

Be Real With God

by Larry Chkoreff

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ISOB has established discipleship locations in many African and Asian countries.

It is our hope that this book will help seekers find a relationship with God, the Creator, as they bare themselves before Him in honesty and reality, and that it will help believers to become free to walk with God with joy and victory.

There are millions of people around the world who are coming to know Jesus Christ every week. The curve of growth is exponential. These people need simple, concise teaching and grounding in the basics of developing their relationship with God. Our hope is that this book will help many of them shorten their path of discipleship and become leaders for the Kingdom of God. It is our prayer that as you read this book you will experience the magnificent presence of God, and will acquire a driving passion to continue to pursue His presence.

This book is dedicated to Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of my faith.

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Introduction Be Real

God's original design for your life was to be in a living relationship with Him. The purpose of this book is to help you find that relationship and walk in it. It is not to add to the layers of roles that we play in life, especially religious roles and religious play-acting. I pray that this book will encourage you to become transparent with God, your Creator, and through that transparency to experience God's wonderful love and grace which will mold you into His original design for your life.

Galatians 1:15,16 says, "But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might [_____] *Paul's purpose in life was inserted here in this blank.*" This is a quote from Paul who wrote the letter to the first century Galatian church. He had been a role player, and a murderer, killing first century Christians and thinking that his life was fulfilling God's purpose for himself and for God. Notice those great statements, "*But when God,*" and "*by His grace.*" This is something that God did! He revealed to Paul his purpose in life. We all want to know why we are here and we want to know our purpose.

We each have a blank _____ for our purpose in life, and it is different for each and every human. You cannot fill in the blank; only God can. Paul could not fill in the blank until he experienced the awesome presence of God and after walking with God for many years. But Paul finally did fill in his blank. God wants to reveal your purpose to you.

Every one of us starts out as who we really are.



Then we develop different attitudes of who we want to be. The "want to be's" become roles that we play. Quite often these decisions are made subconsciously. All of these roles build up like layers of an onion in our lives. It is God's purpose to take us back to who we really are, to the real "you." That is the "you" that God really loves and it is the only "you" that God can really work with to make you whole and fulfilled in life.

We fear the discovery of who we really are. Over the years we have constructed layers of self-deceit upon ourselves similar to layers of an onion. We have so many ways of hiding behind roles that others or ourselves have constructed. These roles are self-deceiving and we have become so lost behind them that we are incapable of rescuing ourselves. Before we know it we are hiding behind so many layers that we are totally self-deceived and fit into what Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

However, only God is capable of peeling back the layers. I can remember God speaking to me just a few months after I had met Jesus back in late 1979. It was not an audible voice, but rather it came through a cassette tape that had been previously recorded in a service 2,400 miles away. It was not something high and mighty or religious at all, it was very practical. However, when I heard it, I knew in my "knower" (deep inside) that it was God speaking directly to me. It went like this:

"I see the original design for your life. It is like a parchment scroll that unrolls. As it unrolls the script of your life is written on it. However, the edges of the scroll have been burnt and the ashes have been scattered so that no person, not even you, can any longer read the scroll. No human could possibly find all of the ashes, fit them together in the proper places and reconstruct the scroll.

However, I have not forgotten it. I am God Almighty, and I am capable of finding the ashes, resurrecting them back into parchment and putting them exactly where they belong so that you and others may see who you really are, and so that your life may return

to its original design. This will be done slowly and progressively, and will only be an act of my grace. You need only to walk close to Me and give Me your heart, which also means being gut level honest with Me at all times."

I can testify that what God told me in 1980 has been my experience and is still my experience. God cannot lie!

True contentment in life is knowing that the real you is acceptable. It is knowing that you can be real with God. It is knowing that you don't know how to be completely real in one big event, but that as you go through life, God will cause the layers to be taken off little by little as you can tolerate it and accept it. You discover that God accepts you just the way you are, however He wants to peel back the layers to get to the real you. You will find out that God is gentle throughout this process. You will discover that quite often even the gentleness can be painful.

There can be hidden compartments in your life that you do not want anybody, especially God, to uncover and expose. You know it would be too painful. But God would say to you, "Go ahead and trust me to touch that hurt just one time. I may cause more pain in your life by touching it, but after that, healing will come. Is it worth it?" It is like the surgeon asking, "Is it worth it to bear the pain of my knife if it means cutting out the disease?"

God is the only one who can bring light to your "dark places." "When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'" (John 8:12).

That is why this book is titled "Be Real With God." Certainly it is my desire for you to come to know Jesus if you do not know Him. In this book you will find areas of doctrine that God desires you to know. You will find points of recommended obedience that are crucial if you are to mature in Christ. However, your relationship with God and your obedience to Him must be based upon your being real with yourself and with Him. If you play act with God you will be miserable and miss the only opportunity to really be free and whole.

We can cooperate with God.

The one thing that God can work with is your honesty. One of His names is truth. “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life...’” (John 14:6a). When Jesus was on trial for His life, He had a discussion with the Roman ruler, Pilate, in which they spoke about the definition of truth. “Pilate then said to Him, ‘Are you a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say it that I am a king. To this end I was born, and for this cause I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice’” (John 18:37).

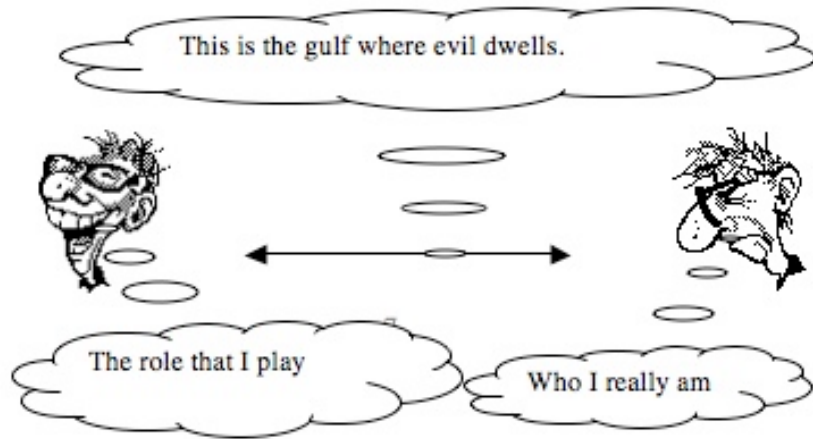
There is a law on planet Earth that always works: it is called sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7-8). One will ultimately reap whatsoever he sows. This law applies to truth also. If you sow the truth you will reap the truth. If you sow deception and dishonesty, you will reap darkness, and the truth will not shine in your life. “Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:37 b).

King David made the following statement in Psalm 32:2-3 after trying to hide his terrible sins from God. David could no longer live with himself, but he discovered that God honors the truth and that the truth will make one free.

“Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long” (Psalms 32:2-3). I suggest that you read the entire Psalm 32.

There is usually a price for being truly honest. Proverbs 23:23 says, “Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Also wisdom and instruction and understanding.” One price you need to be prepared to pay is humility.

I believe that evil came to pass in our world and continues to exist by man’s dishonesty. The cartoon below illustrates this. To the degree that you are not real, is the degree of potential evil or darkness that exists in your life. The wider the gap, the greater the potential is for evil.



This principle applies to all people.

You may be Jewish and have been raised in a God-fearing home with a culture that has taught you to never “convert” and to not listen to “those Christians.” I understand you heeding that advice. Too many Christians have been hard hearted towards your faith and culture.

You may be Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, New Age, or agnostic. You may be worshipping beings in the spirit world or idols. You may be an atheist or a self-sufficient person who has never felt a need for God. You may be reading this book as a new believer and have a desire to grow into maturity. You may have had tremendous faith at some point in your life, but now you doubt God. I respect where you are.

If you are spiritual God is not asking you to become secular.

If you are secular or scientific, He is not asking you to trust in spirits who are untrustworthy. He is not asking you to change your culture or to become like other Christians whom you may have met. He is not asking you to conform to some church or denomination. He is not asking you to become “religious.”

What He is asking you to do is to be honest with your needs in life. We all have “felt needs.” The three main categories are love, security and significance. We need unconditional love. We need to be loved by someone who knows all about us and still accepts us. We need security for material and emotional needs and for

eternal destiny. We need significance, or we need to know that we matter and are worth something. God has a deep desire to be the supplier of those needs, as we will see in future chapters.

You *are* turning to someone or something for these needs already. It may be that you have been relying on your own soul power, which includes your intellect, education, and talents. I am not degrading these, but they must be put into proper perspective. These can appear to work to a degree. It may be that you have been relying on some spiritual religion that puts you into contact with real spirit beings. I understand that this is real and it can appear to work to an extent. In the end however, these “other gods”¹ are unreliable. They are hard taskmasters. They always keep you in fear and demand your worship. They promise an easy way for the supply of your felt needs. However it like using a credit card; eventually the bill will come and you will have to pay.

God, the Creator, is reliable. His name is Truth. His Word is Truth. When He reveals Himself to you it will be in accordance with His Word so that you will not need to wonder if you have made contact with the real God or some “other god.”

One thing I have found about God is that He rarely argues. He usually just reveals Himself and all of the arguments stop. He has a deeper desire to reach you with the truth than you have to receive it. He created you to have a close personal relationship with Him. He did not create you to have to rely on some religion or spirit. He did not leave your eternal destiny in the hands of other men who try to convince you that they have the truth.

To all of you seekers, God is able to reveal His name to you. You do not need to rely on men’s arguments.

To all of you who are moving on toward maturity, He is the teacher. He wants to lead you into all truth and relate to you personally.

Now, I encourage you to exercise honesty with God. There is no correct way to pray. Just talk to Him as you would if He were your best friend sitting next to you. Tell Him what you believe and do not believe. Tell Him how you really feel, give

¹ “Other gods” will be defined in later chapters.

Introduction

Him your doubts, fears and bitterness. Tell Him your needs and how you have been attempting to satisfy them.

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

Just be real with God!

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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Chapter 1

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus”



Your name is what?

One of the greatest needs of man is to know who he is and why he is here.

In 1970, nine years before God came into my life, I had an interesting transaction with God. I was 30 years old and had just experienced an extremely lucrative business deal. It was something that I had dreamed about since I was young. One morning I was in the yard cutting my grass over a very noisy lawnmower. I was asking the question, “Why am I here, and who am I?” I suppose I was talking to God even though I did not have a relationship with Him.

I looked at my comfortable suburban house and I said, “I go to work every morning so that I can make the mortgage payments on that house. I do that so that I can come home to that house every night to eat and sleep. I do that so that I can get up in the morning and go make more money in order to make more mortgage payments.” I began to cry, “Is this what life is all about? Is this what it feels like to be successful? I seem to have a body that has been incredibly made. It has thousands of miles of blood vessels, a heart that beats to keep me alive, and a brain that no man could invent. I seem to have been created by God. Did God create me to live like a hamster in a cage on a wheel going around and around getting nowhere?” I began to weep uncontrollably and cried out to God.

God, in His infinite wisdom, waited nine years before He answered my question.

However He did answer it in a mighty and powerful way.

To be honest, meeting God did not instantly solve all of my problems and answer all of my questions. I was simply put in touch, living touch, with God who could slowly answer all of my questions. He continues to answer them.

It was August 26, 1979, 5:30 PM. I was 39 years old and had lived my life for myself, my own way. On the surface my life did not seem too bad, but underneath it all God saw my desperation. I wanted to know where I would go after I died and where I would spend eternity. I had heard all sorts of differing opinions. Some said you just fall asleep. Some said you just go to a “better place.” Others said you would simply cease to exist. Others talked about a Heaven and a Hell.

Think about it. That is the most important question you can ask during your life here on earth. You had better not take someone else’s word for it. You better be sure. Eternity is not a long time it is forever. I knew deep down inside that I had better not cast my eternal destiny to the opinion of others. Even the people that said they knew the answer could not agree with each other.

I kind of believed in Heaven and Hell, but I thought that God graded on the curve system. For example, if there were some people that were worse than I was, like murderers, etc., then I would fall in the middle somewhere and at least get a “C” grade and make it to Heaven. I finally got real with God and asked the question, “Where do you go when you die?”

My teenage son was helping me read the Bible for the first time. I started at 12:30 PM, and at 5:30 PM I stopped and said, “Jesus is alive, He is God and He wrote the Bible. Not only that, Jesus is the final victor over all evil. God wants to be my father and take over my life.”

I heard God speak to me. He said, “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ (Revelation 21:3,4).

All of a sudden, I experienced what John 7:37-39 says, “On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom

those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”

Jesus became real to me. I saw Him with my spiritual eyes in a way that made Him as real as any other person I knew. He said, “*Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.*” I could feel the “rivers of living water” welling up inside of me. I told Him, “I have made a mess of my life. Thank you for becoming my Father and promising to take care of me. I will do whatever You say.” I can remember the feeling of having a real Father who would now take care of me, someone to whom I could turn to for all of my needs. I had been relying on “other gods.”

This experience caused a passion in my heart that has been the driving force of my life. When we encounter God face to face, doctrines, religions, denominations, family customs, everything goes out the window. This passion has caused me to pursue God with my whole heart. As I pursued Him, I became more acquainted with Him and His personality.

The apostle Paul had an experience on his journey to Damascus. He was a Pharisee of Pharisees. He knew the law and religious traditions better than anybody did in his day. He did not, however, know God until this experience. “As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’” (Acts 9:3,4).

Notice the first thing that Paul said when the light of God knocked him down. “*And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’* Then the Lord said ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads’” (Acts 9:5).

He said, “Who are You, Lord?” Paul did not know who this Being was, but He knew that he better call Him Lord because of the power he had felt in His presence. Then Paul wanted to know who this Lord was. Paul knew he had encountered the most powerful Being in the universe, he just did not know who He was. He certainly was not the same God described by his religious tradition,

God wants to have an encounter with you. I am asking you to be honest and open and invite Him to do so. I guarantee you will never be the same!

When I stop to think of why it took me so long to find my need for Jesus, I can only come up with this conclusion: we need to understand our desperate need for God before we can really see who He is. Actually, we all have a desperate need for God and to understand that Jesus is God Himself. The problem is that we have found ways to bury our desperation. We have discovered how to manipulate people, how to control people, how to perform in life so that our apparent needs are met. When we find that these do not work, we try religion, or we turn to different stimulants, all of which ends up making us slaves. Sometimes we feel as if they *are* working. If we are honest, we will admit that there is something inside of us that is not fulfilled by anything but the Creator.

It has been said by many that we need to fall flat on our face and fail in life before we find Jesus. I do not believe that is true (although it is the experience of many). I believe all it takes is for a person to be gut level honest with herself/himself. People all over the social and moral scale can find the true living God, the Creator of the universe, Jesus Christ. All they have to do is to be honest with themselves and with God. God will do the rest. It is His job to reveal Himself to people.

Religion (of all types) tells us that we have to struggle to do certain things or to be a certain way to find the truth or to find God. “Other gods” keep us in a struggle to control, manipulate and appease them. But the Bible tells us it is God Himself who draws us to Him and that He supernaturally reveals Himself to us. It tells us that God knows what we need and He knows how to help us.

He knows us intimately. He knows what it will take for us to see the truth. We do not have to take someone else’s word for the truth. That would be scary to put my eternal destiny into the hands of another human’s opinion! God will embrace you with His loving kindness right where you are in life, whether you are rich or poor, young or old, moral or immoral.

God is certainly capable of revealing His name to you.

Be honest and listen for the words,
“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

Chapter 2 Bad News, Good News



Before one is ready for good news (Gospel means good news) he/she needs to first face the bad news. Doctors can prescribe wonderful healing medicines, but if we do not face the bad news first, we will never be healed.

The bad news first.

Genesis 1:26 tells us that God created man (Adam) in God's own likeness and image. God created Adam's body out of clay. He gave Adam the potential to have what other animals did not have; that is, to be a three part being. He made man to be a spiritual being with a soul and a body. God breathed His own Spirit into Adam. He gave Adam the program for living, but Adam wanted to be independent from God and God's Word (the Tree of Life). When he became independent, God's Spirit had to leave Adam. This was the beginning of the separation between God and man.

You were born in the image of Adam, a person separated from God. Adam is your forefather. You have the potential to be in the image of God, but you were not born that way.

Now the good news.

(By the way, these following historical events were prophesied with perfect accuracy hundreds and even thousands of years prior to their fulfillment).

God did not give up on Adam and He did not give up on you. Adam knew something was wrong after he became independent and started to run his own life without God. He tried to cover his

shame with fig leaves. We try all kinds of religious activities to make our independence tolerable, but nothing really works.

God warned Adam that if he disobeyed Him that he would die two deaths, spiritual death and physical death. Adam deserved death but he received mercy! How? Why? Genesis 3:21 tells us that God killed an animal, shed blood, and covered Adam and Eve with the skin. God transferred Adam's sin to a sinless creature. This act of shedding blood was foreshadowing what God would do in the future. Sacrificing an animal was the act that foretold of a Messiah who would shed His blood for Adam. Adam's death sentence was reversed. Adam is alive today in Heaven with God. The **curse** due to sin was transferred to the animal.

It is not what we do but who we are that counts.

The thing that keeps us separated from God is not what *we do*, but it is *who we are*. As descendents of Adam we are separated from God. We are not merely separated during this life on earth, but as the Bible tells us we are separated eternally and destined to spend eternity without the presence and love of God. This is called Hell. We need God to do for us what He did for Adam and Eve. We need our sins transferred through the shedding of blood.

God does not want us to become religious, but He wants us to know that He has provided a blood covenant for us so that we may relate to Him. This is the Gospel; this is the Good News!

God arranged, before time began, to have a way for man to be reunited to Himself.

A blood covenant is the only thing that can change a person's spiritual nature. The blood covenant will give us a new birth and change our spiritual identity. The blood covenant will allow God to join His Spirit to our spirit and to go back to the pattern He had for Adam; to be in the image of God.

Here is the Good News. God created you to be in union with Him so that He could bless you with His abundance. Now God, the Creator, wants to cut a blood covenant with you! He wants to take everything in your life that is bad, and give you all of His good and abundance.

What then is a blood covenant?

In a blood covenant each party takes on the identity of the other. What mankind needed was someone who was indeed connected to God so that mankind could obtain that connection. We needed someone whose spirit was connected with God's Spirit, someone who was actually inhabited by God's Spirit. However, the person who was connected to God would have to take on man's nature, that of being disconnected, and suffer the penalty of being disconnected.

Here is God's plan.

First we need to know who Jesus is. The Bible tells us in John 1:1-2 that Jesus is God Himself, that He is the Word of God, and that He is the Son of God who created everything by His words. The Bible also tells us that God has other aspects; that of The Father and that of The Spirit.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:10-14).

The Word of God being spoken to Mary by an angel (Luke 1:26-38) caused the incarnation of Jesus as a child into the womb of this Jewish virgin. God created Adam with His Words and His breath (Gen. 1:28 & 2:7). He caused Jesus to enter the world the same way. Mary became pregnant with the Word of God. In this manner of birth, Jesus did not inherit the nature of Adam (separated from God), but He did become a man. What a miracle! Jesus was the first man to be born since Adam without being a typical descendant of Adam. The Bible calls Jesus the Second

Adam. Jesus was a descendent of Adam in that Mary was His mother, but He was not a descendent of Adam in that God was His Father.

Here is the perfect person with whom to make a covenant. We could take His nature if He would be willing to take our nature. The only problem was: would He be willing to take our nature, that of being eternally separated from God not only on earth, but also in Hell?

Here is more good news. God loved us so much that He would be willing to pay the penalty for us. He would be willing to give up His only Son to be separated from Him, the Father. Jesus never did anything independent from His Father as Adam did, even though Satan tempted Him sorely to do so. When it came time for Jesus to make the blood covenant with us, He was a perfect man capable of swapping natures with us. The people crucified Jesus, the most cruel torture saved only for the most desperate criminals. Jesus shed His blood as His part of the covenant.

What Jesus said just before He died on the Cross is recorded in Matthew 27:46: "About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' --which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" This is evidence that Jesus took on our nature. Jesus was separated from God.

Jesus went to Hell. "He seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:31). Jesus defeated death, Hell and the grave.

Jesus did not stay dead; He was resurrected! "He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead. And, behold, He goes before you into Galilee. There you shall see Him. Lo, I have told you" (Matthew 28:6,7).

"This is now the three times Jesus was revealed to His disciples, He being risen from the dead" (John 21:14).

Jesus was not only resurrected; He ascended back to Heaven as a man. "And saying these things, as they watched, He was taken up. And a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they were looking intently into the heaven, He having gone, even behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them, who also

said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into the heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you into Heaven, will come in the way you have seen Him going into Heaven” (Acts 1:9-11).

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit back to earth so that we could be reunited with God not only in this life but also for eternity. “And suddenly a sound came out of the heaven as borne along by the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And tongues as of fire appeared to them, being distributed; and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2-4).

Finally, God moved back into man to inhabit him as He had done with Adam. However, this time the Spirit of God had a new quality; that of resurrection from the dead. Satan no longer had dominion over man, but man now rules over him.

With the completion of this plan, mankind actually became something greater than the original Adam. We have the resurrected life of Jesus residing in us. We are Heaven-bound and victors over all of Satan’s activities while we are living on earth. God does not promise us a comfortable life, yet He does promise us the ability to overcome in any situation. He promises joy, peace, love, faith and purpose in life. He promises He will never leave us. He promises a close, intimate and personal relationship with Him. He makes this life on earth worth living!

We don’t have to understand all of this intellectually. A very religious man who lived in Jesus’ day named Nicodemus could not figure everything out with his brain. Jesus had an answer for him and for you and me. Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about the Blood Covenant.

“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the

Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus answered and said to Him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved'" (John 3:1-17).

All the "other gods" don't really love you.

They have a selfish, self-seeking attitude towards you. But God, the Creator, has a perfect love towards you. He loves you with a passionate unconditional unselfishness. He wants only the best for you. He put His Son Jesus on the Cross in your place. You can trust Him.

What must you do to receive this great miracle of the blood covenant?

First, be genuine. You must be real! Do not fake it. Be honest with God about your doubts, fears and needs. Jesus is the Truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. God makes a safe way for you to believe. You must trust the truth that He put His Son Jesus on the Cross in your place.

The final two things are found in Romans 10:9-11, which says, "Because if you confess the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Everyone believing on Him shall not be put to shame."

You must know in your heart that Jesus was raised from the dead. If you just know this as a Bible story it will not work. If you try to work up faith it will not work. You must know that He is alive because He is revealing Himself to you.

Once you know Jesus arose from the dead and is presently alive, you must make Him Lord. "Lord" is an old English word for "boss" or "master". You cannot earn your new birth but once you receive it, you must realize that you belong to God and you can no longer be independent as Adam tried to be. Making Jesus Lord means that you must turn from all "other gods" to Him, in His Word, for your needs, as you walk in obedience to Him. We will go into more detail on this in later chapters.

If you are not sure about these things, here is how to pray.

"Oh, God, I am a seeker. I want the truth about who you are and about spiritual things. I want you to reveal yourself to me. I want you to tell me your name. I want this to be a personal thing, not something from a book or from man." Now, pour your heart out to God and tell Him how you honestly feel. Include your doubts, fears, etc.

If you wish to pray to receive the blood covenant, you may do it right now.

"Oh God, I believe that you sent Jesus to take my old nature and I want to receive His nature. I want to be born back into your family so that I can be connected with You. I believe that Jesus shed His blood for me as His part of the covenant. I believe that when He died He took my old nature and the penalty that went with it. I believe that He was raised from the dead to give me His life. I accept this covenant by making Jesus my boss, my Lord." (This is the way we shed our blood, by laying down our life and allowing Him to take over. We do not have to actually cut our bodies.)

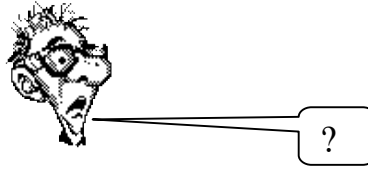
Be Real With God, and He will be real to you.

You will hear him say,
‘Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.’

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Chapter 3

What Happened To Me?



After my radical encounter with Jesus in August of 1979, I felt as if I needed to know what had happened to me. “Feel” is not a very accurate term to use here, but I knew that I did feel different. I knew something had happened. I knew I had an encounter with the Creator, with Jesus. I knew that the Bible was 100% accurate and that God had inspired the writing of it. That is about all I knew. When Jesus reveals Himself to you through His Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit upon you, the result is a knowing that passes all understanding. Encountering Jesus as I did cannot be described it must be experienced.

I was totally “un-churched,” therefore I had no doctrines to “un-learn,” no denominational barriers to overcome and virtually no prejudices at all. I was totally open and was a spiritual sponge.

I had the luxury of being able to stay home the first week after my encounter so that I could read the New Testament. I found a copy (a youth edition) that had been given to me years before. I read it for four to five hours every day. I filled up yellow note pads with questions about what I was reading. There was so much I did not understand.

I remember going to a local church after two weeks of reading the Bible and telling the pastor, “*God has saved me!*” While I was speaking I was trembling and weeping uncontrollably. I am not sure what he thought. I even shocked myself because I did not know what “saved” meant. I knew he was shocked and he had very few answers for me.

I would take my yellow pad to this minister every Tuesday and sit in his office drilling him with my questions. He was able to

answer some of them, but not others. He was a nice guy and I thank God for him!

I am writing this chapter to help you understand what has happened to you if Jesus has become your Lord.

First, I want to lay the foundation that our life with God is not a religion but a relationship. Relationships can best be defined between the two parties relating. Therefore, I want to state that while there are no shortcuts for developing your own personal relationship with Jesus, I hope that what I have discovered will assist you in speeding up that process and cause it to bloom and bear fruit as soon as possible.

Jesus defines His relationship with us as the closest that two beings can have: “I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). There is nothing closer than a grapevine and its branch. The very life of the vine sustains the branch, and the vine cannot bear fruit without the branch. They depend on one another. It is a oneness. Read the rest of John 15 to get a real revelation of this.

The first month of my knowing the Lord, I heard an evangelist say, “Jesus is my best friend. He is more real to me than my best friend on earth.” That statement made me hungry. I told God that if this man could have that so could I. I asked Him for it. We are promised this in 2 Corinthians 13:14 which says, “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” This has been my experience since 1979. Praise God for that!

If you have encountered God and have made Jesus Lord, you have experienced the greatest miracle that can ever happen to a person.

