

Chapter One

The First Bookend: The Righteousness of Christ

1. What does the Bible mean by the word *righteous*? (p. 19)
2. Read Matthew 22:36-40 and I Peter 1:15-16. What is God's standard for the level of righteousness he requires of us? Why?
3. Read Romans 3:10 and Isaiah 64:6. What does God's Word say about our righteousness?
4. Read Galatians 3:10-13
 - a. What happens when we are unable to "abide by all things?"
 - b. What did Christ do for us?
5. What is the difference between trusting in Christ for our *eternal* destiny versus trusting Him for our *day-to-day* standing with God? (21)
6. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

- a. In light of 2 Corinthians 5:21, read 1 Peter 2:22 and Hebrews 4:15. What does God's Word say about Jesus' level of obedience here on this earth?
- b. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that God "made Jesus to be sin." According to 1 Peter 2:24, how did Jesus do this?
- c. Read Matthew 27:46. Explain the significance of the first sentence on page 24 of the book, "The physical pain he endured was nothing compared to the agony of being separated from the Father."
 - c.i. What does this say about Jesus' relationship with his Father at the time of Jesus' death?
 - c.ii. How does Jesus' relationship with the Father being broken result in ours being restored?
- d. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."
 - d.i. At the moment we put our faith in what Christ did for us on the cross, according to Isaiah 61:10, what happens?
 - d.ii. How are we presented before our God? When he looks at us, who does he see?

d.iii. As a result of this “Great Exchange,” according to Romans 5:1, “By faith” we are _____.

7. Explain the connection between Christ’s righteousness and our justification. (p. 26)
8. Faith involves both a *renunciation* and a *reliance*.
 - a. In terms of the first bookend, what kind of renunciation is required of us? (28)
 - b. Where must we place our reliance? Be specific.
9. What does it look like when we stand in the present reality of our justification every day? What difference will it make in our day-to-day, moment-to-moment lives? (27-30)
10. The final paragraph on page 30 asks several questions. Try to answer them based on what you have read in chapter one.

Chapter Two

The Motivation of the Gospel

1. Read Luke 7:36-50.
 - a. In the story of the sinful woman, why is Simon the Pharisee upset?
 - b. There is a profound difference between the way Simon and the woman treated Jesus. What does this tell us about how they viewed their sinfulness?
 - c. Thinking back on your last several months, has your attitude toward your sin been more like Simon or the woman? Why?
2. None of us loves Christ the way he deserves to be loved. Genuine love for Christ comes through two important understandings? What are they? (34)
3. How does the story of the sinful woman depict the truth of the first paragraph on page 35? How can you apply this to yourself?
4. Read Isaiah 6:1-5.
 - a. How does Isaiah respond to seeing the Lord?

- b. How does he view himself in light of being in the presence of a Holy God?
- 5. Put yourself in Isaiah's place. Do you think you would have responded the way Isaiah did in verse 5? Why or why not?
- 6. How was Isaiah's experience similar to that of the sinful woman of Luke 7? What were the three common steps? (36)
- 7. In light of these three steps, what can you do to grow in your experience of the motivating power of the gospel?
- 8. Read Philippians 3:4-9.
 - a. According to verse 6 *if* Paul's righteousness was based on following the law, what would he be considered?
 - b. According to verses 7-9, where does Paul realize his righteousness *actually* comes from?
- 9. Read Philippians 3:7-14. Paul renounced his own righteousness and relied solely on the righteousness of Christ. How did that fuel his desire to pursue Christ-likeness and serve God whole-heartedly? (38)
- 10. Read Romans 12:1.

- a. In light of the Gospel message of mercy, how are we to present our bodies?
 - b. Explain the significance of the expression *a living sacrifice*. (39)
11. Consider making an application for your life based on Romans 12:1.

Chapter Three

Gospel Enemy #1: Self-Righteousness

1. Describe in your own words what it means to be self-righteous?
2. What is the difference between self-righteousness *toward God* and self-righteousness *toward others*? Which is worse, and why? (41-42)
3. Read Galatians 2:21. How does the belief that we have earned (merited) God's blessings "nullify grace" and set us up for committing self-righteousness toward God? (42-43)
4. Read Galatians 1:6-9.
 - a. Why was Paul "astonished" with the Galatians?
 - b. Explain in your own words what Paul meant by a *different gospel*?
5. Read Galatians 2:16 and fill in the blanks. "Yet we know that a person is not justified by _____, but through _____ in _____."
 - a. In Chapter One we discussed that being justified means that we are declared righteous (in right standing) with God. According Gal 2:16, how are we justified?

