**A Profound Mystery**



**Curriculum for Women’s Discipleship**

**From the Book of Ephesians**

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For authorization, please contact [ginny.p.porter@gmail.com](mailto:ginny.p.porter@gmail.com).

Scriptures used are from the NET Bible and the King James version of the Holy Bible.

See notations after each passage referenced.

To order copies of this resource:

ginny.p.porter@gmail.com

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And lastly, I thank God for Herb Hodges, the man who has been most instrumental in my life, to casting the vision for true Biblical disciple making.

**The Author**

Mingled among cherished memories, and a few I would rather forget, there’s a wedding theme woven throughout my life story. My Husband and I had just got married when we decided to opened a wedding boutique. So, for the first seven years of our marriage, my carrier was preparing brides for their weddings. Sound’s wonderful, does it not? Love, marriage, and happy ever after. The kind of things little girls dream of, right? Yet something very important was missing here. It was the One who created marriage in the first place – God who is the source of love! And, without love-the key ingredient, inevitably, dreams fall apart. So here I was, a broken woman, from a broken home, in a broken marriage, dressing brides for their most important day. When I was twenty-seven years old, I met the love of my life, the Lord Jesus Christ, and I became His bride. The next thirteen years were spent growing in intimacy with my Savior and persistently praying for my husband. After many painful trials and heartaches, Art also met the Lord Jesus. Finally, the two of us became one. By God’s grace, and His grace alone, Art and I have now been married for 30 years. The Lord has blessed us with three beautiful children, a son-in-law and a daughter-in-law that God handpicked for our children. But that’s not all, He has given us two of the sweetest granddaughters in the world. I can testify that God is the healer of broken lives. I am humbled and honored to have the joy of sharing with you, not only the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ but also bits and pieces of my life story as well.

Today, I am the Women’s Discipleship Coordinator for Catalyst Missions. My life is all about dressing the bride of Christ by making disciples, from my home to the nations (Matthew28:18-20; Revelation 21:1-2). It’s all about spiritual relationships, so please invite a friend or two to join you as together we discover the riches of God’s love through the study of the gospel message from the book of Ephesians.

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**Introduction**



**Ephesians 5:32 (NET)**

***This mystery is great – but I am actuallyspeaking with reference to Christ and the church.***

The Bible is full of word pictures, parables of earthly things used to communicate spiritual realities, and such is the case in the book of Ephesians. The Apostle Paul uses words as a paintbrush, and with each stroke we see a portrait emerge. Yet, this is no ordinary caricature, but a priceless and indescribable masterpiece. In radiant beauty, we see the Glory of God in the face of a Bridegroom – the Lord Jesus Christ. And like a portrait within a portrait, hidden“*IN* *HIM*” is someone else. Part of the mystery is this: as we draw near and focus our attention on the Bridegroom, then we see her - the object of His affections, *His* *Bride* – *the Church.* This study is an attempt to comprehend this divine mystery and find ourselves within this love story.



**Colossians 3:3-4 (NET)**

***For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ (who is yourlife) appears, then you too will be revealed in glory with him.***

Like every book of the Bible, the Book of Ephesians is a rich reservoir of life transforming truth. Yet, what makes this epistle so special is that it affords us a rare opportunity to see the big picture of the Bible, not only from Genesis to Revelation, but eternity past and eternity future!

It also provides an excellent context in which we can learn essential doctrinal truths as well as practical life application. Within the safe boundaries of God’s Word, we will tackle the needs of a woman’s heart, such as our insecurities, identity struggles, dealing with our painful pasts, family issues, etc. The hope is that you will discover deep, soul healing truth and cultivate an intimate love relationship with God.

Perhaps you will meet Him for the first time, and this will be a formal introduction to the One whom your soul has longed for. On the other hand, you may know Him very well, and this in-depth exploration of the book of Ephesians will enlarge your vision of His greatness and serve to rekindle a flame of love for Him. Either way, as we discover the magnitude of the Love of God in Christ, we will be forever changed.

**Phase One**

**The Gospel**

**Week #1**

**History of The Church at Ephesus**



**Introduction**

The motif of a wedding runs throughout the Word of God like a golden thread. Using small vignettes, woven within the pages, there is a love story – one of love lost and ultimately found again. This divine narrative is part of the mystery found in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. In keeping with our theme, throughout this study, we will be using some wedding metaphors. This comes quite naturally for me because as a newlywed, I was in the wedding business. It was around this time that I met the Lord Jesus and became *His bride*. Therefore, this section of scripture bears a special significance for me, in more ways than one.

Perhaps these concepts of love and marriage seem foreign to you. If this is so, you can be assured that it is by no coincidence that you have picked up this book. Every relationship begins with an introduction. My heart’s desire is that the Lord will use this, the first booklet in a five- phase study, to properly *introduce you* to the God of the Bible. You see, in addition to dressing brides for their weddings, I’ve also been a matchmaker (I promise to expound on this later).

Before we commence, you should know that this is not your ordinary Bible study. It’s much more than that. No matter if you are a novice, or a lifelong teacher of God’s Word, you probably have some preconceived ideas. So, to clarify, here are the primary goals for our time together.

First, we want to grow in grace and knowledge of God. Yet, what we’re after is intimacy with Him - not just head knowledge.

Second, we want to cultivate transparent relationships with other women. Therefore, this study is meant to be done in community. Jesus choose a group of twelve, then He divided the twelve into three groups of four. Although, even a community of two with the Holy Spirit joining you, can make a perfect number also. The discussion questions at the end of each week, are to foster deeper understanding and applications of the truths we are learning together.

Lastly, together we want to take these ancient Holy Text and learn to make personal relevant life applications. If all this works as intended, God’s unchangeable Truth, will bring hope, help, direction and purpose into each one of our lives. And, wouldn’t that be worth every moment invested? Now, if you are ready, let’s dive right in.

**A City of Idols**

To correctly interpret any passage of Scripture, it entails putting the passage into its proper context. The fact that an enormous amount of the New Testament is directly, or indirectly, tied to Ephesus, makes the study of this book even that much more appealing. So, we’ll begin our study of Ephesians with some historical facts about the city. If you were to visit the ancient city of Ephesus today, you would find its ruins on the western coast of Turkey next to the modern city of Selcuk. It would hardly resemble the glory of the city believed to be thousands of years old. Yet, in its heyday, it was the most important city in western Asia Minor. Because its inland harbor emptied into the Aegean Sea, it was also a major intersection for trade routes making it very important to the economy of the entire region. In addition to having an enormous coliseum, Ephesus was the site of one of the Seven Wonders of the World: a pagan temple dedicated to the Roman goddess Diana or in Greek - Artemis. Their belief was that Diana’s image had fallen from Jupiter.

Now if you know anything about Biblical history, you may be aware that the devil himself was cast out of heaven in just such a way, and then he became the *god* of this world (Isaiah 14:12-14; 1 Timothy 4:1; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:13). Not content to go it alone, the devil led a host of fallen angels with him in his rebellion. Perhaps these fallen angels are what fell from the heavens or maybe it was an asteroid. Regardless of the explanation of the image, Satan has always wanted to be worshiped, and he was very much at home in Ephesus. Because of this, the city became a hub for evil spirits, witchcraft and idolatry. In fact, it was their main industry and a lucrative industry at that.

I wonder if you can relate to being raised in a home or a place that could be described as a habitat for evil incarnate. Because of our ignorance of the spiritual battle that rages around us, we often think of the supernatural world in terms of Halloween, dress up costumes and candy. But this was not a game for the church at Ephesus, and it is no game for us either. The kingdom of darkness had such a stronghold in this place and the surrounding cities that Paul ends this letter describing the cosmic battles with a chapter on spiritual warfare.

* Can you think of a place where it seems that evil is rampant? If so, list the place here and what makes this place evil. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In Acts 19, we find the account of a real turning point in this city that culminated with a large bonfire in the city square. Many people had turned to God from idols and brought their books on sorcery to burn. The sum of the items amounted to fifty thousand pieces of silver.

**Spiritual Matchmakers**

The beautiful feet that first carried the good news to the city of Ephesus were a husband and wife team from Corinth Greece - another pagan culture. Their names were Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:18-26). They were tentmakers by trade, but their vocation was fishing for men and women. From their example, we learn that God does not have *professionals* and *lay people* in His church. In fact, the term “layperson” is not even found in the Bible because no division exists between the secular and the spiritual life in God’s economy.

**Galatians 3:28 (NET)**

***There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slavenor free, there is neither male nor female– for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.***

Every individual who is part of the bride of Christ has a vital role in God’s redemptive plan. Likewise, every follower of Christ should be a fisher of men. John the Baptist was the perfect example. He was a disciple maker and yet he called himself "***a*** ***friend of the Bridegroom.***” His whole life was all about pointing people to Jesus. And then there is John the apostle, a fisherman by trade, but that was before he left his nets to follow Jesus as a fisher of men (Matthew 4:18-20). If we are friends of Jesus, like John, Pricilla and Aquila, we will do the same.

You might be surprised to know that the apostle John spent his last years evangelizing in the region of Ephesus. If you’ll remember, when He was on the cross, the Lord Jesus tasked this beloved disciple, with the care of His mother Mary. So, it’s not surprising then, that she was also with John and they both spent their last days in Ephesus. John was in Ephesus when he wrote the gospel of John, as well as 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, sometime between A.D. 80-95. In fact, he was arrested while in Ephesus and taken to Patmos, located in the Aegean Sea southwest of Ephesus. This is where he received the Revelation sometime between in A.D. 94-96. Ephesus is the first of the seven churches that the Lord Jesus addressed in Revelation. If you were to take a tour of the ruins of this city, the Basilica of Saint John and the House of Virgin Mary would no doubt be on your “must see” list. At the conclusion of our study, in book number five, we will learn more about Saint John and his connection to the church of Ephesus. But that will have to wait until the grand finale.

**Paul’s First Prison Epistle**

**Acts 19:1 and 10 (NET)**

***WhileApollos was in Corinth, Paul went through the inlandregions and came to Ephesus. He found some disciples there.***

***10 This went on for two years, so that all who lived in the province of Asia,both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.***

Of course, you cannot tell the story of the church at Ephesus without talking about the apostle Paul. He wrote Ephesians while he was in Rome, under house arrest because of preaching the gospel (Acts 28:16-31). It’s believed that this letter was intended as a circular letter to be hand copied and read to all the saints who were scattered throughout Asia Minor. In fact, half of the books in the New Testament (fifteen of the twenty-seven) are connected in some way to Ephesus. For example, Ephesians was the first of the four prison epistles. The others were to the church at Colossae, Philippi and the personal letter to Philemon - who was part of the church in Colossae. Apparently, Philemon was in Ephesus when Paul led him to Christ. The subject of Paul’s letter to this brother was Philemon’s runaway slave Onesimus. In God’s providence, Onesimus met Paul during his time imprisoned in Rome and there Onesimus was born again. He was no longer a slave to sin – he was a new creation, and as such, he needed to be reconciled to Philemon.

Now, here is where the story gets even more interesting. The mail carrier, if you will, who hand-delivered the prison letters was Tychicus whom Paul called a beloved brother and faithful minister. Guess who accompanied Tychicus with the letters? It was Onesimus - Philemon’s runaway slave, but now in Christ, they were brothers.

During his ministry, Paul spent more time in Ephesus than he did in any other place – roughly three years. This was about the same length of time that Jesus spent with His twelve. It is important to note that Luke and Timothy were also in Ephesus with Paul (Acts 16:1-17). He also wrote first and second Corinthians while in Ephesus. Always exemplifying the lifestyle of Jesus, Paul cared deeply about those in whom he had invested so much of his life. These specific saints were entrusted with several divine mysteries, not the least of which is that the Church is the bride of Christ, hence, the wedding theme of this study.

Paul, too, was a “*spiritual matchmaker,*” otherwise known as an evangelist. But that’s not all he was. He was a true **“*friend of the Bride* *of Christ*,” …** ***a disciple maker.*** What I’m trying to say is this: just as a bridesmaid or close friend would attend and assist the bride in preparation for the wedding day -- a disciple maker does the same thing for the church – the bride of Christ. Now you may have some preconceived ideas about what it means to make disciples, and so we’ll spend a fair amount of time throughout this study exploring this concept in depth.

* What do you think it means to make disciples? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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One product of Paul’s disciple making endeavors in this city was a man named Epaphras. When Epaphras had been well-equipped, he took the gospel 100 miles away and founded the church at Colossae. And so, we see the multiplication of disciple making.

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make note of any insights and personal applications.**

* Acts 11:24-26, Acts 18:1-4, 20:1-38; Ephesians 6:21-24; Colossians 4:7-14; 2 Timothy 4:7-19; Titus 3:12; Philemon; 1 Corinthians 1: 11-12, 2:3-4, 3:4-11, 16:5-20

**An Emotional Departure**

By the end of Paul’s three-year tenure at Ephesus, the ties of love that had been forged between him and the saints were apparent. After all, he was their spiritual parent. Acts 20, gives the account of his moving departure from these beloved saints.

**Acts 20:36-38 (NET)**

***When he had said these things, he knelt downwith them all and prayed. They all began to weep loudly,and hugged*** ***Paul and kissed him, especially saddenedby what he had said, that they were not going to see him again. Then they accompaniedhim to the ship.***

I can relate to Paul's experience. I was at the airport in Nicaragua about to return home from my sixth trip to visit the women who are part of “A Strand of Pearls Discipling Ministry.” They are my spiritual family, and I love them dearly. Each departure is sad for me because I don’t know if I will get to see them again -- at least on this earth. That’s how it is when you form true spiritual relationships within God’s eternal family.

* Do you have any relationships within the body of Christ that transcend cultures? If so, describe them here. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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At the airport, I stood next to a young woman who was leaving her country and family for the first time in her life. As her mother unashamedly prayed over her twenty-year-old baby, the tears were flowing freely. While we waited to board the plane, I asked the young woman where she was going, and she replied, “To Europe to attend a university.” It would be two long years before her mama would see her face again. I’m a mama too, and I felt the raw emotions of this painful departure. It had been one year, almost to the day, that I put my youngest son on a plane bound for the Czech Republic to attend a university for five months. The reality is, once we part company, we never know for sure if we will see the face of those we love again. Unless, of course, we’ve been born again into God’s eternal family because, for us, there will be no sad farewells. Eternity will be a forever joyful reunion.

After Paul’s departure, the saints in Ephesus were left in the capable hands of Timothy, Paul’s primary disciple. In fact, first and second Timothy are the personal letters of encouragement that Paul wrote to his “spiritual son” while Timothy was the pastor of the church of Ephesus. These were written during Paul’s first and last imprisonment in Rome between A.D.62-67. (Throughout this study we will be referencing these letters often.) Continuing the work that Paul had begun, Timothy led this flock for about one and a half years.

I dare say, there has never been, nor ever will be, a group of believers who were as privileged as this church. After all, think of the sermons they heard, and who they heard them from! When you consider just the time Paul and Timothy spent with them, that’s at least five full years. But, would they be faithful to reinvest all that truth? Today, according to Operation World, the country of Turkey is 96.64% Muslim. Christians represent only 0.21 % of the population.

* Do you understand what it means to reinvest truth? If so, explain. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Truth is, the world we live in is not that much different than it was 2000 years ago. Sure, we have many luxuries that they did not have, but the spiritual environment is the same. And as it is written in the book of Ecclesiastes, there is nothing new under the sun. The only difference is we have exchanged their false gods for our own, “gods come lately.” We worship created things and not the Creator (read Romans 1:1-32).