You have experienced death and re-birth! You may say, “It does not appear that I have died and have been reborn.” That is because there was an invisible and eternal transaction that took place; nevertheless, it was more real than if it had been physical.

Jesus told Nicodemus, “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John

3:8). We cannot see the wind with our eyes but we can discern it with other senses. We can see the effect it has. You have new life inside of you now and you will be able to discern the effects of it.

Death and rebirth. “Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God” (Romans 6:3-10).

This principle can be compared to generations in the natural. You were inside of your father and your mother even before you were born. If your father had died [prematurely], you would have never been born. In effect, you died with him. However, if by some supernatural miracle your father would have died and been resurrected into a new type of person, you would have also inherited that entire process. So, when you were born, you would have picked up all of your father’s history of death and re-birth.

Titus 3:5 states that we experience the new birth (regeneration) by two things; the Holy Spirit and the Word of Truth. The Word of God is a seed. Read Mark chapter 4. When you hear the Word of God and receive it, it explodes in your spirit as a seed explodes in the soil. “Having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the living word of God, and abiding forever” (1 Peter 1:23).

The young teenager Mary, the mother of Jesus, received the Word of God from the mouth of an angel and she conceived Jesus in the flesh. We receive the Word of God and we conceive Jesus in our spirit.

When we were reborn or regenerated we inherited a new Father. We changed our race.

W.E. Vine Bible Dictionary defines the Greek word (one of the two definitions) “Father” as “Pater,” from a root signifying a nourisher, protector, upholder, the nearest ancestor, the progenitor of the race of people; the originator of a family or company of persons animated by the same spirit as himself. Regeneration is from two words: “palin” means again, and “genesis” means birth. Palingenis or regeneration is actually changing who your Father is.

We changed our race. We needed a new progenitor. We needed an originator of a family or company of persons *animated* by the same spirit as himself. When I saw that explanation in the W.E. Vine Bible Dictionary, I got excited. If God becomes our Pater, then through the insertion of His Spirit into our body His Spirit animates us. That changes our race, our inheritance, our lot in life, what we have coming, our very nature. The world thought it was amazing when in the 1960s, in South Africa, a man actually received a heart transplant. What would they have thought if they had known of a LIFE TRANSPLANT?

This experience is totally a gift. You did nothing to deserve this.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no-one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9). Get this set firmly in your mind. You did nothing to merit the wonderful gift that God has granted to you. No person could be good enough to merit new life. It is strictly a gift. You are no better than your unsaved neighbor or relative. You did not deserve this gift. Grace is receiving something that you did not earn.

So how does this happen?

God set up the Universe so that life is in the blood. “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life” (Leviticus 17:11). Blood covenants exchange the very life of the parties involved. Jesus and you “drank each other’s blood” and exchanged races. He did the drinking of your blood in the Garden of Gethsemene when He took

your sin onto Himself, and He poured out His blood voluntarily at Golgotha on the Cross.

You “drink” His blood when you partake of and receive The Word of the Covenant. Fortunately, our new birth does not require you to physically drink blood (the Bible forbids that). “It is the Spirit that makes alive, the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and are life” (John 6:63). So it is the Word of God that is the transfer agent for the blood covenant.

What a deal! Jesus got your race and you got His. That is why His virgin birth took place. One’s blood is inherited from his father. Jesus’ Father is God Himself. He received God’s blood just like Adam did. Jesus is the last Adam.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The word used here for “new creation” actually means a species of beings that never existed before. This is not like a new model of an old automobile line, but rather it is like a new brand of automobile that never existed before.

What about the time factor?

We were not there 2000 years ago when Jesus shed His blood.

One very important factor to always keep in mind when pondering the things of God is that He lives in eternity. Eternity is not a long time, it transcends time. God has multiple time dimensions. We have only one time dimension. God has multiple space dimensions and we have only three. God is in the past, present and future all at the same time. Therefore, it does not matter what time you live in, the eternal Spirit of God takes you back to that day when Jesus was tortured to death on the Cross of Calvary.

One Scripture that illustrates this is Hebrews 9:14 which says, “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the **eternal** Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”

You can therefore agree with the Scripture that says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith

of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

If you have been worshipping ancestral or other spirits, you have discovered an element of truth. The spirit world is real. Spirits do animate themselves to appear active in your life. Now your challenge is to change your family by the Blood Covenant so that you inherit the things of God, the Creator. God wants to bless you! The best that the “other gods” can do for you is to bring a curse into your life. “Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god; Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, Nor take up their names on my lips” (Psalms 16:4).

What advantages do we receive?

The greatest and most important advantage is that you now have eternal life. You will spend eternity with God in Heaven and you will not have to experience separation from God, which is called Hell. The greatest enemy of mankind that has been defeated in your life is death! Everybody lives forever somewhere. As a believer and a new creation you will live forever in Heaven.

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies’” (John 11:25).

“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40).

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3).

Eternal life, however, is more than living forever. John 17:3 describes eternal life as a quality of life to experience even while you are living on earth. “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). The word “know” is an important word. It carries with it the idea of intimacy. We can have intimacy with God not only after we die, but especially now while we are still living on earth.

Prayer.

“Jesus, I want to tell You how much I appreciate the gift you have given to me. Thank You, so much, for giving me a brand new life, a life transplant. Thank You for giving me the Holy Spirit. Thank You for making it possible for You and me to have an intimate relationship like the vine and the branch. Thank You for the price that You were willing to pay for me to have this gift. Thank You for the extravagant love that You have poured out on me, letting me know my real worth and that I am valuable. Jesus, I want to return the love by totally giving all of myself to You.”

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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Chapter 4

Who is This God Who You Have Met?



If one filled up all of the books in the world there would still not be enough room to describe God. No human being could possibly describe God. Men have tried, but that is arrogance because God created them. A creature cannot describe his/her creator.

God does reveal important things to us about Himself.

We need to know, however, that He never stops revealing Himself and He never will. There is always something new to learn about Him. We learn about Him through having fellowship with Him, one on one.

There are some things I can begin to describe to give you a jump-start. After you read these, take them to prayer and ask God to reveal Himself to you personally.

The first thing we need to know about God is that He is the Creator! When I first met Jesus back in 1979, I used to tell people that I had met the God who created the universe! I used to make sure that I stated it that way. There can be many “other gods.” Mankind has done a good job of making gods in his image. But there is only one Creator! The Creator is the One you have met.

Not only is He the Creator, but by Him, all things still exist and are held together.

Colossians 1:16-17 says, “For all things were created by Him, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.”

Hebrews 11:3 says, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

Hebrews 1:2&3b (Amplified Bible) says, “But in these last days He has spoken to us in the person of a Son, Whom He appointed Heir and lawful Owner of all things, also by and through Whom He created the worlds and the reaches of space and the ages of time, that is, He made, produced, built, operated and arranged them in order. [Verse 3b]... upholding and maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe by His mighty word of power.”

Here are some other attributes of God. Certainly they are not complete or exhaustive, but they are a place to begin. I strongly suggest that you look up these Scriptures in your own Bible and ask God to speak to you Himself. When He speaks to you, doubt flees!

1. He is uncreated and eternal. (John 1:1-3 and Genesis 21:33)
2. He is all-powerful. (Luke 1:37)
3. He is all knowing. (Ps. 147:5)
4. He is ever present. (Jer. 23:23-24)
5. He is a spiritual being. (John 4:24)
6. He is triune, three persons in one. God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 3:16-17, John 1:1-14, 14:9-20)

I remember struggling with this idea the first month I knew the Lord. All of a sudden, one day I just *knew*. My questions ceased. There is a good lesson in the ISOB ² curriculum about the Trinity. It covers subjects like, “Why does God need to be a Trinity?”

The Trinity is a concept that cannot be grasped by the human mind by itself. God must reveal it to you personally. We do not have three separate Gods; but each aspect of God has different functions. The Father conceives the thoughts and plans, Jesus is the Word that speaks them, and the Holy Spirit is the One Who

² International School of the Bible curriculum is available free at www.isob-bible.org, or you may send email to info@isob-bible.org.

carries out the orders. Jesus is also God's Son. Jesus became a human being and took our sins and our sin nature to the Cross for us.

I understand why unbelievers cannot believe the idea of the Trinity. I have received criticism from Mormons and others for believing this truth. However, if you are really ready for the truth, just ask God, then stand back, and watch Him speak to you.

7. He is infinite. (Isaiah 40:12-13)

8. His nature is love. (Ephesians 2:1-7, 1 John 3:1, 1 John 4:9-10)

God does not *have* love, He IS love. God loves us with an unconditional love. His love does not depend upon how good or bad we are. While we were dead in sins, He loved us. A dead man cannot do anything but receive life! Humans love with conditions. For example, "If you are good enough, or do what I tell you, then I will love you." Not God! He loves just because He IS love. That is called AGAPE, meaning unconditional love.

9. His character is the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22-23 which says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

10. He never changes. His emotions do not run hot and cold like human emotions. (Hebrews 13:8)

James 1:17 describes a sundial shadow that turns as the sun moves during the day. But James says that with Jesus, there is NO shadow of turning. In other words, He is always shining like high noon! You can depend upon Him.

11. *Jesus is the Word. Jesus is also God Himself.* "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men" (John 1:1-2). "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

This is the dividing line between Christianity and everything else: Jesus is all God and all man. He is God manifested as His

creation, man. If you are not ready for this yet, just be honest with God and He will reveal Himself to you.

12. Jesus was born of a virgin. (Luke 1:26-38) Romans 1:3-4 states that: “regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.” Can you imagine asking the teenager Jesus, who are your parents? Jesus might say, “Well you see on my mamma’s side, I am from the family of David, but on my Dad’s side, well, I AM.”

13. The Holy Spirit is God. (John 14:16-23, John 16:7-15)

14. Best of all, God is love! He cares about you more than you care about yourself, more than your parents and family care about you.

15. God lives in eternity and not in time. Eternity is not a long time, rather it transcends time. God knows the beginning from the end and the end from the beginning.

16. God cannot be defeated by His enemies, nor by our enemies. Sometimes, when we look at this world and our lives we wonder if God is really in control. We might say, “If God is in control, then why is there so much suffering?” Or, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” “Now that I am a Christian, why is my life not getting better?”

Psalm 1:1-4 says, “Why do the nations rage, and the peoples meditate on a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers plot together, against the LORD and against His anointed, saying, ‘Let us break their bands in two and cast away their cords from us.’ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall mock at them.”

One of the most difficult things many people to believe is that God is really in control of the world and our lives. The bad things that happen in this world do not occur because God is hitting the control button that says “bad.” Bad things happen because God gave humans a free will that He will not violate. However, look at the Scripture above in Psalms 1:1-4. Also, look at Romans 8:28 which says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his

purpose.” If Jesus is your Lord, then even the “bad things” will work to your benefit.

Even evil people and demons who are God’s enemies are working His plan for Him. Psalm 33:10 says, “The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He breaks the plots of the people. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.”

If you are still having a hard time with this idea, just remember we live on a planet that is at war. God gave control of Earth to Adam and Adam gave his authority to God’s enemy Satan. Jesus came to earth and established a “beachhead” or a foothold against the enemy to redeem mankind and the earth. The Church is now called to extend that victory to the world. Actually, Jesus won the victory at the Cross, and we have the victory spiritually, but it is up to us to extend it to our realm of influence. God has ultimate sovereignty in history past and future. However man has a degree of sovereignty now due to his free will which God will not violate. That is why there is still suffering and pain in the world today. One day, this earth will be renewed and suffering will end for God’s children. If we go to be with the Lord before that time, that is when our suffering will end. The unbelievers will have no end to suffering!

17. God is the Word, and we can trust it (Him). If there is one thing The Word of God dares to do that no other book in the world does, it is to accurately predict the future. I have studied the Bible with vigor since 1979 and know that it is perfect. I do not claim to understand it all, but it is perfect. I have studied Bible prophecy intensely. It is obvious that God inspired the Bible and that it is perfect. Bible prophecy proves its perfection by providing evidence that cannot be refuted. The only reason people do not believe the evidence is because it would demand that they call Jesus their Lord, and so many are not willing to do so.

Chapter 9 in this book will go into more detail about Bible prophecy, which proves beyond doubt that God inspired every word in the Bible and that it is perfect.

18. God can be known personally. Most religions and even many Christian denominations do not believe that God can actually

speak to and be heard by man. They do not believe that God can be their best friend. God wants to have fellowship with us. His heart aches to have conversations with us. Jesus describes eternal life as knowing God. That word “know” means the closest form of fellowship and intimacy. “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

Who is Jesus Now?

It would be impossible to fully answer this question. The Book of Hebrews, Ephesians, Revelation and others give us some answers and allow us to peek into Heaven.

In Revelation chapter 1 John sees who Jesus is now! He is different from the last time he saw Him. He is the ascended Christ revealed! He is revealed as the faithful, trustworthy witness, the firstborn of the dead, the Prince of the Kings of the Earth, the soon coming One, the Alpha and Omega, the first and last, and the Almighty Omnipotent One!

Remember that Jesus was God manifested in a human body. He was all God, yet all man! When He was killed, He actually died. However, since He was sinless, Hell had no claims on Him. Therefore God the Father resurrected Him. When He was raised from the dead He was re-born as a new creation, yet still human (a different kind of human) and still God, the Creator. Jesus is now in Heaven ruling the universe. He is still all God, yet all man!

He is more than the ruler. He is our advocate, or to put it another way, our lawyer who is there to make sure we receive our inheritance. There are many names given to His functions like intercessor, advocate, high priest, etc.; however, the easiest thing to remember is that He wants us to receive our inheritance both here on Earth and in Heaven, and He will ensure that happens.

He walks through the fires and trials of life with us. He comforts and encourages us. This is all done through the Holy Spirit who He sent to take His place.

As we face the results of sin, (not only our sin, but also the curses passed down by our forefathers going all the way back to Adam), Jesus is there to take the real penalty of them for us. As

the scrolls of our lives unfurl, He does not always take the bad circumstances away, but He will always take the harmful things out of the bad circumstances. He not only took our curses 2,000 years ago, but He is on task to get rid of what is left of them that still attempt to harm us.

He is the soon coming King. If there is one thing that Jesus promised over and over it was that He is coming back to earth some day. He did not tell us the time and date, but He made His second coming a certainty.

“According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep” (1 Thessalonians 4:15).

“‘Yes, it is as you say,’ Jesus replied. ‘But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’” (Matthew 26:64).

“‘Men of Galilee,’ they [the angels] said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven’” (Acts 1:11).

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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Chapter 5 Who Am I?



Humans go to great lengths to try to obtain identity.

We wear certain kinds of clothes, we drive certain automobiles, we comb our hair a certain way, we hang out with certain friends, we have certain hobbies, and the list goes on. Some attempt to make a lot of money and others take poverty vows. Others join various religions or just inherit their family traditions. We go to the “other gods” to obtain an identity.

People allow other people and circumstances to define their self-identity. If you study the psychology of a slave you will discover that they achieve their identity by how they perform and by how others’ judge their performance. They are stripped of all inherent dignity and identity. They can only have self-esteem that is based upon what others’ think of them, or in how they impress others’ with their performance.

Scientists have discovered some amazing things about behavior.

Our brain waves can be trained to act a certain way. It does not matter if circumstances change, we will still react the same way. We form habits by doing the same thing for approximately twenty-one days. Habits eventually form our character. So we find ourselves becoming someone we do not mean to become by default. We do not even know how we got to be that way.

A baby elephant is trained by tying a small rope to a small stake, which is tied to the elephant’s leg. As a baby it cannot get loose, so it walks in a circle. When the baby grows up, it could easily pull the stake out of the ground, but it does not. It feels the gentle tug of the rope and its brain tells it that it is still a captive.

In an experiment, fish were put into a fish tank with their

favorite prey, some smaller fish. However, the smaller fish were put into a plastic bag that the larger fish could not penetrate. Finally, the larger fish gave up. Then things changed. The smaller fish were let out of the bag and became prey, once more swimming among the large fish. The large fish starved to death, being convinced that they could not eat the smaller ones.

Humans are the same way. Our brain waves tell us that we are slaves, losers, and under the power of Satan and circumstances. We feel tossed around by life, beaten up by sin, and living with a sin trained mind. If we have been serving “other gods” they have left us with fear and uncertainty.

Suddenly, Jesus gives us the new birth; we are born again and become new creations in Christ. We meet God and we feel, “Now we have purpose, now we know who we are.” But wait a minute. It is not usually that easy. We have formed brain waves and habits that are not so easily changed. It is true that we have a new nature, but in our brain we still have old “computers” that need to be reprogrammed.

In John 8:34, Jesus told the religious Jews that they were slaves to sin. Did He see them sinning? Probably He did not. However, Jesus knew just by their actions that they had no self-esteem and no identity other than what others thought about them. This is truly slavery because you can never please people. In fact, the people you are trying to please or impress are often the ones that will control and manipulate you by your need to be accepted.

We are so trained to be defeated, that Satan can keep us defeated. Then God comes along and tells us He wants us free! He wants us to know who we are! He wants us to know the truth! John 8:31-32 says, “Then Jesus said to the Jews who believed on Him, ‘If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’”

Finding the real you.

People spend hours of time and thousand of dollars in an effort to track their generational lineage and family trees. There is nothing wrong with that and it can even be helpful and valuable. However the best lineage to trace and the best family tree to focus

on is the one that was the result of your second birth not your first natural birth. Don't look for the real you in the lost and found!

I see most Christians still laboring to find their identity by the wrong means. I struggled with this for years. I had always been a performance-oriented person, meaning I obtained my identity by how well I performed and by what other people thought about how I performed.

Finally, one day in the early 1990's, God spoke to me. First He asked me if I was tired. Of course I was. Then He showed me something that changed my life. He reminded me that in John Chapter 13 He had washed the disciples' feet, and that foot washing in those days was as cleaning toilets is today.

As an analogy, He told me that if the President of the United States came to my house and cleaned my toilet, that CNN News would probably cover it, not because cleaning toilets was so great or I was so popular, but because it was the President doing it.

Jesus told me that He had made foot washing a respectable event since He had done it. Now it was now a good thing to do. He brought dignity to the act simply because He is God.

Then He gave me the analogy that God, through the Holy Spirit, was living inside of me joined to my spirit. Everywhere I went I brought dignity to that place (just as Jesus brought dignity to washing feet) because God was coming to that place in me. He reminded me that what others thought of me would not give me my identity or my dignity.

God provided my identity and I had the privilege of bringing dignity with me everywhere I went. He turned my thinking upside down. I knew that I was a vessel containing God and I no longer needed an outside source telling me who I was. This is freedom!

Most believers never realize victory in their lives because they are always trying to achieve some goal with God. The way of victory is to realize the victory and the finished work of the Cross. We *already have* victory, we are *already* righteous, we *already* are victorious, but we just don't know it yet.

The problem is that people do not know who God has made them to be through the new birth. They do not have their true identity. More than that, they cannot imagine that God has made

them righteous by grace and faith and that they had nothing to do with it. Christianity is not performance oriented. It is what God made you in Christ, by faith, by grace; it was a free gift.

The solution for understanding our identity is we need to get a renewed mind. When we meet God, we receive a new spirit. We are instantly made righteous with God. When our bodies die, we instantly go to be with the Lord in Heaven. But in the meantime we have our souls which have not been made whole as yet. Our souls are made up of our will (volition), mind and emotions. Our souls take a lifetime to get transformed!

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:1,2).

Take a deep breath now and see who you really are through the eyes of Truth. The Word of God is the only true genealogy of who you are.

The Word of God is the only thing that can renew our mind to the Truth! Study and meditate on these truths, confess the Scriptures, determine to believe them no matter what your senses tell you, until they renew your mind.

However, you will never achieve a renewed mind with the truth of God's Word until you truly give God the truth about yourself. You must open up all the "compartments" in your soul. You do this by simply talking to God like a best friend. Tell Him all of your feelings, sins, anxieties, unforgiveness, all of the low self-esteem. Hide nothing! He cannot show you who you are in Him, until you show Him who you are without Him. Failure to do this will keep you in bondage!

We are supposed to obtain our true identity from God through His Word. I urge you to study the story in Numbers Chapters 13 and 14 about the Israelites and the twelve spies in the Promised Land (It is also covered in this book in Chapter 14). God had promised them the Promised Land. Only two of the twelve spies, Joshua and Caleb, had enough faith in God’s Word to see

themselves as victorious over their enemies. The other ten said, “There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.” (Numbers 13:33).

Satan sows seeds to produce a wrong self-image in us.

In Matthew 13:1-23 Jesus told His disciples a parable about the Word of God being planted in their hearts as a seed. He explained how it worked and how Satan tried to keep it from working. Then He explained that not only would Satan try to steal the Word out of their hearts, but that he (Satan) also was a seed sower.

“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way’” (Matthew 13:24,25).

Following are some facts in the Word that you should meditate on. These facts are good seed, which will bear good fruit in your life.

You were hopelessly lost. That means that someone else had to search for you. Ephesians 2:12 (a & b) says, “that at that time you were without Christ, ...having no hope and without God in the world.”

You were dead in your sins. There is no way out for a dead man, except to receive life. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”

The blood Jesus shed on the Cross did more than remove and forgive your sins. Notice in these Scriptures that we only have forgiveness and redemption **“IN HIM.”** Colossians 1:14 says, “in whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins.” Ephesians 1:7 says, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”

Our original "forgiveness" is often misunderstood. Many feel that they are the same person but now Jesus has just removed, "excused," or forgiven their sins.

Wrong! You were crucified with Christ. The first thing God did for you was to "put you" in Christ to experience a co-death with Him. Your old Adamic nature, the "first you," had no hope of being cleaned up. You had to die. The wages of sin is death. The Good News is that you did die. You were already "in Christ" when He was crucified; you just needed to discover it and believe and accept it.

You were already "In Christ" when the following events took place.

You were crucified with Christ. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

You died with Christ. "For if we have been joined together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:5).

You were buried with Christ. "We were buried therefore with Him through Baptism into death" (Romans 6:4). "Having been buried with him in baptism" (Colossians 2:12). If you are having a difficult time with identity, I suggest memorizing Romans chapter 6. Doing that had a profound affect on my life.

You were made alive with Christ. "And you being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you did He make alive together with Him" (Colossians 2:13). "Even when we were dead through our trespasses [God] made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5).

You were raised with Christ. You are seated with Christ. "[He God] made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:5,6).

That is our legal standing with God today and the foundation of our legal rights. As far as the spiritual world is concerned, your position is with Christ in the heavenlies. You are in a seat of authority. Satan and your mind will tell you that you are not seated

with Christ in the heavenlies, but that is a lie! You need to know that God seated you with Him while you were yet a sinner!

You are a new creation. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

You might ask, how can this be? Good question. God put us in Christ. “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Being in Christ is like you were in your father and mother as a sperm and an egg. You inherited their history in your genealogy. Just imagine that you are a marker inside of a book. When the book is moved, the marker goes with it. When the book is put on the shelf, the marker goes on the shelf. If the book is burned, the marker is burned. If by some miracle the book is restored and put back on the shelf, so is the marker.

Your history, and who you in Christ is the result of the Blood Covenant with God through Jesus’ death on the Cross and His resurrection.

You are righteous. Righteous means to have a right standing with God. A son (or daughter) is righteous with his father by birth. He is in the family and he has a right standing that the neighbor does not have. We are righteous by our new birth, not by anything we have done. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). We are righteous because God put His life in us, not because of the way we act or live.

Satan’s dominion over you is broken. Satan had dominion of your old nature, but your new nature is Christ’s own Spirit that has already defeated Satan. Romans 6:8-10 says, “But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that when Christ was raised from the dead, He dies no more; *death no longer has dominion* over Him. For in that He died, He died to sin once; but in that He lives, He lives to God.” If the spirit world has had you living in fear, God will set you free *right now!*

Because of who you are in Christ, "bad things" no longer have power over you. Instead, you have power over them to convert them into blessings. Colossians 1:20 says, “and by Him to

reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

Why do I not feel the way these Scriptures say?

I am very glad you asked. That is an important question. It took years for you to get the world’s and the “other god’s” view of yourself. You were trained with a guilt, sin, fear and curse consciousness, and it will take some time to get your mind renewed to the truth. From Satan’s point of view, he is trying to steal the seed of the Word out of your heart. If he puts enough pressure on you with circumstances and guilt, you may stop believing.

From God’s point of view, He is testing you. He wants to develop character in you. Not the kind of test that teachers give, pass or fail, but testing as it is used in refining gold. The word test means to put into a fire and burn off the impurities. God is interested in seeing your faithfulness in adversity; He wants to know if you will believe His Word even if things look just the opposite. As you act on the Word you received, the manifestation will begin to come.

Faith is very valuable to God. Faith is simply knowing, believing and relying on God’s Word to the extent that you will confess it from your mouth and do what it says no matter what is going on in your life. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). “We live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Faith in God’s Word is what pleases God. “When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him asking for help. ‘Lord,’ he said, ‘my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.’ Jesus said to him, ‘I will go and heal him.’ The centurion replied, ‘Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell

this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.’ When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, ‘I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith’” (Matthew 8:5-10).

The proof of whether or not you believe is *not* how you feel.

The proof is what will come out of your mouth from the abundance of your heart. Luke 6:45 says, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth the good. And an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth the evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his *mouth speaks*.” Speaking the Word of God out loud on a regular basis, especially those Scriptures that have to do with your identity, is powerful.

The only way to overcome and be healed from sin, fear, guilt, addictions, feeling unworthy, feeling like a failure, etc., is to accept these facts. When we know for sure that God loves us and that we belong to Him, that He has made us a new creation and old things have passed away, that our new identity is in Christ, and that we have been purchased from slavery and been given the choice to accept the absolute Lordship, authority and care of God, then we begin the process of overcoming all the bad things in our life.

Gospel means good news.

The Good news is that we were hopelessly lost without any power to help ourselves, and Jesus came and transformed us into something special. This is the Gospel. This is powerful! “I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Romans 1:16).

Religious tradition that preaches bad news is death! “He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant— not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6).

When I was a new Christian, Dr. Paul Walker of Mount Paran Church of God in Atlanta, Georgia, used to build me up every

Sunday morning. Rather than condemning people for their weakness and their sins, he talked about the grace of God, the love of God, and he preached Good News of who we were in Christ. He would always end with the exhortation:

“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

We are special people because God created us and because He gave us the new birth so that He could live in us again. Just the fact that we are containers for God makes us special. “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Don’t be a chicken, you are an eagle!

