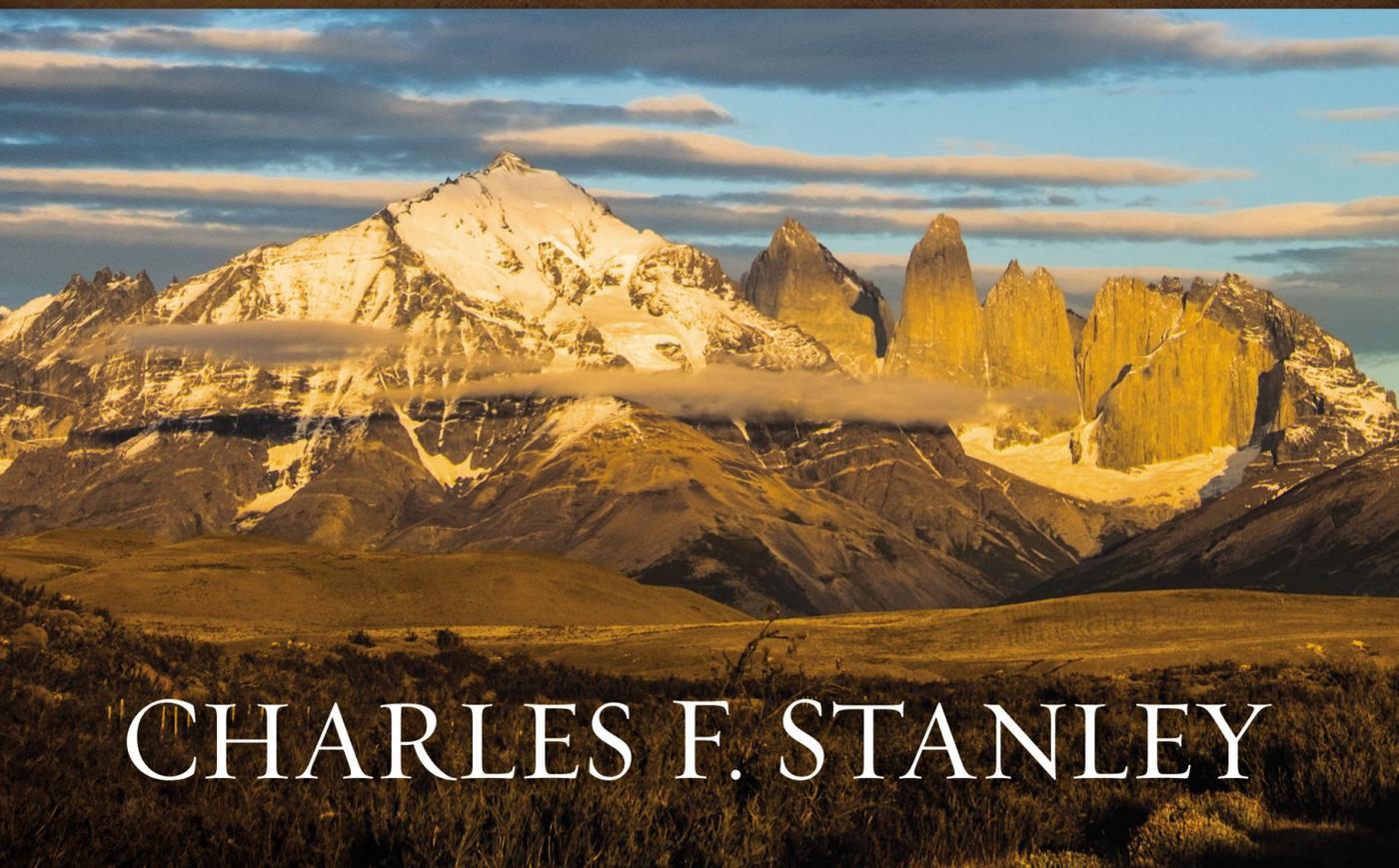


# 30 LIFE PRINCIPLES BIBLE STUDY

An Action Plan for Living  
the Principles Each Day



CHARLES F. STANLEY

# LIFE PRINCIPLE 1

## Your Intimacy with God— His Highest Priority for Your Life—Determines the Impact of Your Life

*Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image,  
according to Our likeness.”*

GENESIS 1:26

### Life's Questions

At the beginning of any journey, you must set out in the right direction to reach your destination. That is why this Bible study begins with God's wonderful purpose for bringing you into this world. To find the life that's worth living—one that makes a *real* difference in this world—you first must understand that you're a special, beloved person. What's more, God has a unique and wonderful plan for you that will give you all the love, satisfaction, fulfillment, and significance you're looking for in life.