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make note of any insights and personal applications.**

* Romans 16:3-4; 1 Timothy 1:1-20; Philippians 2:19-22; Colossians 1:1-8; Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-19; Revelation 2:1-7; Psalms 78:1-8

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Let’s talk about it.**

1. How well do you know the God of the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. If you know Him, who introduced you, and how long have you been a believer?

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1. After you heard and responded to the gospel, did you have a mature believer who came along beside you to help you grow and apply the truth of God’s Word to your life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. If so, what amount of time did they spend with you, and what did you learn from them?

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1. Are you interested in learning more about Biblical discipleship or beginning a discipling relationship? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. As was mentioned, Paul spent the same amount of time in Ephesus that Jesus spent with His 12 disciples (Acts 20:31). How long was that? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Read Mark 3:13-14 and state two things we can learn from the Lord Jesus and Paul about making disciples. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. The Greek word for spent time is *dietribo*. It means to wear through with time or to rub off on. Read passages John 3:22 and Acts 4:13-20. What were the results of the disciples spending time with Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Give an example of someone that has influenced your life in a positive way. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Are your closest friends people who encourage you to love God and pursue personal holiness? (1 Corinthians 15:32-34; Psalm 1:1-4) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. When you are around people who are negative, or gossip or criticize others, what effect does this have on you? Read Ephesians 4:29-31; 2 Timothy 2:14-26. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. In what ways do you think the spiritual climate of our generation is like that of Ephesus? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

Did you learn something new? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer? How did the Lord speak personally to you through this lesson? What action will you take in obedience to God’s voice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Memory Verses**

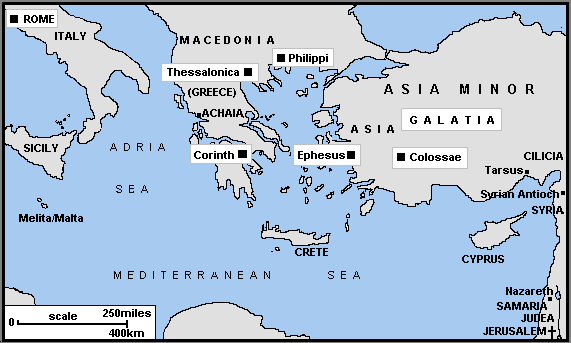
**Acts 19:17-20 (NET)**

***This became known to all who lived in Ephesus,both Jews and Greeks; fear came overthem all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was praised. Many of those who had believed came forward,confessing and making their deeds known.Large numbersof those who had practiced magiccollected their booksand burned them up in the presence of everyone. Whenthe value of the books was added up, it was found to total fifty thousand silver coins. In this way the word of the Lord continued to grow in powerand to prevail.***

## Time Line

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Who & When?  \* Dates are approximate | Where? | What & Why? | How  do we know? |
| Pricilla and Aquila A.D. 52-53  Paul’s 2nd mission trip | Ephesus  Paul was in Corinth- Athens | Evangelized and discipled Apollos | Acts 18:18-28  Romans 16:3-5  1 Cor.16:19-20 |
| Paul, Luke, Timothy,  Titus, Epaphras  A.D. 55-56  3rd mission trip | Ephesus | Evangelized and discipled \*Paul wrote 1 Corinthians -Timothy delivered it. And then He wrote 2 Corinthians -Titus delivered it. | Acts chapters 16-20  1 Corinthians 16:8- |
| Paul, Timothy, Luke A.D. 60-63 | Rome in prison | Paul wrote Ephesians, Colossians 1:1, Philippians | Philemon Acts 28 (Luke wrote Luke and Acts) |
| Tychicus A.D. 60-62 | Went to Rome | Carried letters to the saints  Brought Onesimus back to Philemon | Eph.6:21-22; Col.4:7-9;  Acts 20:4; Philemon 1:1-25 |
| Paul A.D. 62-63 | Released from Rome and went to Macedonia |  | Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus |
| Timothy A.D. 62-64 | Ephesus | Pastor of the church at Ephesus | 1 Timothy |
| Paul & Luke A.D. 66-67 | Imprisoned in Rome |  | Paul wrote 2 Timothy 4:1-12 (Paul, Barnabas or Apollos) possible writers of Hebrews A.D. 67-70) |
| Saint John & Mary the mother of Jesus A.D. 80-95 (about 30 years after Paul left Ephesus) | Ephesus | John wrote the gospel of John & 1,2,3rd John | Acts 18:7; Romans 16:23; 1 Cor.1:14 |
| John A.D. 94-96 | Taken from Ephesus to Patmos | The 1st church Jesus addressed was Ephesus. They had left their first love. | Received the Revelation  Revelation 1:1-11 |

**Map 12. The Travel Areas of the Acts of the Apostles; also where Paul Sent his Letters**(city names in "stamped envelopes", the one province "unstamped")



Map by Gordon Smith http://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/JBPhillips.htm

1. **Matthew 28:18-20- Luke 24:44-53-Acts 1:8 (Great Commission)**
2. **Acts 2:1-47**
3. **Acts 2:54- 8:1-40**
4. **A.D. 33-37 Acts 9-12 (Paul’s conversion and discipleship)**
5. **Acts 11:1-26(Disciples first called Christians)**
6. **A.D. 48-57 (Three missionary journeys) Acts 13:1-52 (V. 44-49)**
7. **Acts 14:19-28**
8. **Acts 16:1-15 (Timothy and Luke join Paul and Silas)**
9. **Act 17:1-11 (22-31) (Thessalonica, Berea and Athens)**
10. **Acts 18:1-18 (Paul in Corinth)**
11. **Acts 18:23-28 (Priscilla Aquila and Apollos in Ephesus)**
12. **Acts 19:1-41 (Paul in Ephesus)**
13. **Acts 20:1-35 (Paul went through Macedonia and Greece and back to bid farewell to the Ephesians Elders)**
14. **A.D. 59-60 (Trip to Rome) Acts 26:1 - 28:31**

**Week #2**

**The Address of the Saints**



**Key Passage**  
**Ephesians 1:1-2 (NET)**

***From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints [in Ephesus],the faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace and peace to youfrom God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!***

**Introduction**

If you are a person who is a little obsessive-compulsive, I want to be upfront with you. We will not be studying the book of Ephesians chronologically. However, if you’re like me, a bit attention deficit, you’ll have no problem whatsoever as we skip around. There is a method to my madness and, although we may not be following the verses in sequence, you’ll find we’ve hardly left a stone uncovered as we mine the truth from the book of Ephesians. This, the first book in a five-phase series, will serve to wet our appetites for all the life changing truth to discover in Paul’s letter to the saints at Ephesus.

The first fourteen verses of Ephesians chapter one has sometimes been called a doxology. Even though the translators of the Bible have added punctuation, in the original Greek language it’s just one long run-on sentence (202 Greek words) composed to praise God for all that He has done. (You may want to read through and familiarize yourself with these verses.)

As we begin to uncover the treasures found just below the surface of this long sentence, let’s employ some basic literary tools in our study. The writer of *The Jungle Book*, Rudyard Kipling, said, “I keep six honest serving-men (They taught me all I knew); Their names are What and Why and When and How and Where and Who.” The “six editorial friends” of Kipling will be of great assistance in unpacking the life-transforming truth that is contained within the first few verses of the Book of Ephesians. So, the first questions we will want to answer in the proper interpretation of this book are as follows: “Who wrote the letter?”; “Who were the recipients?” and “What was their address?” It has already been established in lesson one that it was Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, who wrote the letter while he was imprisoned in Rome around A.D. 60. (2 Peter 1:21; Ephesians 1:1) But for whom was the letter intended, and what was their address? The truth contained within these seemingly simple questions might very well change our concept of God, and bring us face-to-face with our own identity. Before we get to know the recipients of this letter, let’s focus our attention on their location. (See the timeline.)

* Have you ever been taught how to study the Bible? Would you like to learn? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**What’s Your Address?**

Do you like to meet people and hear their life stories? Have you ever sat next to a stranger and tried to strike up a conversation? It usually begins something like this: “Where are you from?” By gathering information, we can learn so much about the person. Although this letter was addressed to the saints who lived in Ephesus, actually, they were found in different locations. It is thought to have been a circular letter that was hand copied and delivered to the saints who lived throughout Asia Minor. However, as this passage indicates, the most important and less obvious location of the saints was **“*in Christ*.”** With fifteen references to this location within the first fourteen verses of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, we can know that this is significant. Paul was so overwhelmed by the fact that the saints live *in Christ*, and perhaps to grasp the fact himself, he used the phrase “*in* *Christ*” 73 times in his letters. But when you add every inference in his letters to the saints being “in Christ” or “Christ is in us,” it totals around 164 references! No doubt Paul had long conversations with the apostles about the day Jesus unveiled this truth to His first disciples. Saint John recorded Jesus’ words in his gospel.

* Have you lived in different cities, states or countries? If so, list them here: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Are there any unique landmarks or traditions practiced in the areas that you have lived? If so, list them here: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Now read Acts 17:24-28. Who determined when and where you would live? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**John 15:5-8 (NET)**

***“I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remainsin me – and I in him – bearsmuch fruit, because apart from me you can accomplishnothing. If anyone does not remainin me, he is thrown out like a branch, and dries up; and such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, and are burned up. If you remainin me and my words remainin you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. My Father is honoredby this, thatyou bearmuch fruit and show that you aremy disciples.***

Knowing that some of these truths would be hard for our finite minds to understand, and since we learn by repetition, the Holy Spirit repeats Himself. Case in point, in John chapter fifteen, you will find the words “Remain *in Me*” eight times within the first seven verses.

As incredible as it may seem; the abode of the saints (those who are part of the bride of Christ) is *in* the Bridegroom. That means that the saints live in dual locations. Our feet walk the sod of earth, but, because we are ***in Christ,*** our true dwelling place is in the Father's House***,*** both now and forever. Now *that* is a mystery difficult to wrap the mind around!

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* John 14:2, 17-20; 15:1-11; 17:16-21; 1 John 3:24, 5:19-21; Ephesians 2:5-7; Colossians 1:13-14; Romans1:18-28, 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:14-16; Galatians 2:20; Exodus 25:8, 29:45

**Ephesians 2:6-7 (NET)**

***And he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, to demonstrate in the coming agesthe surpassing wealth of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.***

What an extraordinary place to live, you might even say, “*Out of this world!”* Yet, what makes this news so extraordinary is the fact that we once lived at another address, a place far away from God, a place the Bible describes as hopeless. And furthermore, we were *all* confined to this “*Godless* zip code!” Yet thankfully, because of God’s boundless love and mercy, He was not content to leave us there.

**Our Former Address**

**Ephesians 2:11-13 (NET)**

***Therefore, remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh – who are called “uncircumcision” by the so-called “circumcision” that is performed on the body by human hands – that you were at that time without the Messiah,alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise,having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who used to be far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.***

How did we all end up in a hopeless place? To find the answer to this question, we need look no farther than the first family God established. (Gen. 1:27-4:25) The story begins in the Garden of Eden where God Himself performed the wedding of Adam and Eve. Everything was perfect; in fact, it was paradise because Adam and Eve had intimacy with God. He was there with them, and He blessed this first couple and commanded them to, “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth.” (Genesis 1:28) (For the bride of Christ, the blessing and command to *multiply* has not changed.)

     Haven’t we all thought, “If only this was right,” or "if I had this or that," or "if they would just leave me alone, then I’d be happy?" Yet, even when you have acquired these things, you discovered that they can’t bring you happiness. However, you would think, surely in an unadulterated environment like Eden, everything would be perfect – right? Not so, because even in paradise, things went terribly wrong. Adam and Eve broke the one and only command given by their Creator, and from that moment on their curse became ours. With the curse came hatred, jealousy, selfishness, fits of rage, blame, guilt, shame, fear and ultimately death. Instead of intimacy and fellowship with God, Adam and Eve hid from the Holy One. Consequently, from that moment on, the union between the Creator and the first couple was severed by sin. Sin defiles everything it touches, and so it was in the marriage relationship between Adam and Eve.

God asked Adam this question - “Where are you?” Needless to say, God knew exactly where Adam and Eve were and what they had done. And, furthermore, before He created them from dust, He knew that they would become dirty with sin. Yet, He asked this question so they would realize their address had changed.

* What separates us from God? Read Isaiah 59:1-8; Colossians 1:21. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­­­­

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Let’s talk about it.

1. Is it possible to hide from God? Read Psalm 139: 7-15. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are some words used in Ephesians 2:11-13 that best describes our first address? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. What are the six editorial friends of Rudyard Kipling that are useful in Bible study\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. How often do you read the Bible? Do you set aside time each day to dialogue with God through prayer? Do you use a journal? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Why do most people study the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. How much of what you hear do you think you actually retain? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. What apostle, other than Paul, lived in Ephesus and recorded the account where Jesus told His disciples to, “Abide in Me?” ­­­­­ ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why is it impossible to live the Christian life without abiding in a love relationship with Christ (John 1:1-14, 14:6)? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Give four practical ways to abide in Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Read John 15:15-16 and discuss this question: Does a tree bear fruit to eat the fruit itself? If not, why does a tree bear fruit? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. How many times did Paul use the phrase “in Christ” in his letters? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. 1 Peter 1:13-18 says that we are to live our life here as strangers. Why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

Did you learn something new? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer? How did the Lord speak personally to you through this lesson? What action will you take in obedience to God’s voice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Memory Verses

**Philippians 3:20 (NET)**

***But our citizenship is in heaven – and we also await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.***

**Week #3**

**The Crux of Our Problem**



**Key Passages**

**Ephesians 2:1-3 (NET)**

***And although you weredeadin your transgressions and sins, in whichyou formerly livedaccording to this world’s present path, according to the ruler of the kingdomof the air, the ruler ofthe spiritthat is now energizingthe sons of disobedience, among whomall of usalsoformerly lived out our lives in the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wratheven as the rest….***

**Introduction**

I hope you don’t mind if I ask you a personal question. Do you consider yourself to be a “good person?" Well, that’s a subjective question, isn’t it? When you get right down to it, doesn’t it depend upon the standard by which you measure what good is? Unless your measuring stick differs from most, when you gauge your goodness, it is always in reference to other human beings. For most us, we think of ourselves in terms of being innocent of committing the so called “big sins." For example - murder. Yet, how does Jesus quantify sin? He defines sin more in terms of the heart because out of the heart our actions will flow. So, by His standard, if we are completely honest, we are all guilty: as guilty as sin. (1 John 3:15, 4:19-20; Matthew 5:27-30) This sounds harsh, doesn’t it? I have another question. Have you ever wondered why people do such evil things? Even in your own family, have you thought to yourself, “Why can’t we all just get along?” Have you ever stopped to consider the fact that, at the very heart of every relational conflict, is the problem of our selfish sin nature? I’ve been pondering this a lot lately, and when you think about it, it explains a lot.

**Rotten Family Tree**

All of us began life in some family context. The home is where ideas are formed, and where we learn who we are and who God is. For good or for evil, this is the place where discipling begins. Yet, regardless of what kind of home we were raised in, no one had to teach us to sin.

Herein lies the root problem of humanity, and it all stems from a rotten family tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You see, the apple - as they say - does not fall far from the tree. The effects of sin are evident by the fact that Cain, the first child born, was a murderer. Who did he kill? He killed the second born - his own brother (Genesis chapter four). And we think *our* family is dysfunctional!