- b. Are we justified (declared righteous) by our own works?
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- 6. The second paragraph on page 44 describes the basis most people give for their belief that God will accept them into heaven.
 - a. Why is this approach considered to be *self-righteous*?
 - b. Read Matthew 7:21-23. What does Jesus indicate his response will be to this large group of people who base their acceptance from God on their own works?
 - 7. Many people bank on the hope that God will consider their good deeds to have enough redeeming value to offset the guilt of their bad deeds. Why is this a dangerous assumption? (45)
 - 8. Think about your recent prayer times. Are you confident in your underlying assumptions and attitudes about why God should favorably answer your prayers?
 - 9. Read Luke 18:9-14. Why was this Pharisee thankful that he was not like the “other men?”
 - a. On what was the Pharisee basing his righteousness?
 - b. On what was the tax collector basing his appeal to God?

- c. According to Jesus (verse 14) why was the tax collector justified, rather than the Pharisee?
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- 10. Describe the self-righteous moralistic believer (47-49). Based on your answers to the ten questions on page 49, do you tend to fit in this category?
 - 11. Why is persistent guilt actually a form of self-righteousness toward God? (50-51)
 - 12. Do you agree that most believers vacillate between moralistic, performance-based self-righteousness on one hand, and persistent guilt on the other? Which category do you lean toward more, and why? (50-51)
 - 13. Explain the last sentence on page 51.
 - 14. From everything you've read in chapters 1-3, how does leaning on the first bookend slay Gospel Enemy #1?

Chapter Four

Gospel Enemy #2: Persistent Guilt

1. Explain how those who embrace persistent guilt lean on the same object of dependency as those who embrace self-righteousness. (53)
2. What is a conscience? Explain in your own words.
3. What did God design the conscience to do for us? What are its two purposes? (54)
4. Why do we tend to use different escape mechanisms when dealing with a guilty conscience? What is the purpose of these escape mechanisms? (55)
5. What have you used in the past to attempt to escape the voice of your conscience? Is this sinful? Why or why not? (55)
6. Read 1 Timothy 1:19. What can happen to our faith when we repeatedly reject our conscience?
7. How have the ten questions on pages 56 and 57 revealed the presence of persistent guilt in your life?
8. The idea that we must “forgive ourselves” has no basis in Scripture. Why do you think this concept has become so popular—even among Christians? (57)

9. Read Hebrews 9:14. What purifies our conscience?
10. Describe how the first bookend is the only way to defeat persistent guilt. (57-58)
11. Read 1 Timothy 1:13-14. Explain how a healthy remembrance of our sin can be a blessing. (58-59)
12. Puritan Thomas Wilcox described six ways to deal with persistent guilt by shifting our focus. Which of these do you find helpful and why? (59-61)
13. Describe how persistent guilt can be transformed into joyful gratitude for the gospel. (61-63)

Chapter Five

Leaning on the First Bookend

1. In your own words, what does it mean to “lean” on the First Bookend?
2. Our unchangeable, infallible God provides the bookends—therefore they never move or fail. The problem is our failure to lean our books on them. Describe how this happens. How can we correct this? (65-66)
3. Read Luke 19:1-10.
 - a. Why did the crowd grumble when Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus’ home?
 - b. How does Zacchaeus respond to being in the presence of Jesus? (verse 8)
 - c. Why do you think Zacchaeus responded in this way?
4. Why is it vital for us to see ourselves as desperately lost sinners? (67-68)
5. Explain in your own words what the author means when he says on page 68, “When we step into the light of Christ’s perfect righteousness, our utter depravity is exposed”?

6. In what ways does reviewing the list on page 68 help you “see” yourself as a desperately lost sinner? What happens to our dependence? (69)
7. Read the paragraph that starts on the bottom of page 69 and describe why the righteousness of Christ is *all-sufficient* for the needs of sinners.
8. It is not enough to merely see the righteousness of Christ as all-sufficient; we must see it as all-sufficient *for us*. Think about specific areas you desperately need the righteousness of Christ to substitute for your sin and failure. Is his righteousness sufficient for even *that*? How does this realization make you feel toward him?
9. What does it mean to *preach the Gospel to yourself every day* and why is it so vital to your spiritual health? (70-72)
10. From the fill-in-the-blank exercise on page 73, identify your functional savior(s).
11. Read Jeremiah 2:11-13. Explain why functional saviors can be described as evil? (72-74)
12. Once we have identified our functional savior(s), what are we to do with them? What can happen when we don’t reject our functional saviors?
13. Currently, what is God doing in your life to help free you from your functional savior(s)? (74)

