

# LESSON 5 Motivations Toward Growth

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Growing is an exciting and yet difficult task. I remember a child whose mother helped him plant some seed. She wanted him to experience the process of growth. One day he came to her crying, “Mother, my seed won’t grow. Every day I pull it up to look at it and it isn’t growing!” Small wonder, you say. Yet, we are often like this. Growth requires time, proper diet, and good soil. For the believer, the soil is our human spirit and will. If you cooperate with the Holy Spirit, your growth will be natural and continuous.

Parents and teachers often use rewards to encourage us to grow. These prizes are called incentives. *An incentive is something that moves us to action.* The Bible shows us many of the incentives provided for Christian maturity. Some are rewards we realize immediately as we begin to grow. Others are realized only after patient waiting. Yet, each of these incentives is important. This lesson is meant to introduce some of these Bible rewards to you.

## ***lesson outline***

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Goals We Relate to Now

Desiring to Grow Up

Knowing Right and Wrong

Receiving and Serving

Goals We See Further Away

Becoming Useful

Looking Like Jesus

Preparing for the Final Test

## ***lesson objectives***

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When you finish this lesson, you should be able to:

- Point out the kind of people God wants us to become.
- State how mature people are enabled to distinguish between good and evil.
- Explain how and why a believer receives spiritual instruction.
- Describe the endeavor to which Paul likens the Christian life.
- Identify the goal of God's Word in the believer's life.
- State the likeness into which the Spirit transforms us.
- Explain how the believer is to prepare for the final test.

## ***learning activities***

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1. Read the lesson.
2. Do the exercises in the lesson development. Check your answers with those in the textbook.
3. Take the self-test at the end of this lesson, and check your answers carefully. Review those items answered incorrectly.

## ***key words***

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cycle  
endeavor  
equip  
eventual

issue  
judicial  
liken  
option

preparatory  
seek  
ultimate

## *lesson development*

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### GOALS WE RELATE TO NOW

Sometimes the Christian is accused of being “other-worldly.” This means he thinks more in terms of heaven than earth. The Bible, however, presents a balanced view of things relating to both heaven and earth. It relates to the *here and now* as well as the hereafter. Maturing as a Christian offers wonderful, immediate rewards. The Holy Spirit presents them to us as incentives to move us toward our goal in God.

### Desiring to Grow Up

**Objective 1.** *Point out the kind of people God wants us to become.*

Every individual wants to grow up as quickly as possible. Adulthood represents independence and additional duties and privileges. Spiritual adulthood is a real *incentive* for Christian maturity. We have seen from 1 John 2:12–14 that the passage from “children” to “young men” to “fathers” is an important one.

The desire to be adult and the fear of not growing should cause us to make several important decisions. We must be willing to separate ourselves from habits, speech, and behavior which are childish. Remember that Jesus commended a childlike spirit (Matthew 18:2–5). But there is much difference between being *childlike*, as Jesus meant it, and being *childish*.

First Corinthians 13:11 tells us to put away childish speech, feelings, and thinking. Perhaps our childish ways are seen most in our demanding that people do things for us. This attitude shows selfishness rather than concern for others, and is always taking rather than giving.

Also, we must grow to a higher level of knowing: that of understanding. To understand means to advance beyond simple memorization in order to apply knowledge and truth to everyday life. A child begins by learning only to say words, but a man learns what to say and when to say it.

### Application

1 In 1 Corinthians 13:11 Paul says, “I put childish ways behind me,” and in 14:20 he tells the Corinthian Christians to be grown-up in their thinking. In 13:11, these childish ways are listed as *speech, feelings, and thinking*. How mature are you in these areas of life? Use this simple chart as the basis for writing a self-examination in your notebook. Then pray that God will help you in areas where you definitely plan to improve.

	CHILDISH	MATURE
Speech	Usually about oneself: problems, plans, actions	Often about things of interest to others
Feelings	Reacts with joy, anger, or self-pity according to personal desire of the moment	Controlled; considers consequences, expresses concern for well-being of the group as well as oneself
Thinking	Values determined by own desires for pleasure and entertainment	Values determined by ultimate effect on others as well as oneself; pleasure is secondary to duty

Desire for our spiritual growth comes from three sources. First, our heavenly Father longs for us to come into full maturity as sons. Then, He can fellowship more fully with us. Our spiritual adulthood will glorify our Lord.

### Application

2 Read again Ephesians 4:13 again. According to this verse, what kind of people does God desire that we become? Circle the letter before the correct answer.