Sin is what we do because of who we are. By nature, and by choice we are sinners. As much as we dislike being confronted with our true condition, by comparing ourselves to others, we can delude ourselves into thinking, “I’m not so bad.” But the truth is, we’re not so good - we are rotten to the core of our being. To illustrate the point, I hope you don’t mind if I share a personal story from my childhood that demonstrates that I am no better than Cain. I too, am a murderer at heart.

As a little girl, I loved to play with dolls. Whereas my sister, Sybil, was just the opposite. She was a tom-boy but that never stopped my parents from buying her dolls. One of those dolls was a Raggedy-Ann doll. Printed on its chest, was a heart with I LOVE YOU written across it. I don’t recall why, but one day I was very mad at my sister, so mad, in fact, that in a murderous rage, I took her Raggedy-Ann and used it like a voodoo doll. With pin in hand and hate in my heart, I scribbled the heart of that doll till it was covered in black ink. I guess I was not old enough to replace the word’s I love you, with I hate you. But it did not matter, I was killing my sister! I don’t remember our ages, when the infamous murder took place, so I’m just guessing here, but I want to say, Sybil was perhaps 8, I was around 6 and our little brother, Thomas (who was nicknamed Belo) was about 3 or 4 years-old. Regardless, I was certainly old enough to know better!

If stealing my sister’s doll, and murdering her with hate were not enough, when Sybil found her mutilated doll, she took it to Mamma and said, “Look what *Belo* did!” Poor little guy… he began to protest in earnest, “I didn’t do it! I didn’t do it!” What do you think this six-year old doll assassin did? Rather than confess, I stood there shifting the blame on Belo. Without saying a word, I lied to my mother. Oh, I didn’t stop there ether, in one ugly swoop, I broke at least four of the Ten Commandments! Then came the coup de grace - the worst sin of all. I watched, in silence as my innocent little brother took the spanking that should have been mine.

I wasn’t such a “good little girl” after all - if there is such a thing. Almost fifty years have passed and I still feel ashamed of the hate, lies and guilt of these sins. Although, in case you are wondering, I have asked my sister and brother to forgive me. I am rotten to the core, and I know it. A whole lifetime of sin attest to the fact!

One could argue, that I was just being a kid and that’s how kids behave. So, what’s the big deal? The big deal is that God defines what’s right and what’s wrong, therefore, my sins, are against Him. True, I hurt my family, but I broke God’s Laws, and as the Apostle John wrote, “All sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). As my mother, would say, “Every boat rest on its own bottom,” in other words, the buck stops with me.

The Holy Spirit does not mince words in describing who and what we are before conversion. Contrary to what we might like to think, we are alienated and hostile in our minds towards God, engaged in evil deeds and enemies of God. We are full of envy, murder, strife, inventors of evil, slanderers, disobedient to parents, unloving, ungrateful, unmerciful, ungodly, unholy, slaves to sin and we use our bodies as “instruments of unrighteousness.” The Bible paints a poignant picture that well - illustrates why we are separated from a holy God. It isn’t a pretty picture, is it?

God told Adam and Eve that if they ate from this one and only forbidden tree, they would die. And as sure as God’s Word is true, they died spiritually. Consequently, we will all die physically, and we will all come face to face with this fact every time we attend a funeral. The mortality rate of every living creature is 100%. Wise King Solomon wrote in the book of Ecclesiastes that we all share a common destiny. No matter how we live, we all have an appointment with death. For the last few days I have been at the hospital with my 94-year-old mother-in-law. Watching her suffering, I weep and pray that the Lord will have mercy and give her relief from this agony. I know, and she does too, that the only way of out of this is death. She begs me, please let me go home! “What home?” I asked her. “Home with Jesus.” As we walk, or crawl through the valley of the shadow of death, the stark reality of the curse of sin hangs heavy. It dawns on us, just how catastrophic, that one moment of disobedience was in the garden. Adam and Eve could not possibly have known the sorrows, pain and suffering, that would grow from the insidious seeds of the fruit they ate. Every ounce of human suffering and sorrow can be traced back to that moment.

The ramifications of Adam and Eve being expelled from the garden to live in a godless world remain today. From this first family, to yours and mine, we are under the same curse of sin, and because of this, we are born confined to the same zip code. We are all born spiritually dead and separated from God. Because of these horrific facts, we are under God’s wrath and condemnation. And tragically, if we remain dead in our sins, we will be confined to a Christ-less eternity in a place the Bible calls hell. In this place, sin reigns supreme and God is absent.

**Ephesians 5:1-11 (NET)**

***Therefore, be imitators of God as dearly loved children and live in love, just as Christ also loved usand gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God. But among you there must not be either sexual immorality, impurity of any kind,or greed, as these are not fitting for the saints. Neither should there be vulgar speech, foolish talk, or coarse jesting – all of which are out of character – but rather thanksgiving. For you can be confident of this one thing:that no person who is immoral, impure, or greedy (such a person is an idolater) has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let nobody deceive you with empty words, for because of these things God’s wrath comes on the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them,for you were at one time darkness, but now you arelight in the Lord. Walk as children of the light – for the fruit of the lightconsists inall goodness, righteousness, and truth – trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but ratherexpose them.***

**None Are Righteous, Not Even One!**

**Romans 3:9-19 (NET)**

***What then? Are we better off? Certainly not, for we have already charged that Jews and Greeks alike are all under sin,***  ***just as it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one, there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, not even one.”***

***“Their throats are open graves, they deceive with their tongues; the poison of asps is under their lips.” “Their mouths arefull of cursing and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood, ruin and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are underthe law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world may be held accountable to God.***

* We are still suffering from the consequences of the fall. From the list of curses found in the above passage, and Ephesians 2:1-3, which ones are most evident in your life and the lives of those around you at this moment? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Even though we may try to cover ourselves with the fig leaves of religion and good works, we are either hiding *from* God in our sinful nakedness like Adam and Eve, *or we are* hidden *with* God ***in*** ***Christ*** and clothed in His righteousness. Regardless of our pretense, we are not fooling God. He knows precisely where we are and the dastardly things we have done. And, furthermore, He also knows the unspeakable things that others have done to us. Look at Isaiah 64:6. “All of our righteousness is as filthy rags.” The words “filthy rags” mentioned in this passage are referring to a woman’s soiled menstrual cloths, and a woman who was on her period was considered unclean. How putrid must our *self-righteousness* be to God who is holy. And yet, isn’t it amazing that despite this, God loves us still?

**Romans 5:6-8 (NET)**

***For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (For rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person perhaps someone might possibly dare to die.) But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

* Can you think of a person who you would consider righteous? What makes you think this way about them? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* John 3:16-18; Titus 3:3-7; Romans 1: 1-26, 2:4-10,6:6-12, 11:30; Colossians 3:7; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

What do these ancient Bible stories have to do with my life here in the twenty–first century? Absolutely everything! You see, when I read the Bible, I find the answers to a thousand *whys.* For instance, from the very beginning of God’s story, *where everything fell apart*, I see a mirror reflection of my life. Not only do these Bible stories mirror my life, they explain it! C.S. Lewis articulated best what I’m trying to say when he said: “I believe in Christianity as I believe the sun has risen…not only because I can see it, but because by it… I can see everything else.” This brief statement summarizing his faith is inscribed upon the memorial stone of his grave. By the way, C.S. Lewis walked through the valley of death to enter his real home. He is alive with Christ, and so shall he, as every saint, be with the Lord forever. (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)

Considering all we have just learned; I would like to ask you a question. Do you know where you live? What is your spiritual address? I ask this question because, at times, I think that even as believers we live as if we are experiencing spiritual amnesia or perhaps we have never been made aware of our address in the first place.

* What do you think it means to have spiritual amnesia? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Now if, on the other hand, you are not sure what we are even talking about, then you may feel as if you are reading a letter that was addressed to someone else. If you aren’t sure of your spiritual address*,* please keep reading. I’ve got some ***very good news,*** *and it’s* addressed personally to you! God loves you. He did not send Jesus into this world to condemn you. He came to save you from your sins and give you a new address. (John 3:1-18)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Let’s talk about it.

1. What is your spiritual background? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Have you ever thought to yourself that only your family was broken, and perhaps every-one else had perfect families?
3. Read Ephesians 2:11-13 and fill in the blanks. Our address at birth is: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Our address at second birth is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. According to Matthew 1:21, what did Jesus come to save us from? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Read the following passages and then answer this question: In addition to our sin, what else, or *who else* did Jesus come to save us from? Hint: there could be more than one answer. (John 3:36; Romans 1:18-32, 2:4-6; Colossians 1:13-14) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. What scale do most people use to measure their own “goodness?” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Fill in the blank: Every saint was born into the world a\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
8. Based on these verses Ephesians 2:1-7, what are the two conditions of every living soul?

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1. Adam and Eve used fig leafs to hide their sins. What kind of fig leaves do people hide behind today? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. How does God view “self-righteousness?” (Isaiah 64:6) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Read Romans 3:9-15 (on page 24) and think of a current situation that proves God’s Word is as relevant now as it was 2000 years ago. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. In his famous sermon*, “*A Broken Heart,” Leonard Ravenhill said, “Jesus did not come into the world to make bad men good. He came to make dead men live!” (YOUTUBE.com/gospelaustralia) What did he mean by this statement? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. How does Ephesians 2:1-3 and Titus 3:1-5 debunk the theory that people are inherently good?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Thinking of your background, did the people in your family point you to God of away from God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. My guess is that you have a story or two that resembles mine. If so, would you share it here? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. From the following verses, when does a person’s heart become sinful? Genesis 8:21; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. When was the last time you contemplated your own mortality? Explain the circumstances.

## Think On These Things

## Did you learn something new? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer? How did the Lord speak personally to you through this lesson? What action will you take in obedience to God’s voice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Memory Verses

**1 Corinthians 15:21-22 (NET)**

***For since death came through a man,the resurrection of the dead also came through a man.******For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.***

**Week # 4**

**The Blood of a Spotless Lamb**



**Key Passages**

**Ephesians 1:7-10 (NET)**

***In himwe have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us in all wisdom and insight. He did this when he revealedto us the secretof his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forthin Christ,toward the administration of the fullness of the times, to head upall things in Christ – the things in heavenand the things on earth.***

**Introduction**

From the very start, God had a plan and it’s never changed. He has always intended to have *His* *people*, living in *His* *place*, under *His* *rule - on earth as it is in heaven.* That, in a nut shell, defines the Kingdom of God. His plan was working perfectly at first in the Garden of Eden; then came the fall and it seemed like all would be lost. But thank goodness the story did not end there. In fact, before the world began He designed a plan that no one could thwart. He was going to redeem us from the curse of sin. The first glimmer of hope is found in the middle of the bleakness. Right there in the account of the fall, God Himself preached the first gospel message that is recorded in the Bible. The unlikely recipient of the gospel was the ancient serpent – the devil. Amid this seemingly hopeless situation, a promise was made. When time had fully come, a woman (a virgin named Mary) would give birth to a Son and He - the God/Man - would ultimately destroy the devil’s work (Galatians 4:4-5).

**Revelation 13:7-8 (NET)**

***The beast was permitted to go to war against the saints and conquer them. He was given ruling authorityover every tribe, people,language, and nation, and all those who live on the earth will worship the beast,everyone whose name has not been written since the foundation of the world in the book of life belonging to the Lamb who was killed.***

**God Provides**

**John 1:29 (NET)**

***On the next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of Godwho takes away the sin of the world!***

As seen in the previous passages, the plan was set in motion before the Lord Jesus ever spoke the world into existence. What was God’s plan? The answer lies, in part, in God’s provision to cover Adam and Eve’s shame and guilt through the death of an animal. Before the fall they were naked, but there was no shame. However, now that their eyes were opened they tried to cover themselves. Leaves were not sufficient, so God killed the first animal and took its skin to make them clothes. I believe that animal was a lamb (Genesis 3:21). Elsewhere we find another account that foreshadowed the plan. In Genesis chapter twenty-two, we see the word “love” used for the very first time in the Bible (see John 3:14-18, 1 John 4:9-10). God told Abraham to take his “Only son Isaac, whom he loved” and sacrifice him on an altar. Yet, all the while, God intended on providing a ram as a substitute for Abraham’s son. Here is another typology. Part of the curse in the garden was that the ground produced thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:17-19). It is no coincidence that the substitutionary ram God provided for Abraham was caught in just such a thicket by the horns on its head. Around four thousand years later, remnants of the ancient curse remained. Thorns were gathered and twisted together to make a crown to adorn the head of another Lamb (John 19:1-42).

One more noteworthy narrative took place in Exodus 12:5-27. When God was about to redeem His people out of slavery in Egypt, He told them to slaughter a lamb and place the blood over the doorposts of their homes. When the death angel saw the blood, he would pass over the house. Every one of these blood sacrifices prefigured the One who would come as our substitute…Jesus, the Lamb of God. Through the shedding of His precious blood, God would redeem His people from their sins.

**1 Peter 1:18-20 (NET)**

***You know that from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors you were ransomed – not by perishable things like silver or gold, but by precious blood like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb, namely Christ. He was foreknownbefore the foundation of the world butwas manifested in these last timesfor your sake.***

There is another, not so apparent, illustration from the Garden of Eden that we don’t want to miss. If you’ll remember, there were two trees in the middle of the garden. We have looked at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, now let’s consider the other one appropriately called - *the Tree of Life*.

**Genesis 3:21-24 (NET)**

***The Lord God made garments from skinfor Adam and his wife, and clothed them. And the Lord God said, “Nowthat the man has become like one of us, knowinggood and evil, he must not be allowedto stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” So the Lord God expelled himfrom the orchard in Eden to cultivate the ground from which he had been taken. When he drovethe man out, he placed on the eastern sideof the orchard in Eden angelic sentrieswho used the flame of a whirling swordto guard the way to the tree of life.***

Look closely at the above text. The cherubim and a flaming sword blocked the way to the Tree of Life. Why? Because, if they could get to that tree, and eat of its fruit, they would live forever! Now fast forward approximately four thousand years to another tree. A tree that was cut down to make a cross. And what kind of “fruit” hung upon that tree? (Deut. 21:23) On a hill called Golgotha, suspended between heaven and earth, was the naked, mutilated and blood soaked body of God’s One and Only Son.

**Galatians 3:13 (NET)**

***Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (because it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”)***

The curse of sin was absorbed by the “fruit” that hung on a cut down tree when Christ, who knew no sin, became sin for us (1 Peter 2:24). Now looking back to the Garden, what would happen if Adam and Eve could eat from the Tree of Life? They would live forever! By allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture, the mystery becomes quite clear, and this is it: The Tree of Life symbolizes the cross, and the fruit that hung upon that tree is the Lord Jesus Christ! Keeping all of this in mind, listen closely to the controversial words of Jesus in the following passages.

