

The background of the cover features a large, detailed illustration of a lion's head on the left side, looking towards the right. On the right side, there are silhouettes of a man and a child standing in a savanna landscape. The man is pointing towards the sky, and the child is looking up at him. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall tone is warm and inspirational.

BASICS

FOR THE
NEW BELIEVER

By PHILLIP CANNAVO

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for the

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English Edition

Available at

www.gillministries.com

Preface

Habakkuk 2:2 says: *“Then the Lord answered me and said: “Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it.”*

In preparation for the greatest Harvest the Kingdom of God has ever experienced, the Lord has challenged us to put together ten foundational principles. These principles are for the purpose of helping new believers understand the fundamentals of their newfound faith, and also, for unbelievers to know who Christians really are, and why we do the things we do. It is our earnest desire to see new believers firmly planted in the truths of God’s word.

This manual can be used as an elementary educational tool. It is designed to configure the inner man of new believers, and prepare them for growth and fruitfulness.

As a self-study guide, it can be used by local churches to give to new believers at altar calls; it is also a great tool for inmates or shut-ins; it can be used in evangelistic meetings as a “get-started tool;” it can be distributed to family members, friends, and even neighbors, or anyone who is curious about our faith. Any ministry can use it as a tool for outreach, or as a teacher’s guide for new-believer cell groups or beginners' class.

Our prayer is that everyone who reads this book would be saved, blessed, and come to a basic understanding of the foundational principles of Christianity, setting them as foundational blocks upon which to build and grow.

Be blessed as you read and study.

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Lesson One

Salvation

Introduction

In the world there are only two types of people: those who are saved and those who are not. The saved are those who have understood that they cannot save themselves and that they need a Savior. Salvation of the soul is freely offered to everyone through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever places their faith in Him, believing and accepting His sacrifice will have eternal life. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one can reach the Father, or heaven except through Him.

It doesn't matter what church or denomination you do or don't belong to, what your ethnic, religious or cultural background is, what group you associate with, or if you are agnostic or even atheist.

Note: An Agnostic believes that we cannot know that God really exists. The word "agnostic" in the Greek language means "one who lacks knowledge of God." Agnostics are followers of pragmatism; their belief in something has to be scientifically proven, and because God is not scientifically proven and can only be known by faith, they prefer to leave Him out of their discussion.

An atheist is easier to define. He simply declares that God does not exist. All of creation evolved from matter and mankind evolved from apes.

You may be rich or poor; young or old; good or bad; tall or short; light weight or heavy set; good looking or ugly; a criminal, murderer, drug user, alcoholic; prostitute, homosexual, or pedophile; single, married, or divorced, a cheater, abuser, controller, mobster, gangster, money launderer, compulsive gambler, hater, idolater, or pagan. Whatever background you have, whatever situation you find yourself in, there is "Good News" for you today.

God Loves You

There is one unwavering, unchanging, and unconditional truth on which to hang your whole life, and that is, "GOD LOVES YOU" no matter what condition or state in which you find yourself.

John 3:16 says: "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."

You are the “whoever” this verse speaks of. While you live in this world, the love of God will pursue you to the ends of the earth to reach you, restore you, and transform your life. He desires to give you a future and a hope, restoring you to the purpose for which He created you.

The only way God cannot reach you is if you refuse to receive Him and His only Son, Jesus Christ, in your life. When Jesus knocks at your door as He is right now, through reading this life-changing material, do not harden your heart, but open the door. It could be the very last chance you have to come to Jesus, escape God’s judgment of sin, and make Heaven your home.

2 Peter 3:9 says: "The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance;"

We Were Born in Sin

Let me explain why! Because of Adam’s disobedience, sin and death entered the world. Since the fall of the first created man, every person conceived and born thereafter, even to this day, was born in sin.

Romans 3:23 states: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

You and I, because of our sinful nature have been separated from the holiness of God without remedy.

But God -- Jesus

But God, because of His great love for us, has made a way to restore our relationship with Him. It would cost Him dearly. The price would be the suffering and death of His one and only Son. God knew that only a perfect sacrifice or atonement could be offered to save us, and only He is perfect and without sin. Therefore,

Philippians 2:5-11 says: Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Bought Our Salvation – Our Inheritance

Jesus willingly came to earth and gave His life, paying the ransom for humanity to be purchased back and reconciled to God the Father.

The price for your salvation was already paid. It is as if we were spiritually, emotionally, physically, and financially bankrupt, and unbeknownst to us, someone placed a great inheritance at our disposal.

However, we have no password to access the wealth. When we accept Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord, Jesus comes to live within us, granting us access to the rich inheritance He has for our lives. This inheritance consists primarily of eternal life and salvation from hell and destruction.

There is freedom for our souls and health for our bodies; not to mention the countless other blessings promised to us in God's word. This divine well being will be so noticeable that eventually even the world will know we belong to Jesus.

Our lives will be filled with gratitude for all the great things He has done for us. The Holy Spirit within us will testify to the fact that we are children of the Creator and Ruler of the universe. When we stand before God on the Day of Judgment, with one short glance at us He will know that we are His own.

But We Must Receive

How sad it would be to discover, when it is too late, that all along you were one of the most blessed people on earth, but refused to accept the One who could unlock your inheritance of eternal life in heaven.

Do you have the password? If you don't, in a moment you will have an opportunity to make Jesus the Lord and Savior of your life.

- Before you do, I must clarify that you don't have the password, or you are not saved, just because your parents or grandparents or spouse are saved.
- You are not saved simply because you go to church every week or on Christmas or Easter.
- You are not saved because you grew up in church, are a member of it, give money to it, or feel like a permanent fixture of it.
- You are not saved by being baptized as a child or by participation in catechism classes.

➤ Neither does helping the poor and needy and performing acts of kindness save you.

Salvation Comes Through

You are saved by personally acknowledging your inability to save yourself and by accepting Jesus in your heart as your Lord and Savior, thereby choosing to live for Him.

In John 14:6 Jesus declared: "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except by me."

Acts 4:12 says: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.""

Jesus!

Jesus is our only answer. Jesus is the only password available.

By simply believing, accepting, acknowledging, and confessing His sacrifice, the chasm sin created is bridged, reconnecting us once again with the God of the universe. Salvation is received by admitting our spiritual bankruptcy and our inability to mend the broken fellowship between God and man caused by sin.

We must therefore believe the scriptures in Romans 10:9-10 that state: "if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Believe in your heart that Jesus' payment for our sin is sufficient to save you, confess Him as Savior and Lord with your mouth and you shall be saved.

Pray With Me

If you have understood what you have just read, please pray the following prayer. This is a spiritual transaction with the God of heaven.

Prayer:

God, I acknowledge I am a sinner and that I am in need of a Savior.

I realize that I cannot save myself from eternal hell, so I now accept the sacrifice of your Son Jesus who came to die on the cross in my place to restore and mend my broken fellowship with you.

I place my faith and trust in Jesus Christ and receive Him both as my Lord and Savior.

His sacrifice was complete! Nothing needs to be added to it.

Therefore, I believe that from this moment on I am a new creation.

From this moment on I consider myself a child of God, in Jesus name. Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Write your salvation experience.

2. Practice sharing it with someone else as a witnessing tool.

Lesson Two

Welcome to the Family

Now that you have become a child of God, you belong to the greatest family in existence. You have the opportunity, to develop an intimate and personal relationship with your Heavenly Father and to enjoy all of His benefits.

The Church

At our conversion, the Holy Spirit of God baptizes us into Christ making us a part of Himself and a member of His body, the Church.

When we use the word, “Church,” we are not referring to the local churches that are in our neighborhoods. The Church is the total family of God, and is made up of all the souls that have been redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

The family of God is made up of “children” and for this reason I would like to talk about the mentality, the position, and the heart of a child of God.

God has chosen to unfold His plans through His family. The plan of redemption for the salvation of humanity is activated by His people under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Church is the vehicle through which the Lord fulfills the Great Commission, His work.

The Church, the body of Christ, is the only representation of the Lord on earth. Through His Church, He spreads the message of salvation, disciples the nations, and teaches them His principles.

- Through the hands of the Church, God touches the sick;
- Through the feet of the Church, He reaches the remote parts of the world to proclaim His gospel;
- Through the loving eyes of His Church, He reveals to mankind His compassion;
- Through the ears of the Church, the Lord listens to the cry of the poor and suffering.

The love of God is expressed and manifested to humanity through His people and His children, the Church. What an honor and privilege believers have to represent the Father on this earth!

Becoming a Child of God

One of the greatest gifts a person can ever receive is to become a child of the Creator – the God of heaven and earth. At one time we may have thought God was distant, even absent from our situations, almost disinterested in our neediness, and seemingly indifferent regarding our destiny and future.

Now, after salvation, our conversion, He manifests Himself in our lives in a direct way, involving Himself with the minutest details of our lives.

After having spent a part of our lives enslaved to sin, separated from God and outside the boundaries of His protective grace, we have the comfort of His Fatherhood that is loaded with peace and tranquility.

➤ A Personal Relationship

The Supreme God, the King of the universe, is interested in our personal lives and family; our present and our future. Just like every good earthly father cares for the life of each of his own children, so our Heavenly Father cares and gets involved with every aspect of our lives, not presumptuously or dictatorially, but gently and respectfully.

The Father acts in the lives of those who seek Him and give Him the space to work. Our Father will never disappoint us: "If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more your Heavenly Father who is in heaven will give all good things to those who ask Him" (Matthew 7:11).

➤ Receiving the Fullness of Life

When we become the children of God we are able to put away poor self-esteem, inadequacy, insecurity, timidity, betrayal, religiosity, the fear of our own earthly father, unworthiness, trauma, together with other emotional problems. These things keep us from living the fullness of life.

As new creation beings, in Christ we have fullness of life.

The Prodigal Son

Jesus deals with this very topic in the parable of the prodigal son. In Luke 15:11-24 we read:

➤ Took Inheritance and Left

Then he said: "a certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me'. So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son

gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

➤ *Lost All and Was Starving*

But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in the land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of the country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

➤ *Decided to Go Home to Live As Servant*

But when he came to himself, he said: 'how many of my father's hired servants have bread and nothing to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.

➤ *Was Received as Son*

But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.

It is important to highlight the fact that the word "servant" in the original language makes reference to a person who has been hired for a particular reason, as in the case of a slave. A servant was hired by his own master.

Our Heavenly Father

Even though the parable of Jesus can be interpreted in many ways, the most important aspect of this story is the love the father displays toward a rebellious son.

The young man demanded from his father what he would have inherited eventually, and then he wasted it while living in sin. As he was feeding the swine and suffering from hunger, the young man came to himself and said: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."

Here we see the young man, having lost his dignity, choosing to go back to his father as a servant and not a son. In fact, he

remembers his father's house and the abundance enjoyed by the servants. He finds it easier to identify with the servants than with his own father, whom he had dishonored.

Because of his rebellion, he disqualified himself from the position he once held and enjoyed, lowering his stature from that of a son to that of a servant.

The story continues by saying that while he was still a great way off, the father saw him, and ran toward him to welcome him home once again. This son repeated what he had rehearsed while with the swine, saying that he was no longer worthy to be called a son, but would now like to be accepted as a servant.

The father did not even consider his request, but immediately restored him to the royalty and nobility that he enjoyed prior to his departure.

The father did not discuss the son's experience or where he had been; he didn't want to know how the son had wasted his inheritance. He wasn't looking for the reason why he left in the first place.

The father knew only one thing: that his son was lost but now he was found; that he was dead but now was alive again. The father did not assign him to hard labor; or wait for him with a stick in hand in order to beat him. He did not send him to the servants' quarters, so that he could decide the kind of punishment his son deserved.

➤ *His Great Love*

Let's consider the great love with which the heavenly Father loves His own children. Many of us may have had great fathers: exemplary, loving, and full of grace. Many others were less fortunate.

Our relationship with our actual biological father usually becomes the model for relating to our Heavenly Father.

➤ *Not Like Earthly Father*

He is not a man that He would lie; He does not disappoint; He doesn't leave us alone; He does not abandon; He does not betray; He does not abuse; He is not demanding; He does not presume, nor is He fake: but is real, truthful, full of grace and goodness. Our heavenly Father is unchanging. We must not be afraid of Him. He has dealt with us in a respectful and dignified way, even if our choices and decisions were contrary to His will.

The apostle Paul wrote, "If we are unfaithful, yet He remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

➤ *Fear keeps us from receiving*

Fear keeps the children of God from experiencing the fullness of sonship. Many Christians live in the house of the Father, but act like servants, or slaves, fearing the Father as if He was a master. They see God as severe, condemning, angry, impatient, hard and unable to deal with human weaknesses.

But in the word of God, we discover how much the Father loves His own children.

In 1 John 4:16 we read: "and we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him."

In 1 John 3:1a we find: "behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us...";

In the gospel of John 17:23 Jesus says to the Father: "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."

Through this last verse, we can know that God loves us exactly the same way He loved His own Son Jesus.

➤ *Become Intimate with Him*

To better understand how much God loves us, we must observe the intimate rapport that Jesus has with His Father, as clearly expressed in scripture. Jesus enjoys a very intimate and intense relationship with His Father. Their relationship has precedence over every other issue of life. For Jesus, fellowship with the Father is an absolute necessity, and it was confirmed by His diligence in rising early in the morning to meet with Him.

Jesus says: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9b).

Jesus is the exact representation of His Father: "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30).

It is impossible not to become like the person we admire the most.

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit through Mary; however, He was born and lived as a man. When He came to Earth, He laid aside His rights and privileges as God. He lived on this earth as the Son of Man, the Last Adam. We must understand that as Son of Man, He had to learn how to relate to God the Father, and in submission, obey all His commands.

Jesus needed to develop His relationship with His Father. In fact, Hebrews 5:8 says: “Though he was the Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.”

Even Jesus, like a man, had to learn the scriptures and “grow in wisdom, in stature, and in grace before God and man” (Luke 2:52).

We’re Accepted in Christ

You might ask: How is it possible that a holy, just, and pure God could accept me with all my weaknesses, my past, and all my insufficiencies?

The answer is quite simple. “Therefore, in all things He (Jesus) had to be made like His brethren (us), that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).

And going on in Hebrews, “seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16).

➤ *Through His Atoning Sacrifice*

We could never be accepted by God apart from Christ and apart from faith in His atoning sacrifice.

From the very first day we gave our heart to the Lord, the Holy Spirit grafted us into Christ, and for this reason the word of God says: “If any man be in Christ he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

➤ *To Be New Creations*

Obviously, only those who live in Christ have become a new creation.

The new creation is made in the image of Christ; therefore, when the Father looks at believers, He sees them exactly in the same way He sees His Son Jesus. This is the work of the power of His grace operating in each of His children.

In Hebrews 1:5; 3:5-6 it is written: “You are my Son, today I have begotten you,” and again: “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.” “and Moses indeed was faithful in all His house (God’s) as a servant..., but Christ as a Son (is faithful) over his own house...”

Moses as a servant was faithful “in all Gods house,” but Christ as a son is faithful “over His own house.”