True success in God's eyes is not measured in terms of wealth, accomplishments, or popularity. Some of the richest, most talented, and best-known people in the world have little or no real impact on the world around them. On the other hand, countless people who are “average” by cultural standards—regardless of their unique limitations—make an enormous impact on the world simply by serving in the place that God has called them to serve. It is people's relationship and obedience to God that determine their impact.

Have you wondered what motivated God to design the universe or why He created you? It was love . . . pure and simple. Even before the

#### PRINCIPLE IN ACTION

*Phinehas* (Numbers 25:10–13)

*Deborah* (Judges 4:1–5:31)

*Mary of Bethany* (John 12:1–8)

*Timothy* (1 Timothy 1:2, 18)

*James* (James 1:1)

*Success is desiring to be the person  
that God has called you to be and  
to achieve those goals that God has  
helped you to set.*

—CHARLES F. STANLEY

beginning of the world, God loved you and wanted to have a close, personal relationship with you that would bring great joy, fulfillment, and power to your life (see Ephesians 1:4). Therefore, Life Principle 1 is this: *Your intimacy with God—His highest priority for your life—determines the impact of your life.*

## Day 1: Made In God's Image

God created you like Himself so you could have fellowship with Him.

Each of us has a need to know that we are loved.

God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth" (Genesis 1:26).

When God created you, He made you like Himself. Why? So you would have the capacity for fellowship with Him. Without that commonality, you would have no way to comprehend Him on a personal level. However, because you have this commonality, you can recognize His perfections. You can appreciate His limitless love, mercy, grace, wisdom, and power because of the (extremely) limited versions of those attributes you see in yourself. Worship, of course, is the only sensible reaction to God when faced with this realization.

The world tends to sum up a person's impact based on the fame and fortune that he or she possesses. But God sums up a person's impact in terms of relationship, character, and obedience to Him. God wants you to succeed first and foremost in your relationship with Him, then in your relationships with others, and finally in your vocations and ministries. His highest priority and purpose for your life is intimacy with Him. Therefore, the depth of your relationship with Him will determine the impact of your life in this world.

Thanks to God's design, this relationship simultaneously fills your deepest personal needs—especially the need to know that you are loved. Each one of us has to feel certain, deep down in our hearts, that someone cares for us and has our best interests at heart. When your relationship with God is strong, you experience His love with a passionate intensity too deep for words. So it is that God created you with fellowship in mind—with Himself and others. But you cannot fully love others until you have yourself experienced the love of God.

1. Read Genesis 1. God is spirit. He is eternal, all-powerful, and all-knowing. He exists out of time, and the laws of physics don't apply to Him. He is sovereign, answers to no one, and can't be defeated. In what ways, then, are you created in His image (26)? Where is the resemblance?

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2. What impact does the fact you were created in God’s image have on your dominion over the animal world (26)?

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3. What impact does the fact you were created in God’s image have on your relationship with other people?

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4. Is it possible to catch a “glimpse of God” in other people? Explain.

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5. After the first five days of creation, God declared His work to be “good” (4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). After the sixth day—the day He created humankind in His own image—He declared His work to be “very good” (31). Why do you think He said this?

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*The word image in the Old Testament also means a likeness, model, semblance, or shadow. This is what you have in common with God and why you can know Him more deeply.*

## Day 2: A Willing Surrender

You experience God’s love when you willingly surrender to His call to be your Savior, Lord, and Friend. *Surrender* is a loaded word. In military terms, it means that all is lost. In spiritual terms, however, it means that all is gained. To *surrender* to God is to let go of the steering wheel of your life and leave the driving to the One who not only designed the car but also plotted the course. To surrender control to God is to gain confidence and faith.

*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Genesis 1:27).*

*God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day (Genesis 1:31).*

**In spiritual terms, to surrender to God means that all is gained.**

God desires your fellowship and worship.

God wants your service to be effective and fruitful.

God waits for the freedom to bless you.

Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity (Psalm 37:1).

He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass (Psalm 37:6-7).

There are at least three reasons why God seeks your surrender. First, *He loves you and desires your fellowship and worship*. As long as you hold something back from God, you cannot know Him completely or fully experience His love. However, when you surrender all that you are to Him, you get all of Him.