**John 6:47-58 (NET)**

***I tell you the solemn truth, the one who believeshas eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestorsate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. Thisis the bread that has come down from heaven, so that a personmay eat from it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats from this bread he will live forever. The breadthat I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” Then the Jews who were hostile to Jesusbegan to argue with one another, “How can this mangive us his flesh to eat?” Jesus said to them, “I tell you the solemn truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no lifein yourselves. The one who eatsmy flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is truefood, and my blood is truedrink. The one who eatsmy flesh and drinks my blood resides in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so the one who consumesme will live because of me. Thisis the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the bread your ancestorsate, but then later died. The one who eatsthis bread will live forever.”***

The Lord Jesus is the Living Bread (symbolized by the fruit.) And everyone who eats of Him will live forever. Henceforth, the cross of Christ became the ***Tree of Life***! By the way, this tree brings us from the garden all the way to the end of the story of the church at Ephesus. (Revelation 2:1-7)

* Read each of the following passages and make a note of the provision or foreshadowing of God’s ultimate plan to deal with what took place in the Garden of Eden. What do these passages have in common? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 3:14-15; Exodus 16:13-20; Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:20-22,28, 10:19-22; Revelation 1:5, 5:9, 7:10, 22:1-5; 1 John 3:8; 1 Peter 1:1-2; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Colossians 1: 13-14, 19-20). \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I would like to use the story I shared in the last chapter to make some applications here. When I lied about my crimes and subsequently allowed my little brother to be punished, He did not suffer in silence - he screamed, “I did not do it! I did not do it!” And furthermore, to state the obvious, it wasn’t *his choice* to take my beating.

But, now, let’s look at the Lord Jesus. When He was falsely accused, and arrested, He could have screamed the truth, like my little brother did; “I did not do it!” Instead, He was lead like a lamb to the slaughter, He did not open His mouth (Isaiah 53:2-12). Then, He said, “Father forgive them”. In sinless perfection, the Lamb of God willingly submitted to His Father, and took our punishment, thereby absorbing the wrath of God. And as He was dying, Jesus cried out, “Father, why have you forsaken me.” Now, why would the Father in heaven abandon His Precious Son at such a time of need? Habakkuk 1:13 says that “God’s eyes are too holy to look upon sin.” When our sins were laid upon Jesus, the Father turned His back on His Beloved. At that moment, for the very first time, the Lord Jesus experienced our alienation from the Father. Yet, His separation purchased our reconciliation.

Why did it have to happen this way? You see, although God is love, He is also holy, so holy, that He must keep His Word and punish sin. His holiness demands it. Furthermore, because we are made in God’s image, it’s intrinsic in our nature to want justice and fairness. Think about this: How many times have you heard this statement, “It’s not fair!”? Or, when we are wronged, we say, “Someone is going to pay for this!” Well, the wages of sin is death, and someone will pay - either you or Jesus.

Has anyone ever taken your punishment? Or, have you ever willingly suffered for someone else? If so, it is highly improbable that such a self-less act would be performed on behalf of an enemy. Yet, that is how God’s Word describes us…we are God’s enemies. (Romans 5:6-12).

Some two-thousand years ago, in the Holy Land on a hill called Golgotha, was a cut down tree that had been made into a cross. That day split history in two, when God’s justice and wrath collided with His lovingkindness and mercy. There is no greater love than that (John 15:13)!

**1 Peter 3:18 (NET)**

***Because Christ also sufferedonce for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring you to God,***

***by being put to death in the flesh butby being made alive in the spirit.***

Nonetheless, most people will readily embrace a God of love, but they willfully ignore the fact of His holiness. Those who fall into this category refuse to believe in the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible. And consequently, they never see their sins or the need for repentance. Yet, even though many will reject Him, this cannot diminish the magnitude of the love of God on display as Christ Jesus lay down His life.

* Look up Isaiah 53:1-12 and Psalm 22:1-19, and find the specific prophecies that describe the death of the Lamb of God and make a list. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* There is a scarlet thread that runs throughout the Bible. Read Genesis 38:28; Exodus 25:4; Joshua 2:18-21. What is it? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* John 1:34-37, 10:1-18; Hebrews 9:8-15, 22; Colossians 1:19-22; Ephesians 2:11-22; 2 Corinthians 2:20; 1 Peter 1:16-21, 2:24-25, 3:8-18; Galatians 1:4, 2:20, 3:13; Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; Romans 3:9-23, 4:25, 5:6-8; Leviticus 4:1-35; Isaiah 52:10-15, 53:1-12; Psalm 22:1-19

God’s divine ingenuity is as magnificent as it is mysterious. For instance, a carefully study of Romans chapters 1:18-3:20 reveals the terminal diagnosis of our sin problem. Then, when you read Romans 3:21-5:21, God prescribes the remedy.

Another example come’s to light when you consider the paradox found in the Latin word for cross—the word is c*rux*! Inquisitive by nature, I chased the origins and derivatives of this word all over the internet, and this is what I found. It’s quite fascinating. The crux, or cross, represents many parallel truths that point us to Christ. For starters, just picture a cross road with a guidepost pointing you in the right direction. (Jesus said, “I am the way.”) Here is another connection to Christ. Crux is also associated with red, like the cardinal bird or like blood. The author of the book of Hebrews said, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.” (Hebrews 9:22)

In fact, even the word excruciating means ex (out of) crux - the cross. The Greek word cardio (which means heart) also comes from the word. So, when we get to heart of a matter- we have reached the crux.

The word crux could also mean a hinge of a door, an axis or a turning point. (Jesus said, “I am the Door.”) But, we are not done yet. From the word crux, comes the general meaning of the word crucial. As you can see, the symbolisms found in the word crux or cross are numerous, but one stands out above all the others. Here it is, and it’s ingenious: At the very heart or *crux* of all our problems is sin. The cross or ***crux of Christ*** was the pivotal hinge that open the door to the kingdom of God. Now do you see how God provided the cure for our problem by the blood that Jesus shed for us on the cross?

This beautifully brings into focus the central turning point to humanities problems. The axis on which all else depends is the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus, His burial and then His subsequent resurrection on the third day. And even His resurrection from the dead was another picture of our resurrection from spiritual death to life! Notice the irony. The darkest day in history, the very epitome of all evil is called “Good Friday.” Three days later, He rose again, defeating sin and death forever!

* After reading the following passages, state why Jesus died. 1 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 5:9; Matthew 26:26-29, why did Jesus die? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Read 1 Corinthians 1:17. Why do you think the fact of Jesus resurrection is so important? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Genesis 3:7-21, 22:1-14; Exodus 12:21-28; John 1:1-10, 29-34, 19:17-31; Galatians 4:3-5, 6:14; 1 John 3:8; Hebrew 1:1-13; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:13-20, 2:14; Romans 10:13-17; Acts 28:4-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21

**Romans 3:21-26 (NET)**

***But nowapart from the law the righteousness of God***

***(which is attested by the law and the prophets)has been disclosed – namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But they are justifiedfreely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God publicly displayedhimat his deathas the mercy seat accessible through faith. This was to demonstratehis righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed. This wasalso to demonstratehis righteousness in the present time, so that he would be justand the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus’ faithfulness.***

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Let’s talk about it.

1. If you are in Christ and He is holy, how should this change how you look at sin? (1 Peter 1:15-20) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. In your family, do you see unhealthy patterns in relationships such as passing blame, manipulation, co-dependency, control, or enabling? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Take Isaiah 53: 5-6 and personalize it. “He was pierced for \_\_\_\_\_\_... “The punishment that brought \_\_\_\_\_ peace was upon Him.” … “By His stripes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_am healed.”
4. Read Revelation 1:5; Romans 1:18; 1 Peter 2:24 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. How do we know that God hates sin? Hint: there could be more than one answer. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Read Paul’s departing words to the Ephesians in Acts 20:25-28 and answer this question: What was the purchase price of the church – the bride of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Read Genesis 22:13-14; Mark 10:45; 1 John 2:2, 4:10; Romans 3:23-26, 5:8-11. From these passages, what is the connection between the required Old Testament blood sacrifices and the cross of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Are there any songs that come to mind that reference the cross or the blood of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. In your own words, describe how the killing of the first animal and the sacrifice of Isaac, points to the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Read Revelation 17:14 and 19:14. Describe the Lamb. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Who preached the first gospel message, and to whom was it preached? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. ­Read John 8:34-36. Are there any sins that you continually struggle to overcome? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Are you comfortable with confessing your sins to God and other trusted believers?

## Think On These Things

## Did you learn something new? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer? How did the Lord speak personally to you through this lesson? What action will you take in obedience to God’s voice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Memory Verses

**Revelation 21:22-27 (Net)**

***NowI saw no temple in the city, because the Lord God – the All-Powerful – and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the glory of God lights it up, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their grandeurinto it.  Its gates will never be closed during the day(andthere will be no night there).***

***They will bring the grandeur and the wealthof the nationsinto it, butnothing ritually uncleanwill ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestableor practices falsehood,but only those whose namesare written in the Lamb’s book of life.***

**Week #5**

# “But God” …Makes All the Difference



**Key Passages**

**Ephesians 2:4-5 (NET)**

***But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even though we were dead in transgressions, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you are saved!***

**Introduction**

 Thus far in our study, we have discovered that we are born into this world with a seemingly insurmountable problem.  The problem is this:  because of sin, we are separated from a Holy God. But what is insurmountable for us, is not for Him. Even before time began, God had an overarching plan of redemption and hope.  As we saw in our last lesson, the plan was written in blood. In fact, if you were to take a red pen and mark the references or the allusions to the blood atonement in your Bible, you’ll discover it spans the length of the God-breathed text. Like a large red arrow or a neon sign, the red line points us to the antidote for our problem. It’s the blood of a spotless Sacrificial Lamb—the Lord Jesus Christ.

So now, we are going to probe even deeper into the depths of God’s love, and consider how He has bridged the chasm between us and Himself through grace and mercy. For here, the helpless sinner may pass over from despair and death to salvation and life.

**When God Intervenes**

When we look at our key passage from Ephesians 2, we might be tempted to skip over the two little words at the beginning of the sentence.  The words “But God” seem less important than the huge concepts embodied in the words “saved by grace” and “through faith.”  I promise we will drink deeply from both these life-giving fountains shortly. Yet, before we do, let’s think for a moment on what happens when you take the simple word *but* and combine it with the word *God*. Here are a few examples: We were dead... “But God” made us alive. Or, when we were still powerless, ungodly sinners, God’s enemies… “But God” demonstrated His love by this--Christ died for us. When we were separated from God, without hope in this world… “But God” has reconciled us to Himself through the blood of Christ. Do you see how powerful and weighty these two words are? They can alter a life, a family, a nation and even the whole wide world. When we find this word combination in the Bible, we should stop and take a closer look because they speak volumes. The words “But God” mark a special place—a transition point from one state to another, the place where God intervenes in history. In our key passage, it marks the point that we pass from spiritual death to eternal life.

There are other short word combinations like this that we should pay close attention to when we are reading scripture. The word combination “for God,” is an example. Grammarians tell us that using the word “for” as a conjunction (especially at the beginning of a sentence) is an old pattern of writing that is rarely used anymore. When it is used, it adds formality and weight to what is being said. So, although it is rare in other modern documents, we still see this construction in many (but not all) of the most modern translation of the Bible. For instance, you will find this usage in one of the most quoted passages in the Bible - John 3:16… “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (KJV) And then, here’s one more… “For God made His light shine in our hearts.” Why would modern translations of the Bible still use this old way of writing? Why don’t they say “Because God” or “Since God,” or just say nothing at all? Like a highlighter, using “For God” retains the weightiness and formality of the statement. Therefore, even translators don’t normally touch them.

This is all just to say that small words can mean a lot when we are referring to the Scriptures. Because, as Jesus asserted in Matthew 5:18, every jot and tittle is significant. Now let us return to our original subject. Those “But God” moments do make all the difference in the world. From the hour, they brought us from spiritual death to life, to the thousand-other faith-building moments when God has mercifully intervened in the situations of our life, these moments change the trajectory of our lives forever.

And so, as you read the following stories, consider how the Lord, in His unfathomable love, interrupts our hopeless, helpless, godless lives with these glorious words, “But God.” For when He does, we can never be the same.

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Genesis 8:1, 31:42, 50:20, 1 Samuel 23:14; Psalm 49:15, 73:26; Matthew 18:26; John 3:14-18; Romans 5:6-12, 6:23; 1 Corinthians 1:27; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6, 7:5-6; Acts 2:24, 3:15
* From these above list of passages, pick out three and state how situations were altered by the words *but* or *for* God. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Once Blind but Now I See**

In 1725 a son of a sailor was born. His name was John Newton, and his is an interesting story. His father owned a slave ship. Like father, like son, John Newton, joined in the deplorable trade and earned his wages through the blood, sweat, and tears of the humans he trafficked. God only knows the unspeakable sins committed on that ship. By virtue of his first birth, John was no different than you or I. He was lost, sinful, spiritually blind and separated from God. But then, one faithful night at sea, by grace, God provided a ferocious storm to teach this hardened sinner what it means to fear Him. That’s when John Newton, had a divine encounter with the living God. He cried out, “Lord - have mercy on my soul!” And God, who is rich in mercy, saved him and the change was obvious. He was no longer a sinner – he was a forgiven saint. His personal testimony is depicted in the beloved hymn he wrote…*Amazing Grace.*

The first line of his song offers a window into the soul of a man who had been twice born. Newton’s song begins with these words, “Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now I am found, was blind but now I see.” What was he talking about? Was he physically blind or lost at sea? No. He was blind to the glory of God in Christ and he was blinded by sin to his wretched condition.

The apostle Paul was in Ephesus when he wrote an explanation of spiritual blindness to the church at Corinth. After all, Paul too was once blind until he was blinded by the Light of the world and then he received his spiritual sight.

**2 Corinthians 4:3-6 (NET)**

***But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing, among whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe so they would not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaimourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slavesfor Jesus’ sake. For God, who said “Let light shine out of darkness,”is the one who shined in our hearts to give us the light of the glorious knowledge of God in the face of Christ.***

Towards the end of Newton’s life, his physical eyesight was failing, but with the eyes of his heart he had perfect vision. (Ephesians 1:17-18) The following words sum-up his statement of faith: “Although my memory’s fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior.” Today Newton’s faith has become sight, and no doubt, as he gazes upon the beauty of the Lord he is singing that eternal song of praise to his Savior - the Lord Jesus Christ.

* What are your thoughts about God offering grace and mercy to murders and rapists? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Along those lines, what was so amazing about God having grace upon John Newton?

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* Read 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 and then fill in the blanks: “But for the grace of God\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

We mustn’t forget that it took just as much of Jesus blood and amazing grace to forgive us of our sins than it did the vilest murder who ever lived. John Bradford, the English reformer and martyr once said when he saw a criminal being led to his execution: “There but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford”.

**A Road That Makes All the Difference**

If you have a story in you, or, like Newton, a song of praise, you’ve got to get it out. It simply can’t be contained. We may not all have a song in us, but every saint has a story of God’s grace. Because our testimonies are so intertwined, I’ll share a portion of my husband’s story of grace before I tell my own.

Although Art and I both grew up in families that were actively involved in church, neither of us were saved until we were adults. Art was forty years old. This fact, alone explains the root cause of our problems. But, I don’t think our story is that different from most. It is my measured opinion that churches of all denominations are full of broken people living lives in sin and deception. Seasons come and seasons go, yet nothing changes because even though they attend Church, they are not saved. By the way, *people are the Church*, not buildings!

