

JUNE 2013

25th

Anniversary

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2013

TODAY IN THE **Word**

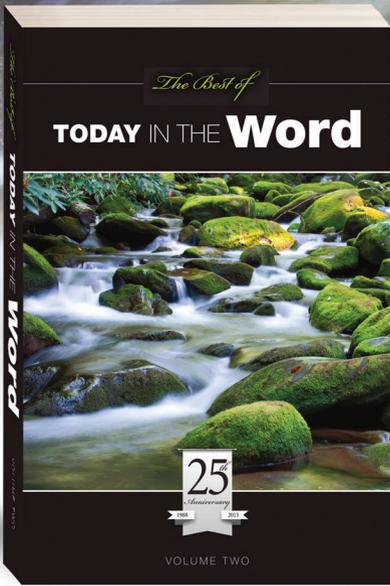
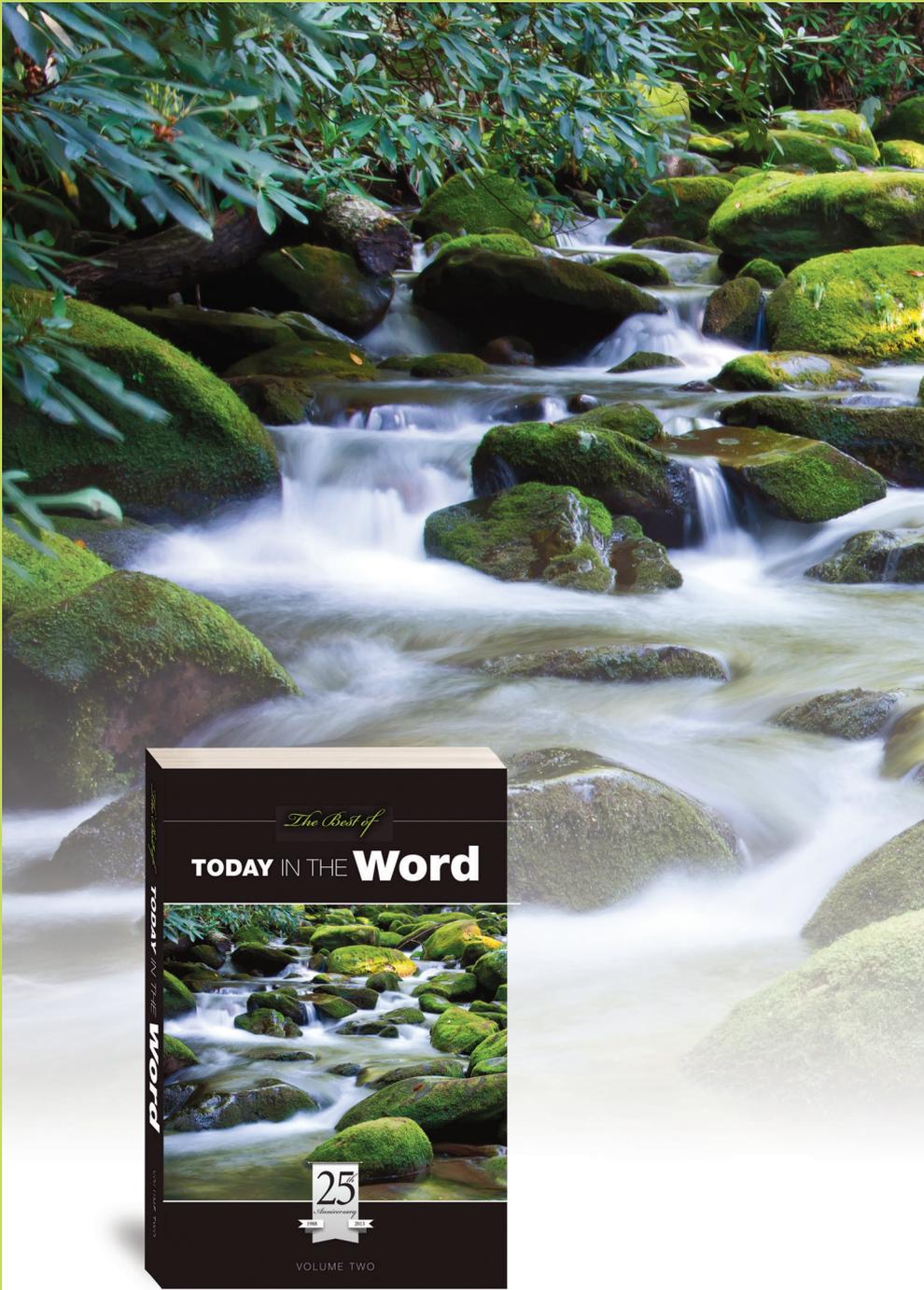
A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

God's love has
been poured out
into our hearts
through the Holy
Spirit, who has
been given to us.

Romans 5:5



Faith with Feet:
Walking in the Fruit of the Spirit



The Best of TODAY IN THE Word

VOLUME TWO • 25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Enjoy *The Best of Today in the Word, Volume Two*, a selection of 12 of our readers' favorite monthly devotionals. With this useful resource, you will deepen your knowledge of God's Word as you delve into Old and New Testament, character, and topical studies. These *Today in the Word* favorites will encourage and challenge you on your life's journey.

Daniel: Commitment or Compromise?

Published June 2005

Day 1
Read Daniel 1:1-2, Jeremiah
During Jehoiakim's reign. No
one king of Babylon made it
2 Kings 24:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

New Year's Eve, 1899 saw of
rivers stacking up on hotels
cannot provide the uncounted
million enthusiastic planning
celebrations to usher in the
and the history portion was
was an reason to get out
mathematically precise like
the third millennium was
until the 2000's year had
2000 had begun. In other
year 2000 would be the year
kennan only if there had
zero.

A look at the accounts in D
Jeremiah 25 presents a sin
drama. Did Nebuchadnezzar
to Jerusalem in the four
Jehoiakim's reign (Jer 23:1)
Dan 1:1? Some scholars
the Babylonians didn't beg
ing a king's reign until the
he took the throne. The ac
would eventually be that I
zero," while Hebrew writers
referred to it as a year number
reasonable explanations c

Characters of Faith and Wisdom

Published January 2009

Day 1

Read Hebrews 12:1-3

Let us throw off everything that hinders
and the sin that so easily entangles, and
let us run with perseverance.

Hebrews 12:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

On the first Sunday of January 1757,
Father Edwards Burr, daughter of
Jonathan Edwards, wrote in her journal:
"I long to begin this year with
God—Oh for God's presence through
this year! When I look back on the year
past and take a view of the Numberless
Mercies I have been the subject of, I
stand amazed at God's goodness to
such an ill-deserving, ill-discerning
Creature! I am—Why am I thus distinguished
from the greater part of the
World—What obligations am I under
to spend the remainder of my time for
God—I don't want to live unless I can
live more in the glory of God and do
more good."

Let her resolution be ours as well in
2009 as we kick off a year of Bible study
centered around the theme of "God's
Wisdom for Real Life." We begin this
month with "Wise Characters of Faith,"

a series of biblical character portraits.
Today's passage refers to these and other
Bible characters as a "great cloud of wit-

ness" who have run the race before
us. Their lives show us the way. As
"witnesses," they testify to the faithful-
ness, power, and love of God, by whose
grace they lived and by whose grace we
now can run an efficient race (cf. 1 Cor.
9:24-27; Phil. 3:12-16).

In this "race" of Christian life, we should
not let all that hinders us—spiritually,
especially sin. We are also in a race
with perseverance, because the race may
be long and difficult. Encouragingly, it
has been marked out for us, reminding
us that God is always in control.

Finally and most importantly, we must
fix our eyes on Jesus. He founded the
faith by which we run, and in perfecting
our faith as we run. He is the ultimate
example, since He, too, ran a grueling,
sacrificial race marked out for Him by
the Father. When we encounter opposi-
tion, shame, suffering, and even death,
we should "imitate Him"—He has over-
come all these obstacles, and we share

in His victory.

LET US RUN WISE

To start this year right, why not compose
a "New Year resolution journal" Father
Edwards Burr and focus your resolution
on spiritual concerns and your rela-
tionship with the Lord. And since our
goal this month is "Wise Characters of
Faith," let us be a resolution specifically

Request your copy today!

Use the reply card in this
issue, or order a copy online
at www.todayintheword.com.

Thank you for your ministry partnership!

TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

The Abundant Life



The fruit of the Spirit that Paul describes in Galatians 5:22–23 reminds me of the abundant life that Jesus promised in John 10:10. When I consider the sum of these virtues, I cannot imagine a life

that would be more well-lived. This is the life that I want to experience, and it is the life that I want my family to experience. It is the life that I think we all passionately desire.

And because God has placed His Spirit within us, each of us has access to this abundant life. If we are walking by the Spirit and being controlled by the Spirit, our lives will be characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This is what the Spirit produces in us when we keep in step with Him.

Walking by the Spirit is seeking to allow the Spirit's control in your life moment by moment. You see, when God placed His Spirit within us, He gave us the ability to obey, but He didn't make it automatic. Apart from the Spirit's work in our lives, our fleshly desires will always attempt to seize control, so we must intentionally and repeatedly place the Spirit in control. Paul promises, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

My desire every day is to maximize the time when I'm under the Spirit's con-

trol, and minimize the time when I am under the control of worldly desires. This involves recognizing when I am under the control of worldly impulses and choosing to do something different. And friends, this requires living intentionally every moment of every day.

For me, one of the best ways to do this is to start my day by spending time with the Lord. Each morning, I ask Him to transform my mind as I study Scripture and pray. I let the Spirit examine my heart and bring to mind my sin. I confess my sins, and I ask for the power of the Spirit. My goal for the rest of the day is to acknowledge when I fall out of step with the Spirit, repent of my sin, and submit myself again to the Spirit's control.

My time here on earth is limited, and I do not want to waste a day not experiencing a life that is characterized by the fruit of the Spirit. Can you imagine what God could do with a person who is committed to walking by the Spirit? Can you imagine what He could do with an entire church committed to walking by the Spirit?