➤ *Co-Heirs with Jesus*

We are of Christ and in Christ, and He, as an Heir, has made us all co-heirs with Him “over His house.”

In Hebrews, we continue to read: “I will declare (Jesus is speaking) your name to my brethren...” and; “here am I (Jesus) and the children whom God has given me”; and; “therefore, in all things he had to be made like his brethren...” (Hebrews 2:12a;13b:17).

Jesus was made to be like us in order to “...Bring many sons (us) to glory...” (Hebrews 2:10).

Sons of God Become Manifest

The Spirit of Christ within us allows us to act and further His work on this earth. An acceleration of this progress will begin as the “sons (children) of God” become manifest.

The apostle Paul wrote, “for the earnest expectations of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:19).

Not only is mankind longing to be totally set free from sin and its degradation, the whole creation of God also intensely desires to be delivered and restored to the original intent of God. Before this can take place, the children of God must rise and take their place.

When the Lord promised to Abram that his descendants could not be counted and that they would be like the sand of the seashore Abram answered: “Lord God, what will you give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus ... Look, you have given me no offspring” (Genesis 15:2-3).

➤ *Sons receive inheritance*

Abram understood that it should not be a servant who would inherit all his wealth, because an inheritance belongs to a son. This is a principle that God Himself has determined and has confirmed by sending His own Son.

God did not send a servant or someone who might have been His slave to save the world. This world was, and still is, God’s. He could send none other than His own Son, not only to fulfill the need for a perfect sacrifice, but also for ownership and inheritance sake.

God created the world; entrusted it to Adam, but Adam abdicated his role as a son, making himself a servant to Satan through the fall.

Note: Luke 3:38 declares Adam as the son of God. ... the son of Adam, the son of God.

Jesus came to pay the price for the redemption of humanity, and for the purpose of restoring mankind to their original position as "sons."

➤ *Difference Between Sons and Servants*

Both servants and sons serve in the house of the father, but the mentality that governs their behavior differs greatly. For this reason, I want to point out some of the mindsets that distinguish one from the other. This is to communicate needed truths to set the children of God free from an erroneous, preconceived ideas of servant-hood and slavery.

Sons	Servants
Filled with reverential awe of father	Are afraid of their master
Sit at the table with their father	Serve father and sons
Work according to heart of father	Work according to rules
Have an ownership/ heir mentality	Have a union mentality
Are corrected	Are judged
Covered by the father's grace	Subject to the law of their master
Interested in improving father's image	Interested in improving own image
Double portion anointing	No anointing transferred*

* See 2 Kings 2

➤ *Spirit of Adoption*

Paul wrote, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba (daddy), father!" therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ (Galatians 4:6-7).

God calls us "sons" because He has adopted us. The spirit of adoption rests within His children, crying out, "Abba Father!" We, who once were fatherless, have been adopted by God and established in His great family.

Becoming a part of His family cannot be deserved or earned. Just as salvation is a gift from God, so is His fatherhood.

Christ died for you, not only to give you a new life in Him, but so that you may enjoy intimate fellowship with your heavenly Father, who never wants you to be away from Him again.

Lesson Three

Two Baptisms

There are two baptisms we will discover in this lesson – water baptism and the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

In order to receive the maximum that God has prepared for our lives, it is necessary to follow His directives.

Following the footsteps of our Lord Jesus and fulfilling His command regarding baptism in water, will allow us to be identified with Him in His death and His resurrection. When we ask Jesus to baptize us with His Holy Spirit, we will receive the power to become an effective witness for Him.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He commanded His disciples to do two things – to continue to baptize in water as He did while ministering on this earth, and to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit from Heaven so that they could become effective witnesses for Him.

Part of Great Commission

In the Gospel of Mark, we find this last command of Jesus before ascending to His Father.

In Mark 16:15-20 we read: And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized (water baptism) will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues (baptism in the Holy Spirit); they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen!

WATER BAPTISM

The first of the two baptisms we will study is water baptism.

➤ *Definition*

The word "baptism" means to wet with liquid through immersion, or to submerge in liquid until completely covered by the liquid. In this context the body is immersed in water until completely covered.

The word “baptism” is not a translation, but rather a transliteration of the Greek word, “baptismo” and was used when something was totally immersed. An example is being dyed or baptized into a new color.

➤ *Jesus, Our Example*

Jesus, Himself, was baptized, being completely immersed by John the Baptist in the Jordan river.

Jesus' baptism symbolized His death and resurrection. Death as He was immersed in the water, and resurrection as He came out of that same water. In the same way, we obey the command of Jesus to be baptized, basing our faith in His sacrificial death for our forgiveness.

Simply explained, obeying the command of Jesus regarding baptism is to identify with His death, His burial, and His resurrection. With immersion in water, we symbolically participate in His death and burial. With emersion from the water, we participate in His resurrection to newness of life. We bury our sins in the sea of God's forgetfulness, and we come out redeemed to a new life.

➤ *His Baptism*

Matthew (one of Jesus' disciples, who wrote the first book of the New Testament), records the great event of the Lord's baptism. In Matthew 3:13 thru 17 we read: **Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”**

➤ *Heaven's Response*

In Matthew 3:17, we discover how the Father responds to the humility and obedience of Jesus. The heavens opened as He arose from the waters. All of heaven, the angels, and hell itself with all its demons, were witnesses to Jesus' declared commitment to be forever in alliance and united to the will and purpose of His Father.

Our heavenly Father does not remain indifferent when any of His children publicly declare their commitment to follow Him all their days. Christianity is not like a pair of shoes worn only for a season of time or until they wear out. It is a lifetime commitment

to follow the Lord and do His will. He is a good and great God, faithful to His word, and gives us all that is good for our souls in the Name of His Son Jesus!

Following Jesus in water baptism demonstrates our obedience, our intent to be faithful to Him, and it will cause Him to respond quickly to our needs in unusual and marvelous ways.

God will open the heavens and cause His favor to be poured out. He makes known to all His commitment to His child, powerfully declaring: "This is My beloved child in whom I am well pleased."

➤ *Jesus Baptized Others*

In John 4:1 we read, Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John..."

Jesus, just like John, made disciples and baptized them.

➤ *It's Commanded*

In Matthew 28:19-20 we read: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..."

We should follow the example of our Teacher, our role model. We need to be baptized in water, and afterwards baptize anyone who accepts Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

➤ *Our Testimony*

It is importance to belong to and attend regularly, a local church that believes in the ordinance of water baptism. If you haven't been baptized, ask your pastor of baptize you in water, fulfilling in this way a marvelous transaction between you and heaven. Invite others, such as the members of your family and your friends, to be eyewitnesses of your choice to follow Jesus. Your decision may well be a way to lead them to Christ.

➤ *Our Commitment*

Let us obey our heavenly Father's command, following the example that Jesus left us and be baptized in waters. In this way we will die to self-dependence, while acknowledging and declaring our dependence upon God. His favor and His grace will follow our lives when we openly declare our surrender to His will.

BAPTISM IN HOLY SPIRIT

The second baptism, is the baptism in the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in unknown tongues. According to the Scriptures, tongues can be either heavenly language, like that of angels, or an earthly language, like the language of nations, other than our own.

Jesus instructed the believers to wait in Jerusalem for the power of God to come upon them.

Commanded by Jesus

After His death and resurrection, when Jesus was talking to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, He said,

Luke 24:49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.

And then even as He was leaving this earth, He said,

Acts 1:8 You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

In the verses we call The Great Commission, Jesus said,

Mark 16:15-18 "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Who is the Holy Spirit?

To understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it is necessary to first understand the Person of the Holy Spirit and His role as God.

In the first two verses of the Bible we read: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:1-2).

➤ Third Person of the Godhead

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Godhead. Just as we are one person and yet are spirit, soul, and body, God is made up of three parts –The Father, His Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. He is a triune being.

Since creation, we see the Holy Spirit active and operational. He is the Person of the Godhead that acts as the Executor of the will of the Father.

Someone once described the Godhead in the following terms:

**“The Father thought it,
the Son said it,
and the Holy Spirit did it.”**

Take time to think this through again,

**The Father originates the plan,
the Son, the "Word of God," orders the plan,
and the Holy Spirit executes the plan.**

The Bible consists of two Testaments, the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, God originates the plan of salvation.

In the New Testament, Jesus, through His death and resurrection, orders the plan of salvation.

Now the Holy Spirit executes the plan of salvation by revealing it to humanity. The Holy Spirit reveals and glorifies Christ, and reminds us of the words and works of Christ. Not only does He reveal the work of the cross, but He also transforms our lives, conforming us daily, more and more, to the image, or nature, of Christ.

Before Jesus died on the cross, He spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit, that would fill the believer with all spiritual blessing from the Father. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would be sent to be our helper, to teach us, heal us, restore us, and remind us of His words and instructions.

➤ *Our Helper, Our Teacher*

In John 14: 26 we read, *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

This passage describes some of the functions of the Holy Spirit, but not all of them. In fact, He also comes to fill our lives with the power to be witnesses for Christ.

➤ *Our Empowerment*

Jesus said in Acts 1:8 *you shall receive power.*

At Jesus' ascension, nearly five hundred people were present, but even though all of them heard His final words, only one hundred

and twenty obeyed the command to go to Jerusalem and await the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The First Baptism in the Holy Spirit

We refer to this event as the Day of Pentecost.

This event is told in Acts 2:1-4: "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

➤ All Spoke in Tongues

I must point out that all that were present were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. God desires to fill all of us with His Holy Spirit, and desires (as we read what happened in the day of Pentecost) all those who ask Him to receive His gift.

➤ A Promise for All

Some have thought that the gift of the Holy Spirit was available only for the early disciples, but Peter declared in Acts 2:39: "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

➤ To Be His Witnesses

It will be impossible to be effective witnesses of the grace of God without the power and empowerment of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Only the Spirit of God can make effective the Name of Jesus in both our lives and ministries. Jesus said that without Him we can do nothing – His presence is felt in us by the power of the Holy Spirit – He alone can make real and tangible the person of Jesus Christ to our lives.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit, also known as being sealed with His presence in our lives, is a gift that comes from God, and is accomplished by Jesus Christ, the Baptizer.

This gift must be received by faith in the same way we received Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. We believe, and therefore we receive.

Paul, Our Example

The apostle Paul, who said of himself that he spoke in tongues more than anybody, taught that we should speak in tongues as much as possible.

Instructions of Jude

Jude, in verse twenty of his letter, instructs us to build and strengthen ourselves praying in the Holy Spirit. **But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit..."**

Tongues Edifies/Builds Up

Praying in tongues edifies our spirit, or our inner man.

The gift of tongues is a clear manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers.

Therefore, don't fear receiving this wonderful gift; without a doubt, it will be an unforgettable experience.

In the beginning it will seem strange to your mind, but once you yield to the Holy Spirit's guidance and hand Him the reins of your life, you will never be the same.

John 14:13-14 says: "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

By faith, pray with your heart and ask Jesus to fill you with His Holy Spirit. You can use your own words or simply say the following prayer.

Pray With Me

"Father, your word tells me that You not only desire for me to be saved, but that You also want my life to be filled with Yourself. You desire to empower my life with your precious Holy Spirit. In the same way I have received Christ, I now receive the infilling of your Holy Spirit, according to the promise found in Your word. I will open my mouth and by faith I will begin to speak in an unknown language, as the Holy Spirit gives me the utterance; by faith I know that You will perform a miracle in my mouth allowing me to speak in tongues of angels. I ask it all in the Name of Jesus. Amen!"

My dear friend, open your mouth: by faith you will be able to speak in an unknown language, and begin to discover how God can manifest Himself in your life.

Jesus in John 4:13-14 said: "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.

Lesson Four

Living the Spirit-Filled Life

Every child of God has the responsibility to strengthen his or her relationship with the Lord by developing intimate times of fellowship (talking, praying, worshipping) with God. A life filled with the Spirit will allow us to be bold and effective, having received assurance of His guidance, wisdom, and trustworthiness.

As Jesus Lived

As we have already mentioned in a previous chapter, Jesus did not come into the world, as a man, having already mastered obedience; He became obedient through the things he suffered.

In Hebrews 5:8 we read, **though a Son, He learned obedience through the things He suffered.**

This scripture underlines the human and spiritual formation process to which Jesus submitted for the purpose of becoming disciplined for the mission and task He received from His Father. Christian character, together with spiritual maturity, produced disciples filled with the Holy Spirit and faith.

If Jesus needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit, how much more we!

In John 3:34 it is written: **“for He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.”**

We must remember that, even though Jesus is the Son of God, He came to earth as the Son of Man. In all His earthly ministry, we find Him completely relying on God so that He would know what to do.

Jesus, as our example and model, leaves us some marvelous footsteps to follow. We are called to represent Christ and do His works. To that end, we must be equipped and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said: **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father”** (John 14:12).

This is possible because Romans 8:11 declares: **“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”**

By the Holy Spirit of God that dwells in us, we are made alive and able to do the same works accomplished by our Lord Jesus

Christ. In fact, Jesus said: as the father has sent me, so send I you. It is not possible to do the same works by our own ability; we must therefore be filled with the power of His Spirit. Acts 10:38 says: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, Who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."

His glorious ministry on the earth started in the power of the Spirit, and was fulfilled and finished by the same anointing and authority.

The Teacher Himself (Jesus) is often found apart with the sole purpose of praying for His ministry which continues today, even as our High Priest. When we pray or spend time in communion or fellowship with the Lord and meditation of His Word, we grow spiritually. The increase of the anointing is largely the outcome of a continual fellowship one develops with the Lord. Prayer is an essential instrument, because it is like placing wood on the fires of faith. This well spent time produces much zeal in our service for God. Of Jesus it was prophesied: Zeal for your house has consumed me. The same anointing of power and authority of Jesus is available to us today.

In Acts 1:8 it is written: "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all of Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

We receive power from the Lord when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us, filling us with divine abilities to accomplish every good work. Only in this way will we be able to demonstrate His miraculous power to those that still don't know Him.

EXAMPLES FROM BOOK OF ACTS

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles we are told of several men of God that Luke declared were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Stephen

In Acts 6:5,8; and 7:55 it is written: "Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenist, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution"; and: "and Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people."; and: "but he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the Glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

Stephen was not an apostle, but a common disciple that understood the necessity to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He had been chosen as a deacon, in order to assist daily the widows. Even though he was busy every day in serving, he found a way to stay

in close fellowship with the Lord, allowing the Holy Spirit to continue filling his life with the anointing. From Stephen we learn that to be filled with the Holy Spirit we must humbly serve God's cause.

Philip

Even Philip, who was chosen as a deacon together with Stephen to minister, serve and assist widows, was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was so faithful in the little things that the Lord entrusted him with a great evangelistic ministry. In Acts chapter eight we read about how the Lord used Philip to perform miracles.

Acts 8:6-8 tells us: "and the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean Spirits, crying with a loud voice came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city."

Acts 8:13 continues: "then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done."

Acts 8:29, 39, says: "then the Spirit said to Philip..." and: "... the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more..."

From Philip's life, we learn humility and promptness in obedience. When the Holy Spirit speaks to us, it is necessary to quickly obey. Those who are filled with the Spirit live a very productive life. The Holy Spirit does not hand out tasks to the first one available, or to anyone who is doubtful and wavering.