- a) Christian
- b) Loving
- c) Important
- d) Mature

A second source of desire for our spiritual growth comes from the church and its leaders. The apostle Paul discusses his concern in Colossians 1:28: “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching

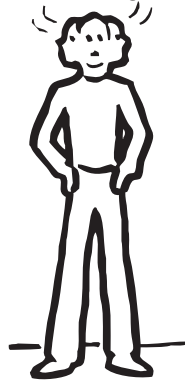
everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.”

Third, because of their need to grow up, people desire their own spiritual growth. Maturity is completion of growth or full age. It is normal for all genuine believers to desire spiritual adulthood. Let us earnestly seek spiritual growth in order to perform special duties and receive special privileges (blessings) that require spiritual maturity.

## Knowing Right and Wrong

**Objective 2.** *State how mature people are enabled to distinguish between good and evil.*

Have you watched a baby crawling on the floor? He will put *anything* into his mouth. It could be edible, or it could be poison. He has no ability to judge between the right and wrong thing to eat. His play with objects can also be dangerous. A stick or other object can greatly harm such an infant. As we grow up, our ability to use good judgment develops. This type of development helps us to tell right from wrong. This is an incentive for the believer to grow up. He needs the ability to tell right from wrong.



Believers who do not grow up are in danger. They often read or listen to false teaching. Because they are immature, they do not recognize error. They are open to deception. Satan finds it easy to confuse the “childish” Christian.

## ***Application***

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- 3 Hebrews 5:14 describes an adult as being able to
- a) become a father.
  - b) get married.
  - c) distinguish between good and evil.
  - d) quote many Scriptures.

4 According to Ephesians 4:13–14, children can be easily blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful men. What do these men do?

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Do you see why we must grow in our ability to know the difference between right and wrong? Knowing right from wrong is important to each of us! We need to “grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). Thus, we avoid the dangers of immaturity.

Hebrews 5:14 tells us that it is through *practice* that mature people are able “to distinguish good from evil.” Our word *gymnasium* comes from the Greek word for “practice.” As an athlete practices or exercises in a gymnasium, so we need to increase our ability to distinguish between right and wrong by practicing the right. We must grow up by the *practice* of God’s Word, examining and doing things in the light of God’s Word.

## Receiving and Serving

**Objective 3.** *Explain how and why a believer receives spiritual instruction.*

One terrible thing about being immature is that we miss important messages. You often say to a child, “I can’t explain this to you because you wouldn’t understand.” Yet, children want to know “why” and “how.”

This is the cry of the writer to the Hebrews: “We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn” (Hebrews 5:11). The letter to the Hebrews was written to people who were in great spiritual danger. They were losing their way spiritually. Their author’s message could have greatly helped them, but their immaturity prevented them from receiving it.

### ***Application***

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5 Read Hebrews 5:12. What lessons did these people still need?

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Because the first lessons had to be repeated, new lessons could not be given. How sad! The full teaching of the Christian faith is by no means easy. It cannot be learned in one day.

The apostle Paul had a desire for the Ephesian Christians also. He wanted them to grow up. They could then REALLY understand the wonderful things about being Christians.

### ***Application***

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6 Read Paul's prayer for the believer in Ephesians 1:15–20. What do believers need to open to receive spiritual light?

- a) The window
- b) The Bible
- c) Their minds
- d) Their eyes

7 In Ephesians 1:18–19, what three important things need to be revealed to the believer?

- a) .....
- b) .....
- c) .....



As we mature in this Christian experience, we are able to receive wonderful teaching by the Holy Spirit. The Word becomes very real, and it also is a means of teaching. The believer cannot afford to miss great messages from God through His Spirit and His Word; therefore, he must open his mind to receive these messages.

## Application

**8** According to 2 Timothy 3:16–17, Scripture rebukes, corrects, and instructs so

God wants us to be mature and well-equipped for His service. This is a great reason in this present life for our pressing on to Christian maturity.

## GOALS WE SEE FURTHER AWAY

**Objective 4.** Describe the endeavor to which Paul likens the Christian life.

Do you enjoy personal testimonies? I do. I especially enjoy hearing from older Christians. They have proven God’s grace. Also, they are nearer the end of their lives. They are soon to see their Lord directly. They see life from a better perspective. For many of us, the incentives we have just studied seem more real. But, the Bible clearly teaches both immediate and future goals for Christian maturity.