One day, an eagle’s egg fell from its nest and rolled into a chicken pen. The eagle was born with the chickens and acted like a chicken, but it kept seeing a difference as it grew. No one was there to tell it that it was not a chicken, but an eagle.

When storms came, the eagle would rush off to the chicken house with the rest of the chickens, running for cover, but the eagle always looked over his shoulder and up, and he saw these other strange birds on the cliff. They were not afraid, they were not running. They were standing with their wings locked into special sockets (that make them like a wing welded to the fuselage of an airplane), they gazed right into the storm even though it was still miles away. They waited and waited and then, bang! The storm hit them but instead of hurting them all it did was make them soar. They went straight up into the air, up to 30,000 feet above the storm into clear air. The eagle would say to himself, “oh man look at those guys, I wish I were like them.”

One day he looked UP, and saw an eagle flying and soaring high with a storm. All of the sudden he knew, “I am not a chicken, I am an eagle. Why should I run?” He climbed the hill, locked his wings, then he took off and soared!

My friend, you are not a mere human, you are not a chicken. You are made to soar in the heavenlies with Christ. Look up!

Now remember the parable of the sower in Mark 4 (read it). Satan comes to steal the seed of the Word of God sown in your

heart. Today a seed of who you are was sown. Tomorrow, stand fast if discouragement comes through some circumstance. The Word is true! Circumstances come and go.

Standing fast requires trusting in the Word. You cannot trust in the Word of God unless you meditate it and speak it on a regular basis. "Waste your time" on the Word of God and you will be amazed.

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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Chapter 6

Death is Annulled



Now that's the best news I have EVER heard!

The issue that brought me to my search for the truth was death. I needed to know exactly what would happen after I died. I did indeed have a fear of death, a fear of the unknown.

People have many different ways of covering up that fear. I hear all kinds of lies that people depend on for their life after death. It hurts me to think that they are so deceived. Many of their theories sound good, but only the Word of God can be relied upon. If you are trusting in something other than the Word of God, you better get busy with your search for the truth because you are not promised one more day on this earth!

Another issue that grieves me is that many Christians are afraid of death. That should be the first fear that leaves if you really have an experience with Jesus. It may be that you have never experienced the new birth, or perhaps you have never been instructed in the Word of God.

The Word of God makes a rather surprising statement about death. It says that death has been annulled. To annul means “to make null and void; to destroy the validity of.” It is as though God put death into a place of insignificance.

“It is that purpose and grace which He now has made known and has fully disclosed and made real to us through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, Who *annulled death* and made it of no effect and brought life and immortality, immunity from eternal death to light through the Gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10, Amplified Bible).

I was on a trip with my family several years ago and my wife's cousin was in the car with us. He was not a believer. I had just been reading 2 Timothy 1:10, and I was impressed with the Amplified version which said that Jesus annulled death. I had no

idea that my cousin was thinking about the same subject until he started sharing with me. I simply told him what I had read that morning and how Jesus had released me from the fear of death. Months later I found out that he gave his heart to the Lord that day. My cousin is going to Heaven because death has been annulled!

The definition of the word used for death in the New Testament is “to separate.” Death is not the ceasing of life, it is the separation of the earthly body (our earth suit) from the real us, our spirit and soul. We will live somewhere forever. Spiritual death is the separation of our spirit from God. Spiritual death starts here in our earthly life and continues forever if we are not born again.

I believe that death for a human is a very terrifying experience. I have heard enough testimony from doctors and ministers who bear witness to this. I have also heard stories of after death experiences. However, I believe that when a believer dies, he does not experience that terror and pain. I believe that just before death happens for a Christian, that his spirit rises up to meet Jesus in the air, kind of like a “rapture.” Hebrews 2:9 says that Jesus tasted death for everyone. Taste is a strong word. We do not taste death because Jesus did that for us.

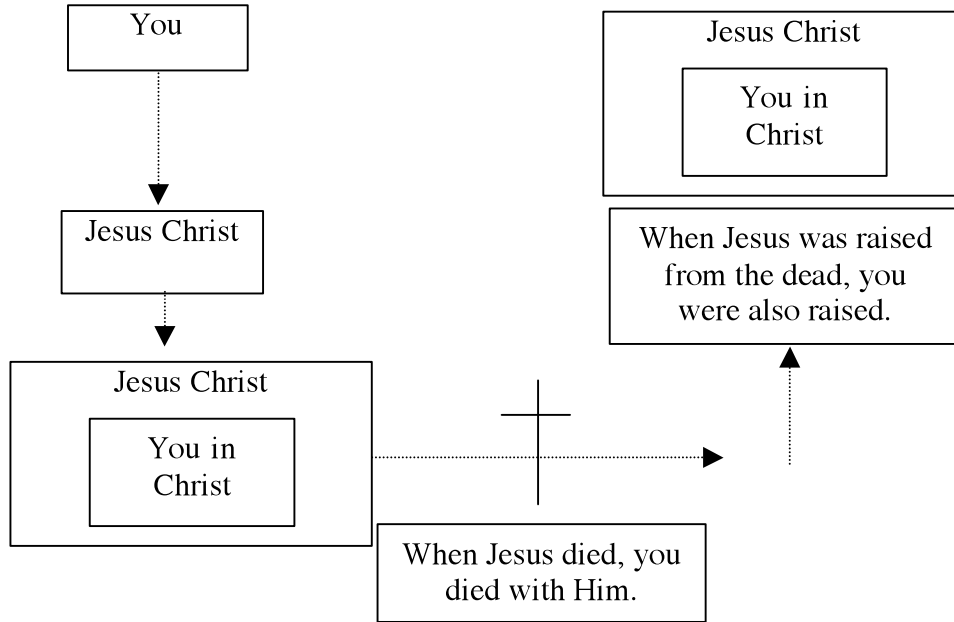
“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might *taste* death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9).

I believe that when we are separated from our body through death, we are immediately present with the Lord. “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8).

I believe this is supported in another way. If we are born again, then we must have died already. “If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection” (Romans 6:5).

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

When you were born again you were you were
put in Christ.



Here are some great Scriptures to meditate on relating to our freedom from death.

“The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death” (Proverbs 14:27).

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’” (John 11:25,26).

“Who alone has immortality in the sense of *exemption* from every kind of death and lives in unapproachable light” (1 Timothy 6:16a, Amplified Bible).

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:55).

“Since, therefore these His children share in flesh and blood, that is, in the physical nature of human beings, He himself in a similar manner partook of the same nature, that by going through death he might bring to a naught and make of no effect him who had the power of death, that is the Devil; and also that he might deliver and completely set free all those who through the haunting fear of death for held in bondage throughout the whole course of their lives” (Hebrews 2:14-15 Amplified version).

Be real with God.

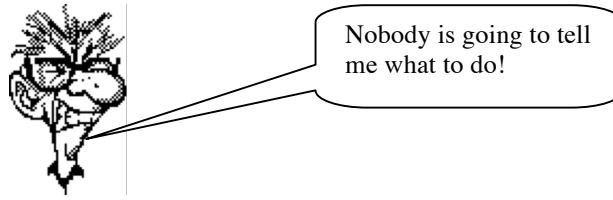
Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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Chapter 7

Jesus As Lord?



“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). Notice it does not say that if you believe that Jesus died for your sins you will be saved. It says if you believe He died and is now alive, and in that “aliveness” you make Him your Lord.

“Saved” is a word that means to make whole and to save from destruction and danger. This not only means the new birth, but also refers to the progressive work of the Holy Spirit healing and making whole those areas of your being that have been wrecked and those areas that are still posing a danger to you.

Man was created to be under the authority of someone.

It is our choice. We cannot be neutral. If we do not let Jesus be Lord, someone or something perverted will be our lord. We have no choice in the matter except to choose one or the other. I can personally testify to this and I have seen multitudes of people fall into this predicament.

Jesus told His disciples that they were confused about the idea of authority. He told them that in the Gentile world (those people without God) authority meant “lording” it over them in a harsh way. Jesus explained that authority meant serving others. “Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’” (Mark 10:42-45).

Authority is a very big issue with God. God created everything with His authority. It is His way of dispensing His power.

Why is God so big on authority? There is something that I call the Law of Authority. The Law of Authority dictates that the servant receives the benefits of the assets, and the protection and power of the authority figure. The authority figure must care for the servant. If one does not submit to his employer, his employer cannot pay him his wages. If one does not submit to the police authority, the police cannot protect him.

The same applies to our relationship with God. God is not an egocentric person who wishes that all of His subjects bow down in order to prove who He is. God has such a love for us, such a desire to totally care for us, but He cannot do so unless we submit our lives to Him. If one does not submit to Jesus, Jesus cannot protect him.

Rules without relationships lead to rebellion! When we are raised with tremendous affirmation and not enough discipline, we grow up to be very independent and rebellious. Conversely, when we are raised with heavy discipline and not enough affirmation, we also become rebellious. There is a balance to be found.

I knew a Muslim man who was married to a Christian woman. He was on the path to believing that Jesus was the Messiah; he was earnestly seeking with his heart. His main problem, however, was discerning the character of God. He said that he could easily obey God's orders when he received them, but that he could not understand having a personal intimate relationship with God. His life experience was with father figures that exercised rules without relationships.

Many people have an experience with Jesus and then fail to move on to victory in their lives because they do not understand the word "lord" or they misunderstand the character of Jesus. So many people feel He is a hard taskmaster and they read the Bible with that mindset. I don't know how to express this, but Jesus is a great guy!

The word lord is not common to the Western mindset. In the West, we like the word democracy. To the Eastern mindset it may

carry the connotation of some hard taskmaster who is impossible to please. The word lord actually carries the connotation of “bread provider.” To all humans of all regions and races, the idea of submitting to an authority is against their nature. That trait was inherited from our forefather, Adam. That was his problem. Rebellion to authority is the original sin.

The entire issue is, you choose who your provider will be. God wants to be your provider. He wants to give you your needed love, security and significance. That is what lords do. That is what gods do. The lord owns the servant and is obligated to provide for that servant. There are several categories of lords, but after we define them you will see that you really only have two choices.

The two choices are:

1. God, the Creator, manifested as Jesus Christ, the Word of God.

2. “Other gods.”

These two choices are also known as the Kingdom of God (Jesus is the King) and the Kingdom of the World (Satan is the prince).

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve chose the “other gods.” They followed the advice of a living spirit being, Satan, who was manifesting himself through something that God had created; the serpent. The advice was to use their own soul power (their own intellect and talent which are independent from God’s Spirit) to be their own god. They took the advice. What they did not know, however, is that the living spirit being was an enemy of their creator, and now he had access to influence their lives. You can now take that formula which applied to Adam and Eve and define all the “other gods” in those terms.

The “other gods” can be defined in two categories:

1. The spiritual, animism. Many people know for sure that they are in contact with living spirits. This practice is called animism, coming from the word animated. Most primitive tribal and family religions are based upon animism. Many of them worship family ancestral spirits. The worshipers feel that these

spirits are looking out for their benefit. They pray to trees, lakes and even other people who have died. They worship one of the creations of God, rather than the Creator. Hinduism, Voodoo, New Age and many other religions are based upon animism. These people are constantly attempting to satisfy and/or manipulate these living spirit beings through worship, rituals, sacrifices, and attempts at reconciliation. They interact with them through various media including meditation, chanting, fetishes, carved idols, drugs, alcohol, animals, dancing, yoga, human sacrifice, and many other ways. They often hold festivals in honor of the spirits. Mardi Gras in America is a good example of this. My friends from West Africa and Haiti have told me some very interesting stories. I have personally witnessed some of these activities and have felt the demonic oppression.

I want to say that these spirit beings are real and they truly do become active and animated in a person's life. The Bible calls them demons and teaches that they are all under the control of Satan, the former archangel Lucifer, who rebelled against God. Satan is the embodiment of all that is evil. He comes to kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10). His eternal destiny and the destiny for all that follow him is the Lake of Fire.

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:19-20 (Amplified), "What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is intrinsically changed by the fact and amounts to anything or that an idol itself is a living thing? No, I am suggesting that what the pagans sacrifice they offer in effect to demons - to evil spiritual powers - and not to God at all. I do not want you to fellowship and be partners with diabolical spirits by eating at their feasts."

Deuteronomy 32:17 says: "They sacrificed to demons, not to God, To gods they did not know. To new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear." These "other gods" do indeed have an animated power. But they counterfeit what God does. They are not reliable, they instill uncertainty and fear, and they will lead you to eternal damnation. They are created beings who were never designed to be providers. Isaiah 14:14 says of Lucifer (Satan), "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most

High.” Satan and all demons are subordinate spiritual beings. Jesus and believers have authority over them.

2. Secular. Many people do not believe in the spirit world and they rely on soul power and other such things for their needs. The problem is that everything is eventually spiritual, even those things that on the surface seem to be secular.

God created man with a very powerful soul, consisting of the will, intellect and emotions. Since the fall of Adam, man only uses a fraction of his potential soul power. I believe this is a grace of God. The Bible calls this “the flesh” and the “old man.” Man can do very powerful things without God in his life (soul power). Man creates powerful religions and works through science. He obtains power through wealth, politics, commerce, military might, intellect, education, institutions, family, ambition, manipulation of the masses, and many other means.

The problem with soul power lies in the fact that God created the soul to be a servant of the spirit (connected to God’s Spirit) and without God the soul operates without the constraints designed by God. Also, the demon spirits hook on to this soul power and actually give it more power to dominate.

Many famous entertainers and business people openly admit (I have heard their testimonies) to obtaining their power from the spirit world. Ezekiel 28:4-5 says of Satan, “With your wisdom and your understanding You have gained riches for yourself, And gathered gold and silver into your treasuries; By your great wisdom in trade you have increased your riches, And your heart is lifted up because of your riches.” Satan has empowered the “world system” and “other gods” with a lot of temporal power for riches. He is an expert.

Man’s soul and the spirit world cannot make man what God created him to be. At best they can supply some of man’s apparent needs, but even these provisions are short lived and have no lasting value. The end result is eternity separated from God. You will live with your god forever. *You* must choose who your god will be.

“Other gods” promise provisions with ease. Jesus promises provisions through His Word. His Word works on the principle of

seed-sowing and harvest, and obedience to His Word. This involves time, patience and quite often suffering. It is not an instant fix. However, God promises what “other gods” cannot promise: an intimate, personal relationship and friendship with Him in His presence, and eternal life. They do indeed perpetrate lies and promise eternal life and reincarnation, etc., but they are lies. Even Jesus was tempted to take the “easy road” for His needs. “Then the devil, taking Him [Jesus] up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish’” (Luke 4:5,6).

There is usually suffering when you change your “lord,” or change who or what your provider will be. This does not come easy! In Mark Chapter 4 Jesus described that provisions in the Kingdom of God will grow as fruit by the seed of His Word being planted in your heart. He also said that Satan will try to steal the Kingdom seed, and plant his own seeds. Many believers fall back under this pressure and return to the “other gods.” There will be a war when you decide to have all your needs met by Jesus in His Word. But it is worth it, both for now and eternity!

Take a lesson from the Rich Young Ruler.

“Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’” (Mark 10:17). This man was a young political leader, he was wealthy, and observed the Jewish law to the letter (he thought). Verse 21 says that Jesus loved him so much that He told him to sell his possessions, give the money to the poor and follow Him. The man was sad because he had many possessions and would not do what Jesus asked. Remember that Jesus loved this man and knew what he really needed. Jesus was trying to get him to turn from his “other gods.”

Then the disciples expressed their concern to Jesus for His doctrine and did not understand how a rich man could be saved. Peter reminded Jesus that he and the others had given up much to follow Him. Jesus replied, “So Jesus answered and said,

‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.’”(Mark 10:29-31). Notice that Jesus gave the warning, “with persecutions.”

Here is your guarantee from the Word of God that Jesus will take care of you when you turn from your soul power and your “other gods.” Notice, Jesus indicated that people would have to leave their ancestral traditions and gods, their material possessions, and anything else that qualifies as an idol or as an “other god.” Also notice the guarantee. When we “sacrifice” what we are trusting in we will receive a hundredfold now in this time, but with persecutions, and also in the age to come, eternal life.

Do not be afraid to turn from your “other gods.” Jesus will give you a hundredfold back, but it will be with suffering or persecutions. It is well worth it!

You eventually take on the character of your provider.

You will become like the one who supplies your needs. You will take on the character of the one you obey. You were created to be a slave to someone. You become a slave to the one you obey. “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” (Romans 6:16). “The idols of the nations are silver and gold, The work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear; Nor is there any breath in their mouths. Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.” (Psalms 135:15-18). Romans 8:29 says that you are predestined to become conformed to the image of Jesus, God's son.

Words are seeds. God's Word will not only provide for you, but will also change your character into His. If you continue to

take the words and pictures of “other gods,” you will become just like them. This is the pattern of sowing and reaping.

The end result is that you have purpose in life; the purpose that God designed for you. That purpose is to “glorify” God. In other words, it is to reveal God to others. Yes, God wants to be your provider, but it does not end there. God does not bless us just to be blessed. That is what got the Old Testament believers into trouble. They fell into gross immorality and idolatry when they became inward with their blessings. God blesses us to bless others. He wants to reveal Himself to the lost people in this world. He loves them, and he wants you to go to them. He wants to use the gifts He created for you to influence people in your realm of influence. God wants to change you into a giver. God promised to bless Abraham, the first Hebrew. He also told him that he wanted him to take the blessings not as a privilege, but rather as a responsibility (Genesis 12:1-3).

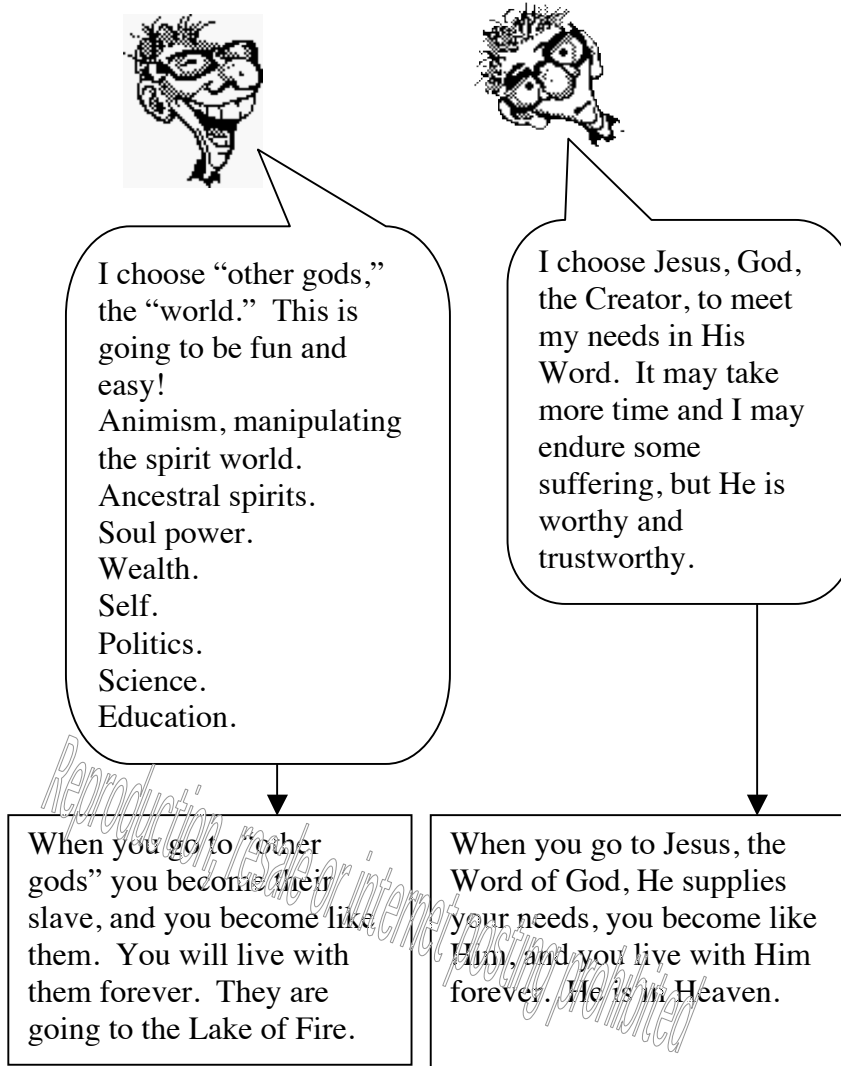
He does not want you to spend time worrying about your provisions like unbelievers do. He wants to set you free to glorify Him. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

When I met Jesus I was in for some real boot camp training!

First, He formed our relationship, then revealed His character to me and then let me know how valuable I was to Him. He went to work to change my character so that I would appreciate authority in His Word. He put me under the discipline of the Holy Spirit. He also put me under the discipline of delegated authorities. These years in my life were a great trial. But through them I discovered some important things about myself and about the character of God.

Jesus is our example. Even though He was God in the flesh, He denied His soul power and trusted in His Father in Heaven. “Jesus gave them this answer: ‘I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does’” (John 5:19). While Jesus walked on Earth, He depended totally on hearing from

His Father. He totally submitted as a human to Father God. If Jesus needed to do this, we do also.



The way to truly make Jesus Lord is to put the Word of God first place in your life. Jesus is the Word as stated in John 1:1-2. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with

God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1,2).

It is vital to be a doer of the Word. “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do** what it says” (James 1:22). Faith is not just believing with one’s mind; real faith is believing the Word of God so thoroughly that one will obey it and act on it in some practical way.

Jesus got excited when the Centurion took His Word and acted upon it. “When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ‘Lord,’ he said, ‘My servant lies at home paralysed and in terrible suffering.’ Jesus said to him, ‘I will go and heal him.’ The centurion replied, ‘Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.’ When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, ‘I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.’ And his servant was healed at that very hour” (Matthew 8:5-13).

Notice in this story that the centurion was passionately concerned for the welfare of his servant. He knew the true meaning of authority!

The measure of how much we love God is how much we love the Word and obey the Word. “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me’” (John 14:23,24).

Another way to submit to the Lordship of Jesus is through delegated authorities. Many Christians misunderstand this concept. A delegated authority is someone who is sent in the name of another. For instance, if I send one of my employees to another employee with my authority to issue an order, then the one sent is my delegated authority. Disobeying the messenger is the same as disobeying the one in authority. The Bible makes it clear that we have delegated authorities throughout our lives. Some of them are good and some of them are not so good, or even evil. The governments of our countries and cities and their police are delegated authorities of God. If you study the Book of Acts you will see how the first century believers handled very difficult circumstances. Jesus, when He was on trial for His life, submitted to the delegated authorities of Rome and even of the Jewish religion. He did not submit to the individuals, but to the office they represented.

We have delegated authorities in our families, in our spiritual and church lives, in our school life, and in our vocational life. Ask God to help you walk the balanced life with your delegated authorities.

How much do you love Him?

Love is action. Obedience to the words you hear is an expression of your love. If you were to catch your child stealing money from a neighbor you would take harsh action lest he become an adult thief. That child might say to you, “But Mom, I love you.” “Yes,” you would say, “but if you love me, then do what I say.”

Submitting to Jesus is always a voluntary action.

In the Old Testament and Hebrew cultures, slaves were a common tradition. However, God demanded that the slaves be cared for and treated with dignity. He even provided for the slave to go free after a certain period of time. Additionally, He allowed a slave to stay with the family that owned him, as a voluntarily slave, if he preferred.

“But if the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ then his master must take

him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life” (Exodus 21:5,6).

My experience with the Lord Jesus since 1979 has been one of going out of my way to find ways to obey Him. He has honored my attitude beyond anything that I can imagine. It is safe to put your entire life into His hands. It is profitable to find His Words and obey Him. It is wise to drop your own desires and seek His. He is God! He can do all things. We are simply created beings; we are limited. He wants to do great things in our lives, but He is certainly limited by how much or how little we submit to His Lordship.

Be real with God.

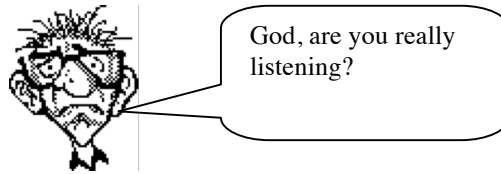
Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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Chapter 8

Moving On With Prayer



When I first met Jesus, I asked Him how He could listen to my prayer and millions of others at the same time. I knew that I had made contact with God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but I was not sure how contact from me to Him would work. I had not been trained in any religious traditions, (thank God) and therefore I did not have to “un-learn” any un-scriptural methods of prayer.

I remember one day early, in my walk with the Lord, hearing the Holy Spirit speak to me. He said, “If you will tithe your time and give me 10% of it, I will bless the other 90% beyond your imagination.” I did just that. I determined to give God no less than 2.4 hours per day for prayer and fellowship in His Word. He honored His promise. He multiplies my time like no one else could do.

The first day was awkward. I sat in my auto and said to the Lord, “Okay, I will just pretend that you are sitting here with me, and I will just talk to the windshield and trust that you will hear me.” He heard me, and my prayer time turned into a wonderful event that I now crave more than anything.

I told the Lord that I preferred to read the Word rather than talk to Him. He responded and said, “Reading My Word is prayer. Prayer is nothing but a two-way conversation between you and Me. When you read My Word, I am speaking. There is a time for you to speak.”

Quite often I get into the Word of God or some kind of devotional book before I talk to God. That way I can come closer to praying His will for my life and others. God wants us to pray, but I feel that He wants to give us the prayers He desires for us to

pray. The primary prayers I initiate with God are the confession of my sin and weakness, and my praise and worship.

Here is an example of what I mean. God wants to increase Israel, but He asks Israel to pray for His will. “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Once again I will yield to the plea of the house of Israel and do this for them: I will make their people as numerous as sheep” (Ezekiel 36:37).

There are some lessons in the ISOB curriculum on prayer that are very good. The primary one is called “The Flowing River”

Some of the principles in those lessons have to do with coming into the presence of God during your prayer time. God has left us a map or a pattern to follow which He honors. I am not reducing God to a formula, but some of these steps will help you make contact.

1. Recognize the value of the Cross of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins. First, take time first to confess your sins to God. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). When you sin, run to God, not away from Him.

Pour out your heart to Him. This is the most important thing you can do to develop your relationship with Jesus. I have found that He honors me with His presence quickly when I pour out my heart, the good, the bad and the ugly. Take some time to unload everything that is on your heart. When I do this I say, “God, this is how I feel. I know I am wrong, but this is where I am located.” He has always honored this attitude.