Swift obedience makes the believer like a tree that gives fruit in its season and in the time established by the Lord. The more we obey the Spirit, the more we are filled with the manifestation of His Glory.

Barnabas

Even Barnabas was used by the Lord, being a man filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 11:22, 24 says: "... And they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch ... for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord."

Barnabas was sent by the apostles in Jerusalem to Antioch to exhort the brethren to remain faithful to the Lord. Barnabas had developed an altruistic spirit that allowed him to exhort, prod, and encourage God's people to remain firm, even though they daily faced much opposition. We must all be filled with the Spirit as

well, in order to help and assist others to reach and fulfill the purpose that God has for their lives. From Barnabas we learn humility in submission to the different ministries of the church.

Paul

The Apostle Paul was so filled with the Holy Spirit that when he laid his body on the young man's corpse, it was brought back to life.

In Acts 19:11 it is written: "now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil Spirits went out of them."

Peter

Acts 5:15-16 says: "so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people or those who were tormented by unclean Spirits, and they were all healed."

Peter and John

Both, Peter and John are examples of how the evidence of the fullness of the Spirit is not limited to our inner experience. From both of them was manifest a tangible power that healed the sick, and delivered the possessed, oppressed, and tormented. It wasn't necessary to touch them with their hands because from their lives flowed a delivering virtue of the Spirit.

A life that humbly and quickly obeys, serves, submits to, and depends on the Holy Spirit will, without a doubt, make a great difference on this earth among those who serve and don't serve the Lord. None of the miracles, healings or deliverances was a product of man's capability. In fact, after the healing of the paralytic before the gate called Beautiful, the amazed bystanders looked at Peter and John as if the healing of that man was caused by their ability.

Acts 3:11-12 says: "Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

From this passage of scripture, we learn that the Holy Spirit manifests Himself through those who truly recognize the source of the power. In this particular case, glory was preceded by humility. Humbleness of the vessel, through which God desires to

manifest Himself, is essential; it is the only way the Kingdom of God can advance. The Glory of God will manifest itself through those who acknowledge their powerlessness and inability to do the works of Christ and depend completely upon the work of the Holy Spirit. Both Peter and John had learned this principle, and for this reason they were greatly used by God. The key to operating in the supernatural is humility and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

To better understand our responsibility as Christians, and to have access to this divine provision, we need to educate ourselves regarding the principles that govern the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Be Filled

To be filled with the Spirit is necessary and indispensable. This experience is a unique gift from God. Regeneration and baptism into the Body of Christ are accomplished by the Holy Spirit, and happen one time at conversion, but being filled with the Holy Spirit is a continual experience.

This is based upon the scripture found in Ephesians 5:18: "... be filled with the Spirit."

The command: ... be filled with the Spirit is given to us together with an admonishment, "do not be drunk with wine." Drunkenness inhibits the capacity of a person to control oneself. The nature of a Christian life that is controlled by the Spirit is compared to a drunk person that has no control of themselves. The meaning of the word "filled" in the original language is "control." The Spirit of God must have full control and total dominion over a believer's life. The more control we yield to the Spirit of God, the greater the anointing will flow out of our lives.

Show Good Fruit

A person that is filled with the Spirit is easily recognized by their good fruit, above ordinary behavior, and good works. The works of the flesh manifest when we are governed by our own passions.

In Galatians 5:19-25 we read: "now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you before hand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are

Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

From this passage of scripture, we can conclude that those who walk by the Spirit demonstrate a personal consecration toward God and are able to produce in abundance the fruit of repentance. The Spirit will produce in them the virtues of Christ, making evident the character of God the Father.

We must also emphasize that the more we are filled with the Spirit, the more credible and truthful we will become. Some people desire to be filled so desperately that they are not willing to let the Spirit fill them gradually. For this reason, many in this process have allowed Satan to create in them a counterfeit anointing, having the appearance of the anointing. These types are easy to identify.

The anointing of the Spirit is indispensable for personal and spiritual maturity. It enables us to fulfill, with dignity and faithfulness, our Christian service.

Forsake the Natural

There is a contrast between a spiritual believer and someone who is governed by his own flesh.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14, the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians he states: "but the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

This scripture is quite clear, because it confirms that a person not yet saved or converted to Christ, cannot understand Christian spiritual principles. The unconverted natural man is dead, if his spirit is not first revived by personally accepting the sacrifice of Jesus. He remains ignorant of the knowledge of God and of spiritual matters.

➤ Don't Be Babies

Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3: "and I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"

➤ Not of the Flesh

Anyone guided and led by their flesh, human reasoning and the strength of their own will, is carnal. Such a person prioritizes his own desires, independently exercised, apart from and over the

will of God. Conversely, the spiritual man lives by the power of the Holy Spirit that operates within him. At the core, this person is submitted and surrendered to the Lordship and authority of Christ, allowing himself to be governed and guided in every aspect of his life.

In Galatians 2:20, the Apostle Paul declares: "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."

Paul was dead to himself and to his carnal impulses, so that from his life the powerful life of God could be made manifest. The Holy Spirit produces this kind of life in those who are completely surrendered to the will of the Father.

The believer needs to recognize how important it is to be filled with the Spirit and not allow himself to be guided by his own natural senses. When a person is led primarily by his natural instincts, they tend to react in the wrong way instead of acting accordingly in the right way to the hardships of life. Living instead by the Spirit, they would be able to face every situation with the wisdom in understanding that comes from above. Our natural senses and instincts need to be brought under the submission of the Holy Spirit, because they are God given, and not evil or wrong in and of themselves.

In 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Paul rebukes the believers at Corinth calling them "carnal," that is, controlled by the flesh or their carnal impulses. The only solution against carnality and being guided by the old nature is to live a life filled with the Spirit.

Be Filled with the Spirit

All Christian service must be accomplished, not according to personal capabilities, but by the grace and power supplied by the Holy Spirit.

➤ As First Believers

In Acts 4:31 we read: "and when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."

During a time of intense persecution, the church was found praying; afterward the Spirit filled everyone present with the boldness to preach and proclaim the gospel to the peoples. We must also note that these disciples were the same ones that received the baptism of the Holy Spirit as described in Acts chapter two. These were not baptized again, but were filled with the Holy Spirit to boldly accomplish the task of spreading the

gospel without fear. The empowerment of the Spirit allows us to serve the Lord defying any fear that could inhibit us from completing the work God has called us to.

➤ *As Paul Was*

When Paul was filled with the Spirit, he was immediately released to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God.

Acts 9:17, 20 tells us: "And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit" ... "immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God."

PRINCIPALS OF THE INFILLING

Ephesians 5:18 gives us three principles regarding being filled with the Spirit.

From Ephesians 5:18-21

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.

➤ *It's Commanded*

Believers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. Therefore, we must be continually filled with the Spirit for spiritual maturity and for service. It is not a suggestion but a command.

➤ *It's Conditional*

Being filled with the Spirit takes place in a believer as he obediently follows the scripture's commands.

➤ *It's Continual*

It is important how we spend our time if we are to stay filled. Just like an inebriated person must continually drink to stay drunk, so a believer must continually drink from the Spirit's fountain to stay filled. The anointing in a believer's life is due to his constant seeking of the face of God.

Even though we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit, there are some indispensable conditions for being filled. It could surprise us that in the scriptures we find no explicit command to pray in order to be filled with the Spirit. The command itself clearly indicates the need for a healthy relationship with the Holy

Spirit. Adherence to the conditions that govern our relationship with the Spirit determines the quantity of Spirit that fills us.

From Ephesians 4:25-32

The fullness of the Spirit is determined by the following principles.

Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.

Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

➤ *Grieve not the Holy Spirit*

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.

The context of Ephesians 4 is an exhortation regarding sin and it deals with Christian character. Believers are warned not to lie; not to allow anger to overtake them; to let go of all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and forgive one another.

When a believer commits these sins, he grieves the Holy Spirit. Sinfulness, having grieved the Holy Spirit, will obstruct him from being filled. We must point out that these sins stem from character weaknesses, and grieve the Holy Spirit dwelling within.

➤ *From 1 Thessalonians 5:14-20*

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

➤ *Quench not the Holy Spirit*

Do not quench the Spirit.

➤ *Do Not Despise Prophecies*

Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

The context of this passage of scripture pertains to ministry or service to God. The believer is exhorted to pray without ceasing; to give thanks in all things; and not despise prophesying.

Don't Reject the Plans of God

When believers pour a cold glass of water on the fires of ministry, they quench the Spirit.

Remaining closed to the new things that the Holy Spirit desires to do is to quench the Spirit, and consequently causes us to miss out on the blessings of His actions as He seeks those to work through who are more sensitive and available, in order to accomplish God's work.

Luke 7:30 tells us, *but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.*

By rejecting the ministry of John the Baptist and not allowing themselves to be baptized by him, the Pharisees rejected the plan of God.

When we lose our spiritual flexibility, our hearts are hardened. The consequences for this behavior, that is to refuse the new thing that God desires to do, will cause believers to abort the plan God has prepared for their lives. If we reject the Holy Spirit, we will quench His purpose. When the Holy Spirit speaks, we cannot pretend we don't hear Him. We should never waste the opportunity He gives us to be used by Him. It is not a good thing to avoid those moments in which the Lord wants to manifest His power through us. May we never obtusely throw water on the fire, quenching the Spirit of God, and hindering the rapport He would like to develop with us.

Don't Fear Men

The fire of the Spirit in us is quenched whenever we fear man, fear failure, and fear to make mistakes. Timidity and fearfulness that God will not respond to our faith actions are powerful weapons in the hands of our adversary. The antidote is to grow in boldness, in trust, and above all in the indispensable gift of faith. This growth occurs by hearing, reading and meditating upon the Scriptures. When we obey, we place wood on the fires of the Holy Spirit, Who is more than happy to use us as His instruments to do the works of God's Kingdom.

WALK BY THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:16a I say then: Walk in the Spirit ...

“Walk” means "to conduct one’s own life.” Instead of living under the dominion of the old nature, believers are encouraged to place their lives under the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit.

Among other things, it is important to confess regularly our sin to the Lord. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

This practice will allow the believer to remain free from any sense of guilt and condemnation and give him the boldness to approach God without shame. In conclusion, cultivating an intimate and personal relationship with the Holy Spirit means:

- To see clearly the scope and purpose of our lives;
- Continually enjoy His guidance;
- Discern quickly any evil attempt to lead us away from the will of God;
- Understand more readily the movements and direction of the Holy Spirit;
- Become a more effective instrument in intercessory prayer for the increase of God's Kingdom and government on the earth;
- Be a bold witness for Jesus Christ;
- Live an incredible fruitful life.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Describe the spirit-filled life, answering the question is it optional or a command?

2. Give several principles of the spirit-filled life.

3, How do you know if you are living a spirit-filled life?

Lesson Five

Life's Manual – The Bible

Just as every sailor needs a compass to navigate efficiently, every Christian needs the Word of God to effectively navigate this life. Consulting this Manual of Life produces stability, balance, and the ability to face every situation with the greatest confidence in the character of God, knowing He can find a way to help us reach our destinations.

DIVINELY INSPIRED

For Doctrine – Correction – Instruction

The Apostle Paul removes every misunderstanding regarding the Bible and its origin when, writing to one of his sons in the Lord, he says, **all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work** (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The entire Bible comes from the mouth of God. His Word was given to us to protect us from false doctrines and heresies. It instructs us on how to live in righteousness so that we may be complete and fully prepared for whatever task God may need us for.

Is Eternal

We must also believe that the Word of God can not only be trusted for today, but that it is also everlasting. No other book has survived millennia like the Bible. Satan has tried to destroy it, discredit it, and sow doubts in the heart of man regarding it, but without success.

The Prophet Isaiah declares: **“the grass withers, and the flower fades, but the word of our God endures forever”** (Isaiah 40:8).

Later he declares, **“so shall My word be, that goes out of My mouth; it will not return to Me void, without first having accomplished that for which I have sent it”** (Isaiah 55:11).

The Word of God has been preserved and defended throughout times, seasons, tribulations, rejections, persecutions, hostilities, and apostasies. The Word of God is alive today, and it will always be the only fountain of truth that man can place his trust in and depend upon.

IT'S OUR COVENANT

In the Bible, we discover that we are children of God because we have received Jesus as our personal Savior.

John says: "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 (John 1:12-13).

This passage tells us that we have been given the right to become children of God. We were not born again through a human, mental process, but through a covenant with God ratified by Jesus, by the shedding of His blood on the cross.

God made a promise to Abraham, and in the book of Hebrews, we find written in very clear terms God's covenant with His people.

Hebrews 6:13-18 says, For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."

And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

This passage of scripture confirms that the covenant was by God's own initiative. Through this covenant, He bound himself to His own integrity, His perfect and just character. He sealed His covenant by swearing, giving Himself no way out; no other possibility.

2 Timothy 2:13 declares: "if we are unfaithful, He remains faithful, because He cannot deny himself."

God decided to act in a peremptory way, and His determination is immutable; unchangeable. This allows us to place our complete trust in His Word. We have accepted Him by faith, and by faith we have been baptized in water; by faith we are filled with the Holy Spirit and, therefore, by faith we must accept everything the Bible says that we are, that we can do, and that we can have. Our identity is in Christ because He is the Word of God made flesh.

OUR INSTRUCTION MANUAL

God Himself is the Guarantor of His Word, and He is powerful enough to bring it to pass.

For Fruitful and Victorious Life

The Word of God is our instruction manual. It explains how to live a fruitful and victorious daily life. It is filled with promises for every believer.

**Everything the Word of God says is truth;
Everything the Bible says I am, I am;
Everything it says I can have, I can have;
Everything it says I can do, I can do.**

Let there be no misunderstanding. God is faithful to His Word. If He said, "Let there be light," and light was and still is, we can be assured that everything He says about us is true also. So without a doubt, you are, you can have it, and you can do it.

For Guidance

The Bible is our guide, our point of reference, the only map to follow, to come out of every situation, dilemma, and any other negative situation possible. This Manual contains words of life and anyone who follows its instructions accurately, is guaranteed success and prosperity in every aspect of life. We research the Scriptures for instructions regarding choices we must make to reach the objectives of peace with God and His final approval of our lives.

In the Bible, we discover how the Lord has diligently and patiently prepared for us the only way for salvation. This reveals His great love for us.

In the Word, we find guidance for our lives so that we may always walk in the light. We can find how to have success in life's journey and how to guard our heart from bitterness and disappointment. We can find how to better face our everyday issues, challenging as they may be.

For Freedom from Bondage

Many suffer from social problems due to lack of knowledge making them very susceptible to deception. Such problems include difficult marital relationships, divorce, loneliness, sexual preferences, rebellion, oppression, depression, torment, poverty, death, religiosity, betrayal, adultery, the occult, magic, divination, and many other problems that enslave people and cause them to be overpowered and subdued by these vexations.

Research the scripture and find God's counsel for you regarding all of these problems. Discover how He can lead you out of every bondage and break every chain that has bound you; those stemming from involvement with the occult, prostitution, drugs, alcohol, and any other vice that can easily torment the life of any person.