God has entrusted us with the Holy Spirit, and He offers an abundant life to those who are willing to submit to His control moment by moment. We cannot do anything about what we did yesterday, but we can do something about what we are going to do today. "Let us walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25).

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



Freedom to Obey

Paul's letter to the Galatians has been described as "the epistle of freedom" because of its emphasis on grace. The Apostle underscores this theme in Galatians 5:1: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ has freed believers from the Law by fulfilling its demands and paying its penalty. Consequently, those who know Christ as Savior are no longer "under the law" (Gal. 5:18).

This freedom also has a positive dimension. Those who belong to Christ enjoy the freedom to obey. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to "walk by the Spirit" and say "no" to the desires of the sinful nature (Gal. 5:16). The apostle Paul also refers to this as being "led" by the Spirit (Gal. 5:18). To be led by the Spirit does not mean that we discover some hidden plan of God. Nor is it a sudden and mysterious impulse to go somewhere or do something for Jesus.

The leading of the Spirit is the power and freedom to do what God has told us to do in the Scriptures. Elsewhere Paul describes this powerful ministry of the

Spirit as a kind of "law" at work in the believer that counteracts the influence of indwelling sin. This is "the law of the Spirit who gives life" who has "set you free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). To live in the freedom of the Spirit does not mean that we will no longer feel the attraction of sin. The sinful nature continues to exert its influence in believers. Even the apostle Paul learned through painful experience that sincere desire was not enough to guarantee obedience to God's commands. We may agree that God's Law is good and genuinely desire to do it, yet still fail because we are relying on natural ability to obey (Rom. 7:21–23). As long as we depend upon our own ability, our attempts to please God will always end in failure.

Those who live by the law of the Spirit have learned to set their minds on what the Spirit desires (Rom. 8:5–6). They recognize that God has planted a new operating principle within them that is more powerful than the sinful nature. They have received the gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ and are relying upon the power of the Holy Spirit for daily obedience. The result is the fruit of a godly life.

For Further Study

To learn more about living the Christian life, read *How to Continue the Christian Life* by George Sweeting (Moody Publishers).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Heather Moffitt

Traveling through this World



This month begins peak vacation season. Children are out of school, the weather is warmer, and events like weddings and reunions are planned. People head to the beach, to the mountains, to grandma's house. We look forward to exciting adventures, to rest and relaxation, to reconnecting with loved ones. As we log hours in the car or on airplanes, we look forward to arriving at our destination for a much-needed vacation.

My own family is planning a vacation next month to Scotland—three generations will spend three weeks touring the country. For all but one of us, it will be our first visit there. But since our family surname, Moffitt, is related to the Scottish clan Moffat, there has long been interest in Scottish history, culture, and even cuisine. Now we will have the opportunity to hike in the Highlands, explore the Scottish islands, and even visit the town of Moffat. As you might imagine, this trip has been the subject of discussion and great enthusiasm from the youngest to the oldest members of the family. Everyone has contributed ideas of where to go and what to see. We all have a particular destination that we can't wait to visit.

A season of travel and anticipation often reminds me that our Christian lives are a season of journey toward our eternal destination of life with God forever. Just like the hours spent in a crowded airport waiting area can be unpleasant, not

every point along our journey of life will be pleasant or exciting or even memorable. But every day is necessary, ordained by God as part of His plan to complete His good work of conforming us more into the image of His Son.

My family has been devouring guidebooks about Scotland. These books aren't just helpful information for after we arrive. Instead, they help us prepare what we need in advance. They tell us what to pack, where to make lodging arrangements, and tourist traps to avoid. Our spiritual journey is similar. Scripture doesn't tell us about our eternal future with God just so we'll know what's going to happen later. God has told us this so that we can be preparing now for our final destination—eternal life with Him. Scripture tells us what to wear (the armor of God in Ephesians 6) and traps to avoid (the desires of the flesh in Galatians 5).

Our anticipation for a vacation is a small reminder of the anticipation we should have for our future life in God's presence. A break from the everyday toil of work now is a foretaste of our promised inheritance of eternal rest (Heb. 4:3). A time to reconnect with loved ones now foreshadows our reunion with all the saints of God in heaven. A chance to explore a new place reminds us that one day we will inhabit a new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1).

Continued on page 38

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Paul B. Currie

MANAGING EDITOR
Heather Moffitt

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Elena Mafer

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
John Koessler
Kim Pickett

WRITER
Jen Pollock Michel

1-800-DL MOODY
(356-6639)

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TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

Walking in the Fruit of the Spirit

The Bible makes many references to the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity. Scripture recounts how He came as tongues of fire, a mighty wind, and a still small voice. But how does He reveal Himself today, in our day-to-day lives?

The Word of God gives us clues that unmistakably point us to God's Spirit. These clues are the fruit of the Spirit—our topic in *Today in the Word* this month. We'll read about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This fruit of the Holy Spirit working in our lives is easily recognizable, and it is clear evidence of God dwelling within us. A short word *abide* gives us an indication on how to bear this fruit. When we *abide* in Christ, we have union with Him by faith, dependence upon Him, and communion with Him. This month we'll dwell a great deal on this word: "He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

In our day-to-day journey, let us strive for a full and fruitful life in Christ! Jesus Christ is the Vine, we are the branches. We can bear fruit only if, and when, we are connected to the true Vine. All of us at *Today in the Word* are thankful for the wonderful branches—readers of our devotional. Thank you for your love for the Word of God and for your faithfulness in supporting Moody and the ministry of *Today in the Word*.

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Introduction: The Fruit of the Spirit

In Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* the Grand Inquisitor states, "Man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom." Sometimes we feel there is no greater burden than the responsibilities of freedom.

As we begin our study this month of the fruit of the Spirit, it's important to notice that the gospel promises freedom, and this rings as a theme throughout Galatians. Chapter 5 declares that salvation's purpose is freedom. We are free from the penalties of God's law, whose requirements we could never fulfill in our flesh. We are free to live into the wholeness—*holiness*—to which God's law meant to restore us. This wholeness and holiness belong to us through Jesus Christ. This freedom, however, is not to be used to promote our self-interest. Instead, it is ultimately the freedom to love and serve our brothers and sisters; in so

doing, we fulfill the essence of all God's commands.

In his book *The Fruitful Life*, Gerald Bridges says that the fruit of the Spirit is both formational and relational. As the Spirit lives in us, we experience the reality of an inward transformation. We enjoy gifts of greater peace and joy, for example, and these nourish and sustain our inner lives. At the same time, Christ's presence will also impact our relationships. The fruit of love, self-control, and patience doesn't just help us

feel more spiritually fit. It actually means to produce dramatic effects on our relationships with family, friends, and co-workers.

Imagine if the Galatians, who were caught in cycles of envy and arguing, could have understood their freedom to be formed into the nature of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is for freedom
that Christ has
set us free.

Galatians 5:1

Apply the Word

Notice what is transformed in us through the power of Christ. It is not simply behavior: it is *desire* (v. 16). We are creatures who were made to love and worship. Through the power of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit, we will not only act more loving and joyful, patient and kind, but we will begin to prefer these responses and to delight in them.

Pray with Us

Last year, more than 1,500 Moody students served weekly at 300 churches and nonprofits. Our Practical Christian Ministry department facilitates this service. Thank God for Gloria Alicea, Donald Martindell, Unity Ostercamp, Roberto Rivera, and Nathan Strand.

Source of Godliness: Abide in Christ

Before his conversion to Christ, Charles Wesley looked like a believer. He studied the Bible, participated in prison ministry, and even traveled to America to preach the gospel to Native Americans. Only after he began reading Martin Luther's book on Galatians, however, did he understand his own need for salvation.

It is possible to exhibit certain qualities that resemble the fruit of the Spirit and not be a Christian. For example, there is an important difference between a person who has a nice temperament and a person made kind by the Holy Spirit. Jonathan Edwards said that the only way to tell the difference between authentic spiritual fruit and the virtues of character resulting from temperament or training was to distinguish whether or not the qualities were "all linked together . . . [If] one link be broken, all fall to the ground, and the whole ceases to be of any effect."

Those who belong
to Christ Jesus have
crucified
the flesh with
its passions
and desires.

Galatians 5:24

Moreover, the Bible, especially our passage today, clearly teaches that the genuine fruit of the Spirit is produced through a vital, ongoing connection between the believer and Jesus Christ. We can't produce the fruit of the Spirit by attending seminars and reading books. To become more loving, joyful, self-controlled, and gentle, we need, as the Gospel of John says, to abide in Christ.

To understand what this means, we are commanded to "remain" in the words of Christ. Does this mean ingesting a hefty dose of Bible reading every day? Certainly this is a commendable practice. But notice that the Holy Spirit is meant to be a Helper to us in the task of absorbing God's Word. Yes, we should commit to opening the Scriptures every day, but we should also look to the Holy Spirit to illumine its truth and remind us of its principles when we most need them.

Apply the Word

Another dimension of abiding in Christ is remaining in His love, and we remain in Christ's love as we obey. God's love isn't conditional on our obedience; as if He stood ready to withdraw it should we fail. Instead, our obedience demonstrates that God is our greatest treasure. Keeping God's commands is an expression of our love for Him.

Pray with Us

It's our privilege to bring before the Lord Moody students who are beginning their summer break. Ask God to use them mightily whether they are spending time with family, traveling overseas for ministry, or staying on campus to take summer courses.

Tension of Godliness: Reliance and Responsibility

In the sport of swimming, coaches help guide their athletes several weeks before a major competition to “taper” effectively. In essence, a taper is a period of time when the swimmer reduces the intensity and volume of workouts in order to achieve maximum performance. Though it might seem counterintuitive, a taper—and the rest it forces upon a body—actually makes the swimmer swim faster!

Our spiritual lives also require a balance between work and rest. As we discuss the fruit of the Spirit this month, it could be easy to read the daily Bible readings and formulate a checklist of spiritual to-dos. And the earnest willingness to work hard at obedience can often be good and right. In fact, our passage today contains important instructions, and we are urged toward the perfect obedience of Jesus. Get along! Work hard at your attitudes of humility, and remem-

ber to imitate the example of Christ. Like the Philippians, we should approach our spiritual lives with this same kind of intentionality because God is revealing to each of us important matters of obedience.