Journaling. Take time to be quiet and begin to keep a journal. Write down your thoughts, your problems, your pain, your doubts, and write them to God. In your imagination see Him sitting with you in the room. He is! Then take time to listen to Him, and write down what, in your inner intuition, He is saying to you. You may make some errors at first, but that's okay. As babies, we fall but don't give up. This is so important in developing intimacy with God.

2. Get into the Word. Sometimes reading a few Psalms or Proverbs helps. Devotions, books and tapes can be very helpful. The Holy Spirit works with the Word of God. You need to put the Word first place in your life.

3. Take time for thanksgiving, no matter what your circumstances may be. This is very important. God does not honor an ungrateful heart. Thank Him for giving you the resurrection power to convert even the bad things in your life into blessings.

4. Take some to give Him your will in exchange for His will. So often we get certain things in our mind that we want God to do. God is not our servant. He wants our will to become lined up with His will.

I can recall one day early in my walk with God when things were just not going my way in business. I was grumbling and complaining to Him. He spoke and said, “Larry, what if I make you a deal? What if I would give you everything you asked for and nothing more or nothing less?” I thought about it for a few minutes and answered, “No way Lord, I have no idea what I need.” He said, “That is correct. But remember Ephesians 3:20, which says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,” I answered, “Yes Lord, have your way.”

5. Then take time to do the same thing with your mind and your emotions. Trade them in for His. Discipline your emotions to praise Him. “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

If you have taken time to walk through these steps, most likely you will find yourself in the presence of God. Sensing His presence is more than just an emotion or a feeling. After some practice you will learn to detect His presence. Remember, He lives in you.

So often, when I find myself in His presence, I find that my prayer requests have either vanished or have changed. Many times I feel God giving me a promise in His Word to stand on.

When you feel that God is giving you a promise in His Word, then you can take that and stand on it as a finished work. It may take some time to manifest itself, but it is worth the wait.

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). I used to wonder how we could pray without ceasing, without intermission. I now do that. All day long I just stay in touch with God in my spirit. Sometimes it is without spoken words. Often I just pray with my prayer language. At other times I simply thank Him for all He has done. There is a way to experience the presence of God in our lives so that we are in touch with Him all day.

If you ever feel out of touch, do something. It may be just your feelings, which can be unreliable. It may, however, be something you need to seek God about. One of the best rules to follow is; if you are in doubt, press in and find out what is going on. Often we will feel the devil’s oppression. But sometimes God is putting a burden on us to intercede for someone and we are feeling his or her spirit. “But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, even those who because of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14).

There will also be a weaning process in your relationship with the Lord. The parents of a newborn baby quickly respond each time the baby cries. But as the baby matures, the parents may wait a few minutes before they attend to the child. Later, as the child matures, the parents may even avoid the child’s demands as a step towards discipline in patience and in an effort to avoid self-centeredness. This is called weaning. The Lord also weans. He may give you a full-grown “watermelon” as a present when you are a new disciple, but later He may only give you the “watermelon seed.” As you continue in your walk with Him, He may even allow that seed to come under attack so that you will grow in faith.

I want to issue a warning to you about this weaning process. So many new believers “feel” the presence of God when they first come to know Him, and then later difficulties come and they fall back because they could not see and feel God working. If you will press in to the Word and prayer, if you will seek the Lord for Him and not just for your own satisfaction, you will not only find Him

during the dry times (the weaning period), but your relationship with Him will grow warm and close.

The morning is the best time to pray. I am a morning person, so I can say this easier than some. Please do not feel condemned or criticized by my preference. You may sleep late every day and have a wonderful prayer life which is very pleasing to the Lord. I know God-called intercessors who stay up or get up late at night and pray for hours. I feel that it is important to align yourself with God in His Word in the morning before you do anything else.

I do not wish to put God in any kind of box or set of formulas. However, from what I read in Scripture, there is something special about the morning. I have noticed that demons are very active at night, especially between 10 P.M. and 4 A.M. It seems that the spiritual atmosphere is clearer in the morning. I believe that is why so many people who are called as intercessors prefer to pray during these “dark” hours. My wife and I especially noticed this during our mission trips to Haiti. The Voodoo activities hit their peaks between 10 P.M. and 4 A.M. I know that demons are active all the time, even during the day, but there seems to be an intensity at night. “You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day” (Psalms 91:5).

I pray all day, but if I do try to do anything in the morning without first making contact with God, my day just does not work as well. It seems like there is a special blessing if we start with God, His Word, and prayer.

Psalm 5:3 says, “In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.”

Psalm 88:13 says, “But I cry to you for help, O LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you.”

Mark 1:35 says, “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”

Exodus 34:4 says, “And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.”

Exodus 19:13 says, “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: ‘Let My people go, that they may serve Me.’”

Psalms 55:17 indicates that anytime is the right time to pray. It says, “Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.”

If you are not sure how to pray, pray the Word. (Chapter 16 covers this subject completely; the following is just an outline). One of the most powerful ways to intercede for yourself and others is to pray the Word. Take the Word of God and put it on your lips and speak it out.

Jesus takes our confession and makes it powerful. Hebrews 3:1 says, “Therefore, holy brothers, called to be partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” When we speak God’s Word, Jesus takes it to the Father and asks Him to perform it. Then we can enter into rest and let the Word do the work. Hebrews 4:1 says, “Therefore, a promise being left to enter into His rest, let us fear lest any of you should seem to come short of it.”

Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Angels go to work when they hear God’s Word. (Psalms 103:20)

Demons flee! (Psalms 149:5-9)

Prayer must be developed between you and God as something personal and real. Ask Him to teach you and He will.

The biggest thing with prayer is to be real with God!

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

Chapter 9

Moving On In The Word



I can make it without reading the Word everyday; after all, I am very busy.

The Word of God has been the biggest thing in my life since I met Jesus. In 1979 when I first met Him I was in several desperate situations. The only time I had any relief and peace in my life was when I was taking in the Word. I was like an addict who had to have more of the Word all the time. I could not get enough of the Word. It spoke to my heart, it understood me, it gave me hope in hopeless situations, and best of all it was not an “it,” it was a “He.” “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1,2).

As I mentioned, I met the Lord while reading the Book of Revelation and studying Bible prophecy. After that day of salvation, I studied Revelation with vigor for almost two years. I was amazed at the way the Word of God was so perfect. I noticed that the Old Testament lined up perfectly with the New Testament. I saw hundreds of prophecies fulfilled to the very date, as foretold hundreds, even thousands of years earlier. It amazed me the way God inspired the Bible and left it for us. What a treasure I had found!

One of the most amazing things I discovered was that not only could I read the Bible, but also the Bible could read me. It told me things about myself that only God could have known. When I would cry out for answers, The Holy Spirit would open an Old Testament story that fit my situation perfectly. I believe that there is a Scripture in the Bible for every moment in our lives. All we have to do is ask, seek and knock.

If you are a new believer, you must learn to make the Word of God first place in your life! There is no other way to have a

deep, personal relationship with God and find His victory in every situation.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible has been given to mankind by the breath of God, which is the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who takes the words of Scripture and makes them alive for you in your life.

There are two meanings for “word” in Scripture: one is logos, and the other is rhema. Logos means the Word of God in general. Rhema means the Word of God coming directly from the lips of Jesus to you. It is a personal Word to you. The Holy Spirit takes logos and makes it rhema!

Some people can actually memorize the Bible and remain atheists. “...not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6b).

What is the Bible all about?

When I first met the Lord, I kept asking ministers to give me a brief outline of what the Bible is all about. I never got it from them. I really do not have space to do it here. I do, however, wish to give you a basic outline from which you may build as you study for yourself.

The Bible is about God creating everything from nothing with His Word. It tells about Him creating man. Then it tells the story of man. It tells how he rebelled against God’s authority and put himself under Satan’s authority. It tells how God’s wonderful redemption plan was executed so that man could be restored to a right relationship with God.

The Old Testament goes into great depth describing God’s acts in creating a family for Himself in the race of Israel starting with Abraham. Much of the Old Testament focuses on the story of Israel. That is important because Jesus was the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel. Jesus was God’s plan to redeem man back to God, and Israel played a big part in that. The Israelites kept the Scriptures in tact, and Jesus came as an Israelite. Jesus said, “You Samaritans

worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22).

Not only is the Old Testament the history of Israel, it also serves to give us shadows and types in its stories that we may apply to our lives today. “Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did” (1 Corinthians 10:6).

“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

For example, look at 1 Kings 18:8-16. Read the story about the woman giving away her last morsel of food during the famine, and how God wonderfully supplied food for her and Elijah. You may apply this personally for your life as I have to mine. God can use supernatural means to supply your needs.

The four Gospels are partial historical accounts of the birth and life of Jesus and of some of the things that our Lord did while He walked this earth. They reveal to us the character of God. The religious people during that time, and our time also, thought that God was a cold hearted, hard to please old man. Jesus revealed God as a God of mercy and grace. God is revealed as a friend to the poor, the sick, the sinners and the helpless. He taught us many lessons about the Kingdom of God in the Gospels.

The Gospels explain how Jesus died for our sins, was raised from the dead on the third day, and how He sent His disciples into the world to preach the Good News.

The Epistles have various messages. Paul, who wrote two thirds of the New Testament, had a special revelation from the Lord regarding what happened between the Cross where Jesus died, and when He sat down at His Father’s right hand. He had a revelation of the defeat of Satan and who God made us to be in Him. Paul had a revelation of the Bride of Christ, the Church. Peter, James, and Paul give good practical advice on living the Christian life.

Paul wrote a very special message to the Galatians. He emphasizes that not only were we saved by grace and grace alone, but that we can only live out our lives by grace and not by works

or legalism. Our old nature, the flesh, continually tries to take control by any means possible. Two common means for the flesh is legalism and self-righteousness. Let us never forget that everything starts and ends with the grace of God.

The Epistles talk about the Second Coming of Jesus. This is a subject that has been misunderstood by believers and non-believers alike for centuries. We will cover this subject more in later chapters.

The epistle to the Hebrews emphasizes the Blood Covenant and compares the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. It reveals Jesus in a wonderful way.

The Book of Acts is in a class by itself. On the surface, it is the history of the first several years of the Church after the ascension of Jesus. It shows the Holy Spirit being poured out on all mankind starting with the Day of Pentecost. It shows God including the Gentiles in salvation. It shows the start of the early church, and the missionary trips made by the first century believers for church planting. It shows the ministry of The Holy Spirit working through ordinary men as if Jesus Himself was doing the work (in the Name of Jesus). The Book of Acts is without end. Technically, it is still happening.

The Book of Revelation is probably the most misunderstood book in the Bible. While I believe there is a lot to be learned about end times in Revelation, I believe that too many believers limit Revelation to future history and do not make personal a application of it in their present day lives. We will cover this more in later chapters.

Can I trust the Word of God?

There is really nothing in this world that can be trusted except the Word of God. People come and go, ministers come and go, institutions, schools, children, parents come and go, everything changes.

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35). “For ever, O LORD, your word is settled in heaven” (Psalms 119:89). “I will worship toward your holy temple, and praise your name for your lovingkindness and for

I highly recommend that you study the many lessons in the ISOB curriculum, such as lessons 110 through 114 about the Word of God.³

I submit that it is impossible the Bible is not the inspired Word of God! Doubt will certainly come to you, especially as a new believer. Keep these facts in your mind to fall back on in times of trial, and God will see you through. The Word of God is true and perfect. You can trust it!

Most Christians do not give enough value to the Word of God. They feel that it is strictly intellectual and cognitive. Also, many feel that it contains errors or at least simple stories.

Isaiah foretold that people would not give any value to Jesus when He came. Too many people are still not giving enough value to Jesus, who is the Word of God.

“He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53:2,3).

How the Word works.

The Word of God is a seed. Seed do not make noise, nor is their growth activity obvious. The Word of God contains life, as do seeds. It contains the very race and spirit of the speaker.

This is the mystery of the Kingdom of God!

I strongly suggest that you meditate on Mark chapter 4, the parable of the sower and the seed, the Word of God. It is one of the most important teachings of Jesus.

Jesus said that the mystery of the Kingdom of God is embedded in this parable: “And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know **the mystery** of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables” (Mark 4:11).

³ International School of the Bible curriculum is available free at www.isob-bible.org, or you may send email to info@isob-bible.org.

The Kingdom of God may seem like a far off place to you, but Jesus said that it is within your reach right now. He said that if you turned (repented) that you would find the Kingdom of God within your reach.

Jesus was telling us to change, **to** repent from struggling to get our needs met, and to become fruit bearers with the Word of God.

“From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near’” (Matthew 4:17). That is to turn and change directions. When you do, you will find the Kingdom of God so close that you can take hold of it.

You may ask, what did He mean? Turn from what? What is the Kingdom of God? I believe that we are to turn from the world’s way of living life to the Kingdom’s way of living life. I believe that this applies to our entire life. I also believe that Jesus was not simply saying to these people, “Stop sinning and repent from your immoral ways.” No, Jesus was giving us the plan for living life.

Mark chapter 4 tells us about the Word. The Word is sown in our hearts and the Devil comes to steal it. How? He does it by taking advantage of the various conditions of our heart.

a. The hard heart, the wayside or hard road, Mark 4:15. At once Satan takes away the message that is sown in them. Some people are just shallow and don’t care.

b. The stony ground, Mark 4:16. They receive and accept at first. But they have no real root. When trouble and persecution arise for the Word’s sake, they become offended, displeased, indignant, and resentful; they stumble and fall away. The Word is lost. Some people can’t stand the pressure. They can’t see anything growing right away so they give up.

c. Thorns, Mark 4:18. The Word is implanted as a seed and grows, however cares, anxieties, distractions, pleasures, delights and false glammers choke it. Deceit of riches, craving and passionate desires for other things creep in and choke the Word. Some people give in to peer pressure and their desire to be popular and materialistic.

One of the reasons we do not believe others and do not believe God’s Word is because of the condition of our heart. The reason

we think others are lying when they are being honest is because it is *our* nature. The reason we have a hard time believing God is because we cannot believe ourselves.

d. Good soil brings forth fruit, Mark 4:20. Growth does not depend on good weather, but good soil. Luke 8, the same parable, says good soil is an honest, virtuous, just, noble and worthy heart. It produces thirty, sixty, one hundred times the amount sown. The word “one hundred” means, according to Strong's Concordance, an uncertain amount of the same origin.

God has given us His Word to supply all of our needs. Our three basic needs are love, security and significance. If we will receive the Word into our hearts and resist the devil as he tries to steal the Word, God will cause fruit to grow in our lives that will supply all of our needs. This is not empty theology. I can personally testify that the Word of God does indeed work this way. The devil knows it, God knows it, now we need to know it!

I challenge you to make a continual study of Psalm 119 as a testimony of what the Word of God will do.

Some examples of what Psalms 119 says about the Word:

God commanded you to keep it in your heart; The Word directs your ways; You will not be put to shame; God will not forsake you; You keep your way cleansed with the Word; The Word will become more to you than all the riches; You will see wondrous things in the Word; God gave you His Word so you would not feel like a stranger on the earth; God rebukes the proud and arrogant who wander from The Word; The Word counsels you and delights you.

The Word revives and stimulates you (vs. 25); When you meditate in the Word you understand God's wonders; The Word will strengthen you when your life seems like it is dissolving and hopeless; The Word will remove you from the way of falsehood; You have to choose the way of truth and set the Word before you; God will give you a heart willing to run the way of the Word; The Word will keep you safe from idols; The Word is only for those that fear and worship God; The Word will turn away your reproach; The Word will renew your life; The Word will bring

you God's salvation, keep you safe and heal you; It will give an answer to those who taunt and reproach you (vs. 42).

The Word will give you liberty and freedom (vs. 45); It will keep you from being put to shame; The Word brings hope and, God's will to your life; The Word will comfort and console you in your affliction; The Word will heal and deliver from danger, it will provide for your needs, it will comfort and speak to you, it will be you with in danger, it will keep you from danger; When enemies attack the Word keeps you safe; God's favor and grace comes through the Word; It teaches you good judgment, wise discernment and knowledge; It will keep you from going astray; It will keep you safe when the wicked lie about you (vs. 69).

The Word is better than gold and silver; You were made to hear the Word; The Word gives hope, but sometimes you have to wait and be still for it; The Word is hidden for those that seek; God's tender mercies come though the Word; It will make your heart blameless, sincere and wholehearted; Even though you suffer sometimes, that is when you know to turn to the Word; The Word is faithful and sure; Forever, the Word is settled in Heaven (vs. 89); Unless you had been in the Word you would have perished; It kept you safe when the wicked came after you; Everything has its limits except for The Word (vs. 96).

It makes you wiser than your enemies. It gives you more insight than even your teachers; You can keep that Word only when you stay honest; The Word is sweet; The Word is a lamp unto your feet and light to your path; The Word heals and gives you life; The Word gives you joy; The Word is a hiding place; You need to stay in good company of friends so that you may keep the Word; The Word is better than anything conceived by man (vs. 129); It gives understanding and comprehension to the simple; The Word keeps evil from overtaking you; The Word is pure and you love it; Even when you are in trouble The Word brings you delight; The Word binds you to eternity [It transfers the Life of God to you.]; You have childlike trust in the Word.

The Word brings God near to you, nearer than your foes; It seems that when the writer was in trouble the Word meant more to him; The wicked cannot work things out because they are far from

The Word; All of God's Word endures forever; You rejoice at The Word as one who has found a treasure; The Word causes you to praise Him; The Word causes God to hear you and deliver you; It causes God's hand to be ready to help; Even when you go astray like a lost sheep, The Word stays in you to bring you back to God; Since the Word of God is the only stable thing, then you need to measure all other words against God's or their character against God's character.

What will the Word do?

When Satan heard the Word in the Garden of Eden, he was defeated. When Pharaoh heard the Word, he let God's people go. When Moses heard the Word, the Red Sea Split. When the walls of Jericho heard the Word, they fell. When Gideon heard the Word, his outnumbered forces slaughtered the enemy. When Samuel heard the Word, he wasn't sure who it was. When Elijah heard the Word, he raised the dead, stopped the rain, and started it again. When Naaman obeyed the Word, his leprosy was cleansed. When Goliath heard the Word, he was felled by a stone and a youth. When Jehoshaphat heard the Word, his enemies defeated themselves with a battle. When Nehemiah heard the Word, the temple and the wall were rebuilt in record time. When Esther heard the Word, she saved an entire nation. When Job heard the Word, even his suffering was worth it: He saw God and his fortune was restored. When David heard the Word, he was comforted, made safe and forgiven from the worst crimes a man could commit. When Solomon heard the Word, it was worth more than all the silver and gold. When the maiden in Song of Solomon heard the Word, she fell in love with her eternal lover. When Isaiah heard the Word, his lips were cleansed and he foretold of a Savior who would die for our sins. When Jeremiah heard the Word, Israel had to become slaves due to their sin; but later their slave masters were overthrown. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego saw the Word, He was with them in the fiery furnaces of life. When Daniel saw the Word, He had shut the lion's mouths. When Ezekiel and the other prophets heard the Word, they saw the coming King who would save them from their enemies.

When the Blind man was touched by the Word, he saw.

When the Word touched the leper, he was clean. When demons saw the Word, they fled. When the Centurion heard the Word, his servant was healed. When the adulterous woman saw the Word, she was forgiven. When the prostitute touched the Word, she was made clean and loved much. When John the Baptist saw the Word, he saw the Lamb who would take away our sins. When John saw the Word the first time, he saw God's Word become flesh. When the religious people saw the Word, they argued with Him and called Him demon possessed. When the crowds saw the Word, they considered Him to be of no value, traded his life for a thief's, and executed Him with the punishment of a criminal. Although He spoke this world into being, they did not recognize him. They only saw Him as that "bloody mess" on the Cross.

When John saw the Word in the Book of Revelation, he saw a victorious One who conquered death, hell and the grave; the One who was raised from the dead, and clothed with a robe which reached to His feet and a girdle of gold about His breast. His head and His hair were white as snow (white as in fire) and His eyes flashed like a flame of fire. His feet glowed like burnished bright bronze as it is refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. John saw the Ruler and Judge of the Universe!

When Satan sees the resurrected Word, he sees that He, The Word, is The King of Kings and Lord of Lords. His eyes blaze like a flame of fire and on His head are many kingly crowns. At every one of our "final battles" in this life, Satan sees him with a sword in His mouth on a white horse, dressed in a robe dyed in blood. "And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:16).

You need to continue in the Word with a consistent Bible Study. There are many good ones you may purchase or you may design one for yourself. ISOB has a free discipleship course

available on the Internet or on CD-ROM for use with your personal computer.⁴

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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⁴ International School of the Bible curriculum is available free at www.isob-bible.org, or you may send email to info@isob-bible.org.

Chapter 10 Moving On With Being Changed.

Changed? What's wrong
with me the way I am?



Some things are changed instantly, some take time.

I can remember one of the first things God revealed to me when I first met Him was how the veil in the Temple was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died on the Cross (Mark 15:38). The Holy Spirit used that to reveal to me that what Jesus did on the Cross gave me entrance to the presence of God. There was nothing I could do to earn or deserve this, it was totally something that He had done. In the King James Bible the word used for torn is “rent.” I used to go around telling everyone, “The veil is rent, the veil is rent!” They looked at me like I was on some drug trip or something. But I knew what I meant.

I owned a neighborhood grocery store when I first met Jesus.

Hundreds of people saw me change overnight! I remember someone asking me, “Now that you are a Christian, do you have to stop doing this or that?” I would say, “I can do whatever I like.” They would look at me in amazement. Discerning the question in their minds I said, “The thing is, what I like has changed. The only things that I like to do now are those which please God.” Now when my desires are improper, the Holy Spirit makes me miserable.

I was a “social drinker” when I met Jesus.

I know this is a controversial subject in some cultures, but what I am telling you is not my opinion or argument, it is the way the Lord dealt with me; it is testimony. One unforgettable day a few months after I met Jesus, I reached into my refrigerator for a beer and I heard the Holy Spirit say, “That will grieve Me.” I asked Him why and He said, “Because it replaces what I am

supposed to do for you.” I have never regretted not drinking alcohol since then. For me, alcohol is one of the “other gods.” Ask the witch doctors in Africa and Haiti about alcohol.

God changed my likes and dislikes immediately. However, I had no idea how lost I really was and how much of a struggle I was facing. I had no idea of how far my life had strayed from the original blueprint God had for me. I thought God had really received a prize when He got me! He very gently changed my mind, letting me realize that I was very valuable to Him, but that I needed to change.

I can honestly tell you after walking with God since 1979, the closer I get to Him, the more I see how far I had really strayed from His original blueprint for me. You need to approach this subject with great humility and purpose in order to drop your pride and self-righteousness.

God’s eternal purpose for your life is stated in Romans 8:29, which says, “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

It took you less than one minute to receive the eternal life of God into your spirit and to make Jesus Lord, but it will take you a lifetime to be changed into His image. True, you have the life of God living in your spirit, and you have been crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20). Actually, you obtained perfect righteousness when you received the life of God into your life. Do not let anyone take that truth away from you. Compromising on that truth will neutralize your walk with God. However, there is another truth for you to realize.

I went through much agony seeking God as to how this whole thing worked. I kept asking Him, “If it is all of grace, then why do I have to perform? Is it really grace, or is it mixed with my works and performance also?”

I have been emphasizing the grace of God and the mercy of God.

I have been emphasizing that there was nothing that we could do to earn God’s favor or earn our way into Heaven. This is true,

and please do not let anyone take that away from you. Read the book of Galatians and discover the message that Paul was trying to give to the church in Galatia.

The simple idea of grace is this: That God moved inside of you and replaced you with Him. As you sin and/or make mistakes, or are unable to meet your own needs whatever they may be, you either repent and/or turn it over to Him, and His life in you lives your life for you. That is grace. As He lives His life in you, you will notice His degree of holiness and abundant life being lived out in and through you.

However, there is another side of the coin that we need to see. Now that you are a believer in the Lord, you should have a passion and desire to live a life worthy of the Lord. “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Ephesians 4:1). Here the apostle Paul urges the Ephesian believers to live a life worthy of the Lord. This means that they have a choice to live a life unworthy of the Lord.

Before I pursue that too far, I need to set a foundation. God created man in His own image. One of those attributes is having a free will or an independent volition. Man is the only created being who has a free will. True, angels did rebel against God with Satan, but that is still not the same as man’s free will. I believe that God probably gave angels one free choice to follow Satan’s rebellion or to stay with Him. The fallen angels can never choose redemption as a human can.

Dogs can choose to go left or right, but they must always act like dogs. They are pre-programmed. However, a believer can choose to act like an unbeliever even though he has received a transplanted spirit in the nature of God, Himself. True, the life of God dwells in the believer, but the believer’s free choice is still active and he can choose to act as he did before he became a believer.

I am not proposing that one must just act like a believer or imitate God. That is ridiculous, no one can imitate God successfully. God’s life must be in that person and that person must choose to allow God’s life to be manifested through His strength and His power by the Holy Spirit.

This chapter discusses your responsibility as a believer. In no way am I suggesting any form of legalism or “works program” in order to find favor with God. God’s grace has never been “cheap.” God paid the highest ransom price to rescue you from the world and Satan.

If you feel that you may live your life as a believer the same way you lived your old life, it may be that you have never really made Jesus Lord, and possibly you have never been born again. No one can make that judgment about you, however please take this as a merciful warning. Don’t be deceived, you are not a healthy Christian unless you have a passion to be conformed to the image of Jesus. Notice, I did not say that you were not healthy if you were not perfect. I said you should have a passion to be changed into His likeness. Make sure that you are not going to “other gods” for your needs. That is often the root cause of an unhealthy attitude. Be honest with God on this issue. It is a matter of eternal life and death.

You can take a lesson from the apostle Paul who had a passion to be conformed to the image of Jesus, however he kept falling short. Paul said in Romans 7:15-25, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”

You are not two people dwelling in one body! Some Christians actually believe that. No, you are a new creation in Christ Jesus and your old nature has been put to death. Paul did not say he had two natures. He said that there was the “law of sin” at work in the members of his body, which waged war against the law of his mind.

I believe that your old nature is like a tree that has been cut down, but still has live branches that have not yet died. You still have old memory tapes in your brain that want to play. Most of your struggle will be with your mind. You may, however, have to deal with spiritual strongholds and/or demonic strongholds. We will discuss those in later chapters.

