

# FULFILLED

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GOD'S PLAN FOR CREATING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



GABRIEL GONZALEZ

3-SESSION SMALL GROUP SERIES | TEACHER'S MANUAL

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**GOD'S PLAN FOR CREATING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

**SMALL GROUP LESSON SERIES**

WRITTEN BY GABRIEL GONZALEZ

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## NOTE TO TEACHERS

Hello! This series is a culmination of three lessons which collectively focus on the human heart. Specifically, each lesson examines the importance of finding and creating healthy relationships in three main areas: 1) Family; 2) Friends; 3) Jesus Christ.

The way that the lessons are written is as manuscripts, meaning that the author has written the lesson as if he were teaching it with these words. You *could* read the lesson and it should flow easily. However, we recommend that you take time to study the lessons beforehand and be familiar with the content. You may want to write certain points in your own words and that's okay! There is more than enough content for you to work with.

To shorten up the total pages, we have not written out every scripture. At the beginning of each lesson, invite the members of your small group to be ready to read certain passages of scripture when you come to them in the lesson. For convenience, we have included the scriptures at the beginning of each lesson. (The author is using the English Standard Version translation for most scriptural references).

Lastly, there are discussion questions at the end of each lesson which are meant to facilitate conversation. You can use these questions or come up with your own!

We hope this series is a blessing and that you find it easy to teach!

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## SERIES FOCUS

Relationships matter to God. Whether it is with Him, your spouse, your children, or your friends, God deeply cares about your relationships. Because people are messy, relationships tend to get messy. Many of us have up walls and barriers because of past traumas, betrayals, or other circumstances that have caused us to lose trust in others. Many of us have scars that are deeply hidden in the darkest corners of our hearts.

However, God has called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. Living in the light means that we are redeemed by God's grace and that all things hidden in the darkness, must be brought forth, before the feet of Jesus. God does not call the hidden areas of our hearts to the light to shame or humiliate us – he bore our shame and humiliation through His sacrifice on the cross. On the contrary, he calls us into His light to restore and reconcile us to Him. It is only through this divine reconciliation that we find true fulfillment in Christ!

We challenge you to open up your heart and allow God's Word to speak to you about each of these key areas of relationships in your life. Examine and search within and allow God to heal and restore those things which are broken. Allow His Spirit to fill any voids in your heart and live a life of fulfillment in Christ Jesus!

## SERIES SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

**Galatians 5:14** – “For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

# LESSON 1: GOD-CENTERED HOMES

## ESTABLISHING GODLY VALUES & PRINCIPLES FOR YOUR HOME

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This lesson focuses on the importance of establishing Godly values and principles in the setting of your home, in order to create a God-centered family with God-centered relationships.

### LESSON SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Genesis 18:19; 1 Peter 5:8; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 5:15-16; Matthew 6:33; Psalm 127:1; Psalm 119:11; Hebrews 13:4; Ephesians 6:1-4; Acts 2:42-27

### INTRODUCTION

#### **\*Read Genesis 18:19**

Have you ever wondered why you are the way you are? Or, why someone else is the way they are? What shapes people? What molds a person's character and way of living?

While all of us are capable of change and growth, especially with the power of the Holy Spirit, the truth is that a *large part* of who we are has a lot to do with our upbringing – with the home that we were raised in.

It is a fact of science that the most formative years of personality development, in every human, are between the years of five to eight years old. Although personality changes can still take place at later stages of life, much of how we learn to relate to other people is cemented into our psychological nature by the time we are eight years old.

**Why is this so important?** Because, if there was ever a time to realize that having healthy relationships in your family – in your home – is vitally important, **it is now**.

The greatest attack of Satan against the Church today is the attack against the nuclear family – that is, a home established by God through marriage, between one man and one woman, and their children, if the Lord allows.

In this lesson, we will talk about why Satan attacks our homes so much and why he is determined to destroy your home!

### SATAN – YOUR ADVERSARY

#### **\*Read 1 Peter 5:8**

Let's establish this right from the beginning: Satan is your **enemy**, and he **hates** everything about you. He has one goal, to **destroy** and **devour** you.