But if our spiritual lives depended only on our hard work and neglected radical dependence on God, we would end up spiritually exhausted and discouraged. Our work alone, even if it is diligent and sustained, can't achieve our spiritual transformation. We need to rest, believing prayerfully that

Work out your
salvation with fear
and trembling, for it
is God who works
in you.

Philippians 2:12–13

God is at work in us, drawing us closer into the life of Christ whose Spirit is the source of all Christian virtue.

Humility and charity, which were desperately needed for this quarreling church, would be formed only if they followed a spiritual regimen of both reliance and responsibility.

Apply the Word

What does a regimen of reliance and responsibility look like? For example, it's our responsibility to read the Word of God regularly. (God isn't going to do that part for us.) But as we read, we should express our reliance on the Spirit for transformation: “God, illumine this passage. Show me my sin. Bring about changes in my attitudes and desires.”

Pray with Us

Would you join us in praying for Frank Leber, vice president of Information Systems, and his executive administrative assistant, Elizabeth Larsen? May the Lord give them wisdom as they help Moody's education and media ministries utilize modern technology.

Strategy of Godliness: Put Off and Put On

Researchers at Duke University who study human behavior have concluded that more than 40 percent of our actions are not a result of conscious decisions; instead, they are the product of our habits. In his book *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg tells stories of people who have successfully replaced their bad habits by forming good habits in their stead. If habits do indeed guide much of our behavior, this should be an important point of focus when we think about personal change.

Put off your old self
... and put on the
new self, created
to be
like God.

Ephesians 4:22, 24

the Ephesians are going wrong morally. Don't lie! Don't steal! Don't slander one another! Of course these actions are prohibited, but for every action that should be eliminated, Scripture gives us another action to replace it. Don't lie—rather, when you speak, tell the truth. Don't be angry and sin—rather, look to resolve your conflicts before evening. Don't steal—rather, work with your hands in ways that are useful. Don't slander—rather, use your words to encourage others.

But does the Bible agree with modern psychology? Are we the habitual creatures that scientists say we are? And can the discussion of habits matter for a topic like the fruit of the Spirit and our desire to form the Christian virtues? The apostle Paul would say yes. The strategy proposed in our reading today is a playbook for the formation of spiritual habits. Notice that our text doesn't simply illustrate where

It's important to resist the sins we're commonly committing, but we should also replace them with virtue. We need a balance sheet of do's and don'ts, because prohibitions alone won't work. We can look to form new godly habits because through Jesus Christ, we have a new self, which shares a new inclination toward actions and attitudes that are righteous and holy.

Apply the Word

Have you felt unsuccessful in your fight against chronic sin? Do you feel defeated by the ways that you seem to fall into the same traps over and over again? Maybe you've been working hard to resist sin, but you haven't considered what new practices you need to put in place. Remember that Paul's admonition is two-fold: put off sin and put on righteousness.

Pray with Us

Today our prayers go to God for Web Support: Lawrence Carlin and Kevin Davis. Join us in asking the Lord to bless them as they carry out their responsibilities at Moody's Chicago campus today.

Progression of Godliness: Pressing Ahead

For those of us discouraged over our lack of spiritual progress, Andrew Murray offers words of consolation: “Regeneration is a birth: the center and root of the personality, the spirit, has been renewed and taken possession of by the Spirit of God. But time is needed for its power from that center to extend through all the circumference of his being.”

The apostle Paul taught that it takes a lifetime to attain what sometimes feels like an elusive goal of knowing Christ and being conformed to His character. Even with all of his extraordinary missionary accomplishments and spiritual vigor, Paul concluded that he still had not reached his goal.

Writing this letter under Roman guard, Paul wasn't thinking of the spiritual ground that he had covered. He wasn't exultant in his successes or self-reproaching about his failures. Instead, he

was resolute about keeping his focus and pressing ahead.

“All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things,” as if meaning to equate spiritual maturity, not with a sense of growing self-assurance but with increasing self-inadequacy (v. 15). This realistic self-appraisal isn't like despair but is more akin to a godly humility. Those who think they have the Christian life mastered may actually have made the least progress. But those who

begin to understand the expansive gap yawning between themselves and a holy, majestic God may be the most advanced in godliness.

Spiritual growth is infinitely hard to measure; progress and failure may be impossible to quantify. Humility, however, may be the sure sign that seeds of transformation have been planted and are being nourished.

Forgetting what lies behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on.

Philippians 3:13–14

Apply the Word

Humility is key for pressing ahead in the Christian life. “Success,” or progress in our obedience, cannot be credited to our efforts, and it's no reason for smug complacency. Neither is “failure” a way we disqualify ourselves from grace. We can faithfully “forget” our past sins and advance with confidence in Christ.

Pray with Us

Moody Radio is producing programs that help listeners around the world in their relationship with Christ. Ask God to guide Collin Lambert, vice president of Moody Radio, as he works with radio staff around the country to carry out this mission.

Love: The Fulfillment of the Law

Despite the boycott that Shane Windmeyer, executive director of Campus Pride, had organized against Chick-Fil-A's restaurants, its president Dan Cathy reached out to Windmeyer in friendship. Dan Cathy, who has publicly affirmed his faith in Christ, befriended an adversary. In Windmeyer's words, because of Cathy's love, he "gained an appreciation for his devout belief in Jesus Christ."

Jesus said that one single virtue would characterize His followers: love (John 13:35). Throughout the rest of this month's study, we will examine each of the nine qualities of the fruit-filled Christian life. Love, however, is preeminent in this list. Scripture makes it clear that all duties and demands could be summed up in two simple rules: love God and love your neighbor (see Matt. 22:36–40).

Although those may be simple rules, they are not easy. When we consider the ex-

ample of Jesus' love for us, we recognize that love isn't a fuzzy sentimental feeling. Love is action, demanding self-sacrifice and stretching us beyond our capacities to give and forgive. Love, at least the kind that Jesus demonstrated and to which He called us, is an impossible standard. Only when we are filled with the Holy Spirit can we reach beyond ourselves to bless our neighbors—especially those with whom we disagree. This kind of love, miraculous in its scope and sincerity, is evidence of God's presence.

Love does no harm
to a neighbor.
Therefore love is
the fulfillment of the
law.

Romans 13: 10

Rule keeping is much easier than love. In Matthew 23, Jesus condemns the Pharisees for their spiritual negligence. Though they were earnest to meet the obligatory requirements of the law, they failed to be a people who love. They dutifully paid their tithes and performed their temple duties, but all this religiosity was not equivalent either to obedience or to real love for God.

Apply the Word

We could selflessly sacrifice our possessions, even our very lives, but if our motivation were anything other than love, we would "gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3). When it is hard to love, either God or our neighbor, we must simply confess the state of our heart and ask God to heal its indifference and hostility. We must trust that the capacity to love is given by God.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Moody Radio, pray for Audrey Altman, Becky Borgstrom, and Jennifer Epperson of Moody Radio South Florida, broadcasting from studios in Boynton Beach. Request that God fill them with the power of His Spirit.

Love: A Response to God's Gift

In 1991, a 16-year-old shot and killed a pregnant woman, Nancy Bishop Langert, and her husband. The young man was tried and sentenced to life without parole. Jeanne Bishop, Nancy's sister, originally wanted vengeance for her sister's death, but years later she began praying for her sister's killer and is now working to abolish juvenile life sentences. "I know that no one is beyond the forgiveness and redemption and purpose of God," writes Bishop.

When we begin to understand that we are loved by God, it becomes impossible for us to hate another human being. We have not deserved God's love, nor have we merited His attention. In fact, Scripture teaches that salvation has always been God's idea and has depended exclusively on His initiative. He has reached out to sinners and chosen to love them without condition or prerequisites. He hasn't loved

only "good" people; He hasn't loved only "religious" people. He has loved sinners .

And God's love cost Him dearly. An atoning sacrifice was demanded in order to bridge the infinite gap of God's holiness and God's love, and that sacrifice was none other than God's beloved Son, Jesus.

This is love: not that
we loved God, but
that he loved us.

1 John 4:10

The implications of God's love are astounding: we are fully and completely loved by God, despite our unworthiness of that love. This perfect love casts out the real fear of being rejected by God on the basis of our failures, whether past, present, or future.

If God has loved us so generously and sacrificially, the only legitimate response is to love our neighbors. We can't simply choose to love "good" people or people with whom we agree. We can't reserve love for those willing to repay it. If we are to love like God, we have to be willing to be wounded.

Apply the Word

Grace is hard to understand, much less receive. Instead, we try to either pretend (that we've met God's standards) or perform (in order to win His approval.) Relying on God's love, however, means giving up on pretending and performing. Our full assurance rests on the unfailing character of divine love.

Pray with Us

Keeping our prayers focused on Moody Radio South Florida, let's lift up Bill Hurne, Eric Johnson, and Brigitte Sylvestre. Ask the Father to use the biblical programming aired on this station to bring revival to communities throughout South Florida.

Love: An Expression of Self-Sacrifice

One aspect of traditional catechism is memorizing a long series of questions and answers that explore the meaning of scriptural teaching and church doctrines. As an example the Heidelberg Catechism poses this question: *What is God's will for you in the sixth commandment?* Respondents are taught to answer, *I am not to belittle, insult, hate or kill my neighbor—not by my thoughts, my words, my look or my gesture.*

Do not murder: we may think we are innocent of violating the sixth commandment, but if we define murder biblically—which includes hatred and animosity—each of us is guilty of breaking this command. God's call to love others is much more difficult than performing superficially kind acts. Love, divine love, is an attitude of the heart made possible by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. It is the sincere desire for our neighbor's blessing.

But why does desiring good for our neighbors (and working actively to achieve that good) feel so difficult? Because in our flesh, loving another person feels like a personal threat. Cain, for example, could not celebrate that God had regarded his own brother's sacrifice with favor. Instead, he was jealous, and that jealousy spawned hatred. It was as if he regarded God's favor as an endangered resource, and as an act of self-protection he killed the competition.