Lights Our Path

The Word of God is our Manual to navigate through the many difficult situations that daily face us.

Psalm 119:105 says: "Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

When you don't know what to do, the Word of God helps you find the right path to come out of any problem you might be facing. The Bible has always been able to shed light in the mind and in the heart, so that you may know what to do, giving you the right course of action. The Bible is your guide. It is completely trustworthy and is your light in the midst of darkness.

Brings Victory over Satan

The Word of God is able to transform the human life, making it less vulnerable and susceptible to Satan's attacks. Let me give you an example: let's consider an empty glass. In reality, the glass is not empty but it is filled with air. As we slowly fill it with water, the air is displaced.

In Ephesians 2:2 the scripture says that Satan is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience."

In the person who has not yet believed the gospel (a child of disobedience) is manifest the prince of the power of the air, Satan. The unbeliever is full of air just like an empty glass. In the person that is born again is manifest the Holy Spirit, because he has obeyed the Word of God; he has repented and changed the course of his life. In the born-again spirit of a believer, all past negative experiences, fears, and wounds are part of the old nature.

BE FILLED WITH THE WORD

When we fill our lives with the Word of God, it is like filling the glass with water, and all past negative experiences, fears, wounds, and everything else that Satan used to dominate us with guilt and condemnation are displaced and start to wane and lose their grip. We begin to experience deliverance and the healing of our souls. Those concerns, negative thoughts and feelings of the past that preoccupy and plague many will begin to leave as you experience greater freedom with the filling of your life with God's word. Even once we have received Christ and have a recreated spirit and

are a new creation, our minds, still influenced by the old sinful nature, must be renewed, purified, and washed by the Word of God.

Brings Cleansing

Ephesians 5:26 says: "... cleansed with the washing of water by the word."

In John 15:3 Jesus said, you are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

Our spirit is clean because we have believed in Him and in His sacrifice, but our minds must be continually washed. Therefore, the negative air of our past will be removed from our lives when we fill it with the water of the Word of God.

Gives Protection

In the letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, he was exhorting them to wear spiritual armor and to strengthen themselves in the Lord and in His power. All the elements of the armor that Paul describes are for the protection and defense of the believer with the exception of one – the sword.

In Ephesians 6:17 we read: "and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

Equipping ourselves with the Word of God gives us leverage against our adversary when he comes to tempt us. When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert, he never replied or answered according to His thoughts, but in all three instances He defeated the enemy by quoting the Word of God. With every temptation by the enemy Jesus said: "it is written." The enemy must back off when faced with the Word of God because he knows that therein lays the authority. For this reason, the evil one, in order to have an advantage over the life of a believer, must deceive.

Knowing the Word of God, we increasingly take away from the enemy the possibility to deceive us and steal from us. This will bring us to experience more victories and fewer defeats.

Brings Prosperity and Success

In Joshua 1:8 God says to Joshua, "this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you'll make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Psalm One declares, blessed is the man who walks not in the council of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the

scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leave also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

Living according to the Word of God will cause us to live a blessed and prosperous life. Everything we do that is governed by the principles of God will win, flourish, and prosper.

If we desire to live successfully, we must offer our greatest commitment to the immutable Word of God. We cannot go wrong if we study and put into practice the Word of God.

Be Doers of the Word

James teaches us to be doers of the Word and not only hearers.

James 1:21b-22a Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only...

Lastly, Deuteronomy 8:3 declares: "...that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord."

If you will study the Bible and place your faith in God's covenant, all the blessings written in it will become yours, and you will live a fruitful and successful life, pleasing to the Lord.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Does our Bible contain the words of God to His people, or is the Bible the Word of God? Use scriptures to substantiate your answer.

2. Why is it important to study the Word of God?

3. Memorize this quotation and use it every day to build yourself up.

**Everything the Word of God says is truth;
Everything the Bible says I am, I am;
Everything it says I can have, I can have;
Everything it says I can do, I can do.**

Lesson Six

Being A Witness

One of the benefits of being filled with the Holy Spirit and obedience to the Word of God, is the divine enablement to speak to others about Jesus Christ. As believers, we must share the truths we have received with others, that is, that Christ came into the world to seek and save the lost. We are those instruments that He desires to use to fulfill this mandate. Let us, therefore, be available to be used by Him to share Jesus with others.

We have spoken about salvation, baptism in water, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, being filled with the Spirit, knowing the importance of God's Word and understanding His covenant with His people, and how important it is to be integrated in the family of God. All of these topics work together to prepare us to speak to others about Jesus and of that which He has accomplished in our lives.

Jesus Came to Save the Lost

All that Jesus has done for us, He desires to do for others as well. For this reason Jesus has made known to us the reason why He came.

Luke 19:10 says: "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

John 18:37 tells us: "Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

Jesus came so that through His sacrificial death all the world could be saved. With His death and resurrection He becomes the pioneer for a new cause, a new mandate; and when He ascended to Heaven, He transferred this new mandate to His disciples, His church, which includes you and I.

In Mark 16:15-20, we read about the conclusion of the earthly ministry of Jesus. Before ascending to heaven to start the next phase of His ministry as our High Priest He said: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

This passage of scripture is also known as the great commission of the church, our mandate. The gospel of the kingdom and the message of salvation must be preached to the ends of the earth. As believers and followers of Jesus, we cannot selfishly hoard for ourselves such a blessing and not share it with others.

Power to be Witnesses

Anyone can share the gospel with anybody else at anytime, but as it is with any other task, we want to make sure it is accomplished with the greatest effectiveness. Therefore, before we go and share this wonderful gospel with others, it behooves us to receive what we have spoken of in both the third and fourth chapters of this book, the infilling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 1:8 we read: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The first disciples patiently waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit, but once He came, He gave them the power to become bold and effective witnesses in sharing the gospel with others. They started sharing the good news of Jesus and harvesting souls for the kingdom of God. This activity is termed: "to evangelize," which is to share the good news of Jesus Christ and His marvelous plan of salvation with humanity.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

As believers, we have the responsibility to enter into the same cause and purpose for which God sent His only Son. As we have already stated, we want to fulfill this task in the most effective way. One of the keys is to listen and be led by the Holy Spirit because He creates the circumstances and the occasions to share the gospel of grace with others. Another key is to start with our immediate family, and from there go on to our neighbors; afterwards to our city, and then gradually, with everyone doing their part, to go to the nations of the world and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

One thing that is very important not to forget is that we are not the savior. Jesus is the only Savior. Our only task is to speak of Him; then it is up to the Holy Spirit to convict people of sin and reveal Christ. Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and we must work together to fulfill this mandate. Jesus is the message and we are the channel through which the Holy Spirit will convince others

regarding sin, the coming judgment, and the available righteousness provided in Christ for them.

Pray

In order to become faithful and effective witnesses for Jesus, it is imperative for us to develop a lifestyle that is concentrated on prayer. Without prayer, evangelizing others will prove unsuccessful.

Believe it!

Another key regarding this cause is to share the message of salvation with the most common and simple terms possible.

The simple message of the gospel contains enough power in and of itself. It does not need to be embellished, and it can never be improved. The Word of God and its message is powerful enough to save.

Be Bold

Many Christians lack the courage and the boldness to communicate the message of the gospel to others. This happens because of fears, lack of motivation, disappointment from past experiences, rejection from others, and many other reasons that keep one's soul imprisoned, creating a sense of weakness, powerlessness, inadequacy and timidity. The fear of failure is one of the greatest obstacles hindering many from sharing the message of Christ. The scriptures declare that the fear of man is a snare; but we must resist the temptation to allow fear to control us and keep us from relating to our neighbor with boldness. That which we cannot do on our own, the Lord will intervene and do for us.

In Luke 9:26 Jesus declares: "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels."

Ask God to give you the boldness to speak to others, sharing with them the most powerful and transforming message of the ages. We should never argue or fight with our audience or listener. Allow the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work in the listeners.

In Hebrews 4:12 we read: "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Avoid Strife

The Word itself is able to work in the hearts of people. Avoid all empty and vain disputes. Paul said to young Timothy: "But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife" (2 Timothy 2:23).

When we share the gospel with other people, it is important to maintain a compassionate disposition. As much as it is possible, we must be good listeners and allow others to express their own opinions without losing our patience and interest in what they have to say.

If what they say is important for them, it may also be important for us; therefore, before starting the dialogue, ask the Holy Spirit to guide and direct the conversation.

Walk in Love

Find the right balance between strength and humility. Do not be abrasive and hard, but walk in love and meekness. Jesus said: "the meek shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

Be Patient

If you wish to bring people to Christ, it's necessary to share the message with much patience. Luke 21:19 says: "By your patience possess your souls."

The moment we lose our patience, we frustrate the Holy Spirit and the conversation begins to head in a negative and contradictory direction. Avoid this at all costs.

Exhibit Joy

Two other qualities needed to effectively witness about Jesus, are the ability to demonstrate great joy and friendliness.

In Nehemiah 8:10 we read: "... for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Sadness, depression, anger (especially toward the world for all of its problems), wrath, a mad look, negative behavior, or a sense of defeat, communicates weakness to others.

Just like Jesus, we must learn to live in this world, and at the same time not be a part of it. Jesus had the ability to be friends with sinners and yet not allowing their sin to cause Him to sin. After all, it's the sick who need a doctor not the healthy. Jesus believed in friendship with the sinner for the purpose of establishing trust between Him and His listeners to reach them with the truth. Friendship lays a foundation of trust, enlarging our evangelistic platform from which we can testify of Jesus with

greater boldness. In all things, it is important to keep the conversation positive. In fact, Jesus came to overcome evil with good, and His example brings us to the last quality necessary to effectively share with others.

Paul Speaks of Love

➤ It's All Important

The Apostle Paul writes to the church at Corinth saying: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away (1 Corinthians 13:1-8).

These words are keys to reaching the unsaved world. Love is the fundamental attribute that sustains and upholds effective witnessing to reach the people of all generations.

If we don't reach out to the world because we love them, we will be like sounding brass or clanging cymbals and God knows that today, in the world, there is much noise and very little substance.

Love is the very essence of God, and to share it with others when we speak of Jesus, is the greatest proof of His existence and of His desire to transform their lives.

➤ It's Love, Not Religion

It is the love of God, not religion, that overcomes the world. The sound and noise of religion (religiosity) was never able to transform the life of anyone. Instead of setting free those enslaved to sin, it puts them in greater bondage. Religiosity is a counterfeit of the true love with which God, through Christ, desires to reach humanity. Jesus is the love of God manifested to man; therefore, without His love for the lost world, we will be just like any other religious noise. Love must be the motivating factor to win souls for Jesus; after all God sent Him because He so loved the world

(mankind). Without compromise, we must have the same attitude the Apostle Paul had when he said: "to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

➤ *Love Like Jesus Loved*

We will never lead to Christ the people that we privately criticize and condemn. If we are suspicious, insensitive, haughty, and not able to endure all things for the gospel sake, we cannot be successful in this task. If we desire to speak to others according to the plan of salvation designed by God, it is not only necessary, but indispensable, for us to love the sinner we are trying to reach. Love never fails. Love wins the world, leading souls to Christ one at a time.

Let's be courageous enough to love like Jesus loved; let us reach our world with the same love with which Jesus reached and saved us. Let us go and share the good news with others!

➤ *Love, Our Greatest Weapon*

1 Corinthians 13:13 states: "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

You have faith? Wonderful! You have hope? Great! Use the greater weapon of love against every evil opposed to the greatest news ever shared. "...Overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

Be courageous and share Jesus with others. Through obedience to the Great Commission, others will come to Jesus and your hearts will be filled with joy. Your life will be filled with a satisfaction you have never experienced before. Your family, your neighbors, your city, and your country are waiting for you. Be courageous and go! You will be their blessing.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Is being a witness a suggestion or is it a command for a spirit-filled believer?

2. Give six principles of being a good witness.

Lesson Seven

Healing

God's plan to reach the world was through the healing of the sick. Jesus healed the sick everywhere He went. The disciples healed the sick. Peter and John healed the lame man and five thousand were added to the church. The story of the early church all through the book of Acts is a telling of the miraculous power of God. But somehow, over a period of time, the church has allowed this marvelous gift of God to become hidden.

When the power of God is manifested through the name of Jesus, and signs, wonders and healing miracles take place, the world will believe Jesus is the Son of God. The miraculous power of God overcomes all obstacles to belief in Him.

Part of the Great Commission is to lay hands on the sick so they may be healed. This mandate given to the first church must be applied even in today's church in the same way it was described in the book of Acts. Jesus came to save, deliver, and heal; He said: "as the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21).

It's time to go and bring healing to a needy world; releasing God's touch upon their lives. "...they that know their God, shall be strong and do mighty exploits" (Daniel 11:32b).

Welcome to, what will likely be the most controversial chapter of this book. The topic of healing and the ministry of healing, are among the most misunderstood and maligned subjects. Ignorance is not bliss; it is destructive. So, I will do my best to be clear and thorough.

Jesus is not only our Savior and Lord, He is also our Healer. There is much debate in the Body of Christ as to whether or not healing is for today.

Personal Testimony

My personal experience confirms a healing Jesus. He healed my five-year old daughter, Tiffany, of a malignant tumor over her adrenal gland, called "neuroblastoma."

The entire medical staff at Yale New Haven Hospital was so amazed; they did not know how to handle this incredible divine intervention. The miracle took place before a team of doctors who were left dumbfounded, and who stated to me, as I will never forget, "We have seen the cells of a benign tumor turn malignant, but never malignant cells turn benign under our observation."

Four days after Tiffany went into the hospital. she came out completely whole. Today, my daughter is married and is a mother, enjoying perfect health. She is not the only one I know that has experienced God's healing power. Suffice it to say that Jesus continues to confound, even today, the wisest of scholars. Therefore, the issue for me is settled and I can speak about it with conviction. Jesus is a healing Jesus. Jesus is our Healer.

HEALING OVER 2,000 YEARS AGO

Isaiah prophesied it. In Isaiah 53:5 we read: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed."

Jesus was indeed wounded to pay the price for our breaking His laws. He was bruised for our propensity to sin, which is that bent in our heart to want to sin. He was chastised so that we may have peace with God and with one another. And ultimately He received 39 stripes on His back for all of our healing.

Peter Confirmed This Prophecy

The Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2:24 declares: "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness— by whose stripes you were healed." Isaiah says: "by His stripes we are healed." And Peter says: "by whose stripes you were healed."

Isaiah prophesies it in the present tense, and Peter declares it in the past tense. So, healing is not something we are supposed to wait for; because the transaction with sin and the sickness it produces, took place on the cross of Calvary. When Jesus received the lashes on His back, He paid the price for our healing. This happened 2000 years ago, meaning that over the last 2 millennia healing has been freely available to anyone who believes in God's report. So, the only two scriptures available in the Word to confirm that Jesus has already paid for it, unequivocally declare that no more price must be, or can be, paid. Salvation, healing and deliverance go hand-in-hand and were unquestionably paid for at the cross.