Second, *He wants your service to be effective and fruitful*. Regardless of your particular situation or the limitations you might have, the more you love Jesus and serve Him in the place He has called you to serve, the more effective that service will be. The closer you draw to God, the more impact your life will have. The more energetically you nurture your relationship with the Lord, the greater the positive mark you will leave behind.

Third, *He waits for the freedom to bless you*. God is omnipotent, but He will not violate His own principles. He draws you to Himself so you can experience His love and forgiveness. He asks for your willing surrender so He can give you the best blessings He has to offer.

6. Read Psalm 37. Why does the prosperity of evildoers make it difficult for people to surrender to God (1)?

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7. What is the connection between surrendering to God and leaving justice and vengeance to Him (6)?

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8. What is the connection between surrendering to God and waiting patiently for Him (7)?

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9. What does it say about God that He waits for you to surrender instead of forcing you to submit to His will?

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10. What does it say that we sometimes choose to wait to surrender until circumstances escalate beyond our control?

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*The word good in the Old Testament also means well-pleasing, proper, pleasant to the senses, useful, profitable, or a general state of well-being and happiness. Everything good that comes to you is from God (see James 1:17).*

## Day 3: Resistance Is Foolish

If God loves you more than anyone else ever could—and if He knows better than anyone else what will bring you ultimate joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment—why would anyone resist surrendering to Him? Why would anyone refuse to give himself or herself completely to Him and enjoy the blessings He has in store for His faithful followers?

*Pride* is one of the most obvious explanations. Many people flatter themselves into thinking they know better than God and can handle their lives better than He can. So they keep Him at a distance. Others choose not to surrender because they fear what God will do (or not do) for them. They think if they give Him control, He'll make them do exactly what will make them most miserable. Still others refuse to surrender because they believe Satan's lies, which tell them God is judgmental and only seeks to punish them for their mistakes.

All of this is completely false! God *always* has your best interests in mind. He will refuse you no good thing when you gladly submit to His will (see Romans 8:32). He has said, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you . . . thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). Given this, it only makes sense to surrender to God. And when you do, you grow close to Him and begin to make an impact on this world.

11. Read Jonah 1. How did Jonah respond to God's call to go to Nineveh (3)? How might his story have unfolded if he had submitted to God's will from the start?

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*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up (James 4:10).*

**God knows what will bring you ultimate joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment.**

**God *always* has your best interests in mind.**

*Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare (Jonah 1:3).*

*So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows (Jonah 1:15–16).*

**12.** Jonah’s resistance was rather blatant. He booked a journey in a different direction from the one God told him to take (1:3)—and faced the consequences for his actions (15). What are some of the subtle ways today that people resist surrendering to God?

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**13.** If Jonah’s story proves anything, it’s that God ultimately accomplishes His will—whether you like it or not. You can learn that the hard way, as Jonah did, or the easy way. How would you convince a skeptical friend that the easy way is better?

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**14.** Read Jonah 3. What is the future to which you can look forward if you submit to God’s will? What are some examples of the impact you might have on the world around you?

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**15.** Read Jonah 4:1–2. What was Jonah’s reason for refusing to surrender to God? In what ways have you refused to follow God because of a lack of compassion for others?

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*Throughout modern times, the story of Jonah often has been ridiculed as myth, but the Hebrew people accepted it as historical. Jesus Christ Himself also vouched for the truth of the book and the remarkable story it relates (see Matthew 12:39–41).*

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## Living the Principle

**You were created for intimacy with God.**

*How will you live out Life Principle 1 this week?* Remember, you were created for intimacy with God. The impact that your relationship with Him makes in your life cannot be overstated. His highest priority for you is to be involved with Him in prayer, the study of His Word, and worship and praise. So, if you want to lead a life that is fulfilling, significant,

and makes a difference, the secret is to surrender yourself completely to Christ and open your heart to His love and mercy.

It's only through your fellowship and communion with God that you will be able to truly affect other people's lives in a way that lasts eternally. It's only through your connection with Him that you will be able to leave a lasting spiritual legacy for your children, grandchildren, and the generations that come after you. As you spend time with God and get to know Him intimately, it will become evident in every area of your life—and this will positively affect the life of every person you encounter.