Because Satan is your adversary, this means that everything you're fighting for, he is fighting against:

- If you're fighting *for* a daily prayer life, he is fighting *against* your daily prayer life.
- If you're fighting *for* a healthy marriage, he is fighting *against* a healthy marriage.
- If you're fighting *for* a good relationship with your children, he is fighting *against* a good relationship with your children.
- If you're fighting *for* good habits in your family, he is fighting *against* you creating the good habits in your family.
- If you're fighting *for*... (fill in the blank)... you can rest assured that he is fighting against you!

The purpose of this is not to glorify Satan, rather to bring awareness to every believer of the reality and severity of the opposition against you. We must understand that Satan hates you and he hates your family. His goal is to destroy your home and your relationships.

Why? Because Satan knows that a strong church is made of strong families. Generally, those in our family are the closest and most important relationships to us. If Satan can disrupt our family relationships, then he can disrupt the stability of the Church, and even our relationship with Christ.

This is why keeping a God-centered home is so important! Let's talk about some of the important aspects of a God-centered home.

## CHOSEN BY GOD TO LEAD YOUR HOME

In the main scripture passage for this lesson (Genesis 18:19), God says that he has chosen Abraham, who is the Father of the nation of Israel, to **command his children and household to keep the way of the Lord.**

Keeping a God-centered home starts with the recognition that every father and mother has been chosen by God to lead their home. Leading your home doesn't just mean organizing your family's weekly activities. The scriptures help us understand that leading our homes means that we must teach our children to keep the way of the Lord and that we must keep God at the center of our lives, **daily**. *\*Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 22:6*

The children of Israel were instructed to talk about God's Word **daily** and to teach God's Word **daily**.

Many Christians struggle to prioritize God in their homes and rely on the Church and its leaders – the pastor, ministry, and Sunday school teachers – to teach their children and family God’s Word. The problem is that most people spend an average of 1.5 to 2 hours per week actually at church, and the other 166 hours at other places. This means that most people spend less than 1% of their time in church per week!

If that is the only amount of time spent on teaching and learning from God’s Word, then how can we expect our children to keep God’s Word and His ways in their hearts? How can we expect for our families to grow healthy, God-centered relationships? How can we expect ourselves to truly know God, if we do not make Him a daily priority?

## PRIORITY ADJUSTMENTS

### **\*Read Ephesians 5:15-16**

It has been said that “...our life is the sum total of all the decisions we make every day, and those decisions are determined by our priorities.” – *Myles Munroe*

God must become your family’s priority – He must become **your priority**.

How can I tell what my priorities are? Ask yourself these questions:

- How do I spend my time when I am home?
- What do I find myself thinking about most?
- What do I spend my money on?
- Where does my family spend most of its time?
- What things do we (or I) talk about most?

If God is not easily found in your responses to these questions, then it is highly probable that God is not your priority.

God’s will and desire for your life, and your family, is that He becomes your greatest priority. So many people spend so much time, effort, and money on worldly pursuits, in the name of “creating a better life for their family”, or “building wealth”, that they completely forget that God wants to provide everything they need! True fulfillment is in Christ! **\*Read Matthew 6:33**

God’s Word teaches us not to worry about what we will eat, or wear, or where we will live! Instead, to focus on the kingdom of God and living righteously. When we do this, everything we need will be given to us! We need to adjust our priorities, to God’s priorities for us.

### **What are God’s priorities for me?**

- Your relationship with God.
- Your relationship with your spouse (once married).
- Your relationship with your children (if God permits).



- Your relationship with your family/parents.
- Your relationship with your fellow believers.
- Your relationship and care for unbelievers (for the sake of winning them to Christ).

Everything else is secondary to God.

## REBUILDING YOUR HOME

### ***\*Read Psalm 127:1***

We must understand that we cannot build a God-centered home by ourselves – we all need God’s help. The wonderful news is that learning how to build a God-centered home is not a mystery. God’s Word is full of instructions and examples of how we can build a Godly home.

No matter your role in the family – a father, a mother, a son, a daughter, even a grandparent – whatever your role is in your family unit, you have the ability to positively impact your family!