Why Some Are Not Healed

If our healing took place 2000 years ago, why are many of us still sick and dying? This seems to be the common question today. This can be answered with a simple counter question. If salvation is free and Jesus paid for all of our sins 2000 years ago, why are so many still not saved?

Not all people are healed today for the very same reason that not all people are saved. Just as we need faith in Jesus to be saved, we need faith in Jesus to be healed. Jesus paid for all sin and all

sickness once and for all. Furthermore, the Greek language uses the same word “sozo” for salvation, healing and deliverance. The common denominator is faith. Faith as small as a mustard seed is powerful enough to raise the dead.

GOD IS GOOD – SICKNESS IS EVIL

We must point out that God is the author of all that is good. His nature is good and His essence is love. Sicknesses and diseases are evil. God is all that is good and true and Satan is all that is evil and untrue. A lie cannot originate from what is good, and Satan is the father and the perpetrator of lies. We know the trees by the fruit they bear. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit.

Paul’s Thorn in the Flesh

It is necessary to put to rest a particular scripture that some use as a reason to say that God puts sickness on us. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 we read: And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Many religious people use the term, “a thorn in the flesh,” as if it pertained to sickness. But Paul’s next phrase explains what that thorn was – It was a “messenger.”

➤ A Messenger – An Angel

In the original language, the word “messenger” is *aggelos* which means: a messenger, envoy, one who is sent, an angel, a messenger from God. In this case it was an angel sent by Satan to most likely harass him in his ministry. It is, however, important to point out that Paul’s thorn was not a sickness as some ignorantly determine, but an entity used by Satan.

The word “infirmities” in the original language carries a twofold meaning “weakness and infirmities of either soul or body.” It becomes clear that Paul was so exasperated by this entity that he asked God to cause it to leave or depart, but God would not. He told Paul that, for him, “His grace was sufficient.”

Apparently Paul thought that this constant vexing was making him weak and requested relief. However, in the end, he turns a negative situation into a positive one. He declares that he would

gladly boast of that weakness so that the power of Christ may rest upon him.

God Gives Good Gifts

It is ridiculous to think that God would watch His own Son pay such a great price for sickness and then decide that He would make somebody sick. It is unthinkable!

Would you make any of your children sick? I'm certain you would not. So why would anyone think that God would?

Jesus said in Matthew 7:11: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

The word of God declares God as *Jehovah Rapha*, which means the "Lord your Healer." God cannot act contrary to His nature.

He said to Israel in Exodus 15:26: "...I am the Lord who heals you."

Clearly, the intent of God is to heal. In Jesus' ministry He healed all who came to him. He healed all kinds of sicknesses.

In Matthew 12:15 we read: "...And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all."

And Luke 6:19 says "And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all."

Jesus desires to heal everyone, but not many will believe that. This is proven when He went to His own town of Nazareth, and He could not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

JESUS HEALED THE SICK

I find two ways that healing occurred in Jesus' ministry. Either the Holy Spirit would move upon Jesus to heal the one or the many, or the faith of the needy would draw healing from Him.

Acts 10:38 says: "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."

By the Anointing

Jesus' power to heal came from the anointing of the Holy Spirit dwelling within Him. This was proven by the woman with the issue of blood who touched His garment. She immediately was healed by the virtue that came out of Him.

By Seeing God's Will

Jesus said that He only did what He saw the Father doing. I believe at times He would be so moved by compassion that the Holy Spirit could not but heal the multitudes.

In some instances, Jesus would bypass other sick people to reach the one whom He saw the Father touching, just like the man by the pool of Bethesda.

John 5:2-9, Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.

Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.

Jesus walked past many other sick people, but touched only this man. There was no question asked regarding faith. Jesus went there just to heal him.

By the Faith of People

In more instances we find that it was the faith of the sick that released that virtue or healing from Him. Let's read some of Jesus' responses to some who acted in faith for their healing.

- Matthew 9:22 "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well."
- Matthew 9:29 "According to your faith let it be to you."
- Matthew 15:28 "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire."
- Mark 10:52 "Go your way; your faith has made you well."
- Luke 7:50 "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."
- Luke 17:19 "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."
- Luke 18:42 "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."

In each of these seven healings or deliverances, Jesus commended and honored their faith. They drew their healing out of Jesus.

Jesus explained to the Syrophenician woman that healing belonged to the children and it was their bread. Jesus, who is the Bread of Life, was broken for our sicknesses and diseases. Healing belongs to God's children. Healing is yours and mine.

GOD'S STRATEGY

Previously, we quoted a verse from John 1:12 where it says that as many as received Him, He gave them the "right" to become children of God. 3 John 1:2 says: "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."

This same John who told us we had a right, says that his prayer was that we may prosper and be in good health just as our soul prospers. No more evidence is needed; Jesus wants us healthy, strong and prosperous in spirit soul, and body; it is the right of God's children.

Now that we have put to rest the issues that seem to cast a shadow over this subject, let us move on to a more practical aspect regarding the ministry of healing.

From scripture, I deduce that God has a strategy for everything, even a strategy for how to get a healing. Obviously, everything depends on the level of faith we walk in. God gave us medical science to help us along the way, and in many cases, keep us alive until we can grow to the level of faith to get it ourselves, just like those seven people we just read about.

I have not found anywhere in the gospels or the book of Acts where Jesus and early Christians actually prayed for the sick, although we do find one instance in the book of James. That will be discussed later in the chapter.

Pray or Command?

The command was to lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. In Acts 9:40 we read about when Peter prayed for the resurrection of Dorcas: "But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.

This passage does not say that Peter prayed for her, it simply states that he "prayed," and Luke, the writer, places a period here to conclude the sentence. Some other translations use the word "Afterward" instead of "And" immediately after the period. We, then, can safely assume that the ensuing word "and" of the next phrase, conveys the idea that Peter acted after he prayed and not during His prayer. The only words he uttered when he was done

praying were: “Tabitha, arise.” I believe that Peter received the strategy from the Lord on how to minister God’s resurrection power. Not everyone that dies is raised to life; only those for whom someone has the courage to inquire of the Lord if they need to be raised and have their lives prolonged. In this case, the people surrounding Tabitha believed her death was premature and acted upon their faith.

So, prayer in our ministry is to help us understand, either by direct revelation of the Holy Spirit, or by a release of faith in our hearts, how to follow through in our ministry to others.

Lay Hands on the Sick

Let us read part of the Great Commission as found in Mark 16:17-18. “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Laying hands on the sick is as much a part of our mission today, as it was for the early disciples. Whenever Jesus sent them out, they were to preach the Good News and heal the sick. This was accomplished following simple steps of obedience, such as “lay hands.”

Laying hands on the sick is a simple process of transmitting the healing anointing to the sick. So when we see a sick person, and we sense that the Lord wants us to minister healing to them, all we need to do is lay hands on them and speak words of faith that lifts the faith of the sick person as well.

Our only responsibility is to lay hands on the sick, and Jesus must do the rest by releasing His healing virtue in the sick body. Mark 16:20 says: “And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.”

Clearly the Lord Jesus promised to work with us through signs that confirm His word. We must work in partnership with Jesus; we lay the hands on and He heals the sick.

A Miracle or a Healing?

We must understand, as well, the difference between a miracle and a healing. A miracle is instant, while a healing is gradual. Even though a healing is gradual, manifesting itself in time, we must remember that the faith of the sick most often determines the progress and the time to achieve total healing. Not having this knowledge can cause the sick person to doubt their healing. They

do not see an instant healing, therefore they believe they are not healed and lose their healing.

I believe that everyone I pray for is healed because I am obeying the Great Commission. When I touch the sick, the seed of healing is released into their body. So from that moment on, we call those things that to the natural eye are not, as though they are. Continuing to believe to have received it causes that healing to begin to grow, and we know that God's Word does not return void without first accomplishing the intent for which it was sent. God sent His Word and healed all our diseases.

Only One Time

The only instance of prayer for the sick in the New Testament, is found in James' epistle.

James 5:14-16 says: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Believers who are sick have a definite advantage for healing over the unbeliever. The believer, through the knowledge of scripture, can seek help from the elders of their local church to pray the prayer of faith that can heal them. In this case it is prayer offered in faith that will heal the sick. Unbelievers are unaware that they too can be prayed for by the elders and receive healing. Again, in order for them to seek prayer, they must believe that this process will work.

Guidelines for Ministry

The following are some guidelines for laying hands on the sick.

To better channel our faith, we try to place our hands near the ill area of the body. We do not, however, lay our hands near the person's private body areas if they are of the opposite sex. Laying hands on arms, legs, up to the knee if they are wearing pants, or on shoulders, neck and head areas is fine. When laying hands on someone of the same sex, you have more freedom. The key is not to violate anyone's privacy. The best situation is to work with a spouse. My wife lays her hands on the women and I on the men. If a woman is sick in her stomach and we are to lay hands on her, Lydia will place her hands on the stomach area and I will place my hand on top of hers. If we are praying for a man who has a problem in the lower abdomen, even though he is a man, I will place my hands on his hips and Lydia will place them on mine. It really works best when husband and wife teams work together.

We must also apply our hands in a very gentle way. We don't want to hurt anyone while we are ministering to them. When ministering healing we must always use discretion and act above reproach.

If you are in need of healing and you believe God, you can lay your own hands on the part of your body that is sick and expect God's healing power to touch you and heal you.

In Conclusion

In conclusion, healing will occur as we move in faith, with a clear conscience, and motivated always by love. A solid prayer life and spending time meditating and hearing God's Word will increase our faith in God.

The only qualification needed to lay hands on the sick is to be a believer in Jesus Christ. All Christians who enjoy this glorious calling are qualified to minister healing. The only question is – Are you a believer?

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Does God put sickness, disease, accidents, birth defects on His people? Explain your answer.

2. Jesus is our example. What was His attitude toward sick people during His time on earth?

3. Explain God's strategy for healing.

Lesson 8

Deliverance

Just like healing, deliverance is part of the Great Commission. The demonic must not only be taken from people, but from our neighborhoods, cities, and nations. The Christian is called to bring deliverance wherever he goes. The authority of God in a believer makes him effective in bringing deliverance and freedom to anyone bound by the shackles of sin, death, and destruction.

DELIVERANCE THROUGH JESUS

One of the most detailed prophecies given in the Old Testament regarding the ministry of Jesus was given by the prophet Isaiah, and it included deliverance.

The Spirit of the Lord

Isaiah 61:1-3 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

In Luke 4:18-2, Jesus was in Nazareth in the synagogue on the Sabbath when He took the scroll and read these verses from Isaiah. Jesus knew what His mission was – it was to reclaim, reconcile, and restore planet earth to the original intent of God's purpose.

Jesus Proclaimed Liberty

Part of Jesus' earthly ministry was to proclaim liberty to the captives and open the prison doors for those who are bound.

Brought Freedom from Oppression

Part of His message was that freedom from oppression, depression, torment, fear, possession, and other effects of Satan's hellish influence, was now available and obtainable. His very presence and His preaching caused demons to manifest in people. The anointing of the Holy Spirit upon His life was so strong that wherever He went demons would come and bow down and declare that He was the Son of God.

The message of liberty meant the opening of prison doors. People who have lived their lives in bondage due to personal

involvement with the occult or were subject to a traumatic experience or victims of circumstances beyond their control, can now walk out of their prison cells because the door has been opened by Jesus.

People who are in bondage tend to build a façade to cover their wounds, but the wounds and scars borne from negative events and experiences are evident to those who are sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Hurts and wounds stemming from betrayal, public embarrassments, failures, rejections, abandonments, want, rape, abortions they might have had, physical and emotional abuse, sexual abuse, control, loneliness, and other forms of negative exposures or experiences, leave emotional scars that contribute to the bondage many live in.

These problems are often detectable, in particular to those closest to the victims, but God desires to set them free. The Holy Spirit desires to fulfill today the same ministry He fulfilled through Jesus when He walked this earth. Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, the “Great Comforter,” still wants to heal and deliver the hurting and wounded people around us because of His great compassion.

Same Holy Spirit

The same Holy Spirit that anointed Jesus lives within us.

In Romans 8:11 we read: **But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**

The Holy Spirit that indwells us quickens us as He quickened the Son of God. By quickening us, He makes us alive, sharp, alert, and sensitive to our surroundings. He also gives us discernment, and one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the discerning of spirits; good and evil spirits alike.

➤ To Discern Spirits

The Apostle Paul in teaching concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:10 said: **“to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”**

The function of the discerning of spirits is to give the spirit-filled believer knowledge of what kind of spirit is working around us, or in the people around us. This gift is not what some people call “intuition.” It discerns the human spirit, evil spirits, good spirits, angels of God, angels of Satan, principalities, powers and demons. God gave us this gift so that we may perceive the spiritual realm, or atmosphere, around us.

➤ *Bring Deliverance*

In the book of Acts 16:16-18, we find a story that describes how the gift of discernment of spirits works together with deliverance. "Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour."

Obviously, what the slave girl was saying was neither a lie nor wrong. Truly, Paul was a servant of the Most High, and he was preaching the way of salvation, and anybody without a sensitized gift of the discernment of spirits, would have most likely praised God that someone was recognizing Paul and his ministry.

However, Paul was "greatly annoyed" by it. This annoyance was caused by the Holy Spirit in Paul that revealed to him that this girl was possessed with a spirit of divination. So, he turned toward her and commanded that spirit to come out of her and that spirit obeyed.

Remember that the delivered girl was a slave. A slave to those who owned her and made money from that spirit of divination operating through her, and she was a slave to the spirit itself. This girl received deliverance from more than one master.

The question might arise as to how that girl became possessed by that spirit of divination in the first place. Although there could be a variety of reasons why the young girl could become demon possessed, I am convinced that all of them have to do with one evil entity. The one whom Jesus said came to "steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10).

SATAN'S PLAN

Satan is always looking for lives to devour.

1 Peter 5:8 says: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

Just as God has a plan for our lives, so does the enemy. Satan hates us because we are created in the image of God. Anything of God is detestable to him. He is always looking for ways to scar you for life and, if possible, would like to take your life as well. Angels of darkness, demons, have the assignment to become familiar with you and your habits; to study your character.

Once he has discovered your weaknesses, he will mastermind a trap or snare to place you in one of his prison cells for a life term.

He will try to make you bitter, angry, resentful, discouraged, discontent and feel rejected, even though in reality it may not be true. He will lie constantly to your mind and, if you don't know the Word of God and resist him with it, sooner or later you will find yourself in a prison cell of desperation.

Satan is always looking for an open door in our lives; he could never enter unless, when he knocks, we foolishly open the door and give him access. Access to the enemy is not necessarily given voluntarily, but it is most often given due to lack of knowledge.

Satan is Shrewd

The enemy is very shrewd in his dealings with man. He consistently sows seeds of doubt in our minds; his ultimate objective is to cause us to question the Word of God. This is the reason why we need to be prepared to face his temptations or attacks. His temptations or attacks are not to get us to sin as much as to cause us to deviate from the intended purpose for which God created us. It becomes very easy to sin when we have gotten off God's course or pathway for our lives.