**Matthew 7:13-27 (NET)**

***Enter through the narrow gate, because the gate is wide and the way is spacious that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. But the gate is narrow and the way is difficult that leads to life, and there are few who find it.***

***“Watch out for false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are voracious wolves. You will recognize them by their fruit. Grapes are not gatheredfrom thorns or figs from thistles, are they? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree is not able to bear bad fruit, nor a bad tree to bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will recognize them by their fruit. Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven – only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons and do many powerful deeds? Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you. Go away from me, you lawbreakers!’Everyonewho hears these words of mine and does them is likea wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house, but it did not collapse because it had been founded on rock. Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house, and it collapsed; it was utterly destroyed!***

Sure, we knew Bible stories, but not the One whom all these stories pointed to. We were both lost religious church members on the wide road to destruction, but we were completely blind to the fact! We were *perishing in the pew* (a title of one of the lessons you will find on Catalyst website). As Jesus, so fittingly described the Church of Laodicea, we were naked, miserable, poor and blind (Revelation 3:17). You see, t*he devil does not care if he takes us to hell from a brothel, a bar stool or a church pew!* I will expound on my testimony in just a bit. But first, I want to give an example of spiritual blindness. I had been saved for a few years when I wrote my first Bible study. It was based on Matthew 7:13-27 (printed above). I borrowed the title from a poem by Robert Frost titled, The Road Not Taken. “*Two Roads diverged in a wood, and I -- I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the Difference.*” This poem was the one I selected for the senior quote in my high school yearbook. Although, at the time of my graduation the poem had an entirely different meaning. The reality was, I was traveling my own path of destruction and going *my own way* on the wide road, however, it certainly was not the road less traveled!

**Isaiah 53:6 (NET)**

***All of us had wandered off like sheep; each of us had strayed off on his own path, but the Lord caused the sin of all of us to attack him.***

**A Picture Worth a Thousand Words**

My husband, Art, is not only intelligent, but also quite artistic. His most famous work, in my opinion, was done in his senior year of high school. He won an award for his portrait of the king -- Elvis that is. Art had not come to know the real *KING* yet. Nevertheless, I thought the painting was so good, that I took it to Graceland and entered it in the annual Elvis art contest. I was sure we would win thousands of dollars. I had hoped Elvis would pay for my daughter Allie’s wedding. Well, that did not happen. However, Art’s painting did make our local nightly news. When the contest was over, we picked up the painting and drove Elvis home. On the way home, we sang part of this old hymn: “Coming home, coming home, never more to roam, open wide thine arms of love, Lord I'm coming home." When we got home, Elvis returned to the closet!

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As the adage goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. So now I want to tell you about a more important work of “Art.” When I began to write the study of the wide and narrow roads, I asked Art if he would do a painting for me to give us a visual for our study. And so, he did (you can see it above). As our three young children watched the painting unfold, they appropriately named the wide road “Death Road.” A fitting title.

Art painted a beautiful gold mirrored gate at the entrance to hell. The gate was to reflect the people on the wide road. Have you ever been to Las Vegas, Nevada? If so, you have an idea of the facade of the gate to hell which stands at the end of death road in Art’s painting. All that the world offers us may look good on the outside, but just like the shiny facades on the casinos, it’s all a grand illusion.

There was one thing I never liked about the painting. Jesus’ face, looked nothing like the one I saw when His light shone in my heart. But you see, Art was blind to the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. And consequently, he was blind to the true condition of his own heart.

Art’s painting was never completed. He stopped short of painting the people on the wide road, although we talked in detail about what they would look like. Have you ever read the short tale by Hans Christian Andersen titled The Emperor’s New Clothes? If you have, then you will remember the Emperor’s *new clothes* were *no clothes at all*! If Art ever completes his painting, the people on “Death Road” will be dressed like the Emperor! They are naked, but they don’t know it, because the reflection in the gates of hell shows them wearing their Sunday best. But they are as naked as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They are not dressed in the blood of Christ and His righteousness.

Suppose, if you will, an artist is at his easel painting a portrait of a man who survived the atrocities of the concentration camps in Poland. Have you seen the images of the emaciated, naked, half-dead, human beings? Now picture the artist standing next to a mirrored wall in his studio. As he paints, he glances at himself in the mirror and he sees a well-fed, well-dressed man. Here’s the irony: the artist is painting a self-portrait. That was my husband! Perhaps Art was beginning to see himself on the wide road, and that’s why he stopped painting. Like the man who looks into the mirror of the Word of God and yet walks away, he quickly forgets what he looked like (James 1:21-25). Aren’t we all guilty of this? This is precisely what happens when we attend church, week after week, hearing the Word of God in vain. It doesn’t penetrate our heart, in fact, it hardens it! This is the exact condition of the Church of Laodicea in Revelation chapter three.

The longer I live, the more I realize the Bible is true - every single word of it! We reap what we sow, we reap later than we sow, and we reap much more than we sow! The devil never gives you a true picture of what is at the end of his road. Unless the Lord intervenes with a “but God” kind of road block, we’ll stay on the wide road, separated from God, in the domain of the one who comes to steal, kill and destroy. This road abruptly ends and then we will live our worst nightmares for all eternity.

Now, back to Art’s story. Recounting the day of his salvation, He said, “When the Lord saved me, He introduced me to two people. First, I was introduced to Jesus in all His holiness. And second, God showed me who I was, a sinner, lost and separated from the God who loved me. This is when I understood for the first time that sin was not what I did, it was who I was. The devil worked on me for a few days telling me that God was too holy to save someone who was so sinful. Then, in desperation, I pleaded with Jesus to save me, and by His amazing grace, He did!”

Shortly thereafter, he asked me, “How could I have been so blind? How could I have missed salvation, all these years in the church?” Well, now the answers are clear - he was blind *but God* opened his eyes. Until God leads us, by the heart, to the cross and we see the Lord Jesus dying in our place, we are blinded to the fact that we are lost. Furthermore, this revelation is a work of God and a *gift* of amazing grace. (Ezekiel 36:22-29)

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Isaiah 42:7, 59:1-5, 61:1-3; Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 4:18-19, 6:43-47, 8:21; Acts 4:10-12; 5:31; 20:20-21; John 3:1-18, 14:1-6; Titus 2:11-14, 3:3-7; Ephesians 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2; James 2:19; Romans 1:21; Revelation 2:1-22
* Read the following passages: Job 42:5-6; Isaiah 6:5; Luke 5:5-8. In each of these stories, someone had an encounter with God. What do all these stories have in common? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Do you have a “But for the Grace of God….” interruption in your life story? If so, would you be willing to write it here and share it with someone? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**My Line in the Song of Grace**

When I contemplate my life before Christ, and how undeserving I truly am, I’m astonished by God’s long suffering tenacious love. And just to think that before the foundation of the world He knew me and yet still loved me!? There are somethings too great to understand, and this is one of them. Admittedly, I am ashamed of the woman I was without Him, but I’m not ashamed of the Lord Jesus – the Author and finisher of my faith (Hebrews 2:5-18, 5:9). So now, I would like to add my line to the eternal song of praise for God’s amazing grace.

**Isaiah 61:10-11 (NET)**

***Iwill greatly rejoicein the Lord; I will be overjoyed because of my God. For he clothes me in garments of deliverance; he puts on me a robe symbolizing vindication. I look like a bridegroom when he wears a turban as a priest would; I look like a bride when she puts on her jewelry. For just as the ground produces its crops and a garden yields its produce, so the sovereign Lord will cause deliveranceto grow, and give his people reason to praise him in the sight of all the nations.***

In Webster’s 1913 dictionary, one definition for grace is simply: *to adorn; to decorate; to embellish and dignify*. (Revelation 21:1-2) This definition so fittingly reminds me of my story of grace. Let me clarify, I am not saying that the word dignify is a word that would aptly apply. Quite the contrary! However, I can relate to the words adorn, decorate and embellish.

Looking back, there seems to be a wedding theme woven throughout my life. For example, from the very first year of our marriage, my career and business was preparing brides for their weddings. The name of the business was Memphis Bridal Gallery. As the owner of the bridal gallery, one of my jobs was to write a detailed description of the wedding dress for the mother of the bride. Most descriptions included seed pearls because pearls are the most often used adornment for wedding gowns along with crystals, sequins, rhinestones, silver and gold thread, and lace.

My Pastor, David Lawrence, has a message titled: “Turning Problems into Pearls.” In that message, he says, “God never wastes your past.” Indeed, the Lord has taken an abundance of problems, and used them as instruments to write my story of grace.

**Jeremiah 8:20-22 (NET)**

***They cry, ‘Harvest time has come and gone, and the summer is over,***

***and still we have not been delivered.’ My heart is crushed because my dear people are being crushed.I go about crying and grieving. I am overwhelmed with dismay.There is still medicinal ointmentavailable in Gilead! There is still a physician there! Why then have my dear people not been restored to health?***

As I have previously mentioned, something was missing in my life. I was broken and so was Art. That’s how our marriage began in 1986. It’s strange to me now, thinking about dressing all those brides in their ornate white wedding gowns, and yet my wedding dress was not white, nor embellished with a single bead or pearl. Figuratively speaking, this dress mirrored the condition of my spiritually dead heart and what it means to try to cover my sins in my own self-righteousness and religious rituals. No wonder I felt like anything but a beautiful bride on my wedding day. Have you heard of these old wedding traditions: “Something old, something new, something borrowed something blue”? The item I chose as “something borrowed” was a very common wedding accessory, a single strand of pearls.

I was 26 years old when the Heavenly Father led me to the foot of the cross of Christ. After an entire lifetime of church attendance, I saw for the very first time the horror of my sins hanging on the love of my life. When I saw how pure and holy He is, I saw what a dirty mess I truly was.  In His boundless grace and loving kindness, God led me to see specific sins. But, the most heinous of all my sins was my religious self-righteousness. What amazed me the most was that He knew all I had ever done, and yet He loved me. That day, for the first time, I understood that He knew me; He knew me. He was not blind to what I was. But He also showed me His enormous heart of love and compassion toward me. I thought, “How could it be that He still wanted me for His Bride?” The only explanation is grace.

God did not waste the years I spent in the bridal business. It was in those years that I became His Bride! He is still working to remove the spots and wrinkles from my wedding gown. He is not done with me yet. Preparation for this wedding is a lifelong task. Part of this process has been refining me through fiery trials. (I will be addressing some of these trials in the lesson called, The Doctrine of Storms, Sorrows and Suffering.)

God is a God of redemption, and when we give him our testimonies, no matter how shameful or painful they may be, He can turn the ashes into something beautiful and useful for our good and His glory. These years were preparation for the eternal work God has chosen for me - to introduce others to King Jesus and dress the King’s daughters for the wedding by making disciples. From beginning to the end, this is a story of grace upon grace! (John 1:14-16)

Someone once said, “Grace is - God satisfying our souls with His Son so that we are forever ruined for everyone else!” To put it another way: the best advertisement for a product is a satisfied customer. There is no one else who ever filled my empty soul like Jesus. Is He that good? Is His grace so completely satisfying that everyone and everything else pales in comparison? Yes, He is, and yes, He does. He absolutely satisfies; I am ruined forever! And that’s a very, very good thing!

**Psalms 40:2-3 (NET)**

***He lifted me out of the watery pit, out of the slimy mud. He placed my feet on a rock***

***and gave me secure footing. He gave me reason to sing a new song, praising our God.***

***May many see what God has done, so that they might swear allegiance to him and trust in the Lord!***

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* 1 Peter 1:18-22, 2:9-10, 2:24-25, 3:18; Romans 3:20-31; 4:2; 5:6-12; 6:1-10; 9:30; Galatians 2:20; Titus 3:4-5; 2 Timothy 1:9; John 3:14-18; 1 John 4:7-12; Psalm 103:1-22; Revelation 21:1-4

**God's Love Is Not Blind**

**John 2:24-25 (Net)**

***But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people. He did not need anyone to testify about man, for he knew what was in man.***

Perhaps you have tried to look good, or be good, or do good, to gain love. If so, then you know that is not only exhausting, but it is pointless. And furthermore, where did all this effort get us? Nowhere! Any “so called” relationship that is absent of transparency and acceptance - just as we are- is no relationship at all. If we must wear a mask to gain acceptance, then we will never be at ease when we are around that person. I’ve just described much of my life. But God’s grace changed all that when I met the real Jesus. It was like finally coming home to a place I have never been. At long last… it was rest for my weary soul. Can you relate?

* Is there anyone in your life with whom you feel completely at ease being yourself? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Do you think those closest to you feel comfortable being themselves around you? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What do you think it would take to foster this kind of relationships? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

There is nothing quite like being completely known and understood. Only Jesus knows us this way because He has walked the recesses of our hearts and minds. Therefore, He understands our idiosyncrasies, silly ways, propensities to fear, or sin, or whatever. He knows what we do and He knows why we do these things. *He gets us!* Not only is He is intimately acquainted with all our ways and He knows what’s in us. But as He was dying upon the cross, He became *intimately* *acquainted* with our sins. Think about that. Every vile thought and deed conceived in the darkness of our unredeemed hearts was placed upon Him. It’s hard for the mind to fathom how repugnant sin truly is to One so holy. That was the true horror of the crucifixion and these very sins were in the cup He pleaded with the Father to take from Him. No wonder He agonized to the point of sweating drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane. (Matthew 26:36-42)

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Matthew 11:28-30; Jeremiah 1:4-8; Psalm 10:4, 11:4, 56:8, 139:1-16; Ephesians 1:1-6; 2:10; John 2:25

**The Hound of Heaven**

**Luke 19:10 (NET)**

***For the Son of Man cameto seek and to save the lost.***

In his poem, The Hound of Heaven, the English poet, Francis Thompson wrote of a God who woos and pursues His bride. Like an unfaithful wife, we run after other lovers. Even so, He searches us out. He paid the highest price for our ransom and He has too much at stake to let us go (Romans 5: 6-12; John 3:14-19; Ephesians 2:1-15). It comes as no surprise that the word *rescue* is found in the definition of the Greek words: ***forgive, grace, and save***.

In a previous lesson, we read Acts 17:24-28. It says that God has determined the exact time and place that we will live. Kiki Carson, a beautiful addition to our disciple group, tells us of how the Lord sought her when she was an exchange student in Morocco, of all places! Kiki said, “He was pursuing me like a Bridegroom pursues His bride.” Don’t you just love that? If you are in Christ, although you may have been unaware of it, He did the same for you. Yet, sometimes, the instruments God uses to draw us, may seem like a contradiction to His love - especially when it involves suffering. For John Newton, God sought him amid a tumultuous sea. For my husband and me, it was a turbulent marriage. For Saul, who became the apostle Paul, it was God’s grace that stopped him in his tracks in the middle of a murderous rampage against Christians. For others, it could be a thousand other forms of grace.