So how do we please God, and what is our responsibility? Follow Paul’s example of how he solved his dilemma expressed in Romans 7. “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires” (Romans 8:1-5).

First, we need to know that we have already been set free. Paul used a description in Romans 7 of a Roman torture when he said, “Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24). There was a Roman custom of strapping the dead victim’s body to the murderer’s body. The murderer would have to try to live his life in this manner. It would not be long, however, until the death spread into his body and killed him also. But notice Paul said, “Thanks be to God [He did set me free]--through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:25).

In other words, Paul knew that his dead body had been legally released, and what he was dealing with was residual in his mind

and in his members. If you keep this in mind, you will live in victory.

Next, you need to heed Paul's words in Romans 8:1-5 stated above. That is, to live "in accordance with the Spirit, and have your mind set on what the Spirit desires."

You must then learn to walk in the Spirit, or live in accordance with the Spirit. What does that mean?

Galatians 5:16 says, "I say, then, Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

Walking in the Spirit is a simple, but different way to live. It is the easiest way I know to be right with God on a daily basis. The process that goes like this:

1. You continue to look into the Word of God (mirror) and ask God to show you how to live. Ask Him, and seek what His standards are for your life. For instance, He says to not lie, to treat your friends with love, to submit to your parents and teachers, to treat your brothers and sisters with kindness, to not get drunk, to not be selfish, to not be angry, to always forgive no matter what, etc.

2. You determine to live the way God wants you to live, knowing that you can walk a life worthy of the Lord only through Jesus living His life in you.

3. When you fail, and you will, be totally honest with yourself, God, and others around you. Repent (turn) quickly. The promise is that when you repent (turn) the Kingdom of God is "at hand", or within your reach.

4. Confess your sin to God. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

5. Confess what the Word of God says about your situation in a positive way. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I live; yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me. And that life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith toward the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself on my behalf."

6. As you continue to live this way, those old habits and old sinful ways begin to disappear. The grace of God takes over and gives you the character of God instead of your old character.

7. Grace “kicks in” for your sin. You did not become righteous by the things you did. Therefore your righteousness is still there; it just has some dirt on it. While you walk in the Spirit, God gives you grace for your mistakes. He takes the penalty of the sin that you would normally suffer, and He gives you a blessing that you do not deserve.

“*Walking in the Spirit*” can also be defined as what Jesus called “taking up your cross daily.” “And He said to all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me’” (Luke 9:23). Remember that your relationship with God is based upon a blood covenant. Two thousand years ago He took up His cross in order to shed His blood for the covenant. Now, in order to activate the covenant and make it a reality in your own life, you must take up your cross, which is your act of “shedding your blood.”

Notice that Jesus said “deny himself.” Those two words taken together simply mean to say no to the “old nature” that rises up to take control of your daily decisions. You must say no to your own will, intellect and emotions, and replace them with God’s will, God’s mind and the emotions of the Holy Spirit living in you. I guarantee you that this does not make you a machine or a robot, but it mixes the character of God with your own unique personality and makes you a whole person.

One of the rules I keep in mind is to not live by rules. It is found in Colossians 2:20-23 which says, “Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.”

If you have ever tried to break a habit, like overeating, you will understand this Scripture. The more attention you pay to your bad habit or even sin, the stronger it becomes. Instead, we should *replace* our concentration on the sin or habit with concentration on something or Someone else. This is stated in Colossians 3:1-5 which says, “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death [put to death literally means to kill by ignoring], therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”

You will tend to become like whatever your eyes are fixed upon!

Do you have a passion and desire to live a life worthy of the Lord? If not, be real with God. Tell Him about it and He will give it to you. If you do have such a passion, remember, live your life without condemnation and “walk in the Spirit.”

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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Chapter 11 Water Baptism.

This baptism stuff sounds scary!



“Baptize” is defined in Strongs Concordance as follows:

“**Baptizo**. Not to be confused with bapto. The clearest example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be 'dipped' (bapto) into boiling water and then 'baptised' (baptizo) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change.

When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism. e.g. Mark 16:16. 'He that believes and is baptised shall be saved.' Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle!

Bible Study Magazine, James Montgomery Boice, May 1989.”

Baptism is the outward, physical act of what happened inside of you, which is, death, burial and resurrection.

Matthew 28:19 says, “Therefore go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” This literally means to immerse into the name of and the character of God Himself. Baptism is a life-long process of being changed into the image of Jesus, which includes being dunked in water.

If you were put into a pool of water and died from suffocation, and then were born again with the life of God in you, that would be a good example of what happened to you in the spirit realm. That is why Jesus wants us baptized. It shows the world, demons, our flesh, body, and mind what actually happened to us in the spirit realm. The actual act of going into the water and coming out really does not do anything for you, except giving you an opportunity to obey God.

Baptism does not give you salvation.

It is an act of obedience which leads you to further salvation.

Salvation does not just mean the initial born again experience. Salvation, or being saved, is from a Greek word that means to be delivered from danger and made whole. After our initial salvation experience, we need to move on to “being made whole” or salvation. Baptism is one of the first acts of obedience that opens the way for developing your relationship with God. It is very important, but not vital to our going to Heaven.

Baptism is also a process not only an event. The word “name” means the character of someone. Baptism into the name of Jesus, the name of the Father and the name of the Holy Spirit, literally means to be immersed into their character so that you become like them.

“He who believes and is baptized [immersed into the character of The Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit] will be saved [made whole, delivered from danger, and conformed to the image of Jesus], but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

Paul talked about our having been baptized with Christ when we were born again. Romans 6:4 says, “Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Colossians 2:12 says, “...buried with Him in baptism, in whom also you were raised through the faith of the working of God, raising Him from the dead.”

Jesus was baptized. He had no sin, but this was a sign that he was going to identify and absorb our sin.

Matthew 3:13-17 says, “Then Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan, to John, to be baptized by him. But John restrained Him, saying, ‘I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?’ And answering Jesus said to him, ‘Allow it now, for it is becoming to us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he allowed Him. And Jesus, when He had been baptized, went up immediately out of the water. And lo, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him. And lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

Jesus spoke about His crucifixion as another one of His baptisms. Matthew 20:22 says, “But Jesus answered and said, ‘You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’”

Some argue about being sprinkled or being dunked. I can tell you that in Muslim countries when people accept Jesus as Lord, the ones that are baptized by being immersed into water are the ones who are killed and persecuted. You cannot be changed into someone’s likeness by being “sprinkled” with their character; you must be immersed into their character and likeness.

You do not need to be baptized by some special religious or spiritual person. A friend baptized me in a backyard swimming pool. I have baptized some of my children in a river.

John spoke about the baptism in the Holy Spirit as another type of baptism.

Luke 3:16 says, “John answered all, saying, I indeed baptize you with water, but He who is mightier than I comes, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to loose. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” This baptism is covered in another chapter.

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

Chapter 12

A New Way of Life: New Habits

New what?



Before I go into this idea of a new life and habits, I want to establish something about which I feel very strong. It has to do with different cultures. I am writing this book as a person from the USA. I know that people from many different cultures will be reading this book. There have been many times in history when Western missionaries have imposed their culture along with the Gospel; for instance in Africa. A lot of damage has been done out of good motives.

A good friend of mine from South Africa asks the question, “Do we fit culture into the Gospel or the Gospel into the culture?” Should an American criticize a mother in the third world for breast feeding her baby in church? Should an African criticize an American for going to a movie theater and paying for entertainment (which would be unheard of in many cultures)?

The early church experienced this same crisis regarding Jews and the Gentiles. The leaders held a historic meeting known as “The Jerusalem Council” in Acts Chapter 15. They came up with only two categories that superceded their cultural differences and those were: (1) abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and (2) from sexual immorality.

My friend from South Africa and I debated this issue and we agreed in this way: It is not the task of a missionary or a teacher who is discipling a new Christian to attempt to change his/her culture. That is the Holy Spirit’s job. We believe that the Holy Spirit will not alter one’s culture except in those areas that affect the believer’s relationship with Jesus. For instance, dancing during a church service may not affect one’s relationship with Jesus. However, unforgiveness will affect the relationship. Living a life that is not based upon loving God and loving your fellow man will affect the relationship, whereas, breast feeding in church will not.

The Holy Spirit does not want all Christians to look alike. His only aim is to get each believer as close to Jesus as possible. Only the Holy Spirit can convince a person to give up a habit that is hurting him. If a fellow believer does the correction it probably will not be with the heart of love that only God has. The Holy Spirit does the necessary correction for the benefit of and out of love for the person.

A person has no right to correct another without first having a close, trusting relationship with that individual; and then, the correction should be done constructively and in love.

Integrity.

One of the misunderstood characteristics of God is His integrity. "Integrity" comes from the word "integer", which means whole number. An integer does not have a fraction, it is whole and complete. Integrity carries the meaning of being pure, upright, honest, whole, congruent, finished, complete, and honorable. A person of integrity is pure; he is not mixed with some truth and some deceit. He is not mixed with some honesty and some dishonesty.

God is a person of integrity and He desires to work that characteristic into us as we mature in Him. Sometimes people start to walk with the Lord after living without integrity and they assume that God is just like them. However, God wants to change us into His likeness; into people of integrity..

The first thing that God began to work in my life, after He became Lord of my life, was to rid me of all dishonesty and lack of integrity. "Blessed are the pure [not mixed, integrity] in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8). If you really want to see God, seek a pure heart!

I had only known the Lord for about six months when He began to reveal things to me from my past that needed restitution . I had habitually underpaid my government income taxes before I became a Christian (just call it cheating). The Lord directed me to pay back all that I had cheated the government.

The amount I estimated was more than I could have paid back, but I told my accountant to make the necessary adjustments

anyway. He advised me not to do it, as it was his opinion that I would never be caught. I told him that God had already caught me. He did not know what to think about that! He went ahead and reported the back amounts. I have since changed accountants!

As it turned out, that was the year that the new tax laws provided for massive tax credits for the employment of students. I owned a retail business and had employed dozens of students. The tax credits totally wiped out the amounts I owed.

In addition, the Lord gave me the promise in Matthew 17:27, which says, “But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.” Each and every year since then (1980), I have received a miracle of some kind when it came time to pay my taxes! I call it “finding a fish with a coin in its mouth” for me. My new accountant loves to watch for the “fish” every year!

The Bible is loaded with promises for the person of integrity!

“The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out” (Proverbs 10:9).

“As for you, if you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws. I will establish your royal throne over Israel for ever...” (1 Kings 9:4-5a).

Here is a promise for your children. “The just walks in his integrity, his sons are blessed after him” (Proverbs 20:7).

Jesus is a man of integrity. “They came to him and said, ‘Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth...’” (Mark 12:14). They knew Jesus was a man of integrity because they noticed that men did not sway him. You cannot please both God and men. You will disappoint one of them for sure.

“In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness” (Titus 2:7).

It may seem hard to be a person of integrity, especially during your first few months and years of being a Christian, but it is the

only way that you can move on with God. The truth may make you free, but first it may make you miserable. However, it is always worth it!

Money is one of the most important measures of our dedication to God.

“No servant can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13). The word mammon can mean money. It more accurately includes the whole idea of increase in worldly security. Jesus spent more time talking about this subject than He did talking about Heaven and Hell.

He told the Rich Young Ruler in Matthew 19, that his religion, power, influence and youth would not gain eternal life for him. In fact, He told him that all of those things in which he trusted could keep him from eternal life. Jesus told him to give all he had to the poor and come follow Him. The Ruler would not do as Jesus said. God does not always ask us to give away all of our money, but He does want us to subordinate whatever we have that could be taking the place of God. This man was trusting in “other gods.”

Jesus never asked me to give my money away, but I surely did. Looking back, I can see that it was the Lord that had influenced me. I got into a giving frenzy when I first came to God. It made some people mad, but God spoke to me when the last cent was gone. He said, “Now you have sown what is corruptible, and you will reap the incorruptible” (1 Corinthians 15). I can tell you that since 1979, God has been faithful to what He said to me! There were many times when it did not look as if He would be faithful, but He always was.

God does indeed desire prosperity for you. However, He is more interested in your character and integrity than He is in your financial comfort. The word “prosperity” carries the root meaning of integrity. You cannot have Godly prosperity without integrity. “Beloved, in regard to all things I pray that you prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers” (3 John 1:2). I have learned

that prosperity in the soul always comes first and is the most important issue. Any material prosperity that God has designed for your life will be an outflow of the prosperity of your soul.

Material prosperity can mean something different for each culture, but to God I believe it has a very simple definition: having enough resources to execute your God calling, and having enough left over to give to the poor and to the Gospel. We are also called to bless Israel!

There is more to be said about money than this entire book would allow. However, I am going to touch on some key issues.

Tithing.

"Bring all the tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house. And test Me now with this, says the LORD of hosts, to see if I will not open the windows of Heaven for you, and pour out a blessing for you, until there is no sufficiency" (Malachi 3:10).

"Tithe" means one tenth. You are to return one tenth of your increase to the "storehouse." The word "storehouse" means the armory from which we receive our weapons. This refers to the Word of God. Actually, according to the Old Testament, you are supposed to tithe to your "priest." Your New Testament priest is Jesus. You are to give your 10% to Jesus (in prayer) and allow Him to tell you where to send it. The safe place is your local congregation from which you are receiving the anointed Word of God. The main things are; tithe, give, and hear from Jesus.

Why are you supposed to tithe? Is it because God needs your money? Is it because the church needs your money? No! No! No!

The law of the tithe goes like this: If a person gave the first 10% of his/her increase to God, under Old Testament laws, the 90% remaining would be blessed. God knows that money is of the world system and it is cursed. He also knows that you need to use it while you live on planet Earth. So, he provided a way for money to be a blessing to you and not a curse. If you tithe your increase, the first 10%, then the 90% will be so blessed that it will go further than the original 100%.

If you are not employed, or if you are financially unable to give, then give something else. Give your time. Tithe your time that you would normally spend on the job. Give at least four hours per week (10% of forty hours) to your church and even more than that to the poor. Or bring in 10% of your food to the church and/or the poor. If you qualify as one of the “poor,” you need to find something to tithe and to give. If you do not start where you are, God cannot give you increase. You need to give, otherwise, you are limiting God’s blessings!

Tithing is not giving. The first 10% belongs to God. You cannot give to God what already belongs to Him. That is like returning something you have borrowed. We are supposed to give above our tithe. We are supposed to give to the poor, to missions, to ministries, etc. Giving (not only giving money) should be our way of life in Jesus Christ.

God is a giver and we cannot live in God’s character without being givers. Love is expressed in giving. You may wish to refer to ISOB lesson 321, “Tithing and Economics”⁵. You should also study Leviticus 27 as well as other Scriptures having to do with the tithe.

You cannot “out-give” God.

“Blessed is he who has regard for the weak [poor]; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble. The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes. The LORD will sustain him on his sick bed and restore him from his bed of illness” (Psalms 41:1-3).

“Give, and it shall be given to you, good measure pressed down and shaken together and running over, they shall give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you measure, it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:38).

Working hard versus laziness.

God will never bless laziness. Christians who feel like they now “live by faith” and therefore do not have to work any longer,

⁵ International School of the Bible curriculum is available free at www.isob-bible.org, or you may send email to info@isob-bible.org.

have always disturbed me. They feel like God should just have people come along and support them. I can tell you, it is not God who gives them this idea!

The Bible seems to be a paradox on this point, but it really is not. It tells us to allow God to provide for us, and yet, it tells us that if we do not provide for our family, we are worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8).

“For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat’” (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

“He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need” (Ephesians 4:28).

I like this principle in Ephesians 4:28. We must work so that we can give. When we give, we are operating in the Kingdom of God and God can indeed supply our needs. “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33). Jesus worked as a carpenter up until He was thirty years old. He was only in ministry on earth for three years.

God is very practical and He is not a panderer. He is not going to be a partner to our fleshly desire to be lazy and have others take care of us.

If you are in special need and cannot take care of yourself, then God will surely provide. If you are handicapped, if you are a widow, if you simply cannot find employment, God does not expect you to do what you are incapable of doing. But He does expect you to trust Him and not look to other people for support. Trust in God's Word, not in handouts. There is a difference!

God usually deals in steps as in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. He put certain amounts of money in each of His three servant's hands; five, two and one talent(s) each. He told each of them to utilize what He had given them. When He returned, He rewarded those who used what they had with more, and told them to go do the same again. I suppose, when He came back again, the rewards continued to increase in size. However, the one servant who hid the talent and did not use it was called lazy. Not only did he not receive a reward; he even lost the original talent.

God honors hard work.

God honors being faithful with what is in our hand today. God honors patience, which means being consistent over a long period of time. Faithfulness and consistence build character that God prizes.

If you are not sure what God expects from you or does not expect from you, then go ask Him. He will reveal His plan for your life. Just be real with God.

So far I have dealt with new ways of personal integrity, of handling money, and dealing with work.

Now I am going to talk about personal relationships.

This can be one of the big stumbling blocks in your Christian walk. I must point out that if your private life with Jesus is going well, then your public life in your relationships will also do well. However if you just try hard at the public life, relationships, and your private life with God is not intimate with Him, your public life will fail.

Do not manipulate people.

Do not allow yourself to be manipulated. This is one of the greatest sicknesses in the world today. God never manipulates and He never blesses manipulation. The devil uses this tactic and you do not want to be used by him!

How to deal with your old friends.

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). Perhaps for a long time you have had a group of friends who have been a bad influence on you. There is a very good chance that God may want you to rearrange your friendships. There is also a very good chance that if you really become radical for God, many of your old friends will just drop you and want nothing more to do with you.

Jesus said that He wants us to be in the world, but not of the world. He wants us to influence the lost people of the world, but He does not want them to influence us.

Jesus said, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it” (John 17:15,16).

Be honest with your friends. Apologize to them for not being a real friend in the past. Let them know what has happened to you. Do not lay some “religious trip” on them; just be honest with your own personal testimony. Be humble and have a meek and gentle spirit.

Give them something to read if possible, telling them about the Gospel. Pray for your friends. Continue to write to them, but don’t preach to them. Just tell them what God is doing in your life.

If you have a friend with whom you have been in a sexual relationship, break it off immediately. If you have been dating, immediately put that on God’s “altar” and allow Him to either take it away or make it right in His sight.

What about your family?

Family can be a more complicated issue than friends. Jesus is a promoter of family, however, He understands that under certain conditions, family relationships can compromise your walk with God.

“Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that” (Mark 7:13).

“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37).

“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:50).

This is a very sensitive subject and you need to hear from God for yourself on this matter. You could go overboard either way and it would be wrong.

We need to respect and honor our parents and our families. However, we need to be aware of the danger of submitting to their potentially strong ungodly influence. We need to know that curses are carried down through families. If we identify too closely with

a family member who is not totally sold out to God, we could be in danger of being influenced in the wrong way. Please refer to the discussion on ancestral spirits in Chapter 7.

Love your family. Let them know where you stand with God, but do not preach at them and become offensive. They will have a lot more respect for your love and forgiveness than they will for your harsh and condemning attitude.

What about romantic relationships?

This can be a major stumbling block in your walk with the Lord. God did not bring Eve to Adam until after he had a solid relationship with God. Why? Because we each have many needs that need to be met. We tend to look to other people to meet those needs. When we do that, we put impossible demands on them. Those kinds of relationships will always turn into selfishness and end in disaster. First, you need to have all of your needs met by God. Then, allow Him to bless you with that perfect romantic relationship in His own timing.

Do not go “hunting” for romance; it will end in disaster. Trust God and be content with being single until God sees that you are prepared for romance. Keep yourself clean and pure sexually. If you have made mistakes in the past, God has forgiven you and has made you white as snow!

Here is a rule to live by. Romance was never designed to exist between two people unless total commitment went along with it. You cannot have one without the other; it will not work!

Marriage. This is a subject that could take up an entire library of books! It is of utmost importance. Therefore we will cover some of the key issues here. I strongly suggest reading other books on marriage including: The Marriage Covenant, by Derek Prince, Whitaker House, New Kensington, PA, 1978. Derek Prince also has an excellent book titled God is a Match Maker.

Our relationship with God is through a blood covenant. Our relationship with our spouse is also through a blood covenant *with* Jesus Christ. While we are in covenant with our brothers and sisters in Jesus through the New Birth, we have a special relationship with only one other person, our spouse. It is a spiritual

mystery. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:31,32). This Scripture says that the two become one, as in a blood covenant. I believe that we actually change spiritually when we become married in the Lord. Two people do not really have a complete marriage unless they become one. ISOB has a video series that goes along with Derek Prince's book.

Marriage is very special to God. He has a perfect plan, “blueprint” for this relationship. Due to various circumstances in life, not everybody has had the opportunity to realize this perfect plan. However, God can change people and create miracles from messes, as He has done for me. He has given me, in my life with Him, a wife that I could only dream about prior to meeting Him.

If there are some issues that I state here that you have not enjoyed in marriage, do not be condemned or feel inferior. Just do your best with your circumstances and trust God to take your marriage on the pathway towards the perfect plan. Whatever your circumstances may be, seek the face of God, trust Him, and He will make your life complete. Take God’s plan and imprint it on your children as a vision for their life. Do not feel condemned if you have been through a failure in marriage, even divorce. Some divorce is Scriptural, some is not. In either case, God wants you to move on and enjoy His abundance for your future.

God’s plan for marriage is for both the husband and the wife to become servants to one another. They are to love each other with unconditional love, preferring the other over their own self. It takes two to have a real relationship. One spouse cannot achieve this. Put your spouse into God’s hands and do not try to manipulate or change him/her.

Romance and sexual enjoyment should be a vital and continuing factor in marriage, but it is the result of a good marriage relationship, not the cause of one.

Intimacy. Many people confuse intimacy with sexual relations. Intimacy is much more than that. Often people gain intimacy with their future spouse while they are courting, but after marriage they treat them like slaves. Intimacy is originated

through words, eye contact and through time spent with one another. Exclusiveness is one key element of intimacy. Both parties need to know that there are no others involved. They need to know that the other party is exclusively devoted only to them. Some call it a “single eye”. The marriage relationship is likened to our intimate relationship with the Lord. Intimacy requires taking time to talk and to listen. There is a desire to spend time with the other person.

Honesty. There can be no relationship or intimacy without total gut level honesty. I do not care how painful it may be; honesty is the only way to approach God’s best for a marriage.

The husband’s duty is to love as Christ loves. He is to initiate unconditional love. He is to give his wife the emotional security she so desperately needs. The wife’s duty is to honor, respect and admire her husband. Submitting to him means to give herself to him for protection, security, leadership, and love. The husband needs to honor the wisdom of his wife in his leadership role. Criticism from either spouse will cause the death of the relationship.

One of my favorite pastors has said from the pulpit, “If you give your wife emotional security, she will submit all over the place.”

Marriage can be the most beautiful gift that God has to give. I can honestly say that my wife, Carol, and I have both received this gift.

Finally.

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Ephesians 4:1). You have received the most precious gift, eternal life. Now it is up to you to cooperate with God to live a life pleasing to Him. Ask God to show you those areas and/or habits in your life that He wants to change. He wants to bless you by changing you.

Be honest with God.

If you do not have driving passion in your life to live a life worthy of God, ask God to change you. Confess it to Him, as sin and He will change your likes and dislikes.

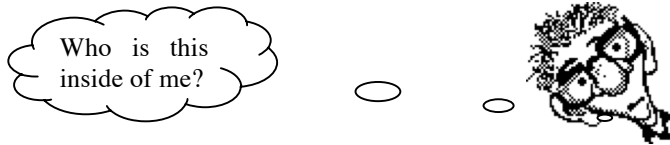
Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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Chapter 13 The Holy Spirit



“...for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17).

Our last chapter on generational curses show how our family backgrounds can cause curses in our lives. Those curses have many manifestations, including bad habits, like gluttony and drunkenness. Most of all those curses cause unrighteousness and lack of peace. But notice what Romans 14:17 says that the Holy Spirit will do in you, counter to your old nature.

If we act like our ancestors before we are born again, then why don't we immediately act like our new Father when we are born again? The answer is, our old nature is so deeply embedded in our souls, and we may not have allowed the new nature, the Holy Spirit to invade and change our souls!

In Luke 3:16 John the Baptist said, “I baptize you with water, but a mightier one than I is coming and He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

My experience.

When Jesus came into my life I saw Him in the Book of Revelation as the ascended Christ, the victor and deliverer. At that point I became a man completely filled with the Holy Spirit. Rivers of living water gushed up out of my soul. “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified” (John 7:38,39).

The one predominate work that the Holy Spirit did in my life from the beginning, was to make Jesus real to me. I knew that Jesus was alive. I could experience “real-time communication” with Him through the Holy Spirit. People tried to give me their opinions about Christianity, but the Holy Spirit was always my teacher.

I cannot explain everything about the Holy Spirit of God.

I do not completely understand the various ways the Holy Spirit is experienced by different people. I cannot totally explain why some people receive the Holy Spirit's fullness more than others. There are a few simple things that I can share with you.

In order to be a child of God, you need to have His Spirit joined to your spirit. That is what happened when you were re-born. You were joined to God, much in the same way Adam was before he rebelled against God. “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

You became a container for the Holy Spirit when you made Jesus Lord.

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would come after He (Jesus) ascended back to Heaven to take His (Jesus') place here on earth.

Knowing how we could feel fatherless if we could not experience His presence, Jesus said the following; “I will not leave you as orphans [fatherless]; I will come to you” (John 14:18).

He told His disciples, after His resurrection but before he ascended, that they would be immersed into the Holy Spirit. “For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5). “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

He told them not to worry after He left. He explained that the Holy Spirit would take His place and make Him (Jesus, God) real to them. Read what Jesus told them in John 14:16-26.

Jesus told them that the Holy Spirit would make Him real to them. “When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from

the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me” (John 15:26). “But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7).

Jesus told His men that he would come back soon. He did! He came back in the form of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit and Jesus are not different people; they are the same, but in different form. The Holy Spirit can actually dwell inside humans, where Jesus was restricted to one human body.