When we don't stay on course, we become extremely vulnerable and susceptible to all of his deceptions. This is the time when Satan executes his evil plan to demolish our faith; he drives us into apathy and despondency where we lose the will to fight the good fight of faith, and he unleashes all of hell against us. How we come out of it, or recover from it, will determine the extent of the healing or deliverance we need.

Once the shield of faith is lowered, there is no telling the extent and seriousness of the wounds the enemy will inflict. And, since this happens to the saved, just imagine the vulnerability of the unsaved. They have absolutely no line of defense, because the only two weapons that can deal with Satan are the Word of God and the name of Jesus. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the desert, He used the Word of God as His weapon and defeated the enemy on all three temptations.

GOD'S PLAN

Our *Sozo* Salvation

In the Greek language, one word – “Sozo” is used for salvation, healing, and deliverance. It should not be surprising that, created as triune beings with body, soul and spirit, God has made provision for the well being of all three. Isaiah clearly states that Jesus paid the price for the whole of man and not just one or two parts.

Jesus Was

In Isaiah 53:5 we read: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed."

➤ *Wounded for Our Transgressions*

Jesus was wounded to redeem us from our failure to abide by the Old Testament laws.

➤ *Bruised for Our Iniquities*

He was bruised to redeem us from the bent, or propensity, to want to sin.

➤ *Chastised for our Peace*

He was chastised to redeem us from the oppression, torment, fear and every other evil thing the enemy inflicted upon humanity, causing us to lose our peace.

➤ *Whipped for our Healing*

He received thirty-nine stripes on His back to redeem us from sickness and disease.

Essentially, Jesus paid for the redemption of our human spirit, soul (emotions), and physical body. Jesus came to save, heal and deliver. This is the sum of His ministry. He saved our human spirits, healed our bodies, and delivered our souls. Jesus went about healing, or freeing, all those who were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him. Jesus hates oppression, torment, and fear, and especially when people are possessed by Satan.

OUR COMMISSION – CAST OUT DEMONS

Before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He gave us the Great Commission, instructing us to cast out devils. Mark 16:17 says, **And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues.**

Casting out demons is part of our mission until He comes back. Jesus said that we would do the same works that He did, and greater works because He went to His Father.

Through Jesus' Authority

Casting out demons is not an issue of strength, but authority.

In the gospel of Matthew we read Jesus' words: "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18).

The issue of authority has been settled; Jesus has it all. There is no more authority available in the universe. Satan does not have

it, the agnostics or atheists do not have it, false religions and false gods do not have it. Only Jesus has all the authority.

Using His Name

Since He called us to go out and preach the gospel of His Kingdom, we must also walk in the full instruction of the Great Commission. We must stay in tune with the Holy Spirit so that we know how and when to move, to exorcise demons. Again, we must be filled with the Spirit so that we may discern the spirit realm around us. We cannot be paranoid and look for a demon behind every door, but neither must we fear the demonic. As we are lead by the Holy Spirit we fulfill the deliverance part of Jesus' mission through us.

Don't Wrestle with Demons

On a more practical note, we must not wrestle with demons. They cannot be allowed to control the conversation and, as a matter of fact, there ought to be no discussion with them at all. The only words that Jesus spoke were: "Be quiet and come out of him(or her)." With the Gadarene demoniac, He asked the name of the demon. If you feel the Holy Spirit wants you to ask, go ahead and ask, but I can assure you it will not be all the time.

Deal with Manifestations

Something I have learned over the years is that if there is some kind of manifestation, you shouldn't get excited over it but calmly deal with it. I have also found it helpful to command the demon to be quiet as I ask the person if they want the enemy to leave. Why? Because demons respond only to authority, which is how they function.

If the demon begins talking to you, command it to be quiet, while very gently calling the name of the victimized person asking if they want to be free from that tormenting, oppressing or possessing demon. If they say "yes," the demon must leave because he is not wanted. In a few situations, the demons came out immediately because they were not welcomed in that house they were staying in. They snuck in and, once exposed and confronted, they had to leave.

An Example

In a fellowship I pastored years ago, there was a very sweet, God-loving couple who were very involved with God's work. The wife, in particular, was a woman of prayer and the Word. The couple usually sat on the front row. While preaching, I noticed something was fighting me in the spirit realm, trying to stifle me. It was not succeeding, but it was nevertheless an opposing force I could have done without at that moment. I remember saying something about it from the pulpit as well.

At the end of one of the meetings, this sweet lady said something that my spirit was very irritated by. She said, "Pastor, I feel so one in the spirit with you while you are preaching. Often I almost know where you are going with the message."

I inquired of the Lord regarding this and the Lord revealed to me that a spirit of divination was at work. He then gave me a strategy on how to deal with that familiar spirit of divination. This lady was a woman of prayer, supposedly receiving "words from the Lord" and was going around giving them to other people without my knowledge.

She confessed to these things, and I believed that she was doing all this in good faith. I called the couple to meet me at church, where I gave her a pastoral directive not to read the Word nor pray for the entire summer. I told her to go to the beach with her daughters and enjoy herself. Her reply was, at first, "Pastor, I can't do that; that would be disobeying God's Word."

I answered that I would take the blame for anything, and that she was to be absolved of what she considered "wrong, a sin." To emphasize what I was saying, I told them that if they would not adhere to this directive, they were then dismissed from the fellowship. They quickly replied that the Lord had called them to that work. They chose to obey.

Ten minutes after leaving my office, I was in another meeting, and the husband returned to tell me to come outside because there was a problem with his wife. This sweet young lady was having a demonic manifestation.

I asked the husband to pick her up and bring her to my office and, while flailing her arms and resisting him, they made their way to the office. At that point, I commanded the spirit to be silent because I needed to speak to her, and she momentarily became coherent. I asked her if she wanted to be free from that spirit, to which she replied positively. Then I spoke to the spirit and said: "The owner of this life does not want you, so you must leave in the Name of Jesus!" I sat across from her and waited several minutes. The spirit then came out of her. Her countenance changed and she was never the same again. The next service she told me, "Pastor, I had no idea where you were going with the message."

The strategy was to bind that spirit and keep it from operating. She had agreed to not pray and read and give prophecies and words to people, so she had an outright manifestation of anger by that spirit, exposing itself.

A Second Example

Let me give you another example of a situation where demonic activity was welcomed in someone's life. A man brought his wife to a man of God asking him pray for his wife who constantly heard voices speaking to her. As soon as he began to pray for her, and he was very willing to do so, the Holy Spirit stopped him, telling him not to pray for her.

The man of God asked the Holy Spirit why he was not to pray for her, and the Holy Spirit replied that the woman did not want to be set free from those familiar spirits.

To confirm this, the man of God asked the woman, who agreed that she did not want to be delivered from those spirits. A person must choose to be freed.

These two stories show us that some are delivered because they are willing to submit to the authority of God's word preferring God's freedom, while others do not prefer this freedom, and consequently are not delivered.

Not by Our Own Strength

If you are driving along the highway in a semi and the world's strongest man tries to flag you to stop, you only stop if you choose to. And if you chose not to stop, there would be no consequences.

However, if even a 100 pound policeman flags you to stop, you have no choice but to stop or face serious consequences. In the same way, demons come out of people not because of our strength, but because we believe in the authority we have as children of God.

Fill Vacancy with Praise

Once a person is delivered, they must be instructed to fill that vacancy with praise and gratitude.

Matthew 12:43-45 says: **When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'** And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.

From these verses, we have learned to instruct those who receive deliverance to immediately fill those areas that have been set free with the understanding of the Word, gratefulness for their freedom, and praise.

Enemy Will Try to Come Back

The enemy will always try to come back and reclaim what he considers his house. These demons truly believe that the delivered person was their house and their possession. So, once deliverance takes place we must always be on guard. We must stay submitted to the Lordship of Christ, and when the enemy comes to tempt, deceive, and steal the deliverance, we must be ready and strong to resist him.

ALL CREATION LOOKING FOR DELIVERANCE

Even creation is looking for deliverance. According to Romans 8:19-22 Paul declares: For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Not only do the souls of mankind desire freedom, but the entire creation seeks to be freed from the corruption and bondage that sin has wrought.

Isaiah prophesied that "the desert shall rejoice and blossom" (Isaiah 35). The deserts of the earth are seeking restoration. When sin came, the Garden of Eden turned into a desert -- the Iraqi desert. God desires to restore all things. This is the reason why we as the Church of Jesus Christ, His disciples, must be active in the ministry of deliverance. Jesus' aim is to get Satan out of people, out of cities, out of nations and off this planet. Everyone must do their part in a small context, and Jesus, through us all, in the end will have delivered this earth completely. Satan and his demons belong in hell and not on this planet, and this ministry of deliverance works to that end.

Restoration of All Things

Acts 3:21 states: "whom heaven must receive (Jesus) until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

In the Greek language, the word restoration is: "apokatastasis." This word has a two-fold meaning:

- 1) restoration of a true theocracy;
- 2) restoration of the perfect state before the fall.

Jesus will stay in heaven until all things are in place and ready so that the earth can be fully restored to God's original intent and purpose for it. This includes the individual lives of people as well.

Deliverance Should Be Normal Occurrence

Even though many, just by hearing the words “devils,” “demons,” or “deliverance” are frightened, their hearts must be put to rest by explaining that deliverance is a normal and natural process chosen by God to set His world free. Often when we think of deliverance we visualize a person on the floor slithering like a snake, rolling back their eyes and hissing. Although this could be one of the manifestations, it is very uncommon. I have received some deliverance in my life, and, at times, it was as simple as waking up differently the next morning.

In conclusion, no matter what kind of deliverance you may need, whether strongholds, fears, preoccupations, obsessions, oppressions, depressions, or torments, God is able to demolish them and set you free.

Stepping Into Deliverance

➤ Two All Powerful Weapons

He has provided us the sword of His Word and the mighty Name of Jesus. These weapons, and your faith in their ability to set you free, are all you need to achieve your victory. They will destroy every fortress, or stronghold, and cast out every demonic spirit that torments and vexes your soul.

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 10:4 says: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,"

The way that we think can open or close doors. Let us not give in to Satan's lies, rather let us give our mind to believing the Word of God.

➤ Be Anxious for Nothing

So, let us heed Paul's instructions as found in Philippians 4:6-8: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."

Let us set our fears aside and bring peace to our hearts with the Word of God. Let us understand what the will of God is and choose freedom from the world's bondage, from darkness, from sin and its habits, from demonic slavery, oppression, depression,

possession, poverty, sickness and any other thing that keeps us from experiencing the very life of God.

➤ *Nothing Shall Hurt You!*

Remember Jesus' words in Luke 10:19: "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Should every believer be ready to minister in deliverance, or is this a ministry for a special few?
2. Give 5 or more rules you will use in ministering deliverance.
3. Give 3 reassurances we have from Scripture that we can successfully do deliverance.

Lesson 9

Giving To God

GIVING, THE NATURE OF GOD

When we are born again, we are made a partaker of the nature of God. God so loved that He not only gave His only Son, but together with Him He gave us all things, and His Holy Spirit as well. God's giving nature must express itself through the life of the believer. We are to manifest His character. Freely we have received from God, and freely we will give.

Let us learn this principle and discover the greatest joy in life – Giving to God!

In Acts 20:35 we read Jesus' words: He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

It's so important that we learn this principle and discover the greatest joy in life – Giving to God and giving to others.

There are blessings that can only be received through obedience of this principle.

Jesus is the mighty conqueror; He conquered hell, death, the grave, sicknesses, diseases, and even poverty. Whoever is born of God overcomes. You and I are overcomers because we are born of God.

To be born of God means that all of the qualities and attributes that make Him who He is, are poured into us. God's DNA is in us. We have the seed of His very nature. Therefore, to understand about giving, we need to look at God and His giving nature.

➤ *John 3:16*

Probably the most famous verse in the Bible is John 3:16: "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."

This verse is a key scripture and the definition of the love God has for humanity.

God was moved by such great love for humanity that He could not help Himself. He gave of His own substance to save mankind. He could pay no less a price than the most and best He could give: the sacrifice of His only Son Jesus.

Giving, the Nature of Abraham

As a precursor in history of God's sacrificing His Son, we find the wonderful story of a man who was considered a friend of God. His name was Abraham, and he is the father of the Jewish nation. God promised Abraham that he would have a son, but the promise did not come pass until he was 100 years of age. This son was born to him and his 90 year-old wife, Sarah, and given the name Isaac.

➤ Offered His Son Isaac

And yet, while Isaac was still in his youth, the Lord told Abraham to take his son on a three-day journey and offer him up as a sacrifice to the Lord. The Bible says that Abraham immediately obeyed the Lord, leaving early the following morning. He never questioned the Lord; he simply obeyed. When he arrived on Mount Moriah, he built an altar to the Lord, bound his only son Isaac, and placed him on the altar to be sacrificed.

As soon as he lifted his knife the Lord stopped him and said to Him: ...Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me (Genesis 22:12).

Obviously, God did not want Abraham's son, but He wanted to show humanity that His love is even greater than the greatest love any human could demonstrate. While Abraham was commanded to offer his only son, nobody but God, from His own free will, would give up their son as a sacrifice.

Nevertheless, Abraham's refusal to even say a word or comment, while going to Mount Moriah, convinces us that he had the very nature of the One he served, loved, and feared, instilled in his heart.

We Are to Give

Abraham was willing to give his son to God, because he knew and loved God. God gave because He loved. And we must give because we love as well. Our lives, and everything associated with our lives, are the most and best we can give to God.

THREE TYPES OF GIVING

There are three types of giving in the Bible: Tithing, offering, and alms.

Tithing

Tithing represents a tenth of our income. This has been a part of God's plan since it was instituted by Abraham, before the giving of the law.

In the book of Malachi 3:8-12 we read: "'Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the Lord of hosts; And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land," Says the Lord of hosts."

Jesus, in Matthew 23:23, confirms this type of giving, saying to the hypocritical religious leaders of his day: "'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."

In practical terms, we are to pay tithes to those who minister to us. In 1 Timothy 5:17-18 we read: Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

The elders, or pastors, of the local church are worthy of their wages because they labor in teaching the Word. This type of giving is managed by the elders under the guidance of the apostle or the pastor that God has established as bishop of the local church. Obeying God in this will bring protection over our possessions and finances.

Offering

The second type of giving is the offering. The offering is a contribution for the upkeep of the house of the Lord and other related services. Often, a growing church will face increasing expenses, for example: purchasing land, renting a facility, remodeling a building belonging to the local church, etc.

Another example of the way offerings can be used was during the earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives and the church provided many resources to bring restoration to that nation, not only through financial offerings, but also through physical labor that many believers contributed to help the people of that land. Christian churches throughout the world intervened to help our Indonesian brothers hit by this disastrous event, just like the early church sent an offering to the brethren in Jerusalem to help them through a time of famine.

Alms, or Charitable Deeds

The third type of giving is alms or charitable deeds. The charitable deed is the only giving in scripture where we are taught "not to let the left hand know what the right hand is doing" (Matthew 6:3); meaning that alms are given secretly, often without letting the recipient know who the giver is. If the tithes and the offerings are done in secret, it is a personal decision and not because it is commanded. In fact, if Jesus had not seen the offering of the widow found in Mark 12:41-44, He would have not been able to instruct His disciples regarding the offering, and that it is given wholeheartedly and not superficially.