Let’s look at some practical ways you can build up your home!

### **1. Schedule specific times for devotion.**

Devotion is simply a time that you dedicate to spend with the Lord. Whether it be by prayer, scripture reading, or worship and praise, devotions should be part of the daily life of every believer, and it should be with the focus of strengthening your relationship with Christ. Devotion times should be set separately for both **individual** and **family** times. ***\*Read Matthew 6:6***

### **2. Teach and memorize scriptures.**

God’s Word places a heavy emphasis on the importance of committing scriptures to memory. Pick just **one** memory verse per week, teach it to your whole family, and memorize it! Make it fun by rewarding your kids with a prize when they memorize scriptures! ***\*Read Psalm 119:11***

### **3. Schedule quality family time together.**

Relationships are only built by time spent together. The more time you spend with the ones you love, the stronger your relationships will be with them. Be intentional about scheduling family time together. Have at least one day per week, or one evening, that is designated as “Family Night”. Let this time be uninterrupted family time with your family unit and make the interactions intentional – stay off of your phone and electronics!

#### **4. Nurture and protect your marriage.**

Your spouse is the closest person that God has given to you to mirror the intimacy and passion of the relationship that Christ desires with His Bride, the Church. Make time to nurture your relationship with your spouse. Go on dates! And most importantly, place safeguards in your home and around your relationship to protect your marriage – to protect your spouse. A healthy marriage is the foundation of a healthy home. ***\*Read Hebrews 13:4***

#### **5. Nurture and protect your children.**

If there was ever a time to get serious about protecting your children from the enemy, it is now! Protect them from the things of this world and nurture them with the love of Christ. Your job as parent is not to be your child's best friend – it is to be their parent, their teacher, their role model. Set safeguards in your home for your children and understand that they are much more susceptible to the spirit-world than you realize. They have a soul that needs salvation, just like you. Prepare them, train them, teach them, love them, nurture them, protect them. ***\*Read Ephesians 6:1-4***

#### **6. Welcome like-minded believers into your home.**

One of the greatest blessings that God gives us besides our immediate family, is the fellowship we have with like-minded believers. The Bible teaches us that all those who have been bought by Christ's blood, have been washed and sanctified into the same spiritual family. This is why we call each other "brother" and "sister". Your home should be a place where, on occasion, you can invite and welcome others into the blessing and peace of your home. When others are welcomed into your home, you are able to be a blessing to them through your hospitality and service, and they are able to be a blessing to you through their friendship and fellowship! In the early days of the church, the church did not meet at a centralized building...they met in the homes. ***\*Read Acts 2:42-47***

## **CONCLUSION**

As you think about more ways you can establish Godly values and principles in your home and with your family, remember this:

- God as my priority = healthier "me"
- Healthier "me" = healthier relationships with others
- Healthy relationships = healthy marriages
- Healthy marriages = healthy families
- Healthy families = healthy churches

No matter what condition your home, or family, is in right now, there's still hope and an opportunity to begin improving today! It starts with your relationship with Christ. Pray and ask the Lord to help you make Him the center of your home.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. *What areas of my family-life balance needs improvement?*
2. *What changes can I make in my daily priorities to improve my relationship with God? My relationship with my family?*
3. *Why does God care about the strength and stability of my home?*

## **OPTIONAL HOMEWORK**

1. *Sit down with your family this week and open your calendars and schedule a Family Night, which will be dedicated strictly to time with your family members only.*
2. *If you're married, plan a nice evening date with your spouse, with the intention of making a meaningful time of connection with each other.*
3. *Make a personal goal of praying for your family members, by name, every morning.*

# LESSON 2: LOVE MY NEIGHBOR

## THE SECOND-MOST IMPORTANT THING TO GOD

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This lesson focuses on the importance of maintaining healthy relationships with our neighbors. Those who we meet; those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ; those whom we call “friend”.