So, with this in mind, ask yourself some difficult questions this week. Begin by asking yourself what impact, if any, you are having on the world around you. If you find that you are having little impact, or that your life seems to lack meaning, consider your relationship with God. Would you describe it as strong and vibrant? Are you letting other things get in the way of your time with Him and study of His Word? If so, what can you eliminate so that your intimacy with God will grow? What other steps can you take to restore the intimacy? Spend time in prayer, asking God to draw you into communion with Himself and transform your life.

Fellowship with God enables you to affect others in a way that lasts eternally.

## Life Lessons to Remember

- ❖ God loves you and desires your fellowship and worship (see Deuteronomy 6:5).
- ❖ God wants your service for Him to be effective and fruitful (see John 15:5).
- ❖ God waits for you to invite Him to bless you (see Revelation 3:20).

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*You can never know the mind of God fully because you are a finite creature and He is infinite, but you can grow in your understanding about who God is, how He operates in your world, and why He does things He does. You can grow in your understanding by reading more of God's Word, gaining more maturity in Christ Jesus, and learning how to read the Bible with spiritual understanding. "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you"*  
(John 14:26).

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## LIFE PRINCIPLE 2

# Obey God and Leave All the Consequences to Him

*Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people for all the earth is Mine.*

EXODUS 19:5

### Life's Questions

God is the Creator of all that exists. “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3). As the Creator and Orderer of the universe, He has the right and the power to conform all circumstances to His will. He is also entitled to expect a certain standard of behavior from those who believe in Him.

Of course, because His standard is higher than that of the culture in which you live, obeying His commands will set you apart from the crowd. In certain circumstances, it will make you a target for scorn from a world that denies His authority. As you strive to meet God's standard, you might be accused of intolerance and narrow-mindedness, or singled out on social media or in social settings. The consequences can be severe . . . which is why God instructs you to leave them to Him. He can bring ultimate good from even the direst consequences.

How do you relate to God, His commands, and the challenges and temptations that confront you? When God directs you to do something, how do you respond? Do His commands seem too difficult or costly for you to obey? Are you facing a decision that seems overwhelming? Are you torn about whether to follow God's instructions? If so, Life Principle 2 will help you: *Obey God and leave all the consequences to Him.*

### PRINCIPLE IN ACTION

*Noah* (Genesis 6:22)  
*Aaron* (Leviticus 8:2–3)  
*Shadrach, Meshach, and  
Abed-Nego* (Daniel 3:19–29)  
*Amos* (Amos 7:14–15)  
*Mary* (Luke 1:31–38)

*Great faith does not blossom overnight. It is the result of years of trusting and obeying the Lord.*

—CHARLES F. STANLEY

## Day 1: Staring Down the Challenges

Obeying God is essential to pleasing Him.

Obedience can be a challenge, especially when you're tempted to believe you stand to lose more through your obedience than you might gain. However, obeying God is essential to pleasing Him. When God commands you to obey Him, it's with your best interests in mind. He knows the outcome of every possible choice you might make, and He steers you to the path of the greatest good. In the process, He gives you key principles by which to live. He also sets a framework around your life that forms a hedge of protection from evil (see Job 1:10).

Can you remember the last time you were tempted to do the opposite of what you knew God desired you to do? Most likely, a struggle erupted within your heart. The questions arose: *Will obeying God cost me more than disobeying Him? Can I experience greater happiness by committing this sin than I would by obeying God? What will happen if I disobey?* If you chose to obey God in that situation, you took the way of wisdom and undoubtedly realized that in the end, the blessing of obedience outweighed any possible consequences.

Obedience is the avenue by which you know God better.

God asks you to submit your life to Him and leave whatever happens to His loving care. As you grow in your walk with the Lord, obedience becomes the avenue by which you come to know Him better. Your experiences teach you that obeying Him produces positive results. Your bond of trust in Him becomes stronger and stronger. In turn, He pulls you closer to Himself and teaches you more about His precepts and His love.

*Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold. . . . When all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image (Daniel 3:1, 7).*

1. Read Daniel 3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were Hebrew captives who had made names for themselves in Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar had appointed them to serve as governors, which gave them great status and privilege. Given this, why might it have seemed to make sense for them to ignore God's law and comply with Nebuchadnezzar's order to bow down to his gold image (1-7)?

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2. What was Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego's reply to King Nebuchadnezzar's order (16-18)? What did they acknowledge about God? What kind of relationship would you need to have with God in order to say—and *mean*—those words?