It matters not the place, nor the circumstances we are in, God knows *who* *we are*, *what we are* and *where we are*. Oh, we may run, but we cannot hide from the ***Hound of Heaven!*** (Jeremiah 23:24; Psalms 139:1-16)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Let’s talk about it.**

1. What do you think it means to be spiritually blind? (2 Corinthians 4:3-6) How does one get spiritual sight? (Psalm 119:130) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Read Romans 5:6-10 and describe what kinds of people Christ died to save. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Ephesians 2:1-9 clearly states how God feels about those who are dead spiritually. What does the text say? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. When a person is the recipient of God’s amazing grace, what are some of the effects that this will have upon their life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Read the following passages Psalm 103:1-14; Isaiah 38:17, 43:25; Zechariah 3:9; Hebrews 9:26. Make a list of what God’s grace has done for every sinner who repents: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. See if you can find any passages that have the transitional phrases “But God” or “For God” and list them here.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. What kind of circumstances did the Lord bring into your life as He wooed you to Himself? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Read Ephesians 1:4-5; Acts 2:38-39; John 6:44-45,65. What do these passages tell us about the Hound of heaven? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

## Did you learn something new? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer? How did the Lord speak personally to you through this lesson? What action will you take in obedience to God’s voice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Memory Verses**

**Hosea 2:14-17 (NET)**

***However, in the future I will allure her;I will lead******her back into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. From there I will give back her vineyards to her, and turn the “Valley of Trouble”into an “Opportunity for Hope.” There she will sing as she did when she was young,when she came up from the land of Egypt. “At that time,”declares the Lord,***

***“you will call,‘My husband’;you will never again call me,‘My master.’***

***For I will remove the names of the Baal idols******from your lips,***

***so that you will never again utter their names!”***

**Week #6**

**The Riches of God’s Mercy and Grace**



**Key Passages**

**Ephesians 2:4-9 (NET)**

***But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even though we were dead in transgressions, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you are saved!***

***and he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, to demonstrate in the coming agesthe surpassing wealth of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; it is not fromworks, so that no one can boast.***

**Introduction**

For much of my life, even as a believer, I have misunderstood the concepts of God’s grace and mercy. Although, having spent a considerable amount of my life attending a protestant church, I was certainly acquainted with theses doctrines. The fallacy of this mindset is not inconsequential. As I have previously mentioned, my lack of understanding of grace and mercy resulted in an unhealthy pattern of trying to earn love, even God’s love. Until recently, I didn’t even realize just how detrimental this faulty thinking was to my relationship with the Lord. It has caused me to live as a beggar - even though in Christ I am rich. Furthermore, without having a firm grip on the doctrine of grace, it left a crack in the foundation of my faith. Left unattended, the crack becomes a crater that drains the joy right out of my salvation. And if I am being honest, I still struggle with a mindset that somehow God loves me when I am good, but when I am bad - not so much.

It all goes back to the fact that fairness and justice are ingrained in our D.N.A. These deep-seated beliefs are not wrong. It is just that apart from God, they are non-existent. Whether I am behaving good or bad, I don’t deserve God’s love. Never have and never will. Rather, by the very nature of my first birth, I have merited death. That’s why it is so important that we to move past a surface, sterile, view of God’s grace and mercy. Until we do, we are living as paupers, even though, we are daughters of the King. Writing this study, especially this lesson, is helping me to retrieve my joy. I sincerely hope it will do the same for you.

And so, we are going to revisit the same passage that we did in the previous lesson. Only this time, as promised, we are going to hone in on the two bedrocks of the Christian faith - grace and mercy. We are going to mull them over, look at them from different perspectives, and, with the Lord’s help, try to define them.

**A Reformed Pharisee**

It is difficult to speak with any authority on a subject that you are unfamiliar with. Whereas, experiential knowledge can afford you the credentials of an expert. As one who had experienced God’s mercy and grace firsthand, the apostle Paul was well qualified to speak on the matter.

Reading Paul’s testimony, it’s apparent that he had experienced a radical paradigm shift. When he encountered the risen Lord on the road to Damascus, not only was his theology reformed, but his life was transformed. In his “B.C.” days as Saul, he was a law abiding, rule keeping, legalistic Pharisee (Acts 25:5-18). But all that changed when God captivated his heart with grace. At last, he was set free from the futility of striving to earn salvation by keeping the Law. And what a relief it is to be unfettered from the vain attempts to earn God’s love, or appease Him with empty burdensome rituals. Paul knew for a fact that God “justifies the ungodly” (Romans 4:5). And He never got over it. With a heart, full of gratitude and awe, Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, the pastor of the church at Ephesus at the time, and he said:

**1 Timothy 1:13-16 (NET)**

***“even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I was treated with mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief, and our Lord’s grace was abundant, bringing faith and love in Christ Jesus. This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” – and I am the worst of them!  But here is why I was treated with mercy: so that in me as the worst, Christ Jesus could demonstrate his utmost patience, as an example for those who are going to believe in him for eternal life.”***

* Make a list of some of the burdensome rituals that religions put upon people? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

It is traditionally believed that the book of Galatians - a tutorial on grace - was written while Paul was at Ephesus. Ephesians 2:4-9 is a condensed version of the entire book of Galatians. The crucial theme of salvation by grace through faith became the hallmark of the reformation (we have just celebrated the 500 year anniversary of this historical event). In fact, Galatians has been called “Luther’s book,” because Luther took his stand on the words of Paul’s apologetic letter on this subject. That’s how vital the doctrine of grace is.

Paul spoke more about God’s grace than any other writer in the Bible, and assuming he penned the book of Hebrews, that is over 100 times! When Paul finally embraced grace, it became the anthem and theme of his life - his emancipation declaration. If we are in Christ, it is ours too.

**Galatians 2:16-21 (NET)**

***Yet we knowthat no one is justified by the works of the lawbut by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by the faithfulness of Christand not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no onewill be justified. But if while seeking to be justified in Christ we ourselves have also been found to be sinners, is Christ then one who encourages sin? Absolutely not! But if I build up again those things I once destroyed, I demonstrate that I am one who breaks God’s law. For through the law I died to the law so that I may live to God. I have been crucified with Christ,*** ***and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. Sothe life I now live in the body,I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God,who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside God’s grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!***

**The Lord Abounds in Mercy**

**Psalm 145:8-9 (NET)**

***The Lord is merciful and compassionate; he is patientand demonstrates great loyal love.***

***The Lord is good to all, and has compassion on all he has made.***

Outside of the Bible, I can’t even think of a context that the word mercy is used today. With one exception, and it just so happens to be a great platform for illustration. Let’s think in terms of a court of law, where a judge has “mercy” upon the accused sparing their lives from the death penalty. Or here is another, less noble, example. For instance, you say flippantly, “Lord, have mercy." I'm ashamed to admit - but I’m guilty. However, the Lord has been readjusting my thinking lately on this subject.

To bring this lesson closer to home, I would like to tell you a story. Well, a few stories to be exact. Not too long ago, our family had a frightening experience when my sister-in-law was in a terrible car wreck. (Not only did the Lord spare her life, he also protected her newly donated kidney – double miracles!) Being the visual learner that I am, the Holy Spirit (my teacher) seized the moment as an opportunity to give me an object lesson on mercy.

We spent two full days in our local Regional Medical Center. As we took turns sitting by her side in the bowels of the trauma center, we got a firsthand look at many gut-wrenching crisis situations. We were totally out of our element!

With only a curtain separating us and other critically injured people, we could not help but hear the conversations and wailing cries of the wounded. An injured young man who had been involved in a shoot-out was placed beside my sister-in-law. It just so happened, that this young man had apparently shot some of the other victims in the trauma center. Along with several police officers who came to pay the criminal a visit, was his aunt. I overheard her plead with her nephew. She said: “You need to get down on your knees and thank the good Lord for having mercy on you and sparing your life!” Although he appeared oblivious to the fact that God had spared his life, his aunt knew better. Her words, it seemed, fell on deaf ears and a hardened heart. His calloused response to her pleas, exposed his lack of fear of the Lord and disregard for the mercy that had been shown him.

There’s little doubt that she left there praying God would have mercy on her nephew’s soul and grant him repentance. I silently interceded for her, her nephew and the others in the trauma center. My heart was tendered to the woman’s plight, because, you see, just recently I lost my nephew, Billy. His short life was replete with trials and sorrows. Granted, there were many times he tried to reform his life, but to no avail. So, when he couldn’t walk the “straight and narrow,” he would give up and run from the Lord (I understand, I’ve been there, too). Many a pleading prayer had been offered up on Billy’s behalf. The last couple of years of his life, the Lord answered our prayers by placing Billy into the care of a local ministry for men named *Warriors Center* ([www.warriorscenter.org](http://www.warriorscenter.org)). Once he entered their program, they loved Billy to Christ and then discipled him. Then, when he was finally ready, the Lord took Billy home. As I write this, next week would have been his thirty–forth birthday.

**Romans 11:32-36 (NET)**

***For God has consigned all people to disobedience so that he may show mercy to them all. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how fathomless his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has first given to God, that Godneeds to repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all*** ***things. To him be glory forever! Amen.***

Now only a fool would claim to fully understand the plans and ways of God. They are far above our pay scale. But of this I am sure, Billy’s life ultimately brought glory to God. How is that so, you may ask? His life displayed the enormous heart of God – His patience, His mercy, how longsuffering He is and the greatest of all of God’s attributes…unfailing love.

Is there someone in your life that desperately needs the Lord? After years of praying, are you wondering if they are a lost cause? To persist in this kind of intercessory prayer takes faith -the kind that moves mountains! But where are you going to find that? Jesus said, in Matthew 17:20-21, that even if our faith is as tiny as a mustard seed we can move mountains. He’s speaking hypothetically here, not so much about physical, but spiritual obstacles. Such as blinded eyes being opened, or those held captive to sin being set free, or the spiritually dead being raised to life. So, here is a list of passages that you can use as “seeds” to grow your faith. As you prayerfully mull them over, ask yourself these questions: Is there anything God can’t do? Is there anyone who is beyond the reach of God’s amazing grace? (2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Matthew 18:18-20, 21:21-22; Mark 10:21-27; Luke 11:5-13,13:6-9, 18:1-8; John 6:44, 65; Isaiah 65:8; Job 22:21-30; Daniel 9:4-19; Revelation 7:10)

* After prayerfully reading over this list, share your insights from these passages. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Compassion-Mercy’s Companion**

**Isaiah 54:10 (NET)**

***Even if the mountains are removed and the hills displaced, my devotion will not be removed from you, nor will my covenant of friendshipbe displaced,” says the Lord, the one who has compassion on you.***

Now, let’s turn our attention to a few Biblical examples. of people that are prime examples of God’s compassion and mercy. And there are so many to choose from! So, for time sake, we will just have to settle for one Old Testament and one New Testament story.

To begin with, there is King David. Now, here is a man who knew a thing or two about God’s mercy and compassion. Even though he was a man after God’s own heart, he committed adultery with Bathsheba, lied about it, and subsequently, murdered her husband. He broke at least 4 out of the 10 commandments! And some big ones at that! Point here is this: *none of us* are beyond returning to the pig pen of sin. However, in David case, he didn’t stay there for too long (2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12). Finally, after the prophet Nathan confronted Him, David owned up to his sins. After this humbling fall, in brokenness and repentance, he was forgiven and restored to fellowship with the Lord. You can read about his repentance in Psalms chapters 32:1-5, 38:1-8, 51:1-19 and 145:3. David never stopped counting the many ways God had been merciful to him. With a humble and grateful heart, David wrote the following Psalm.

**Psalm 103:8-17 (NET)**

***The Lord is compassionate and merciful; he is patient and demonstrates great loyal love. He does not always accuse, and does not stay angry. He does not deal with us as our sins deserve;he does not repay us as our misdeeds deserve. For as the skies are high above the earth, so his loyal love towers over his faithful followers. As far as the eastern horizonis from the west,so he removes the guilt of our rebellious actionsfrom us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on his faithful followers. For he knows what we are made of;he realizeswe are made of clay. A person’s life is like grass.Like a flower in the field it flourishes, but when the hot windblows by, it disappears, and one can no longer even spot the place where it once grew. But the Lord continually shows loyal love to his faithful followers,and is faithful to their descendants.***

Now let’s see what we can learn from a New Testament illustration. You might want to take a moment to read the story yourself, it’s found in John 8:1-11. Here, saint John tells of one occasion where Jesus was teaching in the temple court. (We might compare that to the foyer of a church.) His teaching session was interrupted by a bunch of self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees. With murder in their eyes and stones in their hands, they had the audacity to bring a half-naked woman, and threw her down right in the center of everyone! And how convenient, to have just “caught” her in the very act of adultery! Sounds to me, like this was all premeditated, and she was set up as the “bate” they planned to use to trap Jesus. Curiously enough, someone was missing from this humiliating seen. Where was the man she was caught in bed with?

Amid the accusations of the self-righteous throng, Jesus reads them like a book, exposing the motives of their (pardon the pun) *stony* hearts. Jesus is no respecter of men. He treats everyone equally - both the ones who know they are sinners, and those who *think* they’re not. In this instance, Jesus addresses the latter first. Setting the bar as high as the Ten Commandments, which they loved to quote, but none of them had kept, He stoops down to write in the dirt. We can only speculate what He wrote, but, perhaps it was the specific commands they had broken that day. Or maybe, it flashed through their minds, all the times they coveted their neighbor’s wife, or even worse -committed adultery with their eyes! Pointing out their sins, He said, “Whoever among you is guiltlessmay be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7) (NET). If they were tallying up how many commandments broken here, the judicial scale would not fall in their favor. Sometimes, wisdom *does* come with age. The first to drop their stones and walk away were the older ones.

There are several good takeaways in these two narratives. But, what stands out the most is the stark contrast between the self-righteous Law breakers, and the compassion and mercy of the Lord Jesus. We might be tempted to look down on them, the way they looked down on the women, until it hits you, “Am I really any better than them?” So, who am I to cast my judgmental stones?

God the Father could have sent Jesus to condemn us all, and justifiably so. (John 3:14-18) Yet rather than giving us what we deserve, He delights in giving us mercy - He is rich in it. And, although God is Holy, Holy, Holy, He is also compassionate towards us, remembering that He made us from the dust, therefore we still get dirty with sin. That’s why we need a Savior, a defender, someone who is perfect to stand in the gap. There is only One who fits the bill. (Acts 4:12; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25)

I don’t know about you, but, having already lived beyond the half-way point of a century, I'm certain that if God had treated me, even for one millisecond, as my sins deserve, I would have died a long time ago! More often than I care to admit, I sin grievously, and I know that the prayers of the righteous are powerful and effective (James 5:13-16). Since I am always in need of prayer, this is a real predicament. What can I do when I know I don’t have a righteous leg to stand or to bow on before God? But, then I remember that my Judge sits upon a mercy seat and at His right hand is Christ Jesus…. He is my Righteousness.

Incidentally, the Greek word that is translated as *mercy seat*, is halasterion. It is defined as the means, or the place where sins are forgiven. By no means is God obligated to exonerate us. Yet, when we confess our sins, because of the blood of Jesus, He is faithful and just to forgive us. (1 John 1:5-10) Here again – because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, we can receive mercy. Isn’t He wonderful?

* What are the wages of sin? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Honestly, where would you be if you had to pay the penalties for your sins? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This seems like a fitting place to stop for a moment and think about all of this. When we opened our eyes this morning, God’s mercies were new. He has granted us one more day of life, and at this very moment, we are living in the brief dash between the day of our birth and the day of our death. In fact, David wrote, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23:6) (KJV). Did you catch that? God’s goodness and mercy follow us - covering our past (what is behind us) and God’s mercy is sufficient for all the days that lay before us. Then one glorious day, because of His mercy, we get to dwell in His house forever! Therefore, to say then, that mercy is simply “*not* being treated as our sins deserve,” would be a colossal understatement; it’s so much more than that!

If you are a recipient of God’s mercy, then He put a song in your heart. But it wasn’t meant to stay there. Don’t you think the Lord loves it when we sing praises to Him? Isn’t He worthy of it? Besides that, if we don’t sing, the rocks will cry out (Luke 19:40). And we don’t want that to happen, do we? Are you grateful for God’s mercy? If so, when was the last time others have heard you sing about it?

**Psalm 89:1-2 (KJV)**

***“I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth, will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shall thou establish in the very heavens.”***

Before we turn our attention to focus on God’s grace, we will have a brief lesson in Hebrew. The words grace, mercy, love and compassion abound throughout the Bible. Although, it is difficult for us to appreciate and appropriate these words, unless Hebrew and Greek are our native tongue. But one Hebrew word stands out about them all and epitomizes the very heart of God’s mercy and love. In Hebrew, the word is *cheched*. It’s most often translated as Loving-kindness or mercy. What’s so special about this word?