This is how we
know what love is:
Jesus Christ
laid down his
life for us.

1 John 3:16

Jesus, too, was threatened because of His commitment to love: He was scandalized when He kept company with tax collectors and prostitutes. He was misunderstood by His own family and rejected by His own community. His relationships and reputation suffered because of His sacrificing love. And ultimately He would lose His life for love. Loving others requires that we put ourselves at risk.

Apply the Word

Giving to others when they are in a financial jam (because, for example, they have lost a job or experienced a health crisis) is a tangible way of expressing God's love. Is there someone for whom you could buy groceries or deliver a meal? Is there someone for whom you could anonymously pay an outstanding bill? Give generously as God prompts.

Pray with Us

Moody Radio South is reaching listeners throughout Alabama and Mississippi with the hope of the gospel. Please pray that God would use the ministry of Rob Moore and John Rogers to bring many listeners into a new relationship with Jesus Christ this year.

Joy: A Command from God

Folk wisdom suggests that it requires greater effort to frown than it does to smile. Whether or not this is actually true, it has been proven scientifically that those who produce the facial expressions of enthusiasm, happiness, and joy experience the same physiological changes in the body that those emotions generate. Grinning, then, may in fact help us to “bear it!”

We are talking this month about the fruit of the Spirit, and we’ve already seen that these Christian virtues aren’t merely personality qualities.

Although it may be true, as an example, that joy seems more reflexive for the optimist rather than the pessimist, it doesn’t mean that joy is unattainable for those of us with a more somber perspective. Rather, because each of these characteristics demonstrate the visible presence of the indwelling Spirit of God as He possesses and controls believers, it is possible that all of us can experience a greater measure of

love, joy, and peace whether or not we’re temperamentally inclined.

What’s more, we don’t have to wait till our circumstances prove favorable. Just as we’ve seen with love—that it is a committed decision of obedience inspired by God’s love for us—joy, too, is purposeful and deliberate. “Rejoice!” Scripture instructs us, without adding the exclusions we usually allow ourselves (Phil. 4:4). I’ll rejoice when I have the right job . . . am married to the right person . . . live in the right house . . . have secured the right future.

May the God of
hope fill you with
all joy . . . as you
trust in him.

Romans 15:13

Right after his command to “rejoice,” Paul instructs the church on how to handle nagging anxiety. Clearly, rejoicing doesn’t wait for life to slow down and straighten out. The joy that comes as a fruit of the Spirit does not depend on our material circumstances but the spiritual reality of our relationship with God.

Apply the Word

Joy is a decision of faith whereby we consider the invisible realities of God’s presence and goodness. As our key verse suggests, trust in the Lord is one way to find joy. What usually steals our joy? Doubt, difficult circumstances, and disappointments. To consider that God is still good when life isn’t can be a means to discovering true and lasting joy.

Pray with Us

Will you lift up Christine Gorz, vice president of Corporate Communications, and her executive administrative assistant, Mollie Bond? Ask God to give them discernment and creativity as they roll out Moody’s new branding initiative later this year.

Joy: A Gift Greater Than Happiness

Gretchen Rubin is a happiness expert of sorts. She's written two recent books on happiness: *The Happiness Project* and *Happier at Home*. Some of her advice, however, runs counter to biblical wisdom. "Control is a very important element to happiness," Rubin writes. "For instance, it's a much better predictor of happiness than income. My sense of control plays a huge role in happiness."

Rubin clings to the myth of self-sovereignty. And it is a myth that we are in control of our lives.

None of us can prevent the small emergencies in life, nor can we ward off the larger crises that inevitably come. In his letter, James uses a word to encompass the difficulties that life brings: trials. Trials are unavoidable. Despite our best efforts at planning and prevention, each of us is vulnerable to the reality that life is frail and fickle. At some point, we will be hurt.

Is this a threat to joy? According to Scripture, no. In fact, James says that trials are a cause of joy. This doesn't mean that we have to rejoice when, for example, a loved one dies. Grief is real, and Jesus Himself wept when His friend Lazarus died (cf. John 11:33–35).

It does mean, however, that even in the pain of our circumstances we can still rejoice that God's character and goodness remain intact.

We can't always presume to understand how God is at work in the midst of our

trials, but we can be reassured that He is working to strengthen our faith and to make it resilient. We have the freedom to ask Him for the wisdom in both understanding and reacting to our trials. He may not ultimately alter our circumstances, but He is able to provide the perspective that makes those circumstances bearable.

Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us.

Psalm 90:15

Apply the Word

Biblical joy is paradoxical. It can be sustained through the valley of the shadow of death. It is a great comfort to know that we can survive, with God's presence and help, life's worst storms. *When peace, like a river, attendeth my way / When sorrows like sea billows roll / Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say / It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

Pray with Us

Ann Bolger, Jens Douglas, and Janet Giesler in the Customer Service Center would be grateful for your prayers. Join us in asking the Lord to help this team show His love and care today to those who call Moody.

Joy: The Example of Jesus Christ

Research shows that fiction may be even more effective than nonfiction at changing our beliefs. As Jonathan Gottschall from *The Boston Globe* writes, “When we read nonfiction, we read with our shields up. We are critical and skeptical. But when we are absorbed in a story, we drop our intellectual guard. We are moved emotionally, and this seems to make us rubbery and easy to shape.”

Although the Bible is more than a story (and is not nonfiction), much of it is nonetheless written in the genre of narrative. This proves powerful for shaping our imaginations and for generating real, resilient faith. Indeed, the writer of Hebrews spent the last section of his letter detailing some of the heroic stories of the Bible. He references the tales of those who suffered greatly for God, enduring torture, imprisonment, poverty, destitution, and even death. Then in chapter 12, he turns to the greatest story

the Bible records, the story of Jesus Christ, the God-Man who despite His innocence was falsely accused and subjected to the shame of a public execution.

Remember Jesus, he tells us, as if begging us to discover the reason Jesus could not only willingly endure such humiliation and physical pain, but do so joyfully. How was it possible for Jesus to experience sustained joy even in the face of shame and suffering and death?

For the joy set
before him he
endured the cross.

Hebrews 12:2

It was only possible because Jesus knew the ending of His story. He gave up the riches of heaven, knowing He would experience pain and betrayal on the cross. But He could endure all of these cruelties because of the pleasures and privileges that awaited Him when He would be welcomed back into heaven and would assume His rightful position at the Father’s right hand.

Apply the Word

How do we find joy in the midst of our sufferings? We need to consider the promised ending to our story. Revelation 21 speaks of the time when all suffering, death, disease, and despair will be abolished. The new heaven and the new earth will no longer suffer the burdens of sin, and forever we will experience unabashed and unbridled joy!

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for the Customer Service Center, will you remember Faith Grudziecki, Joshua Harrison, Adam Reece, and Sarah Woods? May God fill them with His peace and sustain them with His grace.

Peace: Reconciliation with God

Tim Keller describes the concept of shalom: “God created all things to be in a beautiful and harmonious, interdependent, knitted, webbed relationship to one another. Just as rightly related physical elements form a cosmos or a tapestry, so rightly related human beings form a community. This interwovenness is what the Bible calls shalom, or harmonious peace.”

Peace exists in three different dimensions: peace with God, peace with others, and peace with ourselves. As we walk in each of these three aspects of peace, we experience the completeness or wholeness of shalom. This is indeed a beautiful and surprising gift, especially in our world of turmoil and heartache.

Peace with God, as the Christian gospel preaches is possible, runs contrary to the expectations of other religious systems. Where other religions teach that God favors the people who try hard and judges

on moral performance, Christianity proclaims that we are sinners. Despite all of our best efforts, we fail our own standards, much less God’s. And though this discrepancy between us and God seems to create an unbridgeable gap, grace bridges that chasm. God has chosen to love and forgive us as a measure of His generous love.

Peace I leave with
you; my peace I
give you.

John 14:27

Peace with God can be achieved only when sin is absolved. The Bible calls this justification (v. 9), but in order for our moral record to be erased, a blameless blood sacrifice must be

offered. Jesus bought this peace with His blood, and because He offered Himself in our place, we are spared God’s present and future wrath.

Peace with God allows us to experience a confident hope. We can know our standing with God is secure because of what Jesus has accomplished on our behalf.

Apply the Word

Notice the words in our passage that imply the confident hope that our peace with God grants to us: “we boast” (v. 2), “we also glory” (v. 3), and we are not put to shame (v. 5). Are you experiencing the shalom of knowing that God no longer holds against you the record of your sin? That He loves you infinitely? That you are fully reconciled to Him?

Pray with Us

Dr. Larry Davidhizar, vice president and dean of the Undergraduate School, welcomes your prayer support. Ask God to help him and his team of faculty to work well together to equip Moody students for a lifetime of service to Jesus Christ.

Peace: Reconciliation with Others

In his new book, *Going Solo*, Eric Klinenberg, professor of sociology at New York University, cites our growing preference for living alone. Currently, there are more single-person households in the United States than married-with-children households. Those who do choose to marry, choose to marry later; some will choose never to have children. Additionally, the rate of divorce for people in their fifties and sixties is increasing.

As a culture, we seem to be losing our enthusiasm for human relationships and the sacrifices they inevitably require. But this is not an option for Christians for whom belonging to a spiritual community is critical. Paul doesn't invite the people at Colossae to continue their participation in the church so long as it meets their needs. Rather, he assumes their membership and gives instruction for making human community work.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Matthew 5:9

We are members of one body, the body of Jesus Christ, and one evidence of the Spirit's work in our lives is the extent to which we can live at peace with each other. Relationships that hum with peace—these are an unexpected surprise in our world that clamors for its own way. And although peace is a gift of the Spirit, it is also work—hard work. Getting along with people when we like them is hard enough, and how much more difficult when we don't.

To work for peace in our relationships will require that we no longer insist that others meet perfect standards of performance. To work for peace in our relationships requires that we put aside our grievances and forbear and forgive. To work for peace in our relationships demands the kind of sustained humility that was Christ's. *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts* (v. 15).

