do* from the Greek verb *ginomai* which means to emerge, become, transitioning from one point (realm, condition) to another.

Regardless of the spiritual gift, Paul commands us to ensure that the focus is edifying the body of Christ. This holds the believer who is exercising the spiritual gift accountable to God and the church as an organism. Secondly, the believer speaking by the spirit is instructed to be silent in the church if there is not an interpreter for their tongues. Paul writes in verse 28, “But if there is no interpreter, he should be silent in the church. Let him speak to himself and to God.” The KJV translates the English words *be silent* from the Greek verb *sigáo* which means to keep silence, hold one's peace. Paul uses an imperative which implies a command. The believer is instructed to speak to God instead of speaking by the spirit openly within the local church. Concerning prophesying, no more than three should minister and the other are instructed to investigate (judge) thoroughly. If revelation is made, others who are prophesying must be silent. Prophesying should be done one by one so that all may learn and that all may be encouraged. Next, Paul gives specific instruction to the women. He writes in verse 34, “the women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak. Rather, let them be in submission, as in fact the law says.” Paul uses the same Greek word *sigáo* (silent) as in verse 28 when he was instructing the men. Both men and women are instructed to be silent if they are exercising their spiritual gifts outside the parameters of Scripture.

Furthermore, the women are not to interrupt the teaching, prophesying, or tongue speaking with questions or comments, but rather to ask their husbands at home. Why? This was God's plan for the church and family. This does not prevent the women from praying, teaching other women and children, and sharing their testimony in their local congregations. Paul is instructing all believers and not just the Corinthians. He writes in verse 37, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” The KJV translates the English words *let him acknowledge* from the Greek verb *epiginóskó* which means to know accurately, know well. Paul uses a command. It is necessary for the believer to thoroughly examine what Paul has written. This is important because all things must be done decently and in order especially in the household of God.

Lesson aim, topic, and summary by Joseph Ellzey Jr., PhD

Chief Editor: Terrence Howard

Bachelor of Arts in Bible & Theology Tyndale Theological Seminary & Institute, Hurst, TX
Master of Theological Studies, Louisiana Baptist University & Seminary, Shreveport, LA

Assistant Editor: Darla Powell

Bachelor of Business Studies, Dallas Baptist University, Dallas, TX
Master of Science in Management, Texas A&M University, Commerce, TX

Lesson aims and summaries:

Glendoria P. Boyd

Certification in Biblical Counseling, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ft. Worth, TX
Basic Bible Diploma (48 hours), Dallas Bible Theological Institute, Dallas, TX
Advanced Bible Diploma (15 hours), Dallas Bible Theological Institute, Dallas, TX

Joseph Ellzey, Jr.

Bachelor of Science in Mathematics, Troy University, Troy, AL
Master of Arts in Bible & Theology, Tyndale Theological Seminary & Institute, Hurst, TX
Master of Criminal Justice, Tarleton University, Stephenville, TX
PhD, Louisiana Baptist University & Seminary, Shreveport, LA

Kenneth E. Wilson

Certification in Biblical Counseling, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ft. Worth, TX
Basic Bible Diploma (48 hours), Dallas Bible Theological Institute, Dallas, TX
Bachelor Degree in Technology, Peru State College, Peru NE
Master of Human Relations Degree, University of Oklahoma, Norman Oklahoma
Doctor of Divinity, Christian Bible College & Seminary, Independence Missouri

Victor Kirkpatrick

Basic Bible Diploma (48 hours), Dallas Bible Theological Institute, Dallas, TX
Biblical Studies, Integrity Seminary, Red Oak, TX

Resources:

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary faculty.
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