### LESSON SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Matthew 22:37-40; Philippians 2:4; John 13:34-35; Galatians 6:10; John 15:12-14; Proverbs 18:24

### INTRODUCTION

#### **\*Read Matthew 22:37-40**

Imagine one day you’re walking past the temple in Jerusalem, and you hear commotion as people are murmuring and whispering about what’s happening inside. Your curiosity leads you into the temple where there you find Jesus standing before a group of Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes. The men you see before Jesus are religious rulers, leaders, lawyers, and interpreters of the law and they are all frustrated. They seem baffled as they try to trick Jesus over and over with riddles. Yet somehow, he stands calm and collected, wise and gentle, and Jesus answers each riddle with words of truth and with no trouble at all.

Finally, after realizing they cannot trick him into a wrong answer regarding scripture and heavenly principles, one lawyer comes up with a great idea...surely, he can trick Jesus regarding the Law – that is the Mosaic Law.

The lawyer says, “What is the *greatest* commandment in the law?”

This question designed to trap Jesus. In asking Jesus to choose one great commandment, they hoped to make Jesus show neglect for another area of the law – there were 613 laws to abide by in those days.

Jesus, completely unaffected by their attempt to trick him, responds immediately that the **first** and greatest commandment is to **love God** with all of your heart, soul and mind. But he doesn’t stop there. He then says that the **second** greatest commandment is to **love your neighbor as yourself**.

Then he says these powerful words: “**On these two commandments hang all the Law and Prophets.**”

Perfectly understanding the essence of the law, Jesus had no difficulty answering these men. Instead of promoting one command over another, Jesus defined the law in its core principles: **love God and love people.**

## WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

It is interesting how so many of us do not have as hard of a time loving God with everything we have, as we do loving others, like we love ourselves.

### What did Jesus mean by, “love your neighbor as yourself”?

This certainly does not mean that we must love ourselves before we can show love to other people. On the contrary, this means that in the same way that we take care of ourselves and invest into our personal physical and spiritual care, we should have care and concern for the interest of others. *\*Read Philipians 2:4*

In another place in scripture (Luke 10), another expert in the law stands up to test Jesus and he asks Jesus, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus responds to him by asking the man to quote the scriptures. The man responds, “Love the Lord with all of your heart, soul and mind, and love thy neighbor as thyself.” Jesus tells him, “You have answered correctly, if you do this you will live eternally.” But then the man tries to justify himself by asking the question, “*Then, who is my neighbor?*”

Jesus responds with the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In the story of the Good Samaritan, a man who is traveling is robbed, beaten and left for dead on the side of the road. A priest is passing by, sees the man, and keeps going. Later, a Levite (a worshipper) passes by, sees the man, and keeps going. Finally, a Samaritan man, passes by, sees the man, and saves his life, cares for him, and takes care of all of his needs until he is better.

### What was the main point of Jesus’s parable?

Both the priest and the Levite were religious men who were busy about the work of the church. They were what we would call today, “kingdom-minded”. They were focused on what seemed right – their duties to their religious works. However, their folly was that they were **too busy** to care about the needs of another person who meant nothing to them.

The point Jesus was making is that religion and religious activities cannot replace the responsibility we have to show love and care to others. “Who is my neighbor?”, you might ask? **Anyone and everyone.**

God wants us to show Christ-like love to *anyone* we come across and to *everyone* who is in a place of need. These are our neighbors.

Your neighbors can be the stranger you meet while waiting in line to pay for groceries. It can be your actual neighbor who lives next door. It can be your child's school teacher, or even your coworker. And it is most certainly your brothers and sisters in Christ!

## MAKING GODLY CONNECTIONS

Let's stop for a moment and consider why "loving your neighbor" is the **second-most important** thing to God. Could it be that showing Godly love to other people is the method that Christ would use help us make disciples? The answer is, **yes!**

Let's look at a few important passages of Scripture to establish the importance of demonstrating love towards others:

1. **\*Read John 13:34-35.** The greatest way that people will recognize that you are disciple of Christ is by the love that you demonstrate towards others.
2. **\*Read Galatians 6:10.** We should always do good to others when we can, especially if it blesses our brothers and sisters in Christ.
3. **\*Read John 15:12-14.** Jesus demonstrated His love by giving His life for his friends. We show our love for our friends, when we demonstrate sacrifice for each other.