Well first, it appears that when trying to translate how massive God’s lovingkindness and mercy are, the writers of the Old Testament couldn’t articulate them in one or two words. And so, the Hebrew word *cheched* seems to explode into many other words, such as: to love, have compassion, be gracious, kind, to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior, to have piety or to grant mercy or beauty or favor. I could go on and on and not capture them all. This explains why there are so many renderings of the word in different translations of the Bible. God’s love is just that massive! In short, this Hebrew word finds it’s equivalent in the Greek word translated in the New Testament as grace or forgiveness. The central message of the Bible is that God is a God of love and mercy. It is who He is, therefore, it is what He does. It would be well worth your time, to search out these words found in the long list of passages below.

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Exodus 25:17-22, 26:34, 33:19, 34:5-7; Leviticus 16:2; Isaiah 54:5-10, 55:3; Nehemiah 11:5; Zech. 10:6; Hosea 2:16-20; Psalms 33:3; Lamentations 3:19-25; Matthew 12:7, 15:32; Acts 20:20-24; Romans 3:25, 8:1-2, 26-34, 9:14-18, 11:6; Hebrew 4:16, 9:5-12; 1 Peter 2:9-10; 1 John 1:5-10; John 8:1-11; Ephesians 1:2-10, 2:5-8, 3:2-8, 4:7, 32, 6:24; Colossians 1:14; 2:13

You may be saying: “I thought you said that this would be a *brief lesson* on Greek and Hebrew!” If you are not used to Bible study, your mind may hurt or you may have fallen asleep from exhaustion! Perhaps you don’t love to dissect words the way I do. So, I apologize. Remember, though, every jot and title is important. And so, I hope that at least you have gained a fresh appreciation for the riches of God’s love, mercy and grace.

**God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense**

**Romans 6:23 (NET)**

***For the payoff of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Every man- made religion in the world has this in common. In one twisted way or another, they say: “If you do your best, you can work your way back to God.” Christianity is just the opposite. The Bible says that we can’t get to back to God. We can’t fix our sin problem – Our sins have *earned* us a death sentence. We owe an astronomical debt. That’s why we need a Savior! We need God to come down to us because we can’t get back to Him and grace is the bridge between sinners and God. To say otherwise is to make a mockery of grace!

However, just for the sake of the argument, what if we could work our way to God, how much work would we have to do? How would we ever know if we have done enough? I have a loaded question for you. When you work a fifty, sixty or eighty- hour work week and your employer hands you your payroll check, do you consider that a gift? I think not! That would be ludicrous. You labored to *earn* a pay check. People don’t work to receive a gift - do they? So why in the world do we think we can earn the gift of salvation through works?

* What are some ways that you have tried to earn grace? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**2 Corinthians 9:15 (NET)**

***Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!***

At every turn of the page in Scripture, is a story or an analogy of Grace. Moreover, numerous examples could be used in an endeavor to define it. Maybe you have heard some such as, “Grace is - God giving sinners what they need the most, but deserve the least.” Truth is, any attempt to explain grace and mercy will fall woefully short. Nevertheless, as inadequate as it may be, I would like to take a stab at it by using the above story of the criminal as an allegory (Page 46-47).

**Micah 7:18 (NET)**

***There is no other God like you! You forgive sin and pardon the rebellion of those who remain among your people. You do not remain angry forever, but delight in showing loyal love.***

As we have just discovered, mercy could be defined, as not getting what we deserve. Case in point is the man whose crimes landed him in the hospital and ultimately in jail. He had been shot while shooting someone else. By our estimation, justice would have been served if his actions landed him in the morgue instead of the hospital. Yet God spared his life. Now *that* is mercy.

But, to get a better understanding of grace, let’s suppose, hypothetically speaking, that one of the shooting victims in the that story was the only son of a Judge. We’ll call him the Honorable Judge Grace. Imagine, if you will, it just so happened that Judge Grace was the one who presided over the trial of his son’s killer. While the evidence proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the accused had killed his son, Judge Grace chose to have mercy on the man. He spared his life from the penalty of a death sentence. That would be an incredible act of mercy, would it not? But grace is even more extravagant than that!

Let’s imagine that the man has served his time in jail, and now he stands before the parole board. Who would speak on his behalf? Judge Grace was the only one who showed up as his advocate. The board granted his release, but he was homeless because his family had long since abandoned him. (This is where grace comes into focus, and it’s truly hard to fathom.) Then, to the amazement of everyone, especially the criminal, the judge did a preposterous thing. The judge who had been bereaved of his only son and had suffered so much because of this sinner’s folly, welcomed his son’s killer into his own home. But that’s not all! He gave this hopeless, helpless, sinful man everything that had belonged to his own dearly loved son. And then he bestowed on him the great honor of making him the heir to his estate. Judge Grace loved the unlovable man with the same boundless, limitless love that he had for his very own son. Can you even imagine? Can you see who the characters are in this little analogy? God the Father is Judge Grace; His only Son is the Lord Jesus Christ. The unworthy criminal, represents you and me. That is why its’ called appropriately---amazing grace!

**Colossians 1:12-14 (NET)**

***… giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to sharein the saints’inheritance in the light. He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption,the forgiveness of sins.***

When God, the ultimate judge, liberates you from the due penalty of your sins… *that is mercy*. But, when He takes you into His home and heart, and loves you as His very own Son, now that’s another thing all together … *that is grace*!

**Romans 8:15-17 (NET)**

***For you did not receive the spirit of slavery leading again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself bears witness toour spirit that we are God’s children. And if children, then heirs (namely, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ) – if indeed we suffer with him so we may also be glorified with him.***

As we wrap up this lesson, let’s glance back to the beginning of the Bible where Moses had an encounter with God. Speaking to Moses, “As a friend…face-to-face,” God described Himself. What would you suppose He would say? “I am a consuming fire.” After all, He had spoken to him from a burning bush! Or He could have said, “I am the LORD God the Almighty” (Genesis 17:1) Or, “I am a jealous God!” (Exodus 20:1-5) He could have described Himself in many other ways that would have left Moses trembling in his sandals or, bare feet, as it were. But no. The Lord God made all His goodness pass in front of Moses and then He said:

**Exodus 34:5-6 (NET)**

***The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the Lord by name. The Lord passed by before him and proclaimed:“The Lord, the Lord,the compassionate and graciousGod, slow to anger,and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness.***

So, what exactly is grace? Well, for starters, it’s a gift. Therefore, it can’t be earned- it can’t be bought - it’s value is beyond measure. We certainly don’t deserve it and we can’t be saved without it.…Grace is a person - a Savior…. He’s the God who put on flesh and dwelt among us personifying forgiveness, mercy, loving kindness and compassion. This is how the apostle John described Him: “full of grace.” What is grace? Grace, my friend, is Jesus!

To our finite minds, the concepts of grace and mercy are foreign. They simply defy the limits of our understanding. It all sounds too good to be true, like a fairy tale or fable. But it’s not.

This is the gift of salvation that God offers. Incredible, isn’t it? Would you like to know how to receive it? Then please keep reading.

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Revelation 14:6-7, 19:11-16, 20:11-15; Acts 10:42, 17:31; Romans 4:25; James 4:12; Matthew 10:28; John 5:21-27; Hebrews 4:12

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Let’s talk about it.

1. In the following passages, what two words are added to mercy and grace that are used as a common greeting for the saints? (Ephesians 1:2; 1 Timothy1:1; Titus 1:4; Galatians 1:3, etc.) Why do you think these words are connected? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you love someone who has become the constant subject of your intercessory prayers? Or did you have someone who loved you and labored in prayer on your behalf? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Can you think of ways religion can distort or corrupt grace? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. The doctrine of Grace was solidified out of what movement? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you ever been affiliated with a religion that insisted that works would earn you an entrance to heaven or favor with God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Outside of receiving the gifts of grace and mercy from God, have you ever received these precious gifts from someone else? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. If so, do you think this person had themselves been the recipient of God’s grace? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Read Luke 6:35-36 and state how God treats His enemies. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. If we have been placed in Christ and He is Grace, then is it possible to “fall from Grace”?

­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

## Did you learn something new? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer? How did the Lord speak personally to you through this lesson? What action will you take in obedience to God’s voice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Memory Verses**

**John 1:14; 16-18 (NET)**

***Nowthe Word became fleshand took up residenceamong us. Wesaw his glory – the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father. For we have all received from his fullness one gracious gift after another. For the law was given through Moses, butgrace and truth came about through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only one,himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made Godknown.***

**Week #7**

# “What Must I Do to Be Saved?”

# 

**Key Passages**

**Ephesians 2:6-9 (NET)**

***And he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, to demonstrate in the coming ages the surpassing wealth of his grace in kindness towardus in Christ Jesus. For by grace you are saved through faith,and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; it is not fromworks, so that no one can boast.***

**Introduction**

We have arrived at the place in our study, where we are on the cusp of one of those “But God” kind on moments. So hopefully by now, we have a firm grip on the concept that salvation is God’s gift of grace. Yet, a gift is of little use if it’s not received.

Picking up where we left off in the previous lesson, we will answer the all-important question: How exactly does a person receive the gift of salvation? Well, if you sincerely desire to know, then let me assure you that this thought did not simply *dawn on you*. The Bridegroom is in a relentless pursuit to win your heart. He is the One who seeks to save the lost. Know then, my friend, that God is calling you to Himself! (John 5:24; Romans 11:6; Hebrew 4:7) For Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws them” (John 6:44). This stirring, or quickening in your spirit, is most definitely a step in the right direction, to be sure, but it’s not the only step.

However, before we take the next step towards salvation, we need to get a few things straight. We do not come to God on our terms, we must come on His. Sometimes, the Scriptures seem to be silent on an issue. But, this is not the case here. To eliminate any further speculation, we will allow the Word of God to clarify these terms for us. And these terms will constitute the focal point for this lesson.

**God’s Terms of Salvation**

**Acts 16:30 (NET)**

***Then he brought them outside and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”***

As a segue to our study, let’s take a brief look at the Old Testament story of Jonah - the reluctant evangelist. We’ll bypass the parts where Jonah gets swallowed by the great fish, finally repents, and then God commands the fish to vomit him on the shores of Nineveh (a city, on par with the city of Ephesus in terms of hedonism, only more barbaric).

Then, after Jonah had wiped the seaweed off his stubborn head, he decided it might behoove him to keep his vows to the Lord. He went through the wicked city with his proclamation - the message was short, but not so sweet. “In forty days Nineveh will be overthrown.” And I’ll paraphrase: “Turn or burn!” Despite Jonah, the whole city believed God and repented, thus averting the annihilation of 120,000 souls and many animals (Jonah chapters 1-4). We won’t take the time to expound upon all this short, but rich, book; however, there are two pertinent details that we don’t want to miss.

First, God asked Jonah this question: “Should Inot be even moreconcernedabout Nineveh, this enormous city? There are more than one hundred twenty thousand people in it who do not know right from wrong, as well as many animals”Jonah 4:11(NET). The main point is this: God not only had compassion and mercy on this wicked city, but also upon His disobedient and prideful servant Jonah! Once again, we see God exactly as He described Himself to Moses.

**Exodus 34:5-6 (NET)**

***The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the Lord by name. The Lord passed by before him and proclaimed: “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and graciousGod, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness.***

The second noteworthy point is this: God’s mercy and grace were contingent upon their *belief in His Word*, and the people of Nineveh *turning from their wicked ways in* *repentance*. Hence, we finally arrive at God’s terms of salvation. The two prerequisites and non-negotiables to receiving the gift of salvation are: faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance from sin. Like the chicken and the egg, these terms are so interconnected that when they come together at the moment of salvation, it’s hard to know which comes first. Furthermore, we could chase passages around the Bible and argue both points, but, you’ll be happy to know, were not going to do that.

**What Did Paul Preach Everywhere?**

**Acts 20:17-21 (NET)**

***From Miletushe sent a message to Ephesus, telling the elders of the church to come to him. When they arrived, he said to them, “You yourselves know how I livedthe whole time I was with you, from the first day I set footin the province of Asia, serving the Lord with all humilityand with tears, and with the trials that happened to me because of the plots of the Jews. You know that I did not hold back from proclaimingto you anything that would be helpful, and from teaching you publiclyand from house to house, testifying to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus.***

Departing words carry a lot of weight, since they convey those crucial issues that are of the utmost importance. Case in point: when Paul was preparing to leave Ephesus, he called the elders together to commit to their memory some serious doctrinal truths which he had publicly and privately proclaimed. Repentance and faith were on the top of that list. Paul was just following the lead of John the Baptist - who emphatically declared, “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.” John was paving the way for the One who came after him. The One “whose sandals he was not even worthy to untie” (Matthew 3:1-12).

**Mark 1:14-15 (NET)**

***Now after John was imprisoned; Jesus went into Galilee and proclaimed the gospelof God. Hesaid, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of Godis near. Repent and believe the gospel!”***

After John the Baptist was imprisoned, Jesus began His three-year public ministry. The above passage records Jesus’ first gospel presentation. What did he preach? - “Repent and believe the gospel.” Now, let’s connect some dots. Both Matthew and Luke includes an instance where Jesus refers to Jonah and the people of Nineveh repenting. (Matthew 12:38-41)

**Luke 11:32 (NET)**

***The people of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented when Jonah preached to them– and now,something greater than Jonah is here!***

What is implied here was that the people in Nineveh, as wicked as they were, when they heard the message, repented. Now, the Lord God Himself is preaching, but, because they refuse to repent, at the judgment, they will be held even more culpable. These accounts, where Jesus preached repentance, were not isolated incidental messages either. To further build the case, look at the next passage.

**Luke 13:1-9 (NET)**

***Nowthere were some present on that occasion who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. He answered them, “Do you think these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered these things? No, I tell you! But unless you repent, you will all perish as well! Or those eighteen who were killedwhen the tower in Siloam fell on them,do you think they were worse offenders than all the others who live in Jerusalem? No, I tell you! But unless you repentyou will all perish as well!”***

***Then Jesus told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the worker who tended the vineyard, ‘For three years now, I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and each time I inspect itI find none. Cut it down! Whyshould it continue to depletethe soil?’ But the worker answered him, ‘Sir, leave it alone this year too, until I dig around it and put fertilizer on it.  Then if it bears fruit next year,very well,but if not, you can cut it down.’”***

Context is everything in Bible interpretation. And so, Keeping the context in the forefront of our minds, will lead us to compare scripture to scripture. What’s not so obvious is the connection between Jesus assertion about repentance in the first verses and the parable that follows it. Is it not a little strange that Jesus starts talking about fruit on a fig tree and when the farmer finds none, he cut it down? Interesting parable and placement, don’t you think? And what about the worker who asked for a little more time to do some cultivating on the fig tree before it’s cut down. To give you an opportunity to discover the hidden message in this parable, it is your turn to do some digging.

* Read carefully Matthew 3:1-12 and then answer the following questions:

What is the fruit in this parable? What’s the tree? What is going to happen if the man returns and there is still no fruit? What do you think is the symbolism of the worker asking for a little more time? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Before we move on, let’s unpack some more Greek words of great importance to understanding the Lord’s terms of salvation. The words believe or faith are pretty much tied to one Greek Word: Pisteuo. Here is a partial definition, *to have faith in or with, respect to a person, to entrust your eternal future to Christ. To rely on Him for salvation and have a rock-solid trust in His fidelity.* This kind of faith will endure till the end of your life when faith becomes sight.