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*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered. . . . "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us (Daniel 3:16-17).*

3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego stated they had no guarantee God would save them from the fiery furnace—yet still they refused to bow to the golden image. Why was death preferable to disobedience for them?

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4. What are some of the likely results of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego’s bold acts of obedience in their own lives, among their circles of influence, and throughout Babylon?

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5. Consider a time in your life when it seemed to make sense to ignore God’s law—or the Holy Spirit’s prompting in your conscience—in favor of a more popular course of action. What can you take away from the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego?

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*“But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up”*  
(Daniel 3:18).

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind* (Romans 12:2).

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*The word obey in the Old Testament primarily means to listen. It can also mean to heed, agree, consent, understand, and yield to. To obey God means that you must listen for His voice and trust what He’s telling you. Obeying God is absolutely essential to pleasing Him.*

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## Day 2: To Trust or Not to Trust

Disobedience says to the Lord that you know better than He does when it comes to your life and the circumstances surrounding it. Nothing could be further from the truth. God loves you and is committed to you. He commands your obedience not because He is a strict

Disobedience says to God that you know better than He does when it comes to your life.

You were created to have fellowship with God.

Disobedience always leads to consequences.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" (Genesis 3:1).

The serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5).

The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked (Genesis 3:7).

taskmaster but because He knows the devastating effect that disobedience and sin will have on your life.

You were created to have fellowship with Him. Disobedience disrupts that fellowship and puts obstacles in the way of your relationship. It creates spiritual distance between you and God and makes you vulnerable to temptation. That vulnerability doesn't go unnoticed by Satan. He encourages disobedience by telling you the Lord's promises cannot be trusted and you can enjoy life more if you ignore His commands. Satan will skew your perspective by causing you to doubt the most secure and trustworthy thing in the world: God's Word.

The key to resisting Satan's temptation is to remember that disobedience *always* produces consequences—including feelings of guilt, shame, and worthlessness; broken lives; destroyed marriages; and bitter disputes. While sin can never change God's eternal love for His children, it can certainly disrupt your fellowship and alienates you from His blessings. In times of disobedience, you become spiritually weak and unable to discern right from wrong. You sink deeper into sin's grasp and find it impossible to reverse your sinfulness on your own.

6. Read Genesis 3. Notice that Satan began his temptation of Eve with the question, "Has God indeed said . . . ?" (1). Why was this question such an effective tool when it came to temptation? What did it cause Eve to consider?

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7. Satan followed up his question to Eve with a declaration that God had lied to her (4). What did he say that made this lie sound like the truth in her ears (5)? What decision concerning who to trust did Eve and Adam (who was with her) have to make?

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8. What was the immediate consequence of Adam and Eve's sin (7)? How did it affect their relationship with God (8-9)? How does your sin cause you to hide from God?

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9. What were some of the long-term consequences for Adam and Eve (16–19)? Why did God have to drive them out of the Garden of Eden (22–24)?

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10. What are some examples of how being obedient to God might present a challenge in the following areas: your friendships, your dating relationships, your entertainment choices, your career path, your reputation, and your comfort zone?

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*Satan often begins his temptations by questioning God's commands and suggesting obedience is not necessary.*

*You do great harm to yourself when you believe you will find greater blessing in doing your own thing than in obeying God.*

*Obedience always results in blessings.*

*"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception. . . . Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it" (Genesis 3:16–17).*

*The LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man (Genesis 3:22–24).*

## Day 3: Confidence-Building Strategies

When God called out to Moses from a burning bush and said, "I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:10), Moses was understandably concerned that he was not up to the task. "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" he asked (11). God had to build Moses' confidence by giving him the words to say and promising to be with Him. He does the same in your life.

The Bible provides you with many principles that will help you obey God with all your heart and give you confidence that you can always trust Him to keep His promises. For instance, Paul writes in Romans 8:28, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God." When you trust God with your life, you can be certain that even when circumstances seem dire, *God is leading you and directing you*—and He will work things out for your good.

The Bible also tells you that "those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31). When in doubt, you can *choose to wait on God* for an answer to your problem. When you do, you can be confident that He will lead you in the best direction.

*By faith [Moses] forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27).*

**God is always leading you and directing you.**

**When in doubt, choose to wait on God for an answer.**

**Meditating on Scripture will build your confidence in God.**

**Trials and challenges will build your confidence in God.**

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine. My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; for whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.*

*Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her*  
(Proverbs 3:1–18).