### THINK ABOUT THIS.

How can we successfully make disciples – other Christ followers – if we fail to make Godly connections with the people we meet? By "Godly connection" we mean, showing Christ's love to people no matter what! Loving them as Christ loves us. The more people we connect with and the more disciples we make, the more of God's love we will be surrounded by.

Think about it. If Christ's love abides in my heart, then I will love God and I will show Christ's love to others. As I meet people and share God's love, I will develop meaningful relationships with people, who in turn will reflect and share God's love with me and others in their path. As this happens over and over again, soon, I will be surrounded by people who love God and love others, including *me*, the same way that I love them!

This is what making **Godly connections** looks like!

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

So, what do we do with this? How can we go about making Godly-connections and how can we show God's love?

1. **Make new friends.** Chances are there are people you attend church with every week that you still do not know much about. Invite a family, or person in your church, out to dinner after a service and spend time getting to know them. *\*Read Proverbs 18:24*
2. **Meet your neighbors.** There's no place like where you live to start sharing Christ's love. After all, it is called your "neighborhood". Introduce yourself to your neighbors. Be kind and friendly. Invite them to a BBQ in the backyard. Tell them you're a Christian. Invite them to your Small Group and Church. They may not respond right away, or ever, but eventually if they're hungry for God they'll see His Spirit and love inside of you.
3. **Practice kindness.** Love is a fruit of the Spirit. You must be filled with God's Spirit and be intentional about practicing kindness. If this seems hard, or if you're always mad about something, a good place to start is in the prayer room. The more time you spend with God, the easier it will be to show kindness to others.
4. **Keep trying.** Sometimes people are resistant to friendliness and kindness. Some people do not want to make connections with others. Do not let this discourage you. Be persistent and "kill them with kindness". Don't give up on people because they do not respond. Remember, Christ's love for you and I remains regardless of whether we demonstrate love back!

## CONCLUSION

If there is nothing else you remember from this lesson, remember this:

Jesus told the Pharisees, "...upon these two commandments hang the Law and Prophets." What Jesus meant by this was that if someone were to obey the law completely and believe in the Prophets (scriptures), but they failed to demonstrate love to God and to others, then they have failed to know the Law and Prophets.

As Christians, we must be careful not to confuse religious activities and our service in the Kingdom of God with the responsibility to show love for God and love for our neighbor. If we do so, we are no greater than the priest and Levite who left the beaten sojourner for dead on the side of the road.

Loving God is first. **Loving people is the second most important thing to God.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Why do you think that God wants us to love people like we love ourselves?*
2. *What are some examples of how I can demonstrate love to others?*
3. *Why is it important to make Godly-connections and to have friends?*

## OPTIONAL HOMEWORK

1. *Find someone at church this week who you don't know too well. Invite them for dinner either at your house, or at a restaurant after church.*
2. *Write down three ways that you can show kindness to someone this week. Then make the effort to actually do it in a meaningful way.*
3. *Introduce yourself to your neighbor wherever you live and invite them to your Small Group, or to church.*



# LESSON 3: JESUS, MY EVERYTHING

## THE MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP I'LL EVER HAVE

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This is the final lesson in this series, and it focuses on the **most important** relationship that anyone will ever have: that is with Jesus Christ, God Almighty. Every believer must love God with all of their heart, soul and mind, and He must be our “everything”.

### LESSON SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Psalm 73:25-26; Matthew 7:21-23; 1 Peter 1:8-9; 1 John 2:3-5; Matthew 4:4; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Philippians 3:8-9; Luke 9:23-25

### INTRODUCTION

#### **\*Read Psalm 73:25-26**

For most of us, it is hard to imagine life without Jesus. After all, He is our Lord and Savior. The scriptures tell us that Jesus came to this world to die for our sins, simply because He loved us. What a beautiful and powerful testament to the way that God feels about us...the way he feels about *me*.