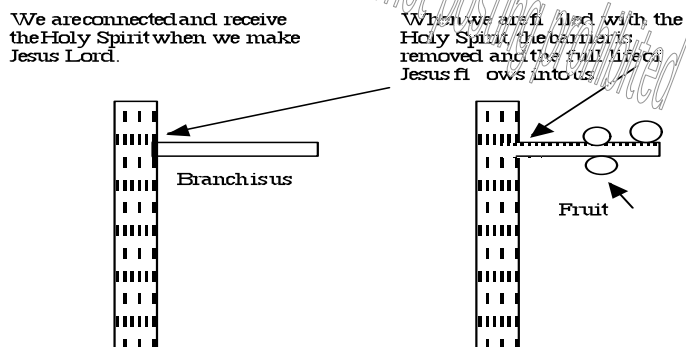
That sounds simple, but the devil has convinced men and women to complicate things. Entire denominational structures have been built around what people believe or do not believe about the Holy Spirit. Often what people believe is some sort of tradition that is not even Bible based.

How does this filling happen?

John 15 says that we are connected to our source like a branch on a vine. We are not independent containers like a water glass that must be filled from an outside source.

It is a matter of staying connected to the vine. The sap in the vine represents the Holy Spirit, Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches. We need to abide in the vine. Jesus says that obedience to His Word is what keeps us abiding. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is being flooded with God when we are connected to Him, as the vine is to the branch. His “sap” flows into us and we stay connected if we abide.

I submit that we become flooded or filled with the Holy Spirit when the various obstructions in the connection between the branch and the vine, are removed.



Are there degrees of being filled? I submit that there *are* degrees. When you are full of the Holy Spirit, all areas of your life will begin to be changed. The fruit of the Spirit will begin to be manifested in your life. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22,23). You will be hungry for the Word of God. Jesus will be real to you. Christianity will be more than a mental understanding; it will be alive and real. You will know that you are in relationship with God.

Ideally, every Christian would be filled with the Holy Spirit when they are born again. Sometimes it happens like that (as it did with me), but not always. The New Testament shows different experiences. At Ephesus, Paul encountered a group who had believed, but who had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. “And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6).

Another incident took place while Peter was preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God...” (Acts 10:44-46).

Experience God through intimacy!

Paul prayed a blessing for the church in Ephesus. He wanted them to experience the reality of God in their present day lives. “...experience for yourselves, the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge without experience...that they may be a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself” (Ephesians 3:19 extracted).

I believe that a lot of obstructions can keep us from the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

The major obstructions are:

Pride. (James 4:6)

Religious tradition. (Mark 7:13)

Fear. (Luke 11:11-13)

Doubt. (Luke 11:9-10)

Inadequacy. (Luke 11:13)

Other big obstructions are:

Not wholly submitting your will to God.

Refusing to give up some sin in your life.

Not living in obedience to the Word of God. (John 14:21-23)

Not addressing spiritual and demonic strongholds in your life.

Going to “other gods” to obtain your needs.

Ask God to show you what may apply to you.

The Holy Spirit desires to do two fundamental things in your life:

1. To make Jesus real to you. This is so you can have intimacy with Him and so that He (Jesus) can make you whole. He wants to set you free from past bondages and prisons. He wants to make you holy like God.

2. To make Jesus real to the world through you. In other words, to glorify or reveal God. Jesus’ only body on this earth is the Church. The Church is His body. We represent Him to the world in the same way that He represented the Father to the world when He was here. You are part of His body, the Church.

What about the gifts of the Spirit?

Please study 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. One type of gift is part of our personality, and other types are given to operate in special situations as determined by God. I have personally had many of the gifts operate in my life from time to time, but not all of them. I have witnessed gifts such as the word of prophecy and the word of wisdom that only the Holy Spirit could have spoken. My wife and I have participated with the Holy Spirit in casting out demons, and have seen the results of people being healed and set free.

Criticism is unholy.

I do not feel it is proper for people who have received the gifts to make those who have not received them feel as if there is something wrong with them. Neither is it proper for those who

have not received the gifts to criticize those who have; that is criticizing God!

Speaking in tongues is a valuable and powerful gift. God uses it not only in public ministry, but more importantly, He uses it to take control of our mind for His benefit. James 3:4-5 says that the tongue is like the rudder that guides the entire ship. If you want to give Jesus the rudder of your life, you should give Him your tongue. It will renew your mind, pray the perfect will of God, and resist Satan. Praying in tongues privately for extended periods of time is powerful. It has produced miracles in my life. There is a more in depth teaching on the Holy Spirit in the ISOB curriculum, lessons 117 and 118⁶.

One time, early in my walk with God, I took a Jewish friend to church with me (he asked me, I did not pressure him). During the service, the person right behind us was prompted by the Holy Spirit to speak out in tongues. My friend turned and stared at him while he spoke. Later, my Jewish friend invited Jesus to become His Lord. He saw Him as the Jewish Messiah.

On the way home he asked me about the “funny language” this man spoke. I explained 1 Corinthians chapter 12 to him. Then he told me that he understood what the man had said in Hebrew and that he had learned it in Hebrew school as a young boy. Here is what my Jewish friend heard that morning:

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days... Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD. To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem... They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks” (taken from Isaiah 2:2-5).

However, wholesome speech in your native language is more important to God. Your words are much more powerful than you can imagine. What you say will not only tend to cause things to happen on earth, but your words will tend to bind the underlying

For more information on this subject, read Chapter 11 of the book Grow or Die. The reference is on the second page of this book.

thoughts to your mind forever. Negative words will put you and others into darkness. Positive and God controlled words will set you and others free. You will experience a peace that is much like Heaven in your heart. Negative words will put “Hell” into your heart.

Ask God to show you what areas in your life are keeping the fullness of the Holy Spirit from being manifested in and through you. The presence of God through the Holy Spirit is worth any adjustment you may need to make.

Prayer.

“Lord Jesus, the Word of God says that you have a desire to fill me with your Spirit so that You and I can be more intimate. I am hungry for you and your presence in my life. Jesus, I believe your Word. I confess to you that I want everything you have for me. Come, Jesus, baptize me with the Holy Spirit and fire. I am open and ready for the fire in my life. I renounce and repent from all sin in my life. I forgive everyone who has wronged me. I offer myself to you a living sacrifice. You are sovereign over my life. Have your way. I offer to you all of my members, my mouth, my tongue, my hands, feet, ears and eyes. **Take it all!**”

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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Chapter 14

We Need To Be Set Free



Me a slave? No way! I go to church three times a week, have a huge Bible, give to the poor, and have memorized 95 Bible verses!

Since 1979 Jesus has progressively set me free from “prisons” that I had been put into by sin. A lot of these “sins” were things that others had placed on me. Some of them were my own doing. Some of them were simply things that were passed down from former generations. I believe that all three of these are causes of bondages and prisons in our lives.

So many people are too proud to admit that they need help or that they need to be set free from slavery. “Then Jesus said to the Jews who believed on Him, ‘If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’ They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to anyone. How do you say, You will be made free?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, Whoever practices sin is the slave of sin. And the slave does not abide in the house forever, but the Son abides forever. Therefore if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed’” (John 8:31-36).

Notice, Jesus spoke this to the Jews “who had believed on him.” They did not want to hear that they were slaves and that they needed someone to set them free. So many Christians today are the same way.

Jesus’ mission statement spoken on the day He started His ministry emphasized setting people free. He said, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour” (Luke 4:18,19).

Paul tells us in Romans Chapter 6 that we have “already” been set free from sin’s slavery. “Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the

one whom you obey-- whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (Romans 6:16-18).

It is true that we have been (past tense) set free. It is also true that we need to be (future tense) set free. Legally we are no longer slaves to sin and Satan once we make Jesus our Lord. However, there is a progressive realization of that fact. Progressively we work out that truth in our lives.

“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed - not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, [not in your own strength] for it is God who works in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire] to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12,13 - added phrases from Amplified Bible).

A good example for visualizing this truth is the story of the Israelites coming out of slavery in Egypt and going through the desert toward the land promised to them by God. This story is recorded in the Books of Exodus and Numbers.

The Israelites were slaves to the Egyptians for over 400 years.

Egypt is the type of the “world” to which we were slaves prior to Jesus saving us. I don’t think we can imagine how deep this slavery mindset was imbedded into the soul of these Israelites. Generation after generation these people had no identity, the husbands did not know when their wives would be taken away, and the mothers did not know when their children would be taken away. They had no rights whatsoever.

God sent a deliverer, Moses, to confront the slave-master Pharaoh. Jesus came and confronted our slave-master Satan.

The people of Israel were led across the Red Sea in a supernatural way out of the hands of Pharaoh. Their former slave-

masters had no more dominion over them. Likewise, we were baptized into Christ and have been taken out of the hands of Satan.

However, God did not take the Israelites directly to the Promised Land. He led them through the desert. The deserts of your life are going to come. They are part of God's program of deliverance from slavery, and you need to know how to respond in faith. The Israelites did not respond in faith.

We see in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 that God tells New Testament believers to be warned of the ways of the Old Testament children of God.

God provided for the Israelites in the desert in a marvelous way. Several times He provided for water to gush out of a rock. He provided fresh bread from Heaven every morning (Exodus 16:15). Their clothes and shoes never wore out. God turned the bitter pool at Marah into a wonderful fresh water lake (Exodus 15). Yet they kept murmuring against God and Moses because they were not used to living by faith in the unseen God. They continued to want to live by their natural senses, even preferring slavery.

These Israelites show us that being a slave for a long time can give us a slavery mindset that is not easily overcome. God knows how to walk us through the overcoming process, but so many times we do not like God's ways.

What are some of the symptoms of the slavery mindset?

Give yourself a check-up.

One of the sneakiest types of slavery is slavery to oneself, otherwise known as selfishness. When we continue to yield to our own selfish desires, we become slaves to our old fallen nature, the flesh.

A lack of identity is the primary attribute of a slave. Slaves have to get their identity from someone else. That is why you see people in the American culture running around trying to get fancy cars, having certain types of friends, dressing a certain way, being part of a movie star's fan club, etc. In some cultures it may include belonging to the proper tribe or family. They are trying to define who they are by how they look, what they drive and with whom they associate.

How are we supposed to receive our identity? I believe that God created us to receive our identity through having a relationship with another being. We are designed to become like the person with whom we become intimate. We receive our identity from whom we obtain our needs. God wants us to become intimate with Him in order to receive our identity from Him. He has taken up residence inside of us. If that does not give you identity, self-worth and dignity, then nothing will!

During the first century, the Romans dragged people from their homes and made them slaves. Families were forever separated, never again to see their parents, children, brothers, sisters or spouses. Most likely the women and men were raped and beaten. They completely lost their identity.

From the slave's point of view his life was now different. He had no identity of his own; he was a non-person. The only thing that he had left was what he could do in his work. The only scale or measure of who he was now was the way he performed his task. If his master looked at him with pleasure because his task was done well, he could feel some self-esteem. Even if another slave admired his work, or perhaps someone else up the ladder of authority gave him one compliment, one measure of "well done," he could feel good about himself.

His life was now a formula. (How I perform) + (how you feel about my performance) = (my self-worth).

The human being was created by God to obtain his worth from God's unconditional love. Now exactly the opposite has happened; humans feel like all love is totally conditioned upon how they perform, and worse, how their masters feel about their performance.

Slaves are "men-pleasers" (Ephesians 6:5). They are constantly trying to get the applause and approval of other people. Their work has no other meaning. If their boss, their parents or teachers are pleased with their work, they feel good about their self worth; if not, they feel like "nothings." They are always attempting to get friends who will give them their identity and self-worth.

Slaves work for "eye-service" (Ephesians 6:5). While they are being watched, they work hard, but as soon as their authorities

turn their backs, they goof off. They hold in their resentment against their authority. They criticize them and bring them down all the time.

Slaves Complain. They always blame their problems on other people. In their minds, their horrible state of being is always somebody else's fault.

Some slaves become very good at manipulation. They learn how to please and even “love” others, so that they will be “loved back.”

Slaves do not like obeying authority. They have learned that authority is bad; they hate their authorities.

Slaves have no authority so they are always manipulating others in order to serve their own needs. Some slaves use their sheer brute force, like shouting and screaming in order to get others to conform.

Slaves have no self-esteem so they use other people, religion, amusement and immorality, which are some of the same things the Israelites used in the desert to achieve some sense of self worth.

Now let us go back to the story of the Israelites.

God was trying to work the slavery mindset out of them by their journey in the desert. Only two of the original group made it, Joshua and Caleb. The only other ones who made it to the Promised Land were the children of the original slaves. Perhaps they did not have so much of the “old slave life” to try to forget.

Why did Joshua and Caleb make it? If you read the accounts in Exodus and especially in Numbers, both of these men spent a lot of time with God. They spent a great deal of time outside the Tent of Meeting where the presence of God abided while the others went about their earthly interests.

It is the same with you today. If you spend more time with entertainment and with minding the things of the world than you do with God and His Word, you too will remain as a slave.

Joshua and Caleb determined to believe what God had said. They did not consider final truth to be what they saw with their eyes. Final truth to them was what God had said.

In Numbers chapter 13, Joshua, Caleb, and ten others went into the Promised Land on a spying expedition.

“Send men so that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give to the sons of Israel. You shall send a man from every tribe of their fathers, everyone a ruler among them” (Numbers 13:2).

Notice God told Moses that He had given this land to the sons of Israel. That was God’s Word, His promise!

Twelve spies went in. Ten gave a bad report. “But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there” (Numbers 13:28).

“Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, ‘We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.’ But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are’” (Numbers 13:30,31).

“We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them” (Numbers 13:33).

Seeming like they were grasshoppers to their enemy was part of the slavery mindset. Ten of the spies looked at their enemies, two of the spies looked at God’s Word!

If we know that it is God’s will for us to be free, then we need to know what we need to do in order to cooperate with Him so that the task can be accomplished. Remember that we do have a free will. God will never impose His blessings on us. He must see that we are willing to receive and to give up those things that are hindering us. God will not set us free from our friends, but only from our enemies. If we are holding on to old slavery based habits as something that we like and enjoy, God cannot help us get free.

Sometimes God instantly sets new believers free from demonic situations. I don’t know why He does some this way and others have to take the long road. It seems like it has nothing at all to do with the person being set free; it is simply God’s plan for each individual.

Sometimes it is a combination of both. All I can say is, you should be prepared to let God have His way in your life.

Sometimes we have strongholds that are demonic and sometimes the strongholds are in our “flesh,” or patterns of our old nature. Galatians 3:13 tells us that Jesus took our curse for us so that we could go free. However, we need the knowledge and the will to cooperate with God.

A stronghold is fortress of false knowledge that is believed on as truth. How strongholds get a foothold in your life:

a. Your sin. All sins give demons a foothold, but one of the worst is sexual sin. Sexual acts bind two people together spiritually in a very unique way.

b. Generational sin. Demons follow families for generations, and gain the right to put the same diseases and curses on them (the law of inheritance). Demonic religions are based upon worship of ancestral spirits in order to perpetuate curses and control of families. They convince people, even Christians, that they must pay a price to a witch doctor or a spirit for protection and blessings. Some even purchase items and drinks as a way to receive protection and blessings. These people believe that by contacting and being in touch with the spirit of their ancestors they will be blessed and have protection from evil. Actually, just the opposite happens. They become prisoners to Satan, the enemy of their soul!

Most festivals like Mardi Gras in America are designed to perpetuate curses over regions. Sometimes even family reunions can be used by demons to perpetuate family curses. Voodoo, many religions and most occults have festivals. Generational curses are one of the most powerful ways that demons attach themselves. Generational spirits often attempt to captivate young members of a family during the teenage years. This is the time when rebellion is most evident. If they cannot succeed, they will try again later in life.

c. Sin in the world. This world is full of sin, which promotes demon activity.

d. Weights, or oppression you might receive from someone else. A very common tactic used by demons is to sexually abuse a young person and thus gain entry for the rest of his/her life. A

weight is not a sin you performed, rather it is oppression against you by someone else's sin.

e. *Through an idol in your life.* Many religions are based upon the spirit world. They believe that objects such as stones, rivers, trees, etc., contain living spirits. They fear and thus worship these spirits so that they will meet their needs in life. An idol can be anything that you make more important than God. It can be a person, a habit, a custom, even a Christian denomination. An idol is anything or anyone in your life to whom you go for your needs other than God. You worship whoever or whatever supplies your needs. It is an act of your own free will.

f. *Rebellion against authority.* If a person does not submit to Jesus as Lord, that person, by default, will be under the control of some other being. Eve was deceived by Satan, and she deceived Adam. Adam should have taken dominion over Satan but he did not. Eve, in effect, took inordinate authority and Adam did not exercise his ordained authority. The original sin demonstrates how authority and sin are tied together. Obviously, they both should have submitted to the authority of God's Word (the Tree of Life).

g. *Christians can be vulnerable (some disagree with this).* If we are influenced by demons before coming to Jesus, there could be a period of time before we receive deliverance. Some never do receive deliverance based upon the fact that they do not wish to totally yield. Obviously, a Christian cannot be "possessed" by a demon, but they sure can be influenced. It does not matter if we use the term possessed, influenced, oppressed or whatever. What matters is that we know how to get rid of demonic activities in our lives!

These Scriptures show that we are still vulnerable even after we believe. "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus

we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough” (2 Corinthians 11:3,4).

Some say that the blood of Jesus protects Christians. Yes and no. The blood protects us when we are obedient Christians. We cannot presume God’s protection if we are living in disobedience. “...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance” (1 Peter 1:2). Christians do need deliverance. I have personally been involved with some absolutely amazing demonic deliverance that resulted in Christians being healed and set free! This is not doctrine but it is factual testimony.

The Scriptures show us a process that God often uses for getting us free. If you look at Isaiah Chapter 61 that Jesus was quoting in Luke 4:18-19, you will see His mission statement expressed. “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” (Luke 4:18,19).

Here is how Jesus often starts the process.

He heals your broken heart. He knows that when you come to Him that you have been most likely beaten up by the world, and have received some type of heartbreak. It may be in a relationship, a career, or whatever. He gently heals this through His Holy Spirit.

He speaks (proclaims) a word of liberty into your life. God normally deals through His Word and through a promise.

He gives you eyes to see Him, to see what kind of condition you are in or have been in. You always need to make the choice. He will not set you free from your friends, just your enemies.

Then He gives you liberty from your captivity. God's ways of setting us free are amazing. He has and uses many different ways. I can personally testify that He does indeed do it!

Isaiah 61 continues with more, including giving you joy, making you an "oak of righteousness," rebuilding your personality and character, providing for your material needs, and putting you into ministry for Him to reach out to your realm of influence.

How can you cooperate with God?

Here is what Jesus said about getting free. "Then Jesus said to the Jews who believed on Him, If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32).

First you must continue in His Word. The word "continue" is a strong word. It means to settle down, abide, and make our home in His Word. It does not mean to look at His Word once a week or even five minutes a day, it means to sustain your very life by His Word. "But He answered and said, It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4).

The word used in this Scripture for "word" is "rhema." Rhema means a personal Word spoken from Jesus to you. You must invest time with God to receive His rhema.

Next you must be committed to being Jesus' disciple. That means to be so united to Him that He is your teacher in everything. It means that you drop your pride and allow God, who knows you better than you know yourself, to have His way with you. He also loves you more than you love yourself. When you are going through discipline with the Lord remember He is doing it because He loves you.

The result will be that we will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. "Jesus said to him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). Knowing Jesus is knowing the Truth. Having a personal, close, intimate relationship with Him is the only thing that will really make you free.

God may use many methods of delivering this freedom to you. He may cause demons to be cast out of you, or out of the influence of your life. Or He may take you through a long process of getting free through pouring the Word into your life.

My own personal experience has been one of displacement. I continually pour the Word into my vessel, and everything that is not of God comes out, including demons. Matthew 8:16 is an example of Jesus casting out demons with His Word. It says, "And evening coming on, they brought to Him many who had been possessed with demons. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick."

We are responsible for becoming slaves to various things and people (excepting of course those issues that have to do with our childhood). We become slaves to whomever or to whatever we yield. Only we can exercise our own will (volition) in yielding. The cure is to begin to yield to Jesus in obedience to His Word, and by doing so you will become His bond-slave. In that, and that alone, will you find perfect liberty and freedom.

"Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?" (Romans 6:16).

Be honest. Confess your sin. Practice honesty and truth at all cost. When you lie, you make Satan your father.

Renounce any contact you have had with anything demonic: music, porno, TV, movies, drugs, alcohol, occult, horoscope, Quija boards, fortune telling, card games, etc.

Renounce any relationship to family ties that may be used to pass down curses. You can be courteous to family without receiving their curses.

Stay close to Jesus through prayer, His Word, selective friends and church groups. Keep your mind filled with Godly things. The mind is the battlefield.

Be open for whatever ways God wants to deliver you. Desire to be free and don't limit God. He has many ways to set you free. His mission is to set you free (Luke 4).

Forgive. This is the big one! Here is a principle that is too often overlooked. Jesus taught it this way:

“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). This can be interpreted, “forgive us in the same measure as we have given forgiveness to those who have sinned against us.”

“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14,15).

It's not that God does not want to forgive you, He will not override your own will. Holding in bitterness and resentment towards another person hurts us. We bind that sin to ourselves, and that will destroy us. The wages of sin is death. What we need is the free gift of God, which is forgiveness.

So many people are tormented their entire lives because they will not forgive. Sickness, disease, poverty and many other maladies have been instantly healed when forgiveness is accomplished.

Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is an act of the will. The root word for forgive carries the meaning to cut away or remove.

When someone really hurts me and even uses treacherous means to take advantage of me, it does not feel good. The first thing I want to do is to expose them and to see justice accomplished. However, I know that is not how God works. I then recall the meaning of forgive; to cut away. So I say with my mouth, “Lord, I forgive so and so. I take his sin off of him and put it onto You.” You see, without Jesus, we cannot forgive because He is the only one who can take anybody's sin. He is the only way we can forgive.

If you will do this with everyone in your life, The Holy Spirit will fill you in a mighty way, and you will unlock the hands of God to work on your behalf. You will be set free from things you didn't even know existed.

Prayer for deliverance.

“Lord Jesus Christ, I confess that you are my Lord.”

1. Personally affirm your faith in Christ. “Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that You are the Son of God and the only way to God - that you died on the Cross for my sins and rose again so that I might be forgiven and receive eternal life.”

2. Humble yourself. “I renounce all pride and religious self-righteousness and any dignity that does not come from You. I have no claim on Your mercy except that you died in my place.”

3. Confess any known sin. “I confess all my sins before You and hold nothing back.” Now list and confess them.

4. Repent of all sins. “I repent of all my sins. I turn away from them and I turn to You, Lord, for mercy and forgiveness.”

5. Forgive all other people. “By a decision of my will, I freely forgive all who have ever harmed or wronged me. I lay down all bitterness, all resentment and all hatred.” Now list and confess them.

6. Break with the occult and all false religion. “I sever all contact I have ever had with the occult or with all false religion. I renounce all the works of the devil, Satan, and other evil spirits in my life. I confess and renounce all my occult practices and sins as abominations before You, a Holy and righteous God. I renounce any occult influence from my forefathers.” Now list and confess them.

7. Prepare to be released from every curse over your life. “Lord Jesus, I thank You that on the Cross You were made a curse, that I might be redeemed from every curse and inherit God’s blessing. I renounce every curse from my forefathers. On that basis I ask You to release me and set me free to receive the deliverance I need.”

8. Take your stand with God. “I take my stand with You, Lord, against all Satan’s demons. I submit to You, Lord, and I resist the devil. Amen!

9. Expel. “Now I speak to any demons that have control over me.” Speak directly to them. “I command you to go from me now. In the name of Jesus, I expel you! I pray that any evil power or ability I may possess, or which have oppressed or possessed me, be completely destroyed or removed from me. I commit myself, my body, my mind, my personality, my emotions, my whole being

to the Lord Jesus Christ to be my Lord and savior. I pray this in the mighty Name of Jesus, believing I am delivered.”

It is important to have Godly counseling during and after deliverance.

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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Chapter 15

Moving On With The Church

Many believers have the idea that they can have a relationship with Jesus Christ without becoming part of a local church. While it is true that our relationship with Jesus is an individual matter and is not conditioned upon becoming part of a local church, it is also true that our relationship with Him is not complete without the local church.

1 Peter 2:5 tells us that we are being built into a spiritual house. “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

The word “church” has gained a twisted definition during the past 2000 years. Quite often people define the church in light of what their traditions and cultures have taught them.

The word for church in Greek is ekklesia. Ekklesia has a multi faceted meaning. It means a group of people called out to gather. However, just stopping there does not do the word justice. A study of history and of the first century church reveals more. Many of today’s churches have copied historic pagan customs that were introduced in the third century.

Humans were created to live in family units. We are not designed to be content as loners; God made us that way. That is one reason you see so many people pack into bars every night and have fellowship around drinking beer and hard liquor. They are in “family.” That family accepts them just the way they are. They find that there is always someone there to listen to their hurts and pains, and give them mercy.

This is what the ekklesia is supposed to provide. I like to define it this way. “To be called out of your worldly family in order that you may get together with your new spiritual family.” Just as families have never been perfect, churches and church families are not perfect. Nevertheless, they are God’s plan for our lives.

Man has used many different forms of church organizations. Denominations have been useful in establishing authority and the orderly ownership of land for church buildings.

Some denominations have promoted humanistic and ungodly doctrines, but God has not thrown them away. There seems to be a move of God in the earth now that is breaking down denominational barriers. I have heard C. Peter Wagner call it “post denominationalism.”

In his book The Gift of Apostle, Dr. David Cannistraci makes the following comments about what he calls the “apostolic” or New Testament Church.

In the coming years, the church will be the vehicle God uses to accomplish his will. The New Testament reveals that the Church is God's instrument and the apple of His eye. He calls us the royal priesthood (Revelation 1:6, 5:9,10), the holy nation (1 Peter 5:3), the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27, Colossians 1:18), God's heritage (1 Peter 5:3), the temple of God (Ephesians 2:20-22), the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22,23) and his peculiar treasure (1 Peter 2:5-9). Jesus loves the church, and gave himself completely for its existence (Ephesians 5:25). Nothing will ever be greater in the heart and purpose of God than his church.

Many writers have seen mission (outreach) at the heart of the life of the church; none, however, more graphically than the Emil Brunner: ‘the Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.’⁷

The book continues to describe the earmarks of an apostolic Church. Some of them are:

1. A church primarily concerned to reach all people with Christ. They have a passion to see entire cultures embrace Jesus in His saving, healing and delivering power.
2. They are churches completely committed to the Lordship of Jesus.
3. They are churches made up of completely activated members of the Body of Christ. They are not held back by any

⁷ The Gift of Apostle, Dr. David Cannistraci, Regal Books, Ventura CA, 1996, page 175-176.

sense of a clergy-laity split. Their people preach, teach, serve and prophesy according to their spiritual giftings as members of the Body.