*Meditating on God’s Word* will also help build your confidence in Him. Joshua noted the importance of this when he said to the Israelites, “Meditate in [God’s laws] day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Joshua 1:8). When you saturate your mind with Scripture, you gain God’s viewpoint and know right from wrong when temptation comes.

Even *times of trial and challenges can build your confidence* in God. When the people of Israel entered the Promised Land at God’s direction, they had to face strong enemy opposition. God will rarely empty your life of trouble and conflict, for if He did, you would not have any reason to depend on Him. He allows enough difficulty to keep you turned toward Him.

- 11.** Read Proverbs 3:1–18. How can you know when you are starting to “lean . . . on your own understanding” (5)? What steps can you take to “acknowledge” God instead (6)?

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- 12.** What does God promise when you choose to seek His wisdom, honor Him with your possessions, and yield to His correction (7–12)? How difficult or easy do you find this is to do in your life? Explain.

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- 13.** When was the last time you felt the Holy Spirit give you direction or wisdom in making a decision? What did you learn from the experience? What is the true value of such godly wisdom (13–18)?

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- 14.** What’s the longest you’ve ever waited for direction from God in a certain situation or circumstance? What did you learn from the experience about yourself and about God?

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15. If you were to make obeying God the number one priority in every area of your life, where do you think you would see the most opposition, conflict, or temptation? Explain.

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*In Exodus 3:14, God said His name is “I AM WHO I AM.” This is also translated as, “I WILL ALWAYS BE WHO I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN.” God never changes! He will be as faithful and loving to you as He was to Moses and the Israelites all those many years ago.*

## Living the Principle

*How will you live out Life Principle 2 this week?* Consider the challenges you may be facing as a result of your obedience to God. One strategy for successfully dealing with those challenges is to think of them as badges of honor for your faithfulness. Remember, if you’re being targeted for standing with God, there’s no better place in the world to be!

If you find that you are struggling with obedience in a certain area, ask yourself what God is leading you to do—and what is standing in your way. With the help of the Holy Spirit, weigh the pros and cons of obedience. Ask God to help you recognize the potential that lies in following His will. Ask Him to expose the consequences that cause you to fear as the ineffective threats that they really are. And ask Him to remind you of the promises He has made in the Bible to help you grow in confidence that His way is always the best way.

## Life Lessons to Remember

- ❖ God wants you to trust Him with your life and all that concerns you (see Proverbs 3:5–6).
- ❖ At times you will need to wait on the Lord for an answer to your problem or situation (see Psalm 37:9).
- ❖ At other times you must be willing to endure conflict (see Matthew 5:10–12).

*“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22).*



## LIFE PRINCIPLE 3

# God's Word Is an Immovable Anchor in Times of Storm

*God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man,  
that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do?  
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?*

NUMBERS 23:19

## Life's Questions

If you've made the decision to seek an intimate relationship with God and obey Him no matter what, you will undoubtedly experience seasons of difficulty and uncertainty. Some challenges you will see coming long before they actually hit. Others will blindsides you with the suddenness of a lightning strike. Some challenges that may seem manageable at first will later reveal themselves as much more difficult and serious than you imagined. Others have the potential to turn your life upside down immediately.

Your walk with God is a journey of faith, and there will be situations in which your trust in Him will be tested. If you've read the stories of Joseph, Job, and countless other heroes of the faith in the Bible, you know what a dark night of the soul looks like. Jesus Himself said, "In the world you will have tribulation." But He also added this promise: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

What will you cling to when a deluge of trouble rains on your life and everything you know to be true seems to be swept away by winds of adversity? What will you hold on to when the waves of doubt threaten to crash down on you? Where can you find a firm foundation when everything around you is sinking? The answer is found in Life Principle 3: *God's Word is an immovable anchor in times of storm.*

### PRINCIPLE IN ACTION

*Ezra* (Ezra 7:10)

*Job* (Job 10:12)

*Jehoiakim* (Jeremiah 36:20–32)

*Habakkuk* (Habakkuk 3:17–19)

*Joshua the Priest* (Zechariah 6:9–13)

*We need to read the Bible daily  
to give our minds and hearts the  
spiritual nutrition they need to face  
life's daily demands.*

—CHARLES F. STANLEY

## Day I: A Guidebook for Life's Journey

The more time you spend in Scripture, the stronger your bond with God grows.

Don't tackle life without instructions from the One who makes each day possible.