Because of Christ's love for me and how He has saved me from my sins, I cannot express my gratitude enough for His lovingkindness and mercy. I cannot imagine life without Jesus. Most Christians, if not all, share these sentiments about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

However, what is harder to imagine than a Christian contemplating the goodness of Jesus, is a Christian who will stand before God one day and to hear these words from Him: “Depart from me worker of iniquity. ***I never knew you.***”

These daunting words are Jesus's words, found in Matthew 7:21-23, as He describes the reality that there will be those who call Jesus, “Lord”, but never had an actual **relationship** with Him. **\*Read Matthew 7:21-23.**

The thought that I can call Jesus, “Lord”, perform works in His name, and even do righteous things, but *fail to know Him* and be *lost in eternity*, is a catastrophic reality that not many Christians are willing to face.

Today, our goal is to find out how can I *know* Jesus, because knowing Him, will be the most important relationship I will ever have!

## BELIEVE ON HIM

**\*Read 1 Peter 1:8-9**

The first step one must take to know Jesus, is to **have faith**. To believe on Him.

Some find it hard to believe in God because they cannot see Him, or have a tangible way to know He is real. However, faith is not based upon what we can see physically with our eyes, or what we can feel physically with our hands. Instead, our faith is evidenced by what we cannot see, and the substance of what we hope for. **\*Read Hebrews 11:1.**

Here's a great example that something can exist without being able to see it:

**Have you ever seen the wind?** I mean sure, you see the *effects* of the wind by things being blown around, dust being kicked up, and the environment around the wind changing. But no human being has ever seen the *actual* wind itself.

Yet, we know the wind is real. Why? Because we not only see the effects of the wind, but we can *feel* its existence. Such is our faith in God. We may not be able to see Him physically with our own eyes, but we believe He is alive and real because His Word tells us so, and because we feel His presence. When He shows up, the environment changes. And eventually, to those who know Him, we learn to hear His voice.

Take the first step and *believe* on Him.

## EMBRACE HIS WORD

**\*Read 1 John 2:3-5**

The next step to knowing Jesus is to **embrace His Word**.

Many Christians today subscribe to a type of Christian faith that is based purely on feeling and emotion. Meaning, the level of their knowledge of Christ is as deep as the ambience and transient feeling they get when the worship band is playing on Sunday morning. So many Christians rely so heavily on the church-worship atmospheres to “feel God”, or to have an “encounter with God”, instead of realizing that they can find what they’re looking for by opening His Word and studying the scriptures.

Don’t get us wrong, there is a time and place for anointed, Godly worship. We are not discounting the power of an anointed worship service. However, what we aim to say is that God’s Word is the purest form of *truth* and *knowledge* that any of us can receive from Christ. You can have a “God experience” in your living room, or wherever you’re reading God’s Word, simply by opening your Bible and embracing the Scriptures. **\*Read Matthew 4:4 and 2 Timothy 3:16.**

## PRAY, PRAY, AND THEN PRAY AGAIN

### **\*Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17**

In order to *know* God, we must spend time talking and listening to Him. We must **pray**.

Aside from Bible reading, prayer is probably the greatest lost art in the modern-day Christian church today. The Bible is filled with hundreds of scriptures that emphasize the importance of **daily prayer**, in the life of the believer.

Instead of listing hundreds of scriptures below to emphasize prayer, let me ask you this question instead: *Why did Jesus pray?*

If we believe that Jesus is God, then why would it have been necessary for Him to pray? While this question is highly debated amongst scholars and theologians, and there are many possible answers to this question, may I offer you this simple answer:

**Jesus did not pray because He needed anything from Himself; He prayed because He wanted to give the example to His disciples, and all believers, that the human mind and will must be submitted to God's Spirit and will.**

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, in Matthew 6, He told them to pray for God's will to be done, instead of their own will. What a simple formula!

So many Christians have this backwards. We pray for all of our wants and needs, instead of praying to know God's will. Imagine how different your outlook on life would be, if for *every situation in your life*, you prayed the will of God to be done, instead of your own will?

The truth is that the only way we can know God intimately and to know His will, is to spend uninterrupted time with Him, in prayer.

In Genesis 3, the Bible describes a picture of mankind (Adam) walking and talking with God in the Garden of Eden, in the coolness of the day. This depiction is the relationship that God had with man, before the sin entered the world and the fall of man. Imagine that – God walking and talking with you, daily!