Apply the Word

Relinquishing our rights and demands feels almost impossible. It can happen only when we absorb who we are: God's dearly loved children. Jesus demonstrates this in John 13. He humbled Himself and washed the disciples' feet because He understood His identity. Like Him, when we are secure in God's favor, we can serve others—and work for peace.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Moody's Undergraduate School, will you remember faculty serving in the Bible department? Let's ask the Lord to reenergize Trevor Burke, John Goodrich, Ernest Gray, and John Hart during the summer months.

Peace: Inner Tranquility

When Jodie Foster accepted an award at the 2013 Golden Globes, she confessed: "I want to be seen, to be understood deeply, and to be not so very lonely." Her words echo Jim Carrey, another successful American actor, who once said, "I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of, so they can see that it's not the answer."

We are tempted to put our hope in the false gods of money, sex, power, and fame to satisfy our longings. But as these members of the Hollywood elite remind us, counterfeit gods never deliver on their promises. Through the Holy Spirit, we are promised peace, and it's a peace that we can count on. As we've seen, this peace is vertical (peace with God) as well as horizontal (peace with others). Additionally, the peace of Jesus Christ is internal, and perhaps no better Scripture describes this placid state of the soul than Psalm 23.

I will fear no evil,
for you are
with me.

Psalm 23:4

Inner spiritual peace is derived from the presence of God. This psalm alludes to peaceful scenes (green pastures, quiet waters, right paths), and we would expect to enjoy peace in these places. But the psalm also includes more foreboding, anxiety-inducing elements (darkest valley, enemies). It's there we feel most afraid and disquieted. Only when we recognize that the Lord is present with us in every scene and every chapter can we have an abiding peace that does not depend on circumstantial ease or comfort.

We come to experience greater inner peace as our capacity enlarges for imagining God, in all of His goodness and greatness. Though we are small and weak, made vulnerable by all of our frailties (sheep never were animals to be admired), God loves us still and is committed to us.

Apply the Word

Peace doesn't mean the absence of fear and anxiety. These are natural responses to worrisome situations. We can experience peace in the midst of fear by doing what God commands: "Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns" (Phil. 4:6-7; *The Message*).

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for faculty in the Bible department, let's lift up Gregory Jenks, William Marty, Gerald Peterman, and Ronald Sauer. Praise God for these dedicated professors who are equipping students with a solid understanding of God's Word.

Question and Answer

By Dr. Rosalie de Rosset, Professor of English, Literature, and Homiletics



In Matthew 22:37 the word *strength* is dropped from the list that includes *heart*, *soul*, and *mind* in Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27. It seems to me that all four are important to make it a complete picture. Do you have any thoughts on why Matthew didn't include all four?



The answer to this question, in this case, might be simple. The omission of the word *strength* in Matthew 22:37 is most likely the result of what is called authorial variation, meaning each author—within the boundaries of what God had to say—could write with his own voice and make certain choices in language and detail. Matthew might have felt that the notion of *strength* was included in the other three parallel words. While Scripture was fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, it was transmitted through human authors who showed their God-given individuality in their distinctive styles and emphases, adding to the beauty and interest of reading the texts of the books of the Bible.



Recently a friend and I were talking about our physical images of Christ. She felt pretty strongly that we should not try to see Christ in a visual way because anything we would think would be inaccurate. I,

on the other hand, have felt comforted by different images of Christ throughout my life—especially, when I was a child, the famous picture of Christ as the Good Shepherd. I realize we don't really know what He looked like, but is there any harm in thinking about Him in a certain way?



This has always been a subject of debate. As a child growing up on the mission field, I remember that another missionary in the city where my parents served parted company with them over their use of flannel-graph figures. It was a Bible-teaching method of the time for children that involved colored cut-outs of biblical characters, scenes, and animals displayed on a flannel-covered board. He was particularly opposed to figures representing Christ, believing this was a form of idolatry.

Certainly, no specific description of Christ's appearance is given in Scripture except the general statement that He had "no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (Isa. 53:2). I'm sure there is good reason for the omission. As one of my students wrote, if we had been given physical descriptions of Jesus, people would have been trying to look like Him, dyeing their hair to get His hair color, cutting their hair to have His hair-style.

Continued on next page

“The Gospels furnish a history of a Saviour, not a biography of Jesus of Nazareth.”

Continued from previous page

Nevertheless, Christ was human; He had a face and a body; it is natural that as human beings, we want to see a face and to imagine a three-dimensional person. So, we probably get used to the image of Christ most predominantly displayed in our childhood. In my case, that image was Warner Salaman's rendition, perhaps the one mentioned in the question above, which has been reproduced literally millions of times. It is still the way I see Christ instinctively.

While it is significant that we see the incarnated Christ, that we have an image, what is more crucial is to know that our image is simply that, an image. In the interest of not getting locked into one mental picture and to note how others have seen Him, it is an interesting exercise to look at a book of artistic renditions of Christ by a plethora of artists from many different parts of the world, images that often capture something about the life of Christ that seems significant to the artist. The variety is fascinating and often inspiring.

Most crucial, finally, is that we focus on who Christ was by reading the Gospels where we have a tremendous range of specific details about what He said, what He did, what He thought was wrong, and how He loved—enough to give us the mental, emotional, and spiritual landscape of His life. He is the One who lived a perfect life and continues to be a model of the best life ever lived.



Did Jesus, as a child, demonstrate the same behaviors that humans show during the years of speech and behavior development (self-centered, outbursts, tantrums, etc.)? Or, should Jesus' unique difference even as a baby and a toddler have revealed to those who saw Him that He was truly different?



As many commentators have noted, and as is notable to anyone reading the Gospels, we are told almost nothing about Jesus' infancy or childhood. As 19th-century biblical scholar Alfred Edersheim said in his famous book, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, “the Gospels furnish a history of the Saviour, not a biography of Jesus of Nazareth.” As a human baby and toddler, Jesus grew and developed, moving through the stages of mental, physical, and social development and increasing awareness of others as any other normal child would. As a divine child, He would not have had a sin nature, meaning there would not have been a dark edge to His expressions of need and frustration. Would He have seemed different? Perhaps, the kind of difference we see in some infants and toddlers who are pleasant and obedient. We cannot know. Mary, of course, and Joseph would have seen the nuances of His nature and growth and marveled. Of His childhood we do know that He “grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40).

Patience: Enduring Injustice

In Harriet Beecher Stowe's bestselling anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Tom, a middle-aged slave, is eventually sold into the hands of Simon Legree, a man so brutal and cruel that he eventually determines to kill Tom. "I hate [Tom]!" said Legree. "I hate him! And isn't he MINE? Can't I do what I like with him? Who's to hinder, I wonder?" Tom, however, bears up under Legree's hateful treatment—and never wishes his master ill.

Our passage might seem a strange one to consider as we turn our attention towards patience. Beginning with verse 18, Peter addresses slaves. We might consider this passage irrelevant to our 21st-century lives. It's true that slavery was outlawed in the United States more than a century ago, and it's also true that the slavery of the ancient Roman Empire, to which Peter refers, differed fundamentally from American slavery. Although slavery may

feel like a topic from the history books, oppression and injustice still afflict our modern society. Some of us may be the victims of physical, emotional, and verbal abuse. even from those who would call themselves friends.

[Be] strengthened
with all power
... so that you
may have great
endurance and
patience.

Colossians 1:11

This passage does not defend abuse, nor does it commend our inaction. Setting aside cruelty and extreme abuse, however, this passage does teach what patience can look like in circumstances of injustice. When we are accused, manipulated, and maligned, we need look no further than Jesus to discover what

patience looks like. Trust in God. Refuse to retaliate. Maintain integrity. Keep silent.

This self-restraint might seem impossible, but it is possible when we realize to Whom we belong. Like Christ, we are precious to God, and He will ultimately defend and rescue us.

Apply the Word

When has someone deliberately tried to sabotage your reputation? And what was your response? How could it have been more like the response of Jesus when nailed to a cross? Patience is the supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit, and it allows us to withstand trials and suffering, especially of what we would call the "undeserved" variety.

Pray with Us

Concluding our focus on faculty serving in the Bible department, ask God to empower Andrew Schmutzer, Timothy Sigler, Michael Vanlaningham, and Michael Wechsler as they equip the next generation of Christian leaders.

Patience: Slowness to Anger

In their parenting book, *Good and Angry*, Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller discuss the place of anger in the home. Ordinarily, we consider anger with suspicion, an emotion we shouldn't feel and certainly shouldn't express. Turansky and Miller, however, argue that "anger is good for identifying problems but not good for solving them."

Is anger, as Turansky and Miller seem to say, a more neutral emotion than we think? Or doesn't feeling angry immediately mean that we've strayed from walking in the Spirit? Not necessarily. Elsewhere in the Bible, we learn that God can and does become angry (cf. Deut. 6:15). Jesus, in an act of righteous anger, overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the temple (cf. Matt. 21:12). And while we're warned in Proverbs and in today's passage against becoming angry too quickly and easily, it's not in fact a sin to be angry (cf. Eph. 4:26).

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.

Ephesians 4:26

Anger is an emotion, a warning light on the dashboard of the soul. It signals when something has gone wrong. But a person who is filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit, will become a patient person who is irritated less and less frequently. If we were honest, we would have to admit that much of our anger arises when our convenience and comfort are threatened, not rightfully as a response to an injustice that has been committed.

A patient person can overlook minor irritations. A patient person gives the benefit of the doubt. A patient person, even when angered for good reason, monitors his reaction time in response. Just like James teaches in today's reading, patience can be measured by a person's reflex. Being quicker to listen and slower to respond is evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in a person's life.

Apply the Word

Today's passage is sobering: do we hear the Word and neglect what it says? If you are chronically angry and impatient, it's time for a check-up. Do you have unrealistic expectations of your circumstances or relationships? Do you have habits of impulsivity? Are you proud? Are there issues of conflict that need to be addressed with your loved ones?