God knows when you need encouragement, guidance, and hope. After all, He created you and understands your inner workings better than you do. What's more, He is able to meet your every need. That's why He provides promises in His Word so you can understand His nature and trust Him. The more time you spend in Scripture—reading about people who claimed His promises, as well as those who rejected them—the stronger your bond with Him grows.

In emotionally devastating times, that bond may prove to be a lifeline and essential to your spiritual welfare. God's Word is therefore a compass, a guide, and an instruction book to life. Just as you use instruction manuals at work or in the kitchen, you can use God's Word as your resource for wisdom and truth. No one would think of baking a cake without a recipe, nor would a mechanic rebuild a car engine without a manual. Likewise, you shouldn't attempt to tackle the complexities of life without instructions from the One who makes each day possible.

As with most things, preparation is the key to success. A wise strategy is to familiarize yourself with God's Word before an emergency arises. Spend as much time as possible acquainting yourself with its stories, its promises, and its wisdom. The more time you spend in study, the better prepared you'll be to apply the wisdom of Scripture when you need it most.

1. Read Psalm 119:97-104. These words were written by King David, the only person God ever described as "a man after [His] own heart" (Acts 13:22). Based on David's words in these verses, how would you describe his heart?

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*Oh, how I love Your law!  
It is my meditation all the day*  
(Psalm 119:97).

2. David said he meditated on God's Word "all the day" (97). What do you think this looked like in his life? Is it still possible to meditate on God's Word continuously today—or was that something that could only be done in simpler times? Explain.

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3. In what ways is God’s wisdom superior to the wisdom of this world (98)? How have you witnessed this in your own life?

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4. When was a time that God’s Word “restrained” you from following an evil way (101)? How did you know God was guiding you in that situation?

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5. How has the Bible given you understanding (104)? What are you doing to gain more understanding from God’s Word on a daily basis?

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*You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word. I have not departed from Your judgments, for You Yourself have taught me. How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way (Psalm 119:98–104).*

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*Left to ourselves, we often don’t know which path leads to life and which ends in death. But through His Word, God sheds light on our situation and leads us to safety.*

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## Day 2: The Value of a Discerning Eye

*Discernment* is the ability to decide between God’s truth and the world’s error. In your life as a believer, it is important for you to have discernment so you can understand God’s Word and apply it in ways that honor Him. Reading the Bible is the first step in this process. The second step is to consider the *context* in which the passage was written by asking these questions:

- ❖ Who did God choose to write this particular passage?
- ❖ What were the historical circumstances of its writing?
- ❖ To whom was the passage written—and why?

*Discernment is the ability to decide between God’s truth and the world’s error.*

- ❖ What is the tone of the passage?
- ❖ How does it connect to the passages around it?
- ❖ How do respected Christian scholars and teachers interpret the passage?
- ❖ What relevance does the passage have for believers today?

It's important not to fall into the trap of lifting individual passages and verses out of context to serve your need in a particular situation. You cannot, for example, simply name and claim promises that look good to you. Some of God's promises are conditional; you have to meet certain criteria before you can claim them. And those promises that aren't conditional may be claimed only with prayer and an earnest desire to know God's will for your life.

While God wants you to experience His best, He also wants you to know Him and enjoy His presence in a personal way that expresses His sufficiency. In order to enjoy His presence fully, you need the assistance of the Holy Spirit. So, before you open God's Word, ask the Holy Spirit to guide your study and application. Claiming a promise from God's Word without guidance from the Holy Spirit will lead to disappointment, disillusionment, and frustration.

6. Read Matthew 4:1–11. How did Jesus respond each time Satan tried to tempt Him (4, 7, 10)? What enabled Him to have these verses ready when needed (see Luke 2:46–49)?

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7. Why do you think Satan chose to quote Scripture in his second attempt to tempt Christ (6)? How did Satan misuse this passage from Psalm 91:11–12?

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8. What can you learn from Jesus' response to Satan's temptation (7)?

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You can't just name and claim promises in Scripture that look good to you.

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your study of God's Word.

*Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God'" (Matthew 4:3–7).*

9. How have you learned to interpret, discern, and apply God's Word wisely?

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10. Why are wisdom and discernment necessary when it comes to statements like these?

- ❖ "The Bible says God wants you to be rich."
- ❖ "The Bible says God wants you to be happy."
- ❖ "The Bible says God is punishing you if you're suffering."