In Matthew 6:1-4 Jesus teaches: "'Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."

This type of giving invokes the favor of God, because no pride is associated with it due to its secretiveness and because it's

motivated by love and compassion for others. Cornelius, as described in Acts 10:1–4, was blessed with a particular visitation from God for his prayers and his alms.

SETTING OUR PRIORITIES

Love of Money

I have heard some say that “money is the root of all evil.” But, the Bible does not say that. Instead, it says that “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). It is the love of money that causes corruption. Money is only a means by which we can live and do good to others. Let’s look at a young man who did not have his priorities right.

➤ *Rich Young Ruler*

In Matthew 19:16-26 we see how Jesus dealt with a financially wealthy person who was, at the same time, impoverished by his own wealth. He owned his wealth, but his wealth ultimately owned him.

Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”

So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

He said to Him, “Which ones?”

Jesus said, “‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?”

Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

"But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

➤ *His Choice*

It was never Jesus' intent, as expressed in this passage, to condemn the young man because he was rich or because he had many possessions. He encouraged him to use his wealth to do good to the poor. His riches had become the young man's identity. He was bound to his riches, and for this reason he was not able to identify with the "Greatest Giver" talking to him. He wasted the opportunity to emulate His creator, Who had enabled him to have and enjoy all of his wealth.

This young man was not able to release what he owned, to gain what only God could give – the very nature of God that would have made him happy and satisfied.

If he had been able to see past his selfishness and the avarice that covered his heart and his riches, he could have experienced the joy that all givers that love God with all their heart experience. Instead, we see him distancing himself from Jesus with great disappointment...because he was very wealthy. Giving without the will to give is incompatible with Christianity. God loves a cheerful giver, and not one who gives out of obligation.

**One Hundred Percent Giving
Brings Hundredfold Return**

After the rich young ruler left, Jesus continued on with his disciples.

Matthew 19:27-39 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?"

So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF STEWARDSHIP

Parable of Talents

In the prophetic sermon found in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells the parable of the talents, and in chapter 25:14-31, we read: "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.

Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

➤ *5 Talents Person*

After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them. His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.

➤ *2 Talents Person*

He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them. His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.

➤ *1 Talent Person*

Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.

But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.

So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but

from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

This parable clearly demonstrates how important it is to use the talents we receive. In other words we are responsible with what the Lord entrusts us with and will also give Him an account of our actions. Every believer must give an account of what we have done with the gifts He gave us. This passage was not given to us to sow fear in our hearts, but to encourage us to place our hands on the plow of God's assignment, fulfilling our tasks, setting aside all doubts, inadequacy, or feelings of incompetency, and the fear of failing.

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES

Give Cheerfully

In 2 Corinthians 9:7 we read: "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." We must not give if we cannot give joyfully. God loves those who give from their heart and not under compulsion or obligation.

Everything Belongs to God

Psalm 24:1 says: "The earth is the Lord's and all that it contains." Whether we like it or not, everything on and in the earth is God's. It does not matter how much you possess, whether much or little, it is His.

Can't Take it With Us

Recently, a very wealthy friend passed away; I saw none of his wealth in that coffin. They say, "You can't take it with you." How true that is. If our possessions were truly ours, they would have to go with us. But naked we came, and naked we leave. Only that which we have done for the Lord will have eternal significance.

The Bible says: "every good and perfect gift comes from God" (James 1:17). This means that whatever you have was entrusted to you by God. If you are wealthy, consider the following: God could have let you to be born in a poor nation with little or no opportunity to gain wealth. You could have been born in a very poor family; or if you are a Christian, consider that you could have been born in a nation where God is not even mentioned. We have it so good! Just think, most of us have a roof over our heads; we have food

on our tables; we wear nice clothes and nice shoes; we drive decent cars; and the list could continue on. I am not saying that having these things is wrong, but to turn our back and pretend there are no needy people around us is an absolute travesty.

Not Owners but Stewards

So, how can we have money or possessions and they not be ours! All the possessions or money we have make us not owners, but stewards. What we consider our possessions are actually like a trust that God has placed in our hands until He returns. At that time, we will give an account of what we have done with the possessions He entrusted us with.

Luke 12:15-21 tells the story of a man with possessions and what God had to say: "And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."'

But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'"

Leaving an Inheritance

Laying up treasures for ourselves is fine, as long as we are rich toward God. Leaving an inheritance to our children and grandchildren is God's will. Providing for our personal family is not only a godly thing to do, but He commands us to do so: "for if a man does not provide for those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).

Lifestyle of Giving

Whatever we love the most is what we are willing to give of the least, unless of course we love to give, and love those to whom we give. If we love God, then we are willing to give to His cause and never miss what we give, because we know it blesses His heart.

➤ *Ready to Give, Willing to Share*

1 Timothy 6:18 says: "Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,"

This teaching and counsel can be applied to anyone's life, whatever social and economic class they belong to. It doesn't matter who you are, where you live and to which social status group you belong. Your best and your most are determined between you and God. After all, He alone knows our heart. It is certain, however, that we must be rich in good works, helping those who cannot help themselves.

➤ *Giving to Others*

In James 2:14-16 we read: "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" Faith is therefore confirmed by actually doing something.

➤ *Helping the Helpless*

Matthew 25:34-36: "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Jesus clearly states that if we have helped the helpless we have helped Him. We must be ready and quick to give when we see legitimate needs. Contributing to the needs of the saints is very Biblical and commended, and we must not only be ready to give, but give willingly as well.

GIVING BRINGS BLESSINGS FROM GOD

In Luke 6:37-38 Jesus says: "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

Many have used verse 38 thinking that giving alone would guarantee a blessing in good measure, pressed down, shaken

together, and running over. Verse 38 does not work without verse 37.

Not Judging, Not Condemning, But Forgiving, And Giving

Four things are essential to activate the blessings of God: not judging, not condemning, forgiving, and giving. If we judge and condemn, and if we don't forgive others and even ourselves, even if we give we will not receive in return.

Many live in deception thinking that just giving would guarantee a blessing from God. Blessings come by obedience to God's Word. The Father blesses us because we love Him and do His Word. It is God's will that His children prosper in every area of their life; not for vainglory, but for the advancement of the Kingdom of His beloved Son Jesus Christ.

In one of his letters, the Apostle John said: "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 1:2). And the psalmist says: "Let the LORD be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant" (Psalm 35:27).

Genuine Givers

In conclusion, genuine givers are those who have truly understood the Lordship of Christ. When Jesus truly becomes Lord of our lives, He becomes Lord of our wallet as well. Unfortunately, it is true that everyone wants a Savior, but very few want a Lord. When we accepted Jesus as our personal Savior, we accepted Him as both Savior and Lord. After all, the Kingdom of God is not a democracy. Our King was not elected to office by the people. Jesus is the King of His Kingdom by birthright. The King owns everything in His Kingdom, including all of our possessions. Be a giver and display the very nature of the King!

Let us exhibit therefore the very nature of God, becoming givers according to His heart; above all blessing Him, then His work, then His servants, the people, and the whole world!

Be a Giver!!!

Lesson 10

Rise and Shine!

The enemy is well aware of the imminent return of Christ, and in these days, he seductively tries to keep people from knowing the truth, at times even claiming the Lord has already come. Nevertheless, it is in this time that the Church, the Body of Christ, must rise up in her authority to shine the Glory of God here on planet earth. We are in the last days and while the world continues to become even darker, the church must reflect, emulate, and represent with an even greater accuracy, the Person of Jesus Christ.

THE CHURCH – THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Throughout the history of mankind, we have witnessed the formation of two cultures, the secular and the Christian. The world that will continually drift further away from the light of the truth, and the church that will continue to shine forth the light of God.

Glory of the Lord

Isaiah 60:1-2 declares: "Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you."

Habakkuk 2:14 declares: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." Every nation, tongue and tribe will be fully aware of the Glory of God, that His children will shine forth all over the earth.

Revelation of the Sons

This is the time in which the Church, which is believers who are the children of God, must manifest itself to the world. Paul wrote to the Romans in chapter 8:19: "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God..."

All of creation has been subjected to the effects of fallen humanity, and groans while it waits for the children of God to rise up and begin to reflect the very nature of God, His Glory.

Light to Be Seen

Jesus said: You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden ... And: ...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14a.16).

In Isaiah we read: Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it (Isaiah 2:2).

The light can only shine when it is positioned in an elevated place. The church that has no light is a church that hides itself because it is intimidated by persecutions and is afraid to confront present challenges, in particular, of a social and economic nature. Another reason the church is hidden is the lack of awareness of the authority and power it must walk in as made available by the powerful name of Jesus.

Moving in Authority

My own father, Anthony Cannavo, an apostle to the previous generation who is now with the Lord, in one of his messages compared the Church to an elephant in captivity. Not knowing its own strength, it can remain imprisoned and subject to powers and authorities who in reality are no match for its might.

This is a time when the Church must move into its authority to show forth the Glory of God all over the earth. Since we are in the last days, and while the world drifts further away from the light of the truth, the Church must continue to shine forth, emulate, reflect and represent with greater accuracy the person of Jesus Christ.

Satan knows that the return of Christ is imminent, and in these last days he is seductively seeking to cause people to drift away from the truth, and at times counterfeiting even the return of our Lord.

WARNING OF END TIMES

Jesus' Warning

The Lord warned us, as in His prophetic sermon found in Matthew 24:3-14: Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."

Many Christians today study the Word with much dedication, trying to better understand the times in which we live. Many discussions regarding eschatology, the study of end-times relating to recent events, eventually culminating with the return of Christ, have been proven divisive.

Several leaders, belonging to different streams have focused their message on the return of Christ, placing emphasis on the negative aspects of the social economic crisis that have overtaken the minds of many and the possible collapse of the global monetary system. They are using this method or strategy to scare people into the truth while at the same time announcing the end of times as we know them.

Apostle Paul's Warning

The Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-4 writes: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."

Things Are Changing

Certainly you have heard the words pronounced such as: "apocalypse," "end of times," "the last days." In fact, many books have been written and many movies made on this topic that have

inundated the mass-media. Many are trying to satisfy the prophetic sense within them as if they have been suddenly catapulted into the final days of history.

Even though the majority of people would never admit it, they are well aware that human history is beginning to signal certain unavoidable changes. The collapse of financial institutions, economies, relationships between nations; a downward trend and deterioration of common sense, honesty and integrity, have led to global corruption. Everybody seems to be out for themselves attempting to make a profit in any and every way possible. Corruption in business and in politics is at an all-time high.

At this writing there are wars and unrest in the Middle East, nuclear weapons proliferation, unrest within and among nations, and many other issues governments must address as they face an ever growing discontented public.

The rise in concern for the future is at an all-time high. For this reason, many are consulting occult sources such as: fortune tellers, horoscopes, mediums, witches, palm readers, tarot cards and many other forms of the occult.

Uncertainty in Atmosphere

The prevailing uncertainty in the atmosphere gives fear an incredible edge. Even our stock markets, investment entities, and financial institutions are scrambling to somehow calm the fears of people who are afraid to lose out and not reach their objectives or their plans for the future. Unrest is the undercurrent that drives this time of history with smoke screens, deceptions, and other gimmicks to which many fall prey because society has lost its point of reference. Everyone is grasping for something concrete to hold on to, but in our world it cannot be found.

Epidemics

With all the advancements of the medical field, there still remains a great deal of uncertainty on how to deal with the epidemics that have invaded our cities and nations. Scientists are working feverishly to supply solutions and answers to a world that, without realizing it, is slowly drowning in the waters of despair.

Lawlessness

Lawlessness is at an all-time high as well. Slowly the ability of civil protection is eroding, as many test the boundaries of public

orderly conduct. In our society, drugs, alcohol, and illicit sex are becoming the norm. These continual practices in our society break down the family infrastructure and wear down the moral fiber of our society.

Parents resisted for the longest time, but eventually have given in and lost control over their children. Children are experiencing sex, drugs and alcohol at a very young age, as parents sit by passively or with a sense they can do nothing about it. In some schools the students are in control of the classroom, and teachers are being slowly lulled to sleep into the arms of an utterly disrespectful and rebellious generation.

Does this sound like we have major problems on our hands? Just reading these few paragraphs of this chapter is enough to cause us to be fainthearted.

Jesus said: "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12).

Perversion of Love

Love, as the world sees it now, is associated with temporary emotional sentiments and lasts only as long as the two participants care to share it. If sex doesn't continue to satisfy, they go on to someone else for another temporary fling, and then go on.

Sexual performance has become the barometer to gauge approximately how long the relationship will last. Love is growing cold. It is really disappointing when it grows cold in the marriage of so-called believers that ought to be centered on God.

Marriage and a lifelong commitment to one another is at risk. The fear of having to tolerate their spouse for a lifetime while refusing to work hard at keeping the love flame going is too much to commit to. Divorce is now socially acceptable even in our churches.

Lawlessness in the earth is beginning to take hold of our society like never before, and is fostered by the spirit of the antichrist as described by John in his epistles.

THE ANTI-CHRIST

Spirit of Anti-Christ

Have you ever heard anyone curse the name of a false god like Buddha, or any other? Why not? Jesus is the Son of God. All other gods are false and serve Satan's purpose. In fact, Satan is the promoter of all that is contrary to and opposing the Kingdom of God.

The spirit of the antichrist is a deceiving spirit sent to desensitize the world to the fact that Jesus came in the flesh to earth to save the world. In vain, this spirit will try to rewrite history through false religions and godless cults designed to influence this present generation, leading it to believe in something that does not exist, spiraling it down into a deep sense of hopelessness.

➤ *Denies Jesus*

1 John 2:22 says: "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son."

This spirit denies Jesus' deity and aims to turn the hearts of genuine Christians, "if it were possible," away from Christ.

Person, the Anti-Christ

John is not speaking of the person who will come "as" the antichrist, rather he is speaking of a spirit sent as a forerunner to pave the way for the "one" whom the Bible calls the man of sin, the son of perdition, the lawless one, false prophet, the wicked one, or the antichrist.

➤ *Seduces the Nations*

This antichrist will perform supernatural signs and wonders to seduce the nations of the world, including some who attend church but are not truly saved and are mesmerized by the attractiveness of this present day religious formality.

➤ *Receives Worship*

The people will see the antichrist as a holy man and a wise man who is able to resolve difficult and great problems, and through his deception many will fall away. His agenda will be inspired by Satan himself, and his desire will be as already announced by Isaiah 14:13-14: "For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the

mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.”

His extraordinary supernatural powers will make him appear to many as God incarnate. The ultimate act of wickedness will be to enter into the temple of God built by Solomon, which is presently being restored at Jerusalem, and sit on the mercy seat in the holy of holies.

➤ *Proclaims Himself God*

There he will proclaim himself as God. He will sweep the naive and gullible off their feet. He will solicit worship from the people. His hatred for God and His son, Jesus, and everything that is holy will be unprecedented. He will stand against everything that is of God. He will habitually discredit the work of the cross. He will put God down in the eyes of the people and lift himself up. The deception will be such that everything that appears right will be wrong, and everything that appears wrong will be right. Satan himself will operate through this son of perdition in his attempt, once again, to usurp God’s throne, yet to no avail.