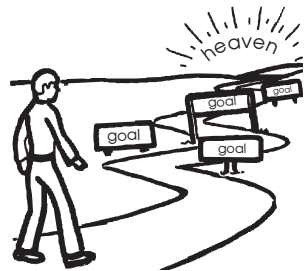
The apostle Paul testifies to the future in the process of Christian maturity. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

## Application

**9** According to 2 Timothy 4:8, what is waiting for Paul?

- a) A crown of righteousness
- b) Another race
- c) A financial reward

Paul views the Christian life as a race. He sees the necessity of keeping the goal in mind. Have you ever been in a race or other athletic contest? The winner is usually the one best trained. We say, “He is able to go the distance.” His body has





been strengthened by exercise. As the athlete trains for a physical contest, *train yourself to reach the more distant goals of a godly life* that require Christian maturity.

### Application

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10 Read 1 Corinthians 9:24–27. What does every athlete in training submit to?

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11 In verse 26, Paul says he runs the race

- a) aimlessly.
- b) perfectly, without error.
- c) purposefully.

12 Referring still to the contest of life, Paul says in verse 27 that he keeps something under control so he will not be disqualified. What is it?

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An athlete in training *must harden his body*, through physical exercise, for the race. The Bible prescribes both physical and spiritual discipline for the race of life: “Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (1 Timothy 4:7–8). The believer accepts hard assignments because he views the ultimate goals.

### Becoming Useful

**Objective 5.** *Identify the goal of God’s Word in the believer’s life.*

*Usefulness* may be classified as a somewhat distant goal. In one sense the believer is always available to God. From the beginning, the Christian life is one of service. The newest believer can work for God. However, as we mature in God, we become prepared for greater responsibility.

At our house, the children are given work to do from their earliest years. The work assignment is to teach them responsibility. At first, the quality of their work is not good. But

it is good for them to work. As they grow, they do much better. They can be trusted with more important assignments.

### **Application**

**13** According to 2 Timothy 3:16–17, the goal of God’s Word is to qualify and equip us to serve God. What kind of good deeds are we to be able to do?

- a) A particular kind
- b) Some kinds
- c) Every kind



We will spend an entire lesson later on the subject of our usefulness. At this point we simply need to realize that *total usefulness* is our goal. God equips some people to do some kinds of good deeds and other people to do other kinds. He wants to prepare us for *every kind* that He plans for us to do. Let us desire to become *senior ambassadors* for God, prepared for any assignment from God, trustworthy and ready.

### **Looking Like Jesus**

**Objective 6.** *State the likeness into which the Spirit transforms us.*

Another goal is to become more and more like Jesus. The believer has an immediate desire for this. But this particular goal of Christian maturity is a lifelong process. As we have seen, this is the work of the Holy Spirit. The believer must choose to allow the Holy Spirit to control his or her personality, emotions, intellect, and will. The Spirit continually works at maturing the submissive believer into Christlikeness.

### **Application**

**14** Review Romans 8:29, and rephrase it in your own words.

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To be like Jesus is an important goal on which we will spend an entire lesson in Unit 3. Here, we are discussing it briefly. Jesus Christ loved us and bought our freedom with His blood. To know Him and be like Him is both a daily and a lifelong goal.

### ***Application***

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**15** Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. Into what likeness does the Spirit transform us?

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To reflect the glory of the Lord, we must keep His beauty, His fullness, and His obedience constantly before us. Physically, mentally, and spiritually we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2) in order to reflect a measure of His likeness now and a greater measure of it as we mature in Him. What a challenge for an entire lifetime! But we have much more to say on this in Lesson 8.

### **Preparing for the Final Test**

**Objective 7.** *Explain how the believer is to prepare for the final test.*

One great incentive for the believer's maturity is seldom discussed. Multitudes of Christians have almost no knowledge concerning *God's judgment of believers*. I am frequently reminded of a time in my college life when I returned to class after more than a week's absence. I walked in on the day of a mid-semester examination. What a shock! I had not read the assignments and did not even know the area of material to be covered. But I had to take the test! That will be the situation with countless believers. Our heavenly Instructor has told us clearly what is required and has carefully announced the time and type of examination. A consideration of these truths is most important for the believer today. It affects his priorities, motivations, and Christian life in every respect. May this study help prepare and alert us for the test.

Romans describes this eternally significant event!

Why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God." So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Romans 14:10–12)

More than anything else, however, we want to please Him, whether in our home here or there, for we all must appear before Christ, to be judged by Him. Each one will receive what he deserves, according to everything he has done, good or bad, in his life (2 Corinthians 5:9–10).