Pray with Us

Will you pray for Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, as he and his teams seek to develop new ways of carrying out Moody's vision to equip people across the globe, cultures, and generations with the truth of God's Word?

Patience: Waiting on God

Patience. In our life's journey, we find ourselves in so many situations when we need a great deal of it! Patience, as a Greek word, literally means, "an abiding under." It connotes a heavy weight that one is forced to bear on one's shoulders or back. We grow spiritual patience in times of trial and testing, and as we learn to wait on God, we develop a greater capacity for trusting Him.

Waiting on God is not the inactive season we might imagine it to be. Although we may not be making decisions as we wait, we're not at a standstill. In fact, we can be active in prayer, and God can be doing a work of transformation in us, namely, growing in us patient faith. Spiritual patience is the capacity for sustained hope even when life doesn't seem to be very hopeful. Notice how the psalmist waits actively on the Lord: he prays, he expects rescue, he hopes for solid ground, and he resists false gods.

He also rehearses the beauty of God's character: that God is faithful, merciful, loving, a help and a deliverer. And the psalmist remembers his own constitution, that he was poor and needy, dependent upon God's rescue. Patience grants us a willing and humble submission to God's providence.

May those who
long for your
saving help always
say, "The LORD is
great!"

Psalm 40:16

Perhaps one of the most comforting thoughts in the psalm is that the psalmist, who evidently wrote from a place of desperate trial, might have been the one to blame for having gotten into this mess in the first

place. He admits that his troubles might be the result of his sins. But even though he might be the very source of his difficulties, he didn't despair of God's rescue and help.

Patience brings us through the worst of times, and spiritual patience is always followed by praise.

Apply the Word

What do we do when we've waited on God, pleaded for His help, and finally enjoyed His rescue? We praise Him! We sing, we share our story of rescue with others, and we declare God's righteousness and faithfulness. And even before we have had an answer from God, we can still say, along with the psalmist, "The Lord is great."

Pray with Us

Today we lift up Moody Publishers Marketing team: Janis Backing, Parker Hathaway, John Hinkley, and John Matsuoka. Pray that this team will be able to clearly and effectively communicate Moody Publishers' current products to the marketplace.

Kindness: Mercy for the Undeserving

Louis Zamperini, a Japanese prisoner of war, endured torture from his captor, “the Bird.” Zamperini dreamed of killing the Bird, but when he became a Christian after World War II, he forgave him and sent him this letter: “Thanks to a confrontation with God, I committed my life to Christ. Love has replaced the hate I had for you. Christ said, ‘Forgive your enemies and pray for them.’ I now would hope that you would also become a Christian.”

Kindness, when it’s synonymous with mercy (and directed toward those who don’t deserve it), reveals God’s grace in an unparalleled way. As we’ve studied the fruit of the Spirit this month, we’ve learned that Christian virtue is not a matter of temperament or personality. It is evidence of God’s Spirit indwelling the human heart. What else, for example, apart from spiritual regeneration, motivates a person to show kindness to someone who is ungrateful or evil?

Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful.

Luke 6:35

Notice that Jesus uses words like “credit” to talk about the implications of kindness. The *English Standard Version* translates this as “benefit.” Jesus sounds like an economic advisor, telling his client where to invest his money for the greatest return. And in fact, this is exactly what He intends to imply. At the end of the passage, Jesus talks about reward, a heavenly reward, that awaits those of us who act for reasons other than self-interest.

In a worldly sense, it is to our “credit” or “benefit” to be kind to those who have something to offer us or have the ability to repay, whether personally or professionally. But to “waste” kindness on those who not only are incapable of returning our generosity but who may even spurn our efforts? This seems unbelievably foolish. So then, is God, who shows such extravagant kindness to us!

Apply the Word

On whom would your kindness feel wasted? Your boss, who demands more of you and never appreciates what you’ve done? Your spouse, who doesn’t contribute his or her “fair share”? Your neighbor, who’s spiteful and selfish? Show God’s kindness to them this week in a practical way, remembering that God shows you kindness you do not deserve.

Pray with Us

Ken Heulitt, Chief Financial Officer, invites you to join him in praying for Moody’s fiscal year ending June 30. Ask the Lord to move mightily in the hearts of His people to support the work He is doing through Moody’s ministries.

Kindness: Truth for the Brother

It has taken years to repair the rift between pastor Charles Stanley and his son, Andy. They fought, as Andy recalls, like “middle-school girls,” but eventually patched together their relationship with the help of a counselor. “They weren’t too smart, too spiritual or too proud to allow somebody to come in and help them navigate all that anger,” says Andy’s wife, Sandra.

Conflict is often treacherous both in the church and in the family, and many relationships are never repaired like Charles and Andy Stanley’s relationship eventually was. Anger, as we’ve already studied, is a hot-potato emotion that we aren’t sure how to handle. Either we’re prone to explode and give in to a host of unhealthy responses—hatred and fits of rage as examples (cf. Gal. 5:20)—or we bury the tension, choosing instead to seethe with unspoken bitterness and resentment.

Wounds from
a friend can be
trusted, but
an enemy multiplies
kisses.

Proverbs 27:6

The fruit of the Spirit is, however, a counterintuitive response, and it overrides our human instincts. For example, kind people might be assumed to be those who make others feel good and keep relational tensions at bay. But as we see in today’s reading and in our key verse, people who exhibit spiritual kindness are not just nice people. To be kind, as the Father is kind, is to want and to pursue the best interest of another person. Often, saying what is difficult but true can be kinder than avoiding relational conflict.

Paul confronted Peter, opposing his choice to withdraw from table fellowship with Gentiles. His confrontation was motivated not by self-interest. That would have failed the “kindness” test. Rather, he was worried for Peter, that he was jeopardizing his Christian freedom. He was also concerned for the church, which was being led astray by Peter’s actions.

Apply the Word

Has someone confronted you, and you’ve later understood it to be an incredible gesture of kindness? On the other hand, has someone confronted you out of spite, anger, or jealousy? Can you tell the difference? When you’re tempted to confront another person, are you able to discern your motives?

Pray with Us

Join us in bringing before the Lord the Investments team: James Chadwick, Barry Cole, Jeffery Knapp, Charles Moeri, and Cherise Wilson. Ask God to help them to be good stewards of the resources that Moody’s ministry partners have entrusted to us.

Goodness: Created to Do Good Works

“There is a gap between our love for the gospel and our love for godliness,” writes Kevin DeYoung in *The Hole in our Holiness*. “This must change. It’s not pietism, legalism or fundamentalism to take holiness seriously. It’s the way of all those who have been called to a holy calling by a holy God.”

Studying Christian virtue can highlight this undeniable tension in our spiritual lives: how do we try to be good without relying on self-effort? How do we insist upon goodness in our churches without retreating into legalism? How do we maintain what the gospel fundamentally teaches—that none of us is good—and still admit that God means to transform us? As Kevin DeYoung says, “We’re scared of words like diligence, effort, and duty.”

The fruit of the Spirit, as listed in Galatians 5:22, is prefaced by this command:

Our God may
make you worthy of
his calling,
and . . . bring
to fruition your
every desire for
goodness.

2 Thessalonians 1:11

“Walk by the Spirit” (v. 16). This insists that we play a part in our transformation—that we participate in God’s action in our lives. But it’s critical to acknowledge that any of our human effort is preceded by the grace of God. Our work doesn’t stand alone. We aren’t the initiators; God is. We only act in response to what God has already done for us by grace. He has rescued us when we were incapable of saving ourselves. We were dead, and He made us alive in Christ.

An important purpose stands behind God’s saving rescue: we are transformed, not only to restore us to wholeness, but to make the world whole again. Each of us has a unique calling and a particular way by which we will bless the world. All of our work will be through and in Jesus Christ, and whatever results from our efforts is meant ultimately to honor Him.

Apply the Word

Sometimes we may hear that we’re saved simply to get into heaven. While eternal life is an immeasurable blessing that we receive by grace through faith, it is not the only reason God has saved us. He has purposed that His people, the church, work redemptively in the world for its good. This may be as pastors or plumbers, teachers or artists.

Pray with Us

Steven Mogck, executive vice president and chief operating officer, would be grateful for your prayer support as he and the rest of Moody’s executive team seek to enhance collaboration between Moody’s education, publishing, and radio ministries.

Goodness: As Close As Home

“As a single childless woman, I share the fear [of aging], and no amount of financial preparation for a prolonged old age calms me,” writes Jane Gross in *The New York Times*. “I’m haunted by the knowledge that there is no one who will care about me in the deepest and most loving sense of the word at the end of my life.”

These fears are not new to our culture. Throughout Scripture, God commands His people to care for those who are vulnerable, including the widows, orphans, and elderly. Our passage today reminds us of this specific kind of goodness that God requires of us.

Goodness, as we saw yesterday, isn’t measured in nice thoughts and kind intentions. Goodness is meted out in action, dispensed in concrete expressions of blessing. As we see from our passage today, our efforts to do good don’t have to be

reserved for unreached tribes in remote jungles, nor should they be limited to the poorest and most marginalized. Although those people deserve our blessing, so do the closest members of our family.

Paul instructs the church about the care of widows. In this historical context, with no social safety net for the elderly and the sick, families shouldered the financial burden. Where they could not, the church should step in. In order to preserve familial responsibility, Paul insisted that the church should only care for widows whose children and grandchildren are unable. If the children are unwilling, Paul wants to clearly show they are neglecting their God-given duties. Adult children who assume this responsibility obey one of the Ten Commandments and pay homage to the lifetime of care they have received from their parents. Godliness is often first learned at home.

Honor your father
and your mother
. . . that it may go
well with you.

Deuteronomy 5:16

Apply the Word

Sometimes our family histories make it hard to bless our parents and siblings. Sometimes our efforts are unappreciated by our family members. There’s little acclaim that comes from caring for one’s family. Perhaps it should be enough to know that our love, respect, care, and honor for our families is pleasing in God’s sight.