## LOSE, IN ORDER TO GAIN

### **\*Read Philippians 3:8-9**

When you believe on God, you study the scriptures, and you spend time with God, daily, then you must do possibly the hardest part of it all: *lose*.

The Apostle Paul was a highly decorated citizen of Rome. He was educated, he was wealthy, he was an accomplished writer and scribe, he was a respected and prominent member of judicial courts, and he was a very excellent craftsman. By many accounts,

he was “full package” deal. A man of many talents. A man with many accomplishments and the right to boast in almost any circle.

Yet, in Philippians 3:8-9, the Apostle Paul says that he, “counts *everything* as a loss, because of the surpassing worth of *knowing* Christ Jesus, my Lord.”

How could Paul say this? If we were in Paul’s shoes with all of his accolades, could we find it within ourselves to say this?

Paul’s example teaches us that all of the material possessions and personal accolades that we can receive here on earth, **mean nothing** in comparison to ***knowing Jesus Christ***.

**\*Read Luke 9:23-25.** Jesus’s words in this scripture are harsh to the believer. In order to know Christ, one must “**deny himself**”. One must “**take up his cross daily**.” One must “**lose his life**” in order to “**gain**”.

Not many Christians are willing to subscribe to this type of dedicated Christian living that Jesus describes. Hence, why **many** will stand before the God and say, “Lord, Lord”, but hear those dreadful words from God, “I never **knew** you.”

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

As we see in Paul’s example and in Jesus’s words, knowing Christ is more than just attending Sunday worship, or being involved in a few religious activities. Knowing Jesus means that He must become your ***everything***. We must be willing to lose a few things in this world, to be denied a few things, in order to gain eternal life and knowledge of Him.

Here are a few ways you can apply these principles to your life:

1. Make some adjustments in your daily schedule to make time to pray and read God’s Word.
2. Get an accountability partner to help you stay on track with your personal devotion time.
3. Evaluate your life and determine what things/people/places/activities are preventing you from really developing a relationship with Christ. Then eliminate them.
4. Find a Godly mentor. Someone who can look into your life and give you Godly counsel and wisdom to help you make hard choices.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of the day, you can have everything this world has to offer and still be lost and empty inside, if you do not have Jesus. Jesus must be your everything!

There's an old song that says:

*My hope is built on nothing less,  
Than Jesus Christ, my righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand,  
All other ground is sinking sand.*

When you really know Jesus, in the fellowship of His suffering and in the power of His resurrection, nothing else matters! Having a real relationship with Jesus Christ is all that matters. And the more you know Him, the more He changes you to become more like Him!

Let the prayer of every saint and child of God be, "Lord, I want to know you, Jesus, my everything!"

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Why do you think some who call themselves believers will not be recognized by Jesus Christ, when they stand before Him?*
2. *What does it mean to "count everything as loss" in order to know Christ?*
3. *How can we make Jesus our everything?*

## OPTIONAL HOMEWORK

1. *Take a moment this week to look at everything you're doing in your life and try to figure out what things are taking you away from a relationship with Christ.*
2. *Spend time in prayer this week and ask God for His will to be accomplished in your life.*

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# FULFILLED

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## **GOD'S PLAN FOR CREATING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS SMALL GROUP LESSON SERIES**

WRITTEN BY GABRIEL GONZALEZ

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Gabriel Gonzalez resides in Southern California with his lovely wife, Marina, and their four beautiful children. He serves as an ordained minister in his local church, where he has been congregating for more than 12 years. As a leader in his church, Gabriel serves in several ministries and capacities, including the Worship Ministry and Small Groups. Professionally, Gabriel serves as the General Manager for the Apostolic Assembly Corporate Office and works closely with organizational leaders on the growth and development of the organization. In 2021, Gabriel published his book, *Seeds: Essential Principles of Leadership*, which is sold on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and the Apostolic Assembly's Christian Education Bookstore, [www.ceonlinestore.com](http://www.ceonlinestore.com). Gabriel is passionate about teaching God's Word and sharing the Gospel. You can find out more information about this series, or other materials, by contacting Gabriel at 909-992-9866.