Chapter Six

The Second Bookend: The Power of the Holy Spirit

1. Explain the difference between motivation and ability/power when it comes to living a Christian life. (81)
2. According to Ephesians 1:13, when are we sealed with the Holy Spirit?
3. Explain the difference in the two categories of *grace*: the blessing of privilege and the blessing of power. (82-83)
4. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9. Explain what this verse means in your own words.
5. Explain the difference between *help* and *enablement*. (85)
6. When discussing the role of our faith in leaning on the First Bookend, the authors state that faith involves both renunciation and reliance. Explain how these two terms apply to our role in leaning on the Second Bookend? (85)
7. From the section titled, The Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, explain what the Holy Spirit being “sovereign” means. (85-86)
8. Why is it that when we rely on the Power of the Holy Spirit, sometimes he temporarily withholds his power while other times he dramatically manifests his power in us? (86)

9. From the section titled, “The Spirit’s Synergistic Work,” explain what is meant by the expression, “qualified synergism.” Describe how this relieves us from the burden of having insufficient willpower and strength to obey God. (86-88)
10. Read 1 Peter 4:10-11 and Philippians 2:12-13. Explain how these passages are examples of qualified synergism.
11. Describe the Spirit’s “monergistic” work. How you have experienced this in your life. (88-90)
12. Describe the *similarities* between the first and second bookends. (92)
13. Describe the *differences* between the first and second bookends. (92)

Chapter Seven

Dependent Responsibility

1. Explain the concept of dependent responsibility from Colossians 1:29. (95-96)
2. Explain the two sentences that start on the bottom of page 98:
 “There’s no conflict between our work and our dependence. In fact, the harder we work, the more absolute our dependence on the Spirit must become.”
3. What is meant by the term “spiritual disciplines”? How do they benefit us? (99)
4. What two truths must we constantly keep in mind as we practice the spiritual disciplines? Why are these two truths so important? (99-100)
5. Explain how reading the Bible can become “a conversation, a process of talking to God and listening to him” in an experience of daily fellowship with him. (100)
6. Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. Explain in your own words what it means to “behold the glory of the Lord.” How does this result in transformation?
7. What is involved in “preaching the gospel to yourself every day?” Why is this so important to your daily communion with God? (101)

8. Read Colossians 1:9-10 and Romans 12:2. Why is Scripture so instrumental in renewing and transforming our lives? What are some practical ways we can apply this truth to our daily lives? (102-103)
9. Explain in your own words how prayer is an expression of our dependency. How does prayer cause our dependency to grow? (103)
10. Read Romans 8:28-29. How does God use the circumstances in our lives (both good and “bad”) as a means of grace in our lives? (104)
11. Read 1 Corinthians 1:9 and 1 John 1:3. What are we called to have with the Lord? In light of this, explain the differences between our *union* with Christ and our *communion* with Christ. (106)
12. Read Psalm 63:1 and Psalm 42:1-2. The Psalmists’ vivid desire for communion with God is evident in these passages. From all you have read in The Bookends so far, what is there about God that would make him *this* desirable to you?
13. What can you do to improve the quality of your daily communion with the Lord?
14. Where will you find the strength to carry out these desires?

Chapter Eight

The Help of the Divine Encourager

1. Why is the Holy Spirit referred to as *the Divine Encourager*? (109)
2. Read Galatians 5:5. Where does the Holy Spirit often point us for encouragement? (109-110)
3. Read John 14:26 and 15:26. In your own words, explain what Jesus meant when he said “The Helper...will bear witness about me.”
4. What is *gratitude for purchased grace*? Why is it life-changing? (110-111)
5. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and 1 John 4:9-10,19. Explain what Paul meant when he said, “the love of Christ controls us.” (111)
6. Read the quote from Thomas Chalmers on page 113. Explain what it means to “replace the object of our sinful affection with an infinitely more worthy one-God himself.”
7. Explain the difference between the diagrams on pages 113 and 114.
8. Think carefully about your life and then fill in the blank on page 115. Now read the paragraph that follows the blank and describe how you feel about God and your sin.

9. In your own words describe what it means to enjoy your relationship with God? (116-117)
10. Read John 17:22-23. What remarkable statements does Jesus make about the impact of the Gospel on those who believe in him? (117)
11. How does a desire to enjoy your relationship with God empower your battle against sin? (118)
12. From the paragraph that starts at the bottom of page 118, describe how the Spirit uses the promises of God to equip us for our battle against sin.
13. From the paragraph that starts at the bottom of page 119, what spiritual disciplines can you commit to in order to prepare yourself for your future needs?
14. List some of the promises from God's word that the Spirit has used to motivate or encourage you in your walk.