4. These churches have an intense relationship with the Holy Spirit. They experience supernatural power because they're deeply devoted to prayer, fasting, spiritual gifts and faith.

Program based church buildings. Often a denomination or a group of believers build a new church building in a neighborhood and then promote church growth. God has greatly used this method to infiltrate neighborhoods with the Gospel. As the church grows it produces programs for children and the varied interest groups. This is called a “program based church.” Some of these program-based churches have embraced principles from the Word of God, especially the Book of Acts, and many of them are doing an important, powerful and wonderful work.

Cell Churches. Today there is a recent explosion of believers meeting in small groups in homes and workplaces as they did in the Book of Acts in the First Century Church.

These are called cell churches (not all home churches are cell churches however). These have been widespread in (but by no means limited to) areas like China, where it is not practical to build church buildings, and where the government forbids the assembly of believers.

In cell churches, believers meet in homes or workplaces in small groups and minister one to another. Each believer has special gifts and callings that God uses. The small groups make up a larger body of believers who meet from time to time in a larger congregation. Often, as the assembly grows, they purchase a large building for meetings on Sunday. There is authority and organization through apostles, pastors, elders, etc.

The successful cell churches have grown rapidly for two important reasons. First, each believer was given the opportunity to do more than just sit on a pew. Second, the groups keep the vision of evangelism. Once they grow beyond fifteen people, they split much in the same way the cells of the human body split and multiply. Members reach out to people in their realm of influence and bring them to the meetings. Often, unbelievers are more likely

to attend a home meeting than they would be to enter a church building.

Through International School of the Bible my wife and I have personally been involved with planting cell churches in several nations. We have witnessed God doing a sovereign and supernatural work.

The following are three outstanding books on the subject of cell churches:

Successful Home Cell Groups, David Yonggi Cho, Bridge-Logos Publishers, North Brunswick, NJ, 1981.

The Cell Church, Larry Stockstill, Regal Books, Ventura, CA, 1998.

Where Do We Go From here? Ralph W. Neighbor, Jr., TOUCH Outreach Ministries, Houston, TX, 1990.

I am in no way promoting one type of church over another. With whatever type of church you become involved, the important thing is that you use discernment to look for the following character traits in church leaders:

1. Integrity of character.
2. Integrity with money.
3. Integrity with the Scriptures.
4. If the leader is attempting to control the members' lives, stay away. The leader should be available as a shepherd without violating a person's free will. He should be trying to put his members under the control of the Holy Spirit.
5. A passion for the lost. Mission and outreach should be the heart of the ministry.
6. A style of leadership that encourages members to be involved in ministry.
7. The leaders should be people controlled by the Holy Spirit and not by doctrines and denominations.
8. The leaders should be mature in the mercy, grace and love of God. They should shun legalism, but promote growth in the character of Christ by grace.

I like the mission statement of my church, Mt. Paran North Church of God in Marietta, Georgia, U.S.A.

“To embrace all people at their point of need, lead them into the presence of Christ, love them as the people of Christ, grow them up in the person of Christ and send them out with the proclamation of Christ.”

Benefits of being in fellowship.

Being in fellowship with other believers can be both rewarding and painful. I have had both experiences. When a brother or sister in the Lord hurts you, it is most painful. However, these are tremendous opportunities to learn and to be taught by God. If you were in the wrong, God will correct you if you allow Him. If you were innocent in the matter, there will be a great learning opportunity for patience and forgiveness.

Satan’s plan is to bring offenses to people so that they stop attending church, or at best go “church shopping.” There is nothing wrong with church shopping, but do it at the leading of the Holy Spirit and not because you are running from someone who offended you. If you run every time you become offended, Satan will be your guide and not the Holy Spirit.

It is good to stay planted in a local assembly; doing so will produce fruit and blessings. “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that are **planted** in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flowering; to show that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and no unrighteousness is in Him” (Psalms 92:12-15).

How to treat other believers.

It is extremely important to your spiritual well being to relate to all people with love. I can guarantee you that in your church fellowship you will have an opportunity to have disputes with other believers. It may be your fault or theirs; that is not the issue. The issue is that the enemy may use this type of dispute to hurt you.

We need to remember that we have entered into a blood covenant with Jesus, and we are in covenant with other believers

through Him. If we mistreat other believers, gossip about them, talk negative about them or hurt them in any way, we can be in danger. I Corinthians chapter 11 gives a warning for us when we take communion. Taking communion is remembering the blood covenant with Jesus, but it also causes us to remember that through Him we are in covenant with other believers. “For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing [discerning] the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself” (1 Corinthians 11:29).

Judgment can come in many ways. It can come in your relationship with your spouse, your children, or in your finances, health, business, etc., when you do not rightly discern the Lord’s Body. That is, when you do not consider the other person to be part of Christ’s Body. When you discern the Lord’s Body according to what you see and not by what the Word of God says, you are in danger.

The priesthood of believers.

There are a lot of churches that promote one class of people to serve God and call them the clergy, and they call the rest of the people the laity. Yet the Word of God makes it clear that all who belong to God should serve Him.

In Exodus chapter 3, God told Moses to speak to the Israelites and tell them that the reason they were to be freed was so that they could serve Him. In Exodus 19:6 God said, “...you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

Let’s not look at the word priest in the traditional religious way. A priest is simply a person who represents God to man, and man to God. The priest acts as a bridge. He intercedes to God on behalf of man, and he brings God’s Good News to man. The priests ate, lived, and slaughtered the sacrifices, all in the service of God. Their entire vocation was to serve God. If they had other professions, such as teachers, physicians, etc., those were to be avocations.

However, all the Israelites did not accept the call. Only the Levites answered the call by forsaking all their idols and their other inordinate relationships. Even then, only a handful of them, the Sons of Aaron were allowed to minister in the Holy of Holies

where the presence of God was. For some reason the same mindset still exists today. In the New Testament, and as the Body of Christ on this earth, all believers are priests.

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

“...and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen” (Revelation 1:6).

Jesus is the only mediator between God and man (refer to 1 Timothy 2:5). But as part of the Body of Christ, we are indeed ambassadors for God to bring to lost humanity the Good News of the grace of God (refer to 2 Corinthians 5:20).

The “ministry” today is not reserved for people who have degrees from seminaries (or from anywhere), nor for people who work fulltime for a church. That is church tradition. The ministry is for all believers. Ephesians chapter 4 makes this clear. Paul is telling us that the work of the apostle, prophet, pastor, etc is to prepare God’s people so that they (God’s people) can work in ministry. “And truly He gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11,12).

For sure, this is a lot easier to talk about then it is to implement. But I have found in my experience that if you will take God at His Word on this subject, He will put you into your ordained ministry. There is a ministry waiting for you to step into. You are the most qualified person for this ministry. However, if you do not answer the call, God’s work is not decreased, He will send the work to another. On the day of judgment you will have to give account of your reasons for neglecting this calling.

The first church with which I became involved was a very small one. I had a strong desire to serve. I did not have any maturity in spiritual gifts, but I knew how to mop and clean. So I mopped the church and cleaned the rest rooms. I loved every minute of it, and felt the Lord’s pleasure as I was doing it. Little

by little He increased my scope of service. I do not have to seek for promotions in serving God; I am not comfortable with people who do. I am very comfortable with being a servant and watching God take care of my needs.

One of the greatest ways we can serve Jesus is to serve the people in His Body. The natural tendency for people is to be selfish and think that the world revolves around them and their own problems. Many churches are filled with people who are running around looking for blessings and looking for people to bless them. This is not God's plan. His plan is outlined in Matthew chapter 25: 14-30 in the parable of the talents. This is the law of increase. We are to use what we have in our hand to serve others, and when we do, Jesus gives us more.

The Church needs to keep a burning vision of outreach instilled in all its members. Without this, apathy and backsliding are the common results. Our forefather in the faith and the first Hebrew was Abraham. God promised to bless Abraham, which was a profound promise to him. However, God made it clear that he was not to bottle up his blessing, but he was rather to bless others. "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing" (Genesis 12:2). Abraham's descendents, Israel, had the same call, but they did not rise up to it. Instead they took God's blessings and became inward with them, not sharing the good news with Gentiles. The ultimate seed of Abraham was Jesus. Through Jesus we are also Abraham's seed (refer to Galatians 3:16 & 29).

When I met the Lord I owned a small grocery store (that was until 1983). In just two months I had cleaned off an entire grocery shelf and replaced the groceries with free Bibles and Gospel tracts. I held a Bible contest. I held Bible studies in one of the back rooms. I felt that I had received something so valuable that I wanted everyone to share in it!

One day a pastor came by and asked me if I was afraid of losing my business by being so bold for Jesus. I thought about it and told him, "Well, if I lose my business, then I will get a job. If I cannot get a job, then I will have no food to eat. If I have no food I will die and be with Jesus. Anyway you look at it I win!" He scratched his head and left.

Please read Ezekiel Chapter 16, which shows God speaking to Israel about His abundant blessings to her, and yet He says of her, “‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and your daughters have done. Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy’” Ezekiel (16:48,49).

People cannot exist without purpose.

If your purpose in life is not God’s purpose for you, you will end up miserable and perhaps even like the Israelites. There is no purpose in life with enough significance to keep you from self-indulgence, except for God’s purpose!

God has designed every believer differently. Not all of us are evangelists or pastors. But each one of us is a vital part of His Body. As a matter of fact, pastors and evangelists are not at the top of the spiritual “food chain.” This is confirmed in 1 Corinthians 12:20-24. You and your ministry are very important to the Kingdom of God and to the Church.

God has bestowed gifts on each one of us in a customized way, and has given us a custom made personality. The only way to find expression for your gifts is by the fruit bearing process. Fruit in ministry is the only thing that is of real value to God. John Chapter 15 says that if we abide in Christ and obey His Words, fruit will be the result. Working up plans in our “flesh” will not produce fruit for God. Fruit only comes by a life laid down for God, and by allowing the discipleship process to take place in your life. Fruit is a result of trusting the Word of God to supply all of your needs. As the Word grows in your life, the life and character of God will be formed in you, and His life is always reaching out to the lost. Jesus is a missionary, and His Bride should be His helper! “My children, for whom I again travail until Christ should be formed in you” (Galatians 4:19).

Other benefits of Church life.

“His malice may be concealed by deception, but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly” (Proverbs 26:26).

This Scripture lets us know that there are areas in our lives that can only be exposed in the assembly. Before we can truly be free, we need all of our wickedness to be exposed, no matter how painful.

“Let the assembled peoples gather round you. Rule over them from on high” (Psalms 7:7).

“I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people” (Psalm 35:18).

“I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation” (Psalm 40:10).

“Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints” (Psalm 149:1).

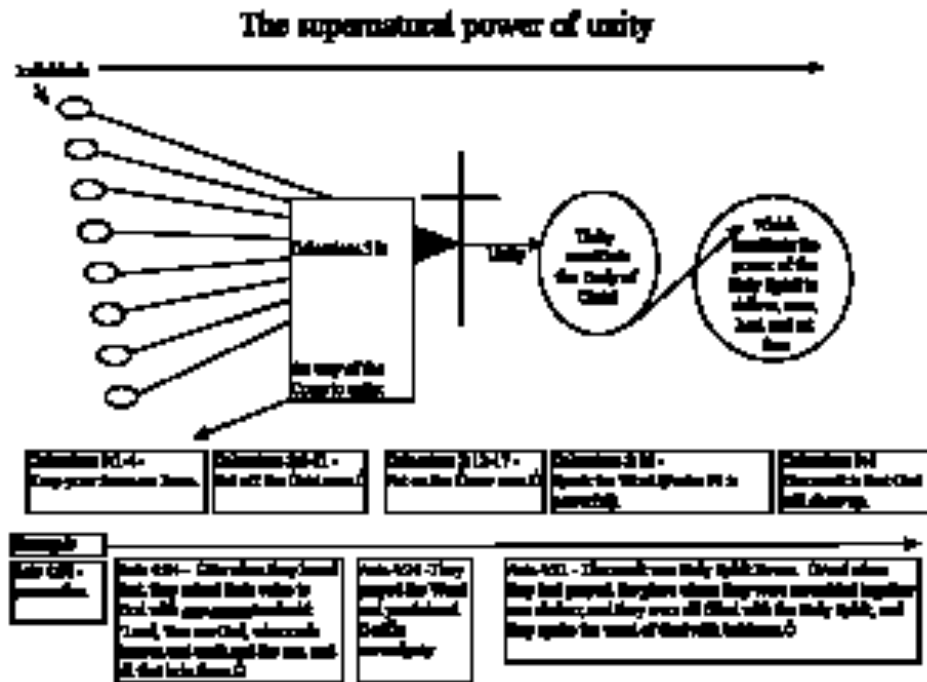
“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him” (Psalm 89:7).

“Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders” (Psalm 107:32).

“Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation” (Psalm 111:1).

The church gives us an opportunity to express the supernatural power of unity.

The Holy Spirit works powerfully through the unity of believers in the church. Jesus prayed in John 17:20-23 that the world would know God’s love through Jesus Christ when believers came into unity with one another. When believers come into unity, they manifest a small mosaic piece of the Body of Christ. The result is the Holy Spirit is unleashed to do what He does best. The Holy Spirit lifts the veil from the eyes of unbelievers, sets prisoners free, and heals the brokenhearted. The Holy Spirit makes Jesus real to us and to the world around us. He makes us whole, spirit, soul, and body, and sends us out to proclaim the Good News to others. I feel that this picture is worth a thousand words.



Finally, we need to remember that the Church, or the Body of Christ, is also the Bride of Christ. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:31,32). “...Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (Revelation 21:9b).

We need to understand how passionate Jesus is about the gathering of His bride and His anticipation to see her in all her glory. Let us keep this in mind when or if we ever become frustrated with the Church or church life.

Usually people in a nation who may be divided come into unity when they are faced with war. Let us unify around the fact that Jesus has made a “beachhead” on earth in this war with Satan, and that we are called to finish up the victory.

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

Chapter 16 Spiritual War



War? I thought Jesus
came to bring peace!

No Victory without Conflict.

We must recognize that we dwell in an enemy's territory. His aim is to keep lost people lost and going to Hell. His aim for Christians is to get them so interested in the Kingdom of the World and its systems of money, entertainment, power, popularity, etc., that they are not even aware that they could live by a higher kingdom, the Kingdom of God. Satan can neutralize Christians by getting them to depend upon the Kingdom of the World and their own resources.

Satan was able to convince Adam and Eve that they could operate their lives without the Word of God (Genesis Chapter 3). Satan tempted Jesus with the same issue in Luke Chapter 4. He will use the same tactic on you. If Satan can get you to act out of your own independence without putting the Word of God first in your life, he has succeeded.

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1).

Doubting the Word of God is Satan's main weapon. This is the essence of spiritual warfare. Without getting too complicated, spiritual warfare is primarily about believing or doubting God's Word. God wants us to trust His Word above all other evidence. Sometimes it is difficult to believe the truth we cannot see and feel with our five natural senses.

If you want to get in shape physically, there are some helpful steps you can take such as, eat properly, get adequate sleep, take a multi-vitamin capsule every day, etc.. But in the final analysis, there is no substitute for exercise or working against a resistance.

The same is true in the Christian life. Proper nourishment from the Word is essential, but so is “exercise.” In God’s strength, facing and conquering trials and difficulties, God, the perfect coach, knows exactly what kind of “workout” you need in order to turn an area of weakness into an area of Christlikeness.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).

Satan does not always use “bad” things to tempt us, sometimes he uses the “good” things of the world to lure us away from God’s Kingdom. Satan uses circumstances and ideas to convince us that we are not SITTING with Christ (our position in Christ), that we should not WALK like He walks (our responsibility), and that we should give up instead of STANDING on the promises (our warfare). We are heirs of the Kingdom of God. Why should we live like those people who are not heirs?

Here is how it works:

Jesus was teaching His disciples in Mark chapter 4. He told them that *The* mystery of the Kingdom of God was contained in this parable. He asked them in verse 13, “And He said to them, ‘Do you not know this parable? And how then will you know all parables?’” Jesus used this very visible agricultural example of seed being sown to explain and unveil the mystery of the unseen world. Mark 4:9-11 says, “And He said to them, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’ And when He was alone, they who were about Him, with the Twelve, asked Him concerning the parable. And He said to them, ‘To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God. But to those outside, all *these* things are *given* in parables.’”

The entire Kingdom of God works like this parable. God plants the seeds of His Words in your heart (regardless of the condition of your heart). These seeds represent all of God’s purposes for your life. Being born again is the first purpose. Next is being filled with the Spirit, being healed physically, emotionally, and mentally, and having your needs provided. The Word brings

you into your proper relationships in life, and provides all of God's further purposes for you. God uses His Word to impart His purposes to you.

Mark 4:14-20 says, ***“The sower sows the Word.*** And these are those by the wayside, where the Word is sown. And when they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts. And these are those likewise being sown on stony places; who, when they hear the Word, immediately receive it with gladness. But they have no root in themselves, but are temporary. Afterward when affliction or persecution arises for the Word's sake, they are immediately offended. And these are those being sown among thorns; such as hear the Word, and the cares of this world, and the deceit of riches, and the lust about other things entering in, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. And these are those sown on good ground, who hear the Word and welcome *it*, and bear fruit, one thirty, one sixty, and one a hundredfold.”

Notice that Satan comes to steal the Word. This is really the only weapon that Satan has against mankind; to steal the Word or to blind us from the Word (2 Corinthians 4:4). If any person would receive and act upon the Word of God, they would be saved and go to Heaven. If any person would receive and act upon the Word of God, he/she would be made whole, spirit, soul, and body, their needs would be provided, and their life would be in order. Satan cannot hurt you if you believe and act upon the Word of God. He can and will tempt you, he can put signs on you that make it look like the Word is not true, but he cannot hurt you if you are totally submitted to the Lordship of the Word, Who is Jesus Himself!

Once the Word is planted in your heart, you must “stand,” or wait against adverse circumstances, until the plant matures. “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:13).

We will always need to overcome difficulties, but we can overcome and win! The way in which we overcome, the results, are God's business. Often things do not work out according to our plans. However, we can trust Him in all things!

So in a very simple, childlike way of looking at spiritual warfare, let's focus on Satan's only weapon and on our response to his actions. Standing, or spiritual warfare, is not reserved for the saint of God who has been walking with God for 20 years. No, it is for every child of God. God makes it possible for all of us to perform warfare in His might and power. We do not have to be experts. Remember God gives grace to the humble. James 4:6 says, "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says, God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble."

So how do we fight this war?

1. First we must know something. Wisdom.

Wisdom is knowing and relying on the fact that the Cross of Jesus absorbed all the evil and everything must turn out to be a blessing. The law of gravity says that whatever goes up **MUST** come down. The law of reconciliation (which is the law of the Cross - Colossians 1:20) says that all evil has been disarmed, and now must be a blessing, IF you believe.

Wisdom is knowing that all things have been reconciled through the Cross. Not just people, but all things. "And through Him having made peace through the blood of His cross, it pleased the Father to reconcile all things to Himself through Him, whether the things on earth or the things in Heaven" (Colossians 1:20).

Reconcile is a powerful word. **Strongs Concordance** calls it "to bring back a former state of harmony." It is defined "to repair, to put back into working order, making peace between two opposing views or groups." **Vines Bible Dictionary** defines it "to change from enmity to friendship." The Cross of Jesus Christ takes all of our "enemies," whether they be people, demons, circumstances, sickness, poverty, everything, and changes them into a friend. This is Wisdom! Christ crucified!

2 Corinthians 5:18 says, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation..." So this is our ministry here on earth, to take all the enemies of our lives, dip them into the blood and Cross of Jesus Christ, and turn them into friends. I can tell you by the Word of God and by my own experience that this is true. It works if you stand.

Wisdom is knowing that the blood of Jesus has defeated Satan. What does it mean to have victory over Satan? How does the blood of Jesus give us power? “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Hebrews 2:14,15).

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him” (Romans 6:8,9).

These verses say that Satan was “destroyed.” What does that actually mean? He seems to be running around doing a job of destroying others.

The word destroy is defined in Strongs Concordance as:

- 1) to render idle, unemployed, inactivate, inoperative.
- 1a) to cause a person or thing to have no further efficiency.
- 1b) to deprive of force, influence, power.

When Jesus and you and I were raised from the dead, we were born again as a new race that is no longer subject to Satan. He has no more dominion over us. We have dominion over him. Satan used his ultimate power on Jesus at the Cross, and then Jesus was resurrected. Satan has no more power to exert. He is out of tools and weapons.

He can still destroy an unbeliever, and he can deceive a believer, but if we know the truth, he cannot harm us any longer. As far as we are concerned, he is destroyed. If we stand on the truth, all Satan can do is lie to us. Satan has no power over the new creation; that includes you and me!

“And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy” (Colossians 1:18).

This is the script of life. We need to recognize where we are in it. It will make suffering more compatible. Yes, Jesus is returning to earth someday, but He will also “return” for you now to turn your problem into a blessing.

A good example of this kind of overcoming is Daniel in the lion’s den in Daniel chapter 6. Daniel was wholly following God

and was persecuted by his enemies and God's enemies. Rather than being delivered *from* the lion's den, he overcame *in* the lion's den. The result was that his enemies were totally defeated.

“At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones. Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: ‘May you prosper greatly! I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures for ever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.’ So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian” (Daniel 6:24-28).

I doubt that Daniel would have prospered and that his enemies would have been defeated if he had not gone through the lion's den.

2. Second, we must do something. “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead” (James 2:26).

Warfare, or standing, requires that we do something, we are not to just wait around. Hebrews 6:12 says, “We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”

a. We must maintain our “virginity.” That is, we must stay clean before the Lord. We must keep short accounts with our sins, and keep them confessed and cleansed before God and man. I use the word “virginity” because I want you to remember that Jesus makes you as if you had never sinned every time you are forgiven!

We must live our life worthy of the Lord and dwell in His presence. “As a prisoner for the Lord, then I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Ephesians 4:1). “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalms 91:1). You should stop now and read the rest of Psalm 91.

If Satan can get you to act according to your old nature (flesh) and the way of the world, he can separate you from the living

presence of God and he can steal God's promises. Galatians 5:19-21 says, "Now the works of the flesh are clearly revealed, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lustfulness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, fighting's, jealousies, angers, rivalries, divisions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revelings, and things like these; of which I tell you before, as I also said before, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (The seed of the Word bearing fruit in your life.)

b. The Bible teaches us that there is a waiting period in warfare and that we are to use the Word of God as a sword. Ephesians 6:17b says, "...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

We are told in Hebrews 3:1, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Jesus takes our confession to the Father as our High Priest, and the Father sees to it that it is accomplished, provided it is the Word of God. The enemy also takes our confession, our negative confession, and accomplishes what we say.

When the Word of God is confessed and prayed over a person or a situation, it is powerful! Jesus created everything by His Word. Jesus IS the Word. Jesus gave us the authority to use the Word as if it were Him saying it!

John 1:1-3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being."

When the Passover was administered to Israel in Exodus 12, the Israelites were told to put the blood of an innocent lamb over their doors and the death angel (demon) would "pass over" and not hurt them. Jesus is the Lamb of God, and we can put His blood over our doors and over the doors of our loved ones and those for whom we pray. How?

Revelation 12:11 says, "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony. And they did not love their soul to the death."

The words of our mouth will apply the blood. Notice in Exodus 12 that as long as the lamb's blood stayed in the basin, it did no good. But when they took the hyssop, dipped it in the blood and applied it to their door, then God and the devil could see it. The hyssop was a common weed that did not seem to have much value. The words of our mouth do not seem to have much value, but when we dip them into the Word of God (Who is Jesus Himself) and apply them as blood, God sees it and the devil sees it!

Jesus takes our confession and makes it powerful. Hebrews 3:1 says, "Therefore, holy brothers, called to be partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

When we speak God's Word, Jesus takes it to the Father and asks Him to perform it. John 16:23 says, "And in that day you shall ask Me nothing. Truly, truly, I say to you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give you."

Then we can enter into rest and let the Word do the work.

Hebrews 4:1 says, "Therefore, a promise being left to enter into His rest, let us fear lest any of you should seem to come short of it."

Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Angels go to work when they hear God's Word. Psalms 103:20 says, "Bless the LORD, O angels of His, who excel in strength, who do His command, listening to the voice of His word."

Demons flee! Psalms 149:5-9 says, "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to carry out vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, (representing our spiritual enemies) to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with iron-bands, to carry out on them the judgment written; this is an honor for all His saints. Praise the LORD!"

Remember that you are not trying to win a battle, Jesus at the Cross has already won the battle. You are called to "stand." That

means to be established in your position of victory in front of a court of law, so that the lies told about you cannot prevail. You will experience a lot of mental pressure, but you will win if you stand.

Standing against the wiles of the devil.

Ephesians 6:11 says, “Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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Chapter 17
Suffering & Tribulation
The door into the invisible world



Now that's the craziest thing I have
EVER heard!

Before I met the Lord, I always pursued ease and comfort for my life. After I met Him, I felt that He would help me pursue that ease and comfort. That has not been true. He has led me into the abundant life, but it has been through much pressure and many trials and tribulations, all of which I am thankful for in retrospect.

We need to realize that we live on a planet that has fallen into sin, or to put it another way, man has rebelled against all the laws of God. That, coupled with the evil activity of Satan to kill, steal, and destroy, is enough to cause suffering for everybody.

Life is rough, it is not fair, and it deals out suffering to everybody in some form. People attempt to hide the pain of life through the pursuit of money, which can purchase temporal comforts. They also cover up life's pain with drugs, entertainment, success and many other things. We need to know and realize that we are living in a war, and there is tension between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the World. The war has already been won in eternity, but it is our job to bring the victory into our sphere of influence. This tension will cause sufferings; however, let us be accurate in defining this suffering. We need to seek God so that we know how to resist those things that Satan is trying to put on us.

God is not the author of suffering or of the unfair things in life. However, God intends for the tough things in life to bring us to the end of our own resources. He desires that we will turn to Him. When we do, He performs miracles and turns our troubles into eternal triumphs.

So many believers have difficulty learning God's prospective on suffering, trials and tribulation.