### **Application**

**16** According to 2 Corinthians 5:10, before whom shall we stand to be judged?

- a) Christ
- b) The church
- c) The Holy Spirit

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Please note carefully the following pronouns I have italicized. Romans 14:10–12 says "each of *us*" shall give account of himself. Note also the language in 2 Corinthians 5:8–10: "*We* are confident...*we* make it our goal to please him...*we* must *all* appear." These are the pronouns of God's family! It is not "they" or "them" but "we" and "us," the inclusive pronouns, that are used with reference to the body of believers.

One further thing of importance to discuss concerning our appearance at this seat of examination is the matter of option. Is it by choice? May we in some manner avoid it? Romans 14:10–12 says, "We will all stand...[and] give an account." Second Corinthians 5:10 says, "We must all appear." The words *will* and *must* leave no doubt about the certainty of our appointment with judgment.

We must quickly put away wrong understandings about this evaluation. This judgment seat has nothing to do with our salvation. In fact, as we have already stated, it is a family affair. There will be no unbelievers there. The original Greek word

*bema* refers literally to a raised platform, like that on which the umpire of the Grecian games would sit, and from which he watched the contestants and rewarded the winners. That specific seat was known as the “reward seat,” not related to a judicial decision. This is not where the believer’s salvation is reviewed. It is a place of inspection, examination, reward, and loss on the basis of one’s life.

We have stated that every believer is called to be like Jesus Christ. Jesus lived according to the Father’s will and found His complete joy in that fulfillment. According to Philippians 2, He took upon himself the form of a servant. Believers are called to take on His image, to be His sons and servants. Thus we can readily see that this *bema* will be the judging of the believer’s servanthood under the lordship of Jesus Christ. This will be even more obvious as we move through Scripture.

### ***Application***

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**17** Read Galatians 6:7–8. This passage states a law of God which applies to the natural and spiritual world. State the law of God in verse 7.

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Every farmer is involved in a cycle of buying, planting, working land, and awaiting the reward of his labor with keen anticipation. At great price, God has purchased and worked the soil of our lives. He expects results. Results will be a major issue on that day of judgment.

### ***Application***

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**18** Read 2 Corinthians 9:6. Who will have a small crop, according to this verse?

- a) He who sows little
- b) A poor man
- c) A city man



Now let us note two passages which were written by the apostle Paul to different churches, but which contain a great deal of similar teaching addressed to slaves and servants in the churches:

Slaves, obey your earthly masters. . . . Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. (Ephesians 6:5–8)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism. (Colossians 3:23–25)

These Scriptures are addressed to all believers. We are the servants of Jesus Christ. He promises that there will be a time of reward for faithfulness, but warns that we will receive repayment for the wrong we have done.

## ***Application***

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- 19 In both the above Scriptures we are to do our work as though we were working for whom?
- a) The church
  - b) Our own father
  - c) The Lord
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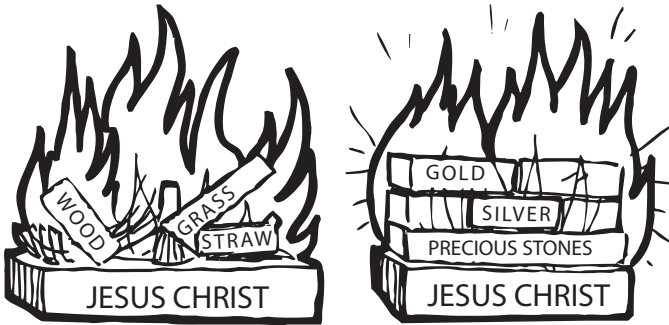
According to Romans 14:12, the believer must give account of himself to God. *Account* is a word which suggests a setting down of our blessings and opportunities to compare them with what we have accomplished: God's investment in us compared with our profitable return to Him. This concept is also found in 2 Corinthians 5:9–10. It says every believer will actually appear before the Lord. At that time, the results of his entire life will be reviewed. Evidently, this does not mean a recounting of sin. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from sin. Sin will

enter the issue only to the degree that it has kept us from being the profitable field, the worthy building, the image of Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit tried to help us be. But let us not treat this point lightly. This will be a serious evaluation of our lives. Concern over the outcome of this judgment should motivate the believer to do the work and will of God.

Even in this course, part of the incentive to learn is the examination or test. Paul clearly implies that being examined before Jesus Christ who gave himself for us will be, for some, an embarrassing moment. It will be so particularly for the Christian who has received the grace of God but has produced no fruit.