OUR ANSWER

Nevertheless, continual social problems can vex even the most spiritual person. We are certainly facing very difficult times, but we must be courageous and resist the temptation that will allow this diabolical spirit to control and dominate any part of the Church of Jesus Christ. Jesus said: “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

Focus on Jesus

Even though all these problems are real, I find it a wiser choice to concentrate on the words and commands of Jesus. Even in the midst of much distraction and hardship we must continue to go about His business in obedience, finishing the work He entrusted us with before ascending to heaven. The temptation of those who have been truly regenerated is to desire to leave this world and be with the Lord as early as possible; but, if we would all leave prematurely, who would remain to fulfill the great commission? While we wait for Jesus’ return, we must give the highest priority, respect, and commitment to this task. God’s highest priority is to save the lost.

Do His Works

Sitting around and discussing the return of Christ without considering His priorities could lead any believer to miss out on God's purpose for his life, so we must always keep before us the things that Jesus commanded us to do. We must apply and prove ourselves as trustworthy co-workers of God, becoming increasingly more sensitive to all He desires to do in us and also in the lives of the people that we love, with all sincerity.

In the parable of the ten minas (Luke 19:12), the Lord said to His servants: **do business till I come**, declaring the need to always be active in God's field until the day of His appearing.

Doing business till He returns does not mean to sit and discuss or debate when and how Christ will come back, but it means to obey Him till the end without futilely trying to pinpoint the time according to human wisdom.

Pray

These debates are Satan's very strategy against the Church, to distract her from her main ministry, which is prayer. Prayer has been replaced with programs and unfruitful methods lacking the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that only the Father knew the day of His second coming, and we must leave it at that. As God's people, we would be much more productive if we would focus only on the things He has told us to do. After all, "the secret things belong to the Lord our God but the revealed things belong to us...."

In Acts 1:9-12 we read: **Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 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." Then they returned to Jerusalem**

The two angels dressed in white appeared to the disciples of Jesus telling them to stop looking toward the clouds and head back to the place where they could fulfill their commanded task. In fact, after the angel spoke with them, the disciples returned to Jerusalem and got to work, beginning with prayer. After all, the One who had ascended into heaven had left them a marvelous

example of how to fulfill a ministry sustained, guided, and empowered by prayer.

Prayer is not only asking God to do something, but it is the instrument that allows us to move in step with God's plan and will.

Be Conformed to His Image

The purpose of prayer is to transform us and conform us more and more to the image of Jesus. The objective of God is to produce within each believer the character qualities of His son. Who is Jesus if not the Lord of all things and King of the universe? Jesus said that the Father gave Him all authority and that all things have been placed in His hands.

Jesus is the heir and we are co-heirs with Him. Romans 8:17 declares: "and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

The word does not say that "we shall be," but that "we are" heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. As Christians, we are now heirs with God and co-heirs with Christ.

As co-heirs with Christ, what kind of conduct should we exhibit in these last days? As children of God, who should we look like? How can we rise up and shine the light of God in a dark world? To better understand this responsibility that we have as children of God, I find it necessary to first understand the intent of God's plan, as it was manifested in the first man, Adam.

OUR PURPOSE

Created Perfect – Eternal

Since the beginning of creation, Adam was made to live forever. His creator had formed him in such a perfect way, that no part of him or of his existence was destined to die. Adam was created to live forever in the presence of God, enjoying every day communion and intimacy with Him.

Man's life was a branch of the life of God, like a branch from the tree from which it sprouts. The breath that God breathed in Adam's nostrils had destined the first man to life eternal like God Himself. God's Spirit filled the first man causing him to show forth the inherited character of God. His abilities were of divine nature, his faculties were extraordinary, in everything and in

every aspect he represented God on the earth; His perfection, authority, dominion, and holiness.

In Revelation 4:11 we read: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; ...for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."

Everything that God created was perfect. At the end of each day God looked at what He had created and, as the Bible tells us, "God saw that it was good." His creation was perfect in His eyes, He liked that, it brought Him pleasure and satisfied Him. All of His creation reflected His paradise, His heaven, His order; His will was being done on the earth as in heaven.

Man, of his own choice, continued to be submissive and obedient to the supreme authority, until he gave Satan his freedom by disobeying God, abdicating his role as God's representative here on earth. This choice of his, created a breach between man and God. Man by his own choice, rebelled against God's command and consequently was separated from God's holiness, and his soul and his body were destined to die. Apart from the life of God, there is no life.

Mankind's Second Change

Nevertheless, God's greatest desire is for every person to know and be reconciled to Him; to live a holy life filled with fruitfulness not only in this life but also in the life to come.

Man was created to be an extension of the very Omnipotent nature of God. He was created to multiply himself and thus extend the family of God. This family is made up of sons and daughters who are aware of their origin, that is, their nobility and royalty.

➤ Become Priests and Kings

In Revelation 1:5-6 it's written: "...firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

As priests and kings, we have been entrusted with the task of carrying out the will of the great King of Kings. As believers, we have the responsibility to advance the kingdom of our King upon the earth where He placed us.

God's children were made kings and priests; not for ourselves, but for God, the Father of our King and Lord Jesus Christ. Believers are considered kings and priests on the merits of the sacrifice and redemptive work accomplished upon Calvary. Believing in the saving work accomplished by Jesus, constitutes us as kings and priests.

Our position before God is determined by Him, and refusing His choosing is none other than false humility. True humility is to accept the will of God for our lives as determined by Him. When the Lord transfers us from darkness into His light, He did not first ask us if we wanted to become a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a chosen generation, but He bought us and made us such according to His purpose, so that we may proclaim His praises.

➤ *To Fulfill Our Mission*

We were not born by chance in our generation and in our country; we were not born without a purpose; without a divine and precise objective. Everyone must cooperate with God in order to fulfill on the earth the mission for which he was sent. Acts 17:26 states: "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings."

God has chosen the time and season for our birth, He has determined that date of our birth and time allotted here on the earth. Furthermore, He has determined the place, the city, and the country for our dwelling, so that our life may be used to make a difference.

Someone may ask: "Why was I born in this time of history?" or, "Why was I born in this particular country?"

According to the Word of God, the answer is clear: God has established both the time of your existence and the place where you are to live. Every believer has a job to do. The scriptures also say that King David served his generation faithfully in the land where God had established him.

➤ *To Protect Our Lands*

The welfare of the land depends on the faithfulness of the people of God within it in any given generation.

In Ecclesiastes 10:16 and 17 we read: “Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child...”; “Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles....”

These two verses, written by King Solomon, reveal two important principles. Let’s consider the first verse: this land is in trouble because its king is a child, immature, undisciplined, irresponsible, lazy, and spoiled. He is not able to fulfill his role properly according to all the responsibilities that come along with the crown he wears.

In contrast, the second verse indicates that when the king is well aware of his responsibilities, he seeks maturity and the wisdom needed to govern his land with diligence, integrity, and trustworthiness. He shows himself to be of noble descent, and is blessed, rich, and prosperous.

This means that King Solomon, the writer of this passage, realizes how important it is to be responsible with what you have been entrusted. We can therefore conclude that a person, family, city or nation will either be blessed or in trouble based on the attitude and behavior of the one(s) governing them. Attitude and behavior demonstrate the maturity level of someone given a responsibility.

We must note that the word “land” used in this passage in the Hebrew language means: earth, country, ground, field, wilderness, territory, anything associated with dirt or the dust thereof.

➤ *Take Care of Our Bodies*

God created man from the dust of the earth, so our bodies can be healthy or sick according to the way we have taken care of it. If we care for our bodies, eating the right foods, resting when necessary, not pushing the body over the limits it can withstand, we will assure ourselves, in all probability, a healthier and longer span of life. To ignore these principles that ensure our well being can be considered immature and irresponsible.

Taking care of, or being responsible for one's own body and health, is wise and at the same time very gratifying. Equally important is taking care of and being responsible for one's own house, one's own family, one's own city, and one's own nation.

➤ *Be Responsible*

Whoever governs, or has been given charge over something, must give an account for all his responsibilities to the owner who put him in charge. The Pastor must give an account for the flock he governs; the mayor must give an account for the city, a president for a nation, a father for his children, a husband for his wife, a businessman for his business.

Every believer one day will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, Who is the righteous Judge and Who will reward everyone according to how responsibly each fulfilled their calling and responsibility.

➤ *A Chosen Generation*

1 Peter 2:9 declares: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

➤ *Bearing Good Fruit*

In John 15:16 Jesus said to His disciples: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."

The Lord chose us; we did not choose Him. What an honor we have as children of God to be chosen by Him to accomplish assigned tasks in His field; His earth. He has chosen us to be fruitful, just like Jesus was during His earthly stay.

➤ *As Ambassadors*

As children who are aware of their royal and noble descent, we must emulate the exemplary model of the One who has chosen us. For this reason Paul declares to the Corinthians: "We are ambassadors for Christ..." (2 Corinthians 5:20)

An ambassador is a person who studies the king in order to emulate him in the best possible way. He imitates the tone of his voice, his laughter, his seriousness, his movements, his countenance, and his behavior. He represents the king, expressing his dignity and honor wherever he went.

The ambassador was chosen for this, and was sent out only after having spent much time in the presence of the king and having studied in a detailed way his character and behavior. How many

of us study the life of our King whom we have been called to represent?

Jesus knew His Father well because He spent much time with Him. To confirm this, the scripture says that Jesus is the exact representation of His Father. Jesus said: “he who has seen me has seen the Father.” The teacher said further: “as the Father has sent me so send I you,” indicating that as He represented His Father, so we must represent Him as ambassadors.

➤ *Representing Jesus*

Some could ask how it is possible to represent Jesus. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Jesus said that without Him we can do nothing, and Jesus also declares that nothing can be accomplished without the anointing of the Holy Spirit who is the sending power from the Father.

In Luke 1:34-35 we read: “Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”

➤ *Walking in Faith*

These two verses of scripture are the key to producing in us the faith to believe that the Holy Spirit within us can manifest to the world all the qualities of the Son of God. The young virgin Mary, through her own rationale, could not explain to herself how she could possibly be pregnant without ever having relations with a man. The angel of the Lord revealed to her that this great event was only possible because the Holy Spirit would come down upon her and the power of the Most High would overshadow her.

Without the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, nothing can be done. It is the power of the Spirit of God operating in us to produce the exact representation of the Lord Jesus. On our own, we are not able to emulate the person and character of Christ.

The first step toward royalty, or toward the representation of the King that leaves no doubt in others, begins with believing that “nothing is impossible with God” and “may it be according to your Word.” These were Mary's words. Her simplicity and demonstration of faith before God allowed her to humbly accept God's will. The Lord chose her for having childlike faith; for

simply believing, making her a delivering instrument of the most glorious gift the earth had ever received.

Even we, once made available to God, can be delivering instruments of all that has eternal value. The Holy Spirit is able to produce all the potential of Christ in us. Jesus said that we would do greater works than He did while He was on earth because the Holy Spirit would descend upon His people. We should then accept what God desires for our lives and become demonstrators of His grace and love, His compassion and His forgiveness by the blood of His Son.

JESUS

It would take an eternity to deal with the subject of the character of our King and Lord, so we will limit ourselves to those character qualities that the world not only doesn't share, but rejects.

If we want to live as kings and lords in this world, we must follow the principles that governed the life of Jesus. If we want to sense His presence in our lives and never feel alone, we must learn to live our lives in the same way Jesus lived His.

The Lord declared: "And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:29).

The presence of the Father was regularly manifested in the life of Jesus because He always did the things that pleased His Father. What principles did our Teacher follow to demonstrate His ambassadorship, the fact that He was the Son of nobility? Peter says: For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21).

Our Model for Excellence

Contrary to the popular secular view regarding the qualities of a leader, the anointing of Jesus is the model for excellence that God looks at with great pleasure. The world's terms and conditions for leadership or kingship, will never measure up to the standard of the only Lord and King Jesus Christ. He is our Model. We are to be like Him in all we do.

➤ *Loves God And Humanity*

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And

the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Mark 12:30-31a).

➤ *Leaves Vengeance to God*

"Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:22-23).

➤ *Humbles Himself to the Point of Death*

"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8).

➤ *Does Not Condemn Others*

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17).

➤ *Defends Those Who Are Castoffs*

Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

She said, "No one, Lord."

And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8:3-11)

➤ *Is Compassionate Toward the Suffering*

“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).

➤ *Instills Peace in Times of Fear*

And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm (Mark 4:37-39).

➤ *Overcomes Evil with Good*

“And while He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus answered and said, “Permit even this.” And He touched his ear and healed him (Luke 22:47-51).

➤ *A Man of Prayer*

“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed” (Mark 1:35).

➤ *Zealous for His Father’s Purpose*

“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!” Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up” (John 2:13-17).

➤ *Trusts His Father's Faithfulness*

For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence" (Acts 2:27-28).

➤ *Is Faithful*

"And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end" (Hebrews 3:5-6).

➤ *Glorifies the Father*

"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4).

For certain, many more character qualities of Jesus could be added to this list, however what was mentioned is sufficient to cause each of us to examine ourselves to see if any of these qualities are truly part of our character.

How do we react when treated wrongly, violated, humiliated, mocked, and rejected by the world? Do we defend ourselves, or like Jesus, are we able to keep silent and place our trust in Him who judges righteously.

When we are doing a work He has commanded us to do, do we glorify God or ourselves?

Are we men and women of prayer?

Do we fellowship with and worship God, or do we come to Him only in times of need?

Are we faithful in the little things, or do we become easily annoyed and leave our post and task?

Do we overcome evil with good? Do we have a propensity to vindicate ourselves?

When others are going through hard times and need us to stay close to them, are we available to assist, or do we distance ourselves from them? Are we able to remain concerned for others even when we are experiencing difficulties, or do we shut everybody out and isolate ourselves with our problem? During

trials, are we an encouragement to others, or do we fuel their fears and insecurities with our own negativity and fears? Are we defenders of the outcast, or do we consider it more important to protect our reputation before men? Are we able to at least see a small part of the character of Christ manifested through ours?

The scripture teaches us to examine ourselves to ensure that our lives really shine forth the light of the Lord. Suffice it to say that the great King has paved for us the pathway of love, of grace, of holiness, of forgiveness, and of true royalty. Let us therefore walk in this pathway and we will never be confused.

In Conclusion

Dear friends, the time has come for us to rise and shine forth the righteousness of God in a land where darkness seeks to prevail. When we enter a dark room, the first thing we look for is the light switch. It is time to find the light switch, the Holy Spirit, Who through His power, illuminates our lives in a way to shine forth the brightness of the soon and coming King as we wait for the fulfillment of His promise: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).

Jesus will soon return for a beautiful bride that reflects Him in all of His excellence, dignity, beauty, and royalty.

You are part of the Church! Rise up, take courage, and allow the Spirit of God to shine forth the Glory of Christ, the King. His holy character will shine through you and cause you to be a light in this dark world. Arise and shine!

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What are the warnings of the end times?

2. How are we to respond?