Pray with Us

William Bielawski, department manager of Custodial Services, requests your prayers for his staff: David Applington, Gulmira Baibosunova, David Boskovic, Ernest Brown, and Ramon Diaz. Pray that they would know Christ’s presence as they work.

Goodness: Caring for Our Neighbor

According to the *Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach*, a book written by a Jewish scribe in the early second century B.C. “If you do good, know to whom you do it . . . Give to the devout, but do not help the sinner. Do good to the humble, but do not give to the ungodly; hold back their bread, and do not give it to them . . . for the Most High hates sinners.”

We might be astonished to hear such hostile words, but historically in Jewish culture, one usually thought first (or even exclusively) of doing good to fellow Jews. Imagine, then, the surprise of Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan where the hero is one of the half-breeds whom the Jews hated—a Samaritan!

Notice the passers-by. First came a priest. Perhaps he was reluctant to help, fearing that the man on the side of the road was dead. He would be forbidden to perform his priestly duties if he became unclean

by touching a dead man. The same would have been true for the Levite if he were going to the temple.

Jesus is directly asking those who consider themselves “religious” to confront their expectations of duty: what does God’s law require? This was indeed the question that prompted Jesus to tell this particular parable when He was approached by a lawyer curious about the requirements for inheriting eternal life.

Turn from evil
and do good;
seek peace and
pursue it.

Psalm 34:14

Goodness is often the catch-all word when we think about pleasing God. The question of who is good and what it means to be good has fascinated philosophers and artists as well as people making their way through daily life. We want to know what good we must do to earn God’s favor. But so often, like the priest and Levite, we’re consumed by rules and miss the bigger requirement—which is always to love.

Apply the Word

Goodness is the way we express love for our neighbor. We’ve learned that we can do good to those who mistreat us. We’ve learned that we should do good to our family members. And today we’ve learned that we can do good even to strangers. All of these examples remind us that goodness isn’t cheap: it will cost us something.

Pray with Us

Continuing in prayer for Custodial Services, lift up Dean Gentry, Paul Henle, Danny Hutcherson, and Jessica Manning. Our special prayers are for Chau Lai and Tailor Nguyen who are retiring soon. Ask the Lord to renew the strength of this team.

Faithfulness: The Unfailing Promise of God

“He’s a chip off the old block.” “She’s just like her mother.” So we comment on the striking similarities between children and their parents. Sometimes they bear uncanny resemblance to one another physically: a son has the same cowlick as his father; a daughter and mother both have the same posture. Often, they mirror one another in other ways: in professional and personal pursuits, in idiosyncratic habits, in manners of speaking and gesturing.

The fruit of the Spirit is evidence that we are each “a chip off the old block.” Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control: these are qualities of God Himself. By the presence of the Holy Spirit in and with us, we are growing in His likeness. We begin to mirror Him in attitude and in action, in motivation and in intention. As we walk in step with the Spirit, we leave behind our toxic habits of sin and assume new habits of

righteousness. These lead to our wholeness—and holiness. Soon, we, too, are more full of joy, peace, and love.

Faithfulness is an important quality of God’s character, and throughout the Scriptures, it appears right alongside God’s love. Love and faithfulness: these twin characteristics reveal what will never fail about God. He is true to Himself, to His promises, to His word. God has no artificiality, no caprice. He doesn’t act on the whims of His mood. He is dependable and trustworthy, which is a great reassurance to us as His people.

This steadfast faithfulness demonstrates His love. Indeed, in the New Testament, it is revealed how God has kept His covenant promises to Israel through Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ—that God Himself has saved both Jew and Gentile alike through His Son—bears witness to God as faithful and true.

The LORD is
righteous in all his
ways and faithful in
all he does.

Psalm 145:17

Apply the Word

God’s faithfulness is an example we are meant to imitate, especially when it comes to keeping our promises. Jesus taught His followers to mean their “yes” and their “no” (cf. Matt. 5:33–37). Even in matters that appear insignificant (“I’ll call you!” or “We’ll have you over!” or “I’ll get this to you soon!”), we should strive, with God’s help, to do as we promise.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for Custodial Services, please remember John Pettett, Thomas Pizano, Oakley Smith, Cathy Sywulka, Do Tran, and John Williams. Thank God for their commitment to caring for the facilities God has entrusted to Moody Bible Institute.

Faithfulness: The Unfailing Love of God

Monica Lewinsky, the political intern at the heart of the sex scandal during Bill Clinton's presidency, has allegedly been offered a \$12 million advance for her memoir. Apparently the publisher believes the book will be a best-seller, especially if it reveals the steamy details of Clinton's affair with Lewinsky. Shame and betrayal will be turned into profit.

Adultery is such an egregious act of betrayal: Imagine then how vulnerable God makes Himself in our reading today as He declares His willingness to forgive and receive back His adulterous people.

Hosea had one of the most difficult prophetic assignments. God called him to marry a "wife of whoredom," a woman with a checkered past and recalcitrant heart. He would marry her and have children by her, but she would persist in her sexually pro-

miscuous ways. Hosea's shocking act was meant to be a picture the lavish (foolish?) love of God for His own betrayers, the nation of Israel, whom He had rescued but who had followed other gods.

God's faithfulness drives Him to these shocking lengths of love. His faithfulness to His own covenant promise allows Him to forgive and remove the stench of our idolatry. Though we have rejected Him and His gifts, meriting His fierce wrath and anger, He longs to bring us back and to speak tenderly to us. In the Valley of Achor (a reference to the place of

judgment on Achan and his family during Joshua's time), He intends to plant seeds of redemptive hope.

His faithfulness not only erases the record of our unfaithfulness but also makes possible that we, too, could become faithful.

I will betroth you to
me forever . . .
I will betroth you in
faithfulness.

Hosea 2:19, 20

Apply the Word

To whom can you show faithfulness despite their unfaithfulness? Maybe you've been betrayed by a coworker, a friend, or even your spouse. You may struggle with thoughts of getting revenge; imagining a scenario of forgiveness might seem impossible. Pray that your heart could grow into the capacity to show steadfast love and mercy.

Pray with Us

Please pray for Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, as he prepares for the 2013–2014 academic year. May God give him strength and passion to persevere in his calling to train future Christian ministry leaders.

Faithfulness: A Dependable Servant

Sloth is one of the so-called seven deadly sins. But in our dog-eat-dog world today, it's hard to imagine that anyone is actually guilty of sloth. Overwork, yes—but sloth? What if, however, sloth weren't defined as lazing on the couch all day in one's pajamas. What if sloth were actually a ritualized busyness, a frantic pace of activity, which in fact kept one from accomplishing what was truly important. This is the way some theologians have described the sin of sloth.

Jesus told a parable about three servants: two are “good” and “faithful,” both characteristics we find in our list of the fruit of the Spirit. The third servant, however, is “wicked” and “lazy,” and we want to understand this distinction, so that we can better understand what it means to be faithful.

First, let's look at the context of this parable, which is sandwiched between

two other parables in Matthew 25. In each of these parables, Jesus is giving us a glimpse of the present and future realities of the kingdom of God. He's assuming that our actions today will affect our lives into eternity. In each of the parables, servants are judged according to their faithfulness, and faithfulness is measured by action here on earth, which is later rewarded or punished.

Interestingly, each of these parables describes “unfaithfulness” as an act of omission. In the first parable, five of the virgins failed to carry with them supplementary oil for trimming their lamps. In the second parable, the wicked and lazy servant did not invest his master's money properly. In the third parable, those accursed by the Son of Man failed to care for the poor and marginalized. Part of faithfulness, then, is doing the work to which God calls us.

Now it is required
that those who
have been given
a trust must
prove faithful.

1 Corinthians 4:2

Apply the Word

Are we surprised to learn that the reward for faithfulness is joy? We shouldn't be! Joy is at the front of our list of the fruit of the Spirit, and we've come to understand that each of these virtues works together with the others. When we are faithful to the obligations that God has given us, we can revel in the joy of His pleasure.

Pray with Us

Donor Resource Management processes donations given to Moody's ministries. Will you ask God to encourage Edgardo Camacho, Sharon Cluff, Norma De Jesus, and Patricia Fletcher as they are busy processing fiscal year-end donations to Moody's ministries?

Gentleness: In the Face of Christ

The average age of farmers in the United States is 57, and in recent years the Department of Agriculture has expressed concern that fewer and fewer Americans are entering agricultural professions. Our increasing distance from fields and from the work of farming perpetuates a general ignorance when it comes to all things agricultural. Some children, for example, aren't even sure which animals lay the eggs they eat!

In the historical context of the New Testament, everyone shared a much greater familiarity with farming practices. The society of that day was not industrial but agrarian. So in order to better understand many of Jesus' parables, we need to put on our farmer's hat and think in the context of the field.

Today, we're learning about gentleness, and as we've done with the other virtues, we want first to look at gentleness as a

divine characteristic. Here, Jesus describes Himself as gentle and humble in heart. In this metaphorical illustration, we are the beast of burden. We carry a load on our back, and we have accumulated weariness because of that load. But Jesus depicts Himself as a wise and gentle master. He doesn't drive His children past the point of exhaustion. Nor does He situate on their shoulders a constricting and heavy yoke. Instead, He invites them to rest. He is gentle, placing on them an "easy" yoke and a "light" burden.

For he knows how
we are formed, he
remembers that we
are dust.

Psalm 103:14

Gentleness is the way in which we honor another person's humanity. Maybe much to our surprise, God in fact honors our humanity! Like the key verse indicates, He understands our fragility, and His gentleness is closely akin to His love and His kindness. Gentleness seems to be a sympathetic disposition that grants us the ability to charitably accept the weaknesses and limitations of others.

Apply the Word

Gentleness is counterintuitive: consider the use of field animals. It would seem that driving animals hard would increase productivity, but in fact giving them needed rest might be more successful in increasing yield. Being gentle with others—patiently forbearing with their failures and faults—may be the best way to help them grow and flourish.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Donor Resource Management, please lift up Kyella Gilliam, Brian Ixcaragua, David Kocourek, Dona Lorange, and Amelia Mendez. May the Lord fill their hearts today.