Do you remember our study in 1 Corinthians 3? Turn to 1 Corinthians 3:9–15. Paul likens the believer to a building. Christ is the one and only foundation for this building. Thus, every believer begins with the same foundation. The believer then begins to build upon that foundation. He builds with either carelessness or fine craftsmanship; he chooses his materials well or builds cheaply. According to the apostle, some use gold, silver, or precious stones; while others use wood, grass, or straw. Can we doubt the meaning of that comparison? The message becomes direct (rather than symbolic):

[The quality of each person's] work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. (1 Corinthians 3:13)



## Application

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**20** Now read 1 Corinthians 3:14. If what was built survives, what will happen to the builder?

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Take a moment to copy 1 Corinthians 3:15 into your notebook.

Here is a clear picture. Every believer begins his building on Jesus Christ, the foundation, when he receives Him as Lord and Savior. His building materials are shaped from attitudes, choices, priorities, maturity, carnality, Christian character or lack of it, things he does which affect God and himself, doctrine, use of finances, stewardship of possessions and time, words, habits, motivations, quality of his Christian service to others, and on and on.

The list seems endless. Every day we choose materials and add to the structure. But there will come the moment of inspection. The examination of what we have built will be so severe the apostle likens it to a test by fire.

Construction that is useless, careless, unchristlike, selfish, and carnal will quickly be consumed. Some Christians have so used their lives that when their works are tested, nothing will remain. Their works will be without reward. It will be as though they had never built upon their salvation. Others will experience loss but will find the fire powerless to consume what remains of true Christian works. These will be rewarded. And what better reward than to feel we have wisely built upon the foundation our blessed Lord provided for us at the price of His life.

Every portion of Scripture that explains how God intends the believer to live becomes part of the evidence at the judgment seat of Christ. Colossians 3, Romans 14, and 1 Corinthians 4:1–5 indicate this. Perhaps you are now asking, “Just where does this place me? What should I do now?” Here are several points to consider:

First, it should not surprise us that such a costly salvation demands an accounting. Think or read through the Lord’s parables. How many concern servants left with responsibilities



and eventually brought before their lord for an accounting? Ask yourself: Does this scriptural review of the judgment seat of Christ make me more aware of my responsibility for having received such a great salvation?

Second is a clear implication in Scripture that the believer who is aware of future judgment can make changes in his priorities and life which will make the “examination” more successful. For example, carefully consider the message in 1 Corinthians 11:31–32: “If we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.”

We can examine our lives now in preparation for the future judgment. We can change attitudes, review motivations, and redirect our energies toward the things that matter in God’s sight. Above all, we can remain open to the Holy Spirit who will guide us into fruitful, spiritual Christian life and service.

**self-test**

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TRUE-FALSE. Write **T** in the blank space if the statement is true. Write **F** if it is false. Then, change the FALSE statements to make them true.

.....1 An incentive is something that prevents or blocks us from action.

An incentive is something that .....

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.....2 A believer who does not grow up is often subject to the deceptive teaching of deceitful men.

A believer who does not grow up is .....

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.....3 The letter to the Hebrews shows that the Hebrew Christians could not receive an important message because they were slow to understand.

The letter to the Hebrews shows that the Hebrew Christians could not receive an important message because .....

.....4 The believer is set apart by God to become like His Son.

The believer is set apart by God to .....

.....5 A believer's salvation will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ.

A believer's ..... will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ.

ALTERNATE CHOICE. When Christ returns and a Christian's works are tested, those which are eternal will remain while those that are temporal will be consumed.

Write the letter **E** before works that are eternal.

Write the letter **T** before works that are temporal.

..... 6 Desire to develop beyond spiritual childhood

..... 7 Judging a Christian brother or sister

..... 8 Concern over the praises of men

..... **9** Ultimate Christlikeness

.....**10** Living according to God's Word

..... **11** Storing up riches on earth

SHORT ANSWER. Write the answer to the question on the lines provided.

**12** What is the name for the place of judgment and reward for a believer's work? .....

## **answers to the study questions**

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- 1 Your own self-evaluation.
- 11 c) purposefully.
- 2 d) Mature.
- 12 His body.
- 3 c) distinguish between good and evil.
- 13 c) Every kind.
- 4 Lead others into error by tricks they invent.
- 14 Here is a sample answer:  
God planned that those He already knew would be like His Son, so His Son would be the first among many brothers.
- 5 First lessons of God's message
- 15 Into the likeness of the Lord.
- 6 c) Their minds
- 16 a) Christ.
- 7 a) The hope of his calling.  
b) The richness of God's blessings for him.  
c) The greatness of God's power in him.
- 17 A person reaps what he or she sows
- 8 The person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do good deeds.
- 18 a) He who sows little
- 9 a) A crown of righteousness
- 19 c) The Lord.
- 10 Strict training.
- 20 He will receive his reward.