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*Jesus responded to each of Satan's three temptations by appealing to the unchanging Word of God. If we want to successfully overcome temptation, we must do the same.*

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## Day 3: Firmly Anchored

At times, God will bring a specific Scripture to mind to deliver His hope and reassurance to your heart. At other times, He will challenge you to pray and seek His wisdom on a certain issue. When you look to God in faith, He will always lead you according to His will. This may not happen overnight. Many times, God will want you to meditate on a certain Scripture passage over a period of time before He gives His guidance.

In 1 Samuel 7:1–3, we read that when David wanted to build the temple for the Lord, he first expressed his desire to Nathan the prophet. David didn't order his men to begin construction but *waited* for God's leadership. And it was a good thing he did, because the Lord wanted David's son Solomon to do the job instead (see 1 Chronicles 28:6).

Later, after hearing God's words from Nathan, he "sat before the LORD" (1 Samuel 7:18). This means he spent time alone in God's presence, communicating with God from the depths of his heart, asking Him questions, and listening quietly for His answers. This was a pattern David developed throughout his life. Being a man after God's own heart,

*Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written 'You shall worship the LORD Your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him (Matthew 4:8–11).*

**God will always lead you according to His will.**

*In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11).*

God will honor your desire to seek His wisdom.

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. . . . I do not forget Your law. The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I have not strayed from Your precepts. . . . You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word* (Psalm 119:105, 109–110, 114).

*I am Your servant; give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies. . . . The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. . . . Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me* (Psalm 119:125, 130, 133).

he sought to know the mind and heart of God so he could do what the Lord desired of him.

God honored David’s attitude by giving him a wonderful promise: “Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16). The Lord will likewise honor your desire to seek His guidance and wisdom. If you come to Him expecting Him to answer, He will never disappoint you. If you are true to His Word and understand it within its context, you will recognize how to apply God’s principles and promises. You will find strength to cling to the Lord as an anchor during difficult times.

**11.** Read Psalm 119:105–135. Nighttime travelers in David’s day had no streetlights to illuminate their way, so they carried lanterns. These handheld lights helped travelers avoid making wrong turns and revealed potential dangers and obstacles in their path. Spiritually speaking, how does God’s Word serve similar purposes (105, 130, 133)?

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**12.** How does David say that he avoided the snare of the wicked (109–110)? How did he anchor his life in the Lord (114)?

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**13.** When was a time in your life that God’s Word revealed a path you should take or an obstacle you wouldn’t have otherwise seen (125)? How did you act on that knowledge?

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**14.** In what ways has the Word of God served as an anchor for your soul? How has God been your hiding place and your shield?

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*“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil” (Hebrews 6:19).*

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15. In what ways are you “sitting before the Lord” as King David did? How has a daily Bible study routine, an active prayer life, an accountability group, or a plan for memorizing passages of Scripture helped to anchor you in your faith?
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*You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13).*

## Living the Principle

What storm are you currently facing? Is trouble striking you like a tidal wave? Are you finding yourself disheartened by your situation? If so, remember that God will never fail you, and He'll never change His mind about the promises He's made to you. So this week when the crises come—and they *will* come—lay your heart out to God and ask for His love and comfort. Ask Him to show you His will and lead you to His message of encouragement.

But don't stop there. Continue on by reading God's Word and meditating on it every day this week. A good place to start is the book of Psalms, or, if you're a new believer, the gospel of John. Ask godly friends what Scripture passages have been meaningful and inspiring to them. As you do this, the Lord will bring His Word to your mind at the moment you most need a reminder of His love and comfort. His Word will serve as an anchor of strength, guidance, and comfort to keep you steady when the waves of adversity rise. He will serve as a lamp to your feet and a light to your path.

*How will you live out Life Principle 3 this week?* Discuss with a trusted Christian friend some ways that you can keep God's Word as your anchor during difficult times. Talk about how the Bible has encouraged you and kept your focus on God in the past. Then spend time in prayer, asking God to draw you into intimate communion with Himself and to transform your life so you can grow closer to Him and affect the world for the sake of His kingdom.

**God will never fail you and never change His mind about the promises He's made.**

## Life Lessons to Remember

- ❖ God's promises are the anchors of your spiritual life (see Hebrews 6:18–20).
- ❖ God always fulfills the promises He makes (see Joshua 21:45).
- ❖ God will reward you as you patiently wait for Him to fulfill His promises (see Habakkuk 2:2–3).