Gentleness: The Disposition of Wisdom

In his controversial cover story for *New York* magazine last May, Wesley Yang drew attention to what he calls the “Bamboo Ceiling.” Although many Asian Americans do well in school and get into top colleges, statistically they are underrepresented as corporate officers, board members, and college presidents. Yang argues that this is because Asians traditionally emphasize the virtues of deference and humility, whereas self-promotion and self-assertion may be needed for achieving these top-level positions.

Do nothing out of
selfish ambition
or vain conceit.
Rather, in humility
value others above
yourselves.

Philippians 2:3

Gentleness, or deference, is not always well perceived—in fact, some may even argue that the wisdom being described in today’s passage is foolishness. Consider the characteristics of godly wisdom, that it is humble, pure, peaceable, considerate (gentle), submissive, merciful, impartial, and sincere. These words imply that a person is motivated to think and act

not on the basis of self-interest (and what will advance one’s position or reputation) but on the basis of genuine love—that he will value others above himself.

Choosing to desire and demonstrate any of the fruit of the Spirit is an others-motivated proposition. It may mean that we lose ground for ourselves, in an earthly sense. But we’re reminded in today’s passage of the eternal reward awaiting those who walk in the Spirit, sowing the seeds of virtue. We will indeed harvest lasting eternal reward.

This consoles us when we feel like the path of virtue leads us further from success, when like the psalmist (Psalm 73) we can’t help but envy the wicked their personal advancement. We live with the knowledge of another realm, which operates according to different rules. And heaven values gentleness.

Apply the Word

If you’ve been feeling discouraged that your “good works” have obstructed your professional and personal goals, read Psalm 73. You’ll discover the journey of a man who went from bitterness and jealousy to the peace and praise of an eternal perspective. “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!” (v. 26).

Pray with Us

Please ask the Father to grant discernment to Lloyd Dodson, vice president of Human Resources, as he leads Moody’s efforts in the recruitment and development of faculty and staff.

Self-Control: For the Purpose of Holiness

In an essay for the Hoover Institution's *Policy Review*, Mary Eberstadt asks this question, "What happens when, for the first time in history, adult human beings are free to have all the food and sex they want?" In her article, Eberstadt cites the long history of pairing food and sex as primal human desires and needs as well as the way each of these has become increasingly more accessible to us today.

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, illustrates this parallel between food and sex. It appears that the Corinthians didn't believe in restrictions of their intake of food and sex. "I have the right to do anything!" must have been a popular phrase by which they readily defended personal autonomy in matters of morality (v. 12). They wanted to be free to decide what and how much they ate ("Food for the stomach and the

stomach for food"), and it seems they also wanted the same liberty in making their sexual decisions. Note how Paul includes both topics in chapter 6.

To answer Eberstadt's question and to engage Paul, we are again back at our list of the fruit of the Spirit. Today we are talking about self-control. Self-control, at least according to Scripture's standards, isn't simply the ability to follow rules. In fact, there is a glimmer of truth in the Corinthians' affirmation that "I can do anything." As Christians, we aren't saved by law; we are saved by gospel grace.

But this isn't the license to do whatever we want. In fact, we're given the wisdom of true discernment, deciding to do and not to do that which is helpful or unhelpful. For the Christian, the true statement is "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13, NKJV).

Like a city whose
walls are broken
through is a person
who lacks self-
control.

Proverbs 25:28

Apply the Word

Self-control is a beautiful and difficult virtue: it is beautiful because it guides us into making choices that are best and serves as a means of protection over our lives. But it is difficult, especially when fewer and fewer people believe that we should deny ourselves any pleasure. Self-control is evidence of the Spirit's control in and through our lives!

Pray with Us

Brenda McLemore and Nga Tran in Mail Service Bulk Mail would be grateful for your prayers. Ask the Father to give them wisdom to operate as efficiently as possible, to choose the best methods for distribution, and to maintain a servant's heart day by day.

Self-Control: For the Purpose of Calling

Novak Djokovic has long been a star tennis player, but in 2011 he changed his diet, and his tennis improved even more. Djokovic had been diagnosed with celiac disease, a condition that makes a person unable to tolerate gluten. He stopped eating pizza, pasta, and bread and admits, “It’s helped me because my movement is much sharper now and I feel great physically.”

Paul uses the analogy of physical competition to emphasize the need for self-control in the Christian life. He talks about a race and a boxing match, and he’s taken obvious inspiration from the Isthmian Games, an athletic festival held in Corinth every two years. For those who set out to win their race, Paul noted that they endured stricter training. For foot races, this would probably include the regimen of logging endurance miles, performing speed and agility exercises, eating

healthy food, and getting enough sleep. It’s a competitive spirit that drives their physically punishing rituals: they want to win the crown, which in the case of the Isthmian Games was a victory wreath made out of withered celery. If this token of victory meant so much for the athletes in the Isthmian Games, imagine what it means for us as Christians to receive a crown that will last forever!

Better a patient
person than a
warrior, one with
self-control than
one who takes
a city.

Proverbs 16:32

Self-control is always hard in the moment: it’s never easy to say no to a momentary pleasure for a future gain. But athletes do this all the time, forsaking the pleasures

of junk food and lazy days on the couch so that they can be in shape to win their race. Christians can be equally self-controlled for the sake of their calling. Paul describes his commitment to strict training as a preacher of Christ, and he’s unwilling to disqualify himself.

Apply the Word

Sometimes our Christian life centers around the question, “Can I do this or that?” We want to know whether our actions are permissible (and we like to push the boundaries as far as we can!) But our readings on self-control have taught us that we shouldn’t simply ask, “Can I do this?” but “Is this beneficial?” and “Will this help me in my calling?”

Pray with Us

Your prayers would be an encouragement to Dr. Paul Nyquist, president of Moody Bible Institute, as he leads Moody’s ministries. Will you ask the Father to guide Dr. Nyquist with the Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17)?

Bless and Be Blessed: The Commission of the Gospel

“We value virtue but do not discuss it,” author John Steinbeck observed. “The honest bookkeeper, the faithful wife, the earnest scholar get little of our attention compared to the embezzler, the tramp, the cheat.” God not only values virtue, He promises to make believers virtuous by the power of His Spirit.

As we conclude this month’s study on the fruit of the Spirit, we’re reminded of our big themes. Christian virtues—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control—don’t come naturally. These are counterintuitive actions and attitudes that, apart from the Spirit of Christ, we cannot master or produce. But our efforts at living out these virtues do matter, and there is an important element of responsibility in our walk with Christ. The extent to which we exhibit the fruit of the Spirit is indeed a direct measure of our obedience to Christ.

He redeemed us
in order that the
blessing given to
Abraham might
come to the
Gentiles through
Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:14

But we would be remiss if we forget what the real purpose is behind our salvation. God wants to make us better people, but His purposes of our personal transformation are actually secondary to His purposes of transforming the world. When God came to Abraham and announced His purposes to bless him, He was clear about His purpose: “I will bless you . . . and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:2–3). This blessing has come to us through Abraham from Jesus Christ. It is mediated by faith—faith in Jesus Christ—and it’s through this faith that we receive the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Notice this summary of Christian living: “The righteous shall live by faith” (Gal. 3:11). God isn’t interested in our attempts at rule keeping. Our faith in Him, which is His own gift to us, grows as the Spirit works in our lives to bear fruit.

Apply the Word

Here’s the faith to which we hope this month’s study on the fruit of the Spirit has inspired you: the faith to believe in God’s forgiveness, the faith to believe in His power to transform you, the faith to believe that His ways are right, and the faith to believe that holiness is wholeness. May your faith—in all of its practical expressions—bless the world.

Pray with Us

Praise God for the tremendous gift of His Holy Spirit who resides within us. May we keep in step with the Spirit, exemplifying love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

FROM THE EDITORS

Continued from page 4

We are delighted to be fellow travelers on this journey with you, the readers of *Today in the Word*. Our passion here at Moody Bible Institute is to help provide you with resources to strengthen and encourage you as we travel through this world on the way to our eternal home. We want to help encourage you to read and study Scripture and to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We want to help build your anticipation for eternal life in God's presence, and to help prepare you even now for that glorious day. You certainly are an encouragement to us—we are blessed by every email, every letter, all your prayers, and gifts. God

is good to provide for all of our needs, and often He uses you as the means of that provision.

Wherever you may be traveling this summer, we hope you'll take along *Today in the Word*. No matter how far we might be from home—either our geographical home or our spiritual home—God's Word is there for us. I know my family will have our copies tucked into our carry-on bags when we board the plane for Scotland. I hope that God will bless your summer season with safe travels and wonderful memories, and I also hope that blessing will include spiritual growth as you study His Word.

Where will you be taking *Today in the Word* this summer? We would love to hear from you about where you are on your spiritual journey even when you're on vacation! Send us a note to let us know where you were reading *Today in the Word*—at the beach, on the mountain trails, somewhere at a relative's house, or even during an international trip. Did you encounter something unexpected in God's Word when you were studying it in a different place than home? Did a season of relaxation also bring a time of spiritual refreshment?

We also welcome your photos, so send us your favorite vacation picture. Even better, share a photo that shows you on vacation with *Today in the Word*! We love hearing from our readers about how God is using His Word to bless and encourage you no matter where you are in the world.

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Ephesians 3:1-6

Today's Devotion A Stewardship of Grace

For those who love detective novels, a mystery means that there's a puzzle that needs to be solved. Those who figure out the clues can solve the mystery. But in today's passage, Paul uses the term mystery in a different sense. This mystery was a matter of revelation. The mystery that Paul wrote about was something which was not made... [▶](#)

This Month

For many of us, the first word that comes to mind when we think about our relationship with the church is complicated. The critic in us looks around on Sunday morning and notices flawed people, the judge in us notes the lack of spiritual zeal in fellow-parishioners, the theologian in us suspects insufficient depth in the pastor's sermon. The list goes on and on, and too often we get mired in the... [▶](#)

Looking For More



This Month's Study at a Glance

[A look at this month's devotions.](#) [▶](#)



Today with Paul Nyquist

[Because of His Great Love for Us](#) [▶](#)



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