Chapter Nine

Gospel Enemy #3: Self-Reliance

1. Why does it seem strange to think of self-reliance and its “cousins” as enemies of the gospel? (123-124)
2. What is self-reliance? How does it compare to self-righteousness? (124)
3. According to John 15:5, what is wrong with a self-reliant approach to life? (125-126)
4. According to 1 Corinthians 4:7, why do you think the authors state that we should not be self-reliant about *anything*? Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. The last paragraph on page 126 states that *all* believers are inclined to fall prey to self-reliance *every day*! Do you agree? What have you done in the last 24 hours that has not been done with 100% dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit?
6. Read Matthew 26:31-35. What was the object of Peter’s dependence? In what ways do *our* acts of self-reliance resemble Peter’s denial of Christ? (127-128)
7. Read Philippians 4:13 and 2 Corinthians 3:5-6. When we fall into a pattern of self-reliance, how can the truth from these Scriptures shift our dependence back onto the power of the Holy Spirit?

8. Read the story of Brian's struggle with self-reliance on pages 128-131. What similar patterns and outcomes have you seen in your own life?
9. Which of the four excerpts from John Newton do you identify with the most? Why? (131-132)
10. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-8. What insights and applications do you find in the description of Paul's thorn in the flesh? (132-133) What types of "thorns" have you experienced?
11. Now read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. How did this promise help Paul deal with his thorn in the flesh? Why do you suppose Paul was able to "boast" of and be "content" with his weaknesses?
12. What thorn can you be content with in your life?
13. In your own words, explain what Paul meant when he said, "For when I am weak, then I am strong?"

Chapter Ten

Leaning on the Second Bookend

1. The first paragraph in this chapter describes both bookends as “infinitely solid and weighty.” Do you believe this? Why or why not?
2. Read Isaiah 41:14-16. How does an earthworm accurately portray our weakness? What happens to transform us from “worm” to “threshing sledge”? (136-137)
3. Explain the term “progressive sanctification.” How does it unfold in the life of the believer? Which comes first, justification or sanctification? (138)
4. Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. Explain what the authors meant by saying, “...the process of our transformation into Christlikeness, involved ‘seeing’?”
5. Using 2 Corinthians 3:18, complete this sentence. “For this comes from the _____ who is the _____. What is the power source of this transformation?”
6. When we place our dependency on the power of the Holy Spirit, it seems like sometimes he comes through for us, but sometimes he doesn’t. How can you explain this apparent inconsistency? (139-140)
7. Spiritual warfare is a daily battle. How does the truth from 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 and Philippians 1:6 give you hope for these battles?

8. Self-reliance is tenacious like poison ivy because its root system is extensive. Identify and describe the root of the gospel enemies. (141-142)
9. What is *humility*? How does it address our self-reliance at its roots? (143)
10. Why is a “fresh view of the cross” needed in order to cultivate humility?
11. What is *godliness*? How does it address our self-reliance at its roots? (143-144)
12. Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-13. How are all three Focal Points for shifting our dependence on the second bookend demonstrated in this passage?
13. Do you agree with the Daily Declaration of Dependence?
14. How can the truths found in 1 Corinthians 15:10 and 2 Corinthians 4:7 encourage you in your dependence on the bookends of the Christian life?

Conclusion

The Bookends: A Personal Worldview

1. What is a “worldview” and why is it important? (149)
2. Explain how the bookends can be a personal worldview. (149-150)
3. How is the Bookends Personal Worldview helpful in each of the three arenas of sin? (150-151)
4. Other than helping in our battle against sin, in what other areas does the Bookends Personal Worldview help? (152)
5. What does the Bookends Personal Worldview provide that makes it so helpful and worthwhile? (152-153)
6. How does Isaiah’s response, “Here am I! Send me” reflect the ultimate goal of living between the bookends? (153-154)
7. Read the second paragraph on page 154. Visualize the activities of your life from this moment forward as books that are stabilized and secured by leaning on both bookends. How does this change your outlook on life? How does it change your plans for the rest of the day, the rest of the week, and your long-term future?

8. Look back to the questions on page 16 and answer them again. How do your answers compare to those you wrote when you studied the Introduction? Summarize what you have learned from The Bookends.

Thanks for completing the Study Guide. If you have any comments or suggestions for the authors of The Bookends of the Christian Life, please submit them on the “Contact” page at: www.TheBookendsBook.com