There are two major opposing doctrines. One says that we are not supposed to suffer as believers. The other side says that we are just old sinners, so God teaches us by making us suffer. The latter view grossly distorts God's character! God does not put sickness and disease on us. He does not even have any to put on us. The story of Job confirms this. Both views are very far from the truth. Both views have some element of truth, but their doctrines will not work when they are in "the fire."

I am going to share with you what God has taught me about this subject.

I learned this through experience and through revelation in Scripture. It is fine if you disagree with me. I know that I do not know all there is about suffering. I have never (yet) been called to undergo physical torture or spent time in jail for the sake of the Gospel.

There is no way I can take space in this book to do a complete teaching on suffering. I am not even qualified to do so, but I have been under severe trials and tests. This is the way I have made it through many difficult circumstances, some of which were life threatening.

Are we supposed to suffer? What kind of suffering?

First, I want to differentiate between "stupid suffering" and redemptive suffering. "Stupid suffering" is when we are reaping the results of bad choices, morally, spiritually, and physically. We need to come before God and receive forgiveness and get back on track with Him. You will find Him with open arms of mercy, ready to turn your mistakes into triumphs.

There is also a difference between the Christian who has totally yielded himself to Jesus and the average person (Christian or not) who is living his life for himself. "if anyone does not love the Lord--a curse be on him. Come, O Lord!" (1 Corinthians 16:22).

Author Gene Edwards is quoted as saying,

When a Christian decides to give up his life utterly and totally to Jesus Christ without reservation,

*abandoning the world, giving up security, turning to simplicity and heading for the deep things of God, that is, the things nearest and dearest to the Lord; you can be sure that soon thereafter he is going to touch some portion of pain. When he does, he has commenced his inevitable journey down the road of suffering. That pilgrimage will carry him from glory to glory to glory, until one day, by the sovereign hand of the Lord, he is made into something not altogether unlike Him. Conformed to His image, mostly by suffering.*⁸

Most of our suffering is mental.

We are tempted by Satan and distracted by our flesh to believe lies. God wants us to believe His Word no matter how bad things look. God wants us to confess His Word over our situations working as the change agent in the realm of the Kingdom of God. During this time we are subjected to *great pressure*. See Mark Chapter 4.

What about martyrs?

God has called some to become physical martyrs unto torture and death. Revelation 12:11 says that we are not to love our lives even to death. The early church calculated that for every martyr three hundred people would get saved. I do not know for sure, but from reading the account of Stephen in Acts chapter 7 and the accounts of other historic situations, it seems as though God gives a special grace when a person is being tortured for the Gospel. The Scripture says that Jesus *tasted* death for every person.

Martyrdom is not something that passed away centuries ago; it is still going on all over the world in large numbers. For those of you who may be called to this ministry, I want to honor you. I am certainly not qualified for this subject. I want to believe that if God ever called me to be a martyr it would be something I would be honored to go through. The grace for such a thing does not come in advance.

⁸ The Inward Journey , Gene Edwards, Christian Books, Goleta, CA., 1982, page 141

The Bible talks about sharing in the fellowship of his sufferings as indicated in Philippians 3:10, Colossians 1:24 and 2 Corinthians 4:12.

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Philippians 3:10). “Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church” (Colossians 1:24). “So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you” (2 Corinthians 4:1). Paul was talking of a kind of redemptive suffering. As he met suffering in his life, he knew that he was breaking spiritual strongholds as an intercessor for others.

Our share is something less than his share.

Only Jesus is qualified for the redemptive suffering that saves man. He bore our curse totally and completely at the Cross. We cannot add to that, nor should we compromise that truth. That does not mean those curses will not come on us. It does mean that when they do, we are to stand on the truth of the Cross and turn that curse into a blessing. Exactly how that takes shape in our lives is up to God. He has the plan for our lives. If you stay close to Him and if you do not compromise the truth of the Cross, He will walk you through the hard times with purpose.

Paul knew that God would rescue him in his sufferings.

“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them” (2 Timothy 3:10,11).

What is the purpose of suffering?

I am going to offer a three-part answer to this question. The three parts are (1) vicarious intercession, (2) entering the Kingdom of God and (3) being proved by God.

1. Our suffering quite often acts as intercession and warfare for the church and the lost, and for the defeat of our spiritual enemies. This is called vicarious intercession.

Vicarious means to take the place of another.

Jesus defeated Satan at the Cross, but now it is up to us to administer that defeat and finalize it. “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 3:10).

Our suffering has to do with finalizing that defeat on Satan. “Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church” (Colossians 1:24).

Our share of His suffering is not the same as His share, but ours is nevertheless redemptive. There is still something lacking in His suffering regarding men and women who are still in bondage. Jesus has done His part; He was the only one qualified to suffer for our salvation. However, there is still something lacking in His suffering regarding men and women who are still in bondage. There is a human part to be done, and it consists of more than just saying prayers.

Our suffering is not the real thing; it is only the shadow of the real thing when compared with Jesus'. Psalm 23 calls it the valley of the shadow of death. Shadows can't hurt, but they can cause fear. Psalm 23 goes on to say that we need not fear for He is with us, and that this path is the path of righteousness chosen by God and not by Satan. It says further that our table is spread in the presence of our enemy, we are anointed of God and our cup runs over for the blessing of others.

Why is our suffering not the real thing?

Look at Revelation Chapters 4 and 5. At the throne, John saw the Lamb who was the only one worthy to take the Scroll, which Zechariah describes as the curse (Zechariah 5:3). Then the Scroll unrolls and explosions take place (the catastrophes in the Book of Revelation). We feel the shadow of our curses, the explosions, and they feel like the real thing. But the Lamb is holding the Scroll and the explosions hit Him. When we shine the light into the *shadow*, we see the Lamb bleeding for our curse and saying to us, “Will you accept the shadow of this as the key to unlock the prisons for those who are bound? I promise it will not hurt you. Will you do this for Me?”

Jesus became poor so we could be rich. Yet look at the poor people in your realm of influence. Someone has to accept the shadow of being poor as the final key to unlock his or her prison.

Suffering gives us authority for ministry.

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12). “Crowns” stand for authority. “Life” is what we are dispensing to the lost world. We gain the authority to bring the lost to God.

Perhaps we could name this teaching “Saved by a Shadow.”

When I experience this type of suffering, I am truly content and at peace (most of the time) because His presence is heavier during this time than ever before. There is something about going through this and then hearing His heart of love toward people that comforts me and makes me know not to be afraid no matter what happens. After all, we only have a few more years to be poor, but those people who do not get saved, well...

2. Our tough situations are doorways into the Kingdom of God.

When we were born again we were legally transferred out of the kingdom of the “world” and transferred into the Kingdom of God. That was all by the grace of God and had nothing to do with our suffering.

“For He has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Colossians 1:13).

However, like most spiritual truths, we realize the benefits of that truth through a process. That is why the Scriptures tell us we realize more of the Kingdom of God when we go through trials and tribulations. We have it all legally when we are born again, but we experience the benefits over a period of time.

“...‘We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,’ they said” (Acts 14:22).

We are in an age where two kingdoms, or two worlds, exist (See the diagram on the next page). One is the visible Kingdom called the “world.” The other is invisible to our eyes and it is the Kingdom of God. The kingdom of the “world” began back

sometime in the Genesis account after man fell slave to Satan. The Kingdom of God began with Jesus.

Satan is the prince of this world system. Jesus is King of the Kingdom of God. Jesus defeated Satan at the Cross. If you read the end of the Book (Bible), the Kingdom of God prevails. However, God has made it our privilege to bring the final victory of the Kingdom to our realm of influence.

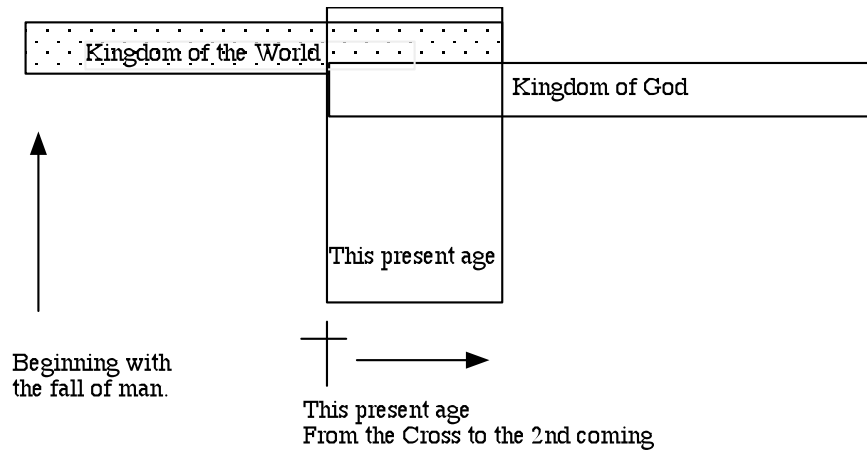
“...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14,15). “But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:27).

We have the opportunity and the privilege to operate in the Kingdom of God right now on earth before we die. “And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come” (Hebrews 6:5).

We do not have room here in this chapter, or even in this entire book, to do an entire teaching on the Kingdom of God. Suffice it to say, the Kingdom of God is not a geographical place or location. It is not a place where we go when our body dies. The Kingdom of God co-exists right here and now with the world that we can see with our eyes. It is the invisible realm where God rules, and where believers have an opportunity to be subjects to the King and to be co-rulers.

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Both kingdoms are co-existing during this age.



We need to know that whatever pressures or difficulty we are going through will be a new door for us to go deeper into the Kingdom of God. It will also bring Kingdom victory into our realm of influence.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). The word for “poor” is *ptocheuo*. Strong's Concordance defines it as “beggar, no way out, perplexed, without resources, realizes his inferior position, indigent.” When the world's kingdom fails you, then you are capable of finding the Kingdom of God. This includes the afterlife and the present life. When I knew for sure that I had no control over where I went after I died, I was poor, and God's Kingdom came upon me for that need. When I knew for sure that I was poor for my child's healing, God's Kingdom came upon us.

God's Kingdom is still coming on me as I am confronted with new ways of being “poor” all the time. Do I enjoy it? No! Am I glad for it? Yes! It brings me deeper into the Kingdom, it brings me more into the presence of God through the fellowship of His sufferings, and it does some serious business for the church.

Each time we overcome bad situations, we gain more spiritual authority. How do we reach that goal? Only by traveling the pathway from pressure to enlargement, from poverty to enrichment. In the Book of Daniel, the three Hebrew children were in the pressure of the fiery furnace. Rather than finding a door out of the furnace, the Fourth Man found His way in. But the result was that the influence of God was expanded. God allowed trial upon trial to press upon Job, but his trials only pressed him to God's goal. To John, the Isle of Patmos seemed like pressure that no one would want; yet it was the vehicle for the Revelation of who Jesus really is.

Revelation 21:21 tells us that the "gates" of heavenly Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God, are made from pearl. A process in the oyster that starts with pain develops pearl. First, a wound occurs in the shell and a piece of sand enters which causes irritation. Second, the oyster's body responds by secreting a substance that coats the sand making its surface smooth. Then the result is a beautiful jewel. Revelation 21 tells us that most of the Kingdom is made up of other precious jewels which in the natural earth are developed by being under much pressure in the earth.

*The Christian life is a process of deliverance out of one world into another, and death, as has been truly said, 'is the only way out of any world in which we are'*⁹

The Christian life is not like the world.

The world works on improvement and upward mobility. The Kingdom of God works on the principle of resurrection. Without death, resurrection is not possible. The Christian life, therefore, works on death first and resurrection second. Poverty and pressure are not the end, they are simply the doorways to abundant life! We need to remember that we are building a kingdom for God that is eternal, and whose elements are out of the reach of the world and Satan. Only what has passed through death qualifies. This is indicated in Romans 6:9-10 and many other Scriptures.

⁹ Unknown author: The Refiner's Fire, Volume II, World Challenge, Lindale, TX., page 106.

“For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God” (Romans 6:9,10).

So far I have given you a lot of theory and Scripture. Now I want to make this practical and something that you can use for your everyday life.

Our lives with God seem to go through cycles or a process that looks like the following.

a. Need. We encounter a desperate situation and realize that it is beyond our ability to resolve it.

b. Promise. We go to God through the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit and we receive His promise as the Word-seed planted in our heart. Mark 4:11 says that this process is *the mystery* of the Kingdom of God.

c. Tribulation. As in Mark chapter 4, Satan comes to steal the Word of promise that has been planted in our heart. We feel temptations from our flesh, from the cares of the world and from all kinds of lies that are thrown at us through circumstances and “thought bombs.” During this time, standing on the Word causes great pressure. During this tribulation our old “self,” the generational nature that we inherited from Adam, passes away and the new nature of Christ takes over in us.

d. We come to the end of our own strength. We try to remain patient, but we feel like we just can’t make it. We feel like giving up. This is suffering. Our solution is to rest in the Word of God. A more complete teaching on this is in our series, “Grow or Die.”¹⁰

Quite often, there is even a sense of disappointment with God because He does not resolve the situation in the way we thought He would. We feel abandoned. If we are going through our own crucifixion, then we need to know two things. First, we do not have enough hands to nail ourselves to the cross, and second, feeling forsaken by God is a part of the process.

¹⁰ International School of the Bible publishes Grow or Die. ISBN # 0-9676731-0-0. Email info@isob-bible.org for information.

e. God takes you up. It seems like we go through a sort of “rapture” when God takes us up to sit with Him in heavenly places. We experience a new and fresh measure of His presence. We receive revelation that we are on track with God, and that everything will be all right. This really helps our emotions. We receive His peace which passes understanding.

f. Separation from world. There is an involuntary separation from the things and resources of the world system. We are no longer looking to man or institutions to deliver us. We know that we cannot deliver ourselves. We know it is God and God alone in His timing and in His way that will deliver us. We become helpless like children waiting on their daddy to provide.

g. Awareness of the Kingdom. Each time we go through this cycle, we become more aware of the spiritual world, the Kingdom of God, and the satanic powers of the world system.

h. Deliverance. God comes through in His timing and in His way. We see His Hand working. It is not the way we expected. It accomplishes much more than we anticipated. We see that we have taken up our cross and that we are different.

3. Proving.

First we talked about spiritual warfare and then we talked about entering the Kingdom of God; now we are going to the third item, which is proving. “These [fiery trials] have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be *proved* genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Peter 1:7).

The word “prove” is a word used in the refining of gold and silver. To prove means to put gold in the fire so that the dross and impurities are burned off. The result is that the gold is more valuable and becomes pure. When we are proven, our old fleshly and worldly ways are burned off and God has proven that we are useful in His service. As we mentioned before, there is always a war, some suffering, and some spiritual tension when you decide that God will be your provider. It is like a “tearing” away from one god to the Living God (Acts 14:22). Jesus said in John 17:18 that He is sending us into the world in the same way He was sent, through spiritual warfare and difficulties.

This refining can also be described as the “breaking of our flesh,” which is our old nature and soul power. Sometimes our self-sufficiency can only be diminished through this proving process. “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain” (John 12:24). The outer shell of the grain must be broken in order for the seed to bear fruit. Our outer shell is the self-sufficient soul, our soul power.

Bitter waters.

When the Israelites came out of Egypt through the Red Sea, one of their first stops in the desert was at a pool of water called Marah, which means “bitter.” The water was not fit to drink, as it was full of heavy minerals. The people were very thirsty and began to murmur. Moses asked God what to do. The Lord showed Moses a particular tree that he was to cast into the bitter water. When he did, the waters were made sweet. Exodus 15:25 says, “And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he *proved* them” (Exodus 15:25). Notice the word “proved.”

The tree is symbolic of the Cross of Jesus Christ, which when cast into our bitter situations, makes them sweet. The story also encourages us to seek the Lord to find out exactly which “tree” to throw into our bitter situations. Moses could have chosen any tree in the woods, and it would not have had the effect of the one God told him to choose. In other words, when we find bitterness in our lives, we need to get close to God so that we can hear Him tell us exactly which step to take next, which doctor to pursue, which medicine to take, which job to take, etc.

Exodus 15:26 contains the first part of your promise with a big “IF”.

It says, “He said, ‘If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you’” (Exodus 15:26).

Exodus 15:27 contains your deliverance, and it says, "Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water" (Exodus 15:27).

The Kingdom of God, in type, was shown in Elim. Elim had twelve fresh springs of water, twelve being symbolic of the Kingdom of God, and seventy palm trees, surely a place of shade, comfort and blessing. The word Elim means strength by virtue of something being twisted.

There was a door, an open door that led to Elim. It was called Marah, the pool of bitter waters. When the tree, the Cross, was applied to the bitter circumstances, the result was strength in Kingdom work.

The story infers that there will be suffering before the goal is reached. We are encouraged to hang on and to be an overcomer. It infers that the open door of bitterness will lead to things of the Kingdom of God, probably ministry, as a pillar in the Temple of God.

Finally.

Jesus made two statements to conclude His Sermon on the Mount. When He warned that storms would hit all of us, He was letting us know that the only thing that would keep us safe would be to build our house on the rock. Building on the rock, if you examine the Scriptures below, are simply "knowing" Jesus.

Knowing Him.

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

On the rock!

Matthew 7:24-27 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of

Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

Even in your sufferings:

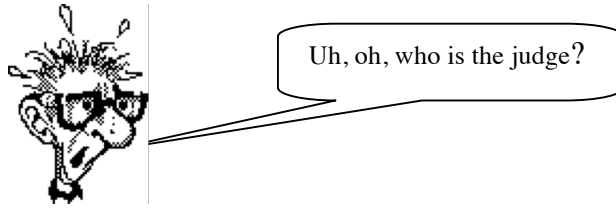
Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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Chapter 18
Jesus Is Returning
There is a judgment.



People are naturally more accountable for what is *inspected* than what is expected.

When you send a child to go do a task, is it wise to ask him to return and show you how he finished it? Or do you think it would be wise to ask this young child to go do the task and tell him that you will never check to see how he has done?

God is a judge.

He will call every person, every deed and every word into accountability, and He will grant reward or lack thereof based upon the facts.

“Far be it from You to act in this manner, to kill the righteous with the wicked. And far be it from You, that the righteous should be as the wicked. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25).

“Lift up Yourself, Judge of the earth; give a just repayment to the proud” (Psalms 94:2).

“...before the LORD; for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth; He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth” (Psalms 96:13).

“But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are written in Heaven, and to *God the judge of all*, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel” (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Here in this verse of Hebrews 12:22-24, God is shown as Judge. However if that is all that He is we have much to fear. The Word shows us that God the Judge is also Jesus the Mediator. He is the only One who can come between a righteous and holy God and lost sinful men. Notice also in this passage of Hebrews that there is a revelation of the blood of Jesus being both the means and the price by which reconciliation has been achieved.

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:17).

“The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any of us should perish, but that all of us should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Judgment has been transferred from the Father to the Son.

“For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son, so that all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him” (John 5:22-23).

The subject of judgment can be very lengthy and we will only attempt to cover what many consider to be the two main judgments here. In respect to these judgments we will only attempt to cover them in outline and not in detail.

Reference is made to “Throne of (Christ’s) glory.” We will not cover this judgment in this book. (Matthew 25:31, Matthew 19:28).

1. Judgment of believers. In the first judgment, the seat upon which the Judge will be seated is the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those to be judged here will be Christ’s own followers and servants. We will cover the future and the present applications of this judgment.

2. Judgment of un-believers. The second judgment seat is called the “Great White Throne”. Believers in Christ will escape this judgment because their names are written in the “Lamb’s Book of Life.”

We recommend the book The Spirit Filled Believers Handbook, Author Derek Prince, chapters 48-52 for a more complete study on the subject of judgment.¹¹

1A. Judgment of believers. The Judgment Seat of Christ (future).

2 Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” Notice this does not say anything but good or bad, there is no in-between.

This judgment is not for condemnation, but for reward. I believe that if we knew more about this judgment, we would live our lives differently. Have you ever watched an Olympic event and seen the “judgment” at the end? The fastest runner was judged first, and given a Gold Medal; second place was judged Silver, etc.

I don’t think any of us know everything there is to know about Heaven, eternity, and the afterlife. As for me, I don’t want to waste this life and forfeit something that will go on for eternity!

We are told that there will be a test of fire. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 says, “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work what he has built survives, he will receive his reward; if it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”

It seems like most of the time the rewards are defined as obtaining more authority and becoming closer to Jesus.

1B. The Judgment Seat of Christ (present).

There is also a present day judgment for believers.

I believe that we are all in a continuing process as follows:

- a. Jesus sows the seed of the Word of God in our life for a need that He wants to meet.

¹¹ Spirit Filled Believer’s Handbook, Derek Prince, Creation House - Strang Communications Company, Lake, Mary, FL. 1995.

b. Satan tries to steal the seed, and/or make the growth of it unfruitful. Mark chapter 4.

c. We go through the trying of our faith during a period of time.

d. Jesus comes back to deliver us and bring our “judgment”.

When He comes to bring us what was promised, will He find us faithful and standing in faith? If so, we win; if not, we loose.

Our faith will be tested by fire. 1 Peter 1:7 says, “These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Are you standing for a healing, for a financial situation, a family situation, as an intercessor for someone, for more Godly character, or whatever? Jesus returns for “judgment,” for reward, now, while you are still living on this earth. Psalms 96:13 says, “before the LORD; for He comes, *for He comes to judge the earth*; He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth.”

Jesus tells His disciples about a judgment that will take place here and now on this earth. Matthew 16:26-28 says, “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

I submit that one could take many of the judgment Scriptures having to do with believers in the New Testament, and apply them both to the judgment we will receive when we get to Heaven and to these present day circumstances. If you don't agree with me, that's okay. That is just my opinion, and in fact, has been my experience. But I do not wish to step on your theological toes in this matter.

2. Judgment of un-believers.

Beginning of a quote from The Spirit Filled Believers Handbook, Author Derek Prince, pages 513-515.¹²

(Revelation 20:11-15) Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

This is the ultimate end of all sin and rebellion against the authority and holiness of almighty God; to be cast forever into the lake of everlasting fire. Only those whose names are written in the Book of Life will escape this final judgment. The names recorded in this book are those who during their life on earth availed themselves, through faith, of God's mercy and grace. These fall into various categories.

All those who put their faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice on behalf of mankind will already have been resurrected at the commencement of the millennium. They will have passed through their own appropriate judgment before the judgment seat of Christ, not for condemnation, but to assess their reward.

It seems certain that the majority of those who appear before the great white throne will not have fulfilled the conditions for receiving God's mercy and will therefore be condemned to the lake of fire. Nevertheless, as was pointed out in chapter 46, there

¹² Spirit Filled Believer's Handbook, Derek Prince, Creation House - Strang Communications Company, Lake, Mary, FL. 1995.

will definitely be at least two categories of people before the great white throne who will escape condemnation and enter into eternal life.

The first category will consist of people such as the queen of the South and the men of Nineveh, who availed themselves of the mercy that God offered to them in one brief but decisive revelation of Himself. Scripture does not indicate how many others there may have been in the course of history who were given a similar opportunity.

The second category will consist of all those who died in faith during the millennium.

Can we anticipate that there will be others to whom God will extend mercy from His great white throne? The answer to this is locked up within the omniscience of God. For us, with our limited knowledge and narrow perspective, it is foolish to speculate.

Let us rather adapt the attitude expressed by Abraham.

(Genesis 18:25) Far be it from you to do such a thing--to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Those who have tasted God's measureless mercy are assured that He will never withhold His mercy from any who qualify for it.

(Romans 11:33) Let us beware, however, of assuming that we can ever fully comprehend all that is included in the outworking of God's judgments. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

There is one final thing to remember about judgment of unbelievers. The wrath of God was put on Jesus as the final judgment of sin. The choice is really yours to accept or reject God's free gift of salvation. The only safe place to be is to be sure that you have been born-again. That is when your name is listed in the "Lamb's Book of Life."

One final thing to remember about the judgment of believers is that God is seeking ways of rewarding you, not of condemning you. Purpose to live your life on earth in obedience to the Lord's voice and in total abandonment to Him so that you will receive all the possible rewards for eternity.

The Second Coming

Another aspect of judgment is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to this earth. We will not give a complete teaching on the subject here, but the Bible is very clear. He is coming again. The Lord purposely does not give us very much detail about when He is coming again. Notice in Acts 1:7, Jesus in effect tells His disciples just before He ascends back into Heaven, "None of your business when I am coming back, you concentrate on being My witnesses" [Author's paraphrase].

He came the first time as our suffering Saviour, our substitute, our Lamb to take away our sin. The second time He comes, He is coming as King, to set up His Kingdom.

The Old and New Testaments are filled with Scriptures on the Second Coming of Jesus to this earth. Here are just a few.

"But I would not have you ignorant, brothers, concerning those who are asleep, that you be not grieved, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will also bring with Him all those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For we say this to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not go before those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall ever be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28).

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is”(1 John 3 2).

“...who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’”(Acts 1:11).

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know”(John 14:1-4).

“knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we,

according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (2 Peter 3:3-14).

However or whenever He comes back, or if you meet Him when your body dies, makes little difference. Your theology on end times really does not matter, expect for one thing. **He is coming!** You will meet Him eye to eye; you will meet Him as judge. You need to be ready!

We need to keep Jesus’ perspective in mind.

He is anxiously waiting to receive His Bride, the Church. In Jewish tradition the son prepared the wedding house on his father’s property, working on it constantly in anticipation of the wedding day. The father would continually inspect the house to see when it was ready. Also, in the Jewish tradition there was no wedding date set. The bride had to be ready all the time. Matthew 25:10 says, “And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came. And they who were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut” (Matthew 25:10).

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.’ Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. ‘I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.’ And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” (Revelation 22:12-17).

Our story starts with a curse due to man’s disobedience. “...Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life” (Genesis 3:17b).

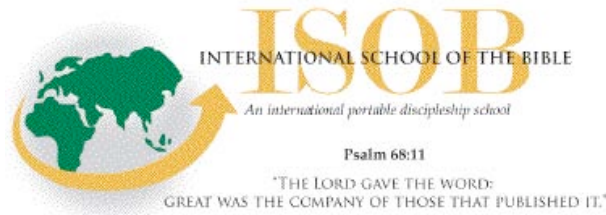
Our story ends with the Lamb taking our curse so we could be blessed. “And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.” (Revelation 22:3). Amen!

Be real with God.

Now listen for His voice.

“Hello there, my Name is Jesus. I love you.”

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