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Ephesians 1:15-19, 2:8, 3:12, 4:5, 13, 6:16, 23, Hebrews 1:1-9; Galatians 2:16, 3:22; John 3:16-18, 36A, 8:24-26; Romans 1:16, 10:4-11; James 2:19; 1 John 5:13)

The word Hebrew word for repent is also huge - the word is *shuwb*. I love the visual metaphors found in this definition. To name just a few, such as: turning back to God and thereby away from sin. Or, returning to the starting point (see Jesus admonition to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-5). And then there is this one: to recover, rescue, and restore someone who is lost. To fetch home again (like a shepherd who goes after his lost sheep, finds him and carries him home). (Ezekiel 14:6, 18:30; John 10:11-18)

Have you ever been curious about Heaven, or wondered what goes on there? Well, in the Parables of the Lost Things, we get a rare glimpse. Peeking through the window of God’s Word we see a party. What are they celebrating? In each of the allegories, Jesus told us that a joyful party begins every time a sinner repents. Now, look back at that Hebrew word. Do you see the words “fetch home again”? “Repentance,” someone has said, “is turning away from sin and when you do, you will find Jesus -- the one who pursues lost sinners.” Compare those descriptions with this parable.

**Luke 15:1-10 (NET)**

***Now all the tax collectorsand sinners were comingto hear him. Butthe Phariseesand the experts in the lawwere complaining, “This man welcomessinners and eats with them.”***

***SoJesustold themthis parable: “Which oneof you, if he has a hundredsheep and loses one of them, would not leave the ninety-nine in the open pastureand go look forthe one that is lost until he finds it? Thenwhen he has found it, he places it on his shoulders, rejoicing. Returninghome, he calls togetherhisfriends and neighbors, telling them, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost.’ I tell you, in the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinnerwho repents than over ninety-nine righteous peoplewho have no need to repent.***

***“Or what woman, if she has ten silver coinsand losesone of them,does not light a lamp, sweepthe house, and search thoroughly until she finds it? Thenwhen she has found it, she calls together herfriends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the cointhat I had lost.’ In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of God’s angelsover one sinner who repents.”***

Remember, last words are weighty. Just prior to His ascension, Jesus reminded His disciples that, “...repentancefor the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimedin His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:47) (NET) Think about this: every time a sinner repents; we are one step closer to the culmination of all things when King Jesus comes to get His bride. Now, if the celebration that happens in heaven when one sinner repents is something wonderful, can you imagine what the Wedding Supper of the Lamb will be like?

All of this just underscores the necessity of repentance, as well as faith, for salvation. If repentance is this important, then why, is the word repentance often omitted from gospel presentations? This is perplexing when you look at the endless list of passages that address the subject. Furthermore, if this is such a big deal to Jesus, should it not be to us? Here is some food for thought: is a gospel that does not include the need for repentance, *really* the gospel?

One of the great revivalist of our day, whom I have had the privilege of hearing speak on a couple of occasions, is Richard Owen Roberts. As a lifelong student of spiritual awakening, he wrote a book entitled *Repentance* *The* *First* *Word* O*f* *The* *Gospel*. I have not read his book, but after hearing him preach, there is no mistaking his convictions concerning repentance. In a wilderness of “easy believe-ism,” like John the Baptist the forerunner, Roberts continues to speak the truth, and refuses to compromise on the priority of repentance. Along these lines, I would like to encourage you to hear his messages on YOUTUBE. Additionally, I hope you will also hear the short excerpt of another message titled, *“*A Broken Heart,” by the late English evangelist and author, Leonard Ravenhill. (YOUTUBE.com/gospelaustralia)

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Acts 2:36-38, 17:30, 26:20; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10; Matthew 3:1-12, 11:21; Luke 15:7, 24:47; 2 Peter 3:7-10; Revelation 2:1-5; Ezekiel 18:32, 33:1-11

**What Is Repentance?**

**2 Corinthians 7:9-12 (NET)**

***Now I rejoice, not because you were made sad,but because you were made sad to the point of repentance. For you were made sad as God intendedso that you were not harmed in any way by us. For sadness as intended by God produces a repentance that leads to salvation, leaving no regret, but worldly sadness brings about death.  For see what this very thing, this sadness as God intended, has produced in you: what eagerness, what defense of yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what deep concern, what punishment!In everything you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.***

So now that we know how crucial repentance is, let’s try to define it. But first let’s identify what repentance *is not*. Repentance *is not*, feeling bad for doing something wrong, or just saying casually or sarcastically, “I’m sorry.” (Usually in this case, “I’m sorry” will be followed by, “But…”) Likewise, if you have ever been caught breaking the law, for example, going over the speed limit, and you were sorry you got a ticket, but *not* sorry you broke the law, you were *not* repentant. This is especially true if you continue to break the law by speeding. If you tell someone you have hurt and lied to, “I am sorry,” but then you continue to lie and deceive them, that *is not* repentance. My guess is that a person or situation just came to your mind, because rare indeed is the person who goes through this life unscathed by this kind of hurt. Am I right?

* Have you ever been hurt by someone who said they were sorry, yet continued to hurt you? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Why are words meaningless when it comes to faith and repentance? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Therefore, essentially, repentance means to have a change of mind and heart about your sins, and turn away from them. For this to happen we need to have one of those “But God” moments when the Holy Spirit grants us a keen sense of awareness that we have sinned against God. What the Bible calls “Godly sorrow.” Again, this is God’s grace gift. (Acts 11:15-18) When we see our sin for what it is, and call it what He calls it, then we must own it! All this will result in a change in the direction of your life. And henceforth, instead of running *from God* head long into sin, you are running *to Jesus- the only one who can* save you from sin. One thing is for sure, a truly saved person, will change from a habitual sinner, to a habitual repenter!

**Romans 2:4-6 (NET)**

***Or do you have contempt for the wealth of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, and yet do not knowthat God’s kindness leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornnessand your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourselves in the day of wrath, when God’s righteous judgment is revealed!***

It’s interesting that the two Greek words for repent or repentance (metanoeo and metanoia) relate to the word transformation. In fact, in the Strong’s Concordance, repentance and transformation are next to one another. In Greek, the word transformation is *Metamorphoo* and this is where we get the English word - metamorphosis! *Meta* means *to change* and *Morphoo* means *form*! If you are thinking that word means the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly- you are correct. What’s the connection in the two words? Without true godly sorrow that leads to *repentance*, there will be no salvation, and consequently, there will be no change or *transformation*. (This will be our focus our next lesson.)

* To get a clearer picture of repentance, look at the Old Testament story of king David. It is found in 2 Samuel 11:1-27, 2 Samuel 12; Psalms 51:1, 69:16, 86:3-5; 103:8-12, 145:3-9. Then make notes of the characteristics of repentance in David’s life and then share your insights with your small group. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15-16; John 17:18-23; Romans 1:16; 10:9-18; Isaiah 44:1-8; 49:6-10; Eph. 6:19-20; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 2:14-17, 5:10- 6:2

**Biblical Definition of Faith**

**Romans 1:16-17 (NET)**

***For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For the righteousnessof God is revealed in the gospelfrom faith to faith,just as it is written, “The righteous by faith will live.”***

Like Siamese twins, repentance and faith go together, and you can’t have one without the other and receive salvation. To borrow a couple of analogies from our last lesson: repentance and faith are the two hinges that swing open the doors to the Kingdom of Heaven. In fact, for those who refuse to repent, one day the door will be shut and there will not be a second chance at salvation. ***Jesus is The Door*** (see Matthew 25:1-13; Luke 13:23-30).

I would like to tell you a story about a woman whose name is Iris Blue. I heard her speak on a radio program several years ago. Her story of amazing grace is quite incredible. Despite being raised in the church; she was in a state of total rebellion. Her life was marked by heroin addiction, prostitution and repeated incarcerations (mostly in and out of jail and then once in the penitentiary).

Despite the obvious facts, Iris’ mother was completely blinded to her daughter’s spiritual condition. Each time Iris had served her sentence, and was released, her mother would kill the proverbial “fatted calf” and welcome her prodigal home. Iris would eat the meal and head right back to her life of sin. All the while, her mother pleaded with her to get back in church and rededicate her life to God. When finally, after umpteen times of Iris’ prison stints and subsequent releases, Iris’ mother took off her rose-colored glasses. Her daughter was lost - not backslidden! Finally, her mother humbled herself and confessed all of this to her church. That is when her prayers for Iris became powerful and effective. Within two weeks the Lord miraculously saved Iris.

As a Christian mother, I would like to speak in defense of Iris’ mother. I really do understand her reasoning. The very thought that even one of our children would die without Christ is simply more than we can bear. Denial is a pretty good coping mechanism, I should know, it’s one of my favorite hiding places, until reality slaps me in the face. At my age, you would think I would know better.

Anyway, back to Iris. What’s even more amazing is her father’s part of the story. In an interview, I had with Iris, she shared with me her father’s testimony. Her father was a Sunday school teacher who said that he had loved Jesus his entire life. When given the opportunity to pray a prayer of salvation, he did. I liken this scenario to being inoculated, you get just enough of a disease to insure you never get the real thing. He got what Paul called “vain Belief.” (1 Corinthians 15:1-3) He confessed to her one day:

“*I taught about Jesus, but it was like having a crush on a movie star. I knew about Elvis all my life too. But I didn’t know him.”* So, Iris’ father passed his synthetic - faith to her and subsequently, she grew up hearing about Jesus constantly, but never really knowing him either*.*

This is a very condensed version of the story, I haven’t even told you about her husband, Duane’s compelling conversion! To learn more, by going to their website at: duaneandirisblue.com. The reason I included this story is because many people have faith just like Iris’ dad’s. It’s synthetic.

So, what’s the difference in synthetic faith and saving faith? We’ll see how the Bible defines it in Hebrews chapter eleven - the “faith chapter.” Most scholars agree that it was Paul, “the Hebrew of Hebrews,” who penned the letter. Here, faith is described this way: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see. For by it the people of oldreceived God’s commendation. By faith we understand that the worldswere set in order at God’s command,so that the visible has its origin in the invisible.” (Hebrews 11:1-3) (NET) And furthermore, “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.”

Faith, much like repentance, is a gift of God. And, according to Romans chapter twelve, God has *given* to everyone a measure of faith.

* Can you relate to any of the above stories? Would you care to share them here? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Keep in mind that faith is “being convinced of things we have never seen.” The apostle John was in the city of Ephesus when he wrote the gospel of John. There’s little doubt that the saints in Ephesus received the vision of Jesus’ glory when they heard the following first-hand account from John. The conversation between doubting Thomas and the risen Christ, certainly apply just as well to you and me as it did to the saints of old.

**John 20:24-31 (NET)**

***Now Thomas (called Didymus),*** ***one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “Unless I see the wounds from the nails in his hands, and put my finger into the wounds from the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe it!” Eight days later the disciples were again together in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked,*** ***Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Putyour finger here, and examinemy hands. Extendyour hand and put it into my side. Do not continue in your unbelief, but believe.” Thomas replied to him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are the peoplewho have not seen and yet have believed.”Now Jesus performedmany other miraculous signs in the presence of thedisciples, which are not recordedin this book. But theseare recordedso that you may believethat Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

If faith is being certain of what we cannot see, then what is the connection between faith and hearing? Although we don’t have to *see* to have faith, that does not alleviate the need for hearing the gospel to believe. Paul makes this point clear when he said, “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17-18) By this, we can deduce that hearing God’s Word is necessary to believe in Jesus for salvation. (James 1:18)

Through the hearing of the Word of God, one comes to think differently about sin, turns from it in repentance, and places their faith in Christ alone to save them. In the above passage, John summarizes why the Bible was written … so that you would hear about, and believe on, the Lord Jesus Christ!

**Mark 16:15 (NET)**

***The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned.***

Some may argue, “If it’s as simple as that, then is saving faith nothing more than mere intellectual assent to the facts of the Bible?” If that is the case, then the demons are saved, because as James said, “Even the demons *believe* in Jesus.” (James 2:19) Are the demons saved? Of course, not!

I have learned a great deal about faith through Kevin Twisdale, a fellow disciple maker. In summarizing faith, Kevin said that faith boils down to three things… conviction, commitment and conduct. He explained it this way: You are so convinced about what you believe about Christ, that you live by that conviction. Conviction is in the head, and commitment is of the heart, but conduct is the thing of the habit or the reality of what we live. Furthermore, Kevin said that the word believed is followed by the preposition (into). Why does that matter? This suggests that belief is directed to a person, and that person is the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Ephesians 2:19-20 (NET)**

***So then you are no longer foreigners and noncitizens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household, because you have been builton the foundation of the apostles and prophets,with Christ Jesus himself asthe cornerstone.***

* Look up each of the following passages and then make notes to discuss in your small group. What is significant about the words fidelity and Cornerstone? Acts 4:11-12; Matthew 21:42; Romans 9:33, 10:11; 1 Peter 2:6-7; Psalm 118:22 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Isaiah 28:16 (NET)**

***Therefore, this is what the sovereign master, the Lord, says: “Look, I am layinga stone in Zion, an approvedstone, set in place as a precious cornerstone for the foundation.***

To believe, is to place yourself fully in Christ and rest in Him alone for salvation. For, as Paul asserted, Jesus is the Cornerstone and Foundation of saving faith. “Faith is man’s impedance continually receiving God’s omnipotence,” Twisdale says. Naturally, this would include faith in the in errancy of the Bible (Acts 16:31; John 20:31).

Bottom line is this: we live, or behave, what we believe. If what I believe does not translate into my practical everyday life, then it is not saving faith. Yet, when one has true saving faith, they are relying upon the finished work of Jesus. Thus, renouncing all other means to earn salvation (including behavior modification) and receive Him as the sovereign Lord and ruler of their life. One’s faith, in and of itself, is of no use whatsoever if it is not firmly anchored in Christ Jesus. The only part we play in the gospel, is our sin problem.

**Is He Lord at All, if Not Lord of All?**

Before we delve into the matter of Lordship, I feel the need to offer an empathetic disclaimer. If you have known the oppression of having someone who is wicked rule over you, like a husband who forcibly rules over his wife, or a father who abuses his authority with those he was tasked to serve and protect, understandably, the words *submit* and *surrender* can hold negative connotations. This can result in some serious trust issues. The real problem is that we superimpose this warped image on God. (In book number two, I promise we will cover this subject at great length.) But for now, I just wanted to remove any possible obstacles you have to overcome so that you fully understand who Jesus is and the lengths, and breath and heights He overcame to purchase your salvation. His love is the real deal! When you believe on ***this*** ***Jesus***, it’s not hard to surrender to One who loves you so.

Then, at least on some level, you are able to show your trust and love for Him by willingly submitting to Him as Lord. When we believe on Christ for salvation, we relinquish our rights to autonomy. Thenceforth, as far as we’re concerned, He has the legal right to boss us around - if He so pleases. But, He is not like that at all. Although He is the Lord God - the Almighty, He will not force Himself on anyone. But, however, as He did for Jacob before he renamed him Israel, God will wrestle with those who struggle to surrender all. (Genesis 32:22-32, Isaiah 1:15-20)

Consider this, Jesus is mentioned as the Savior twenty-four times in the gospels. Compare that to the fact that He is called “the Lord” 433 times. So, this must be significant, don’t you think? Now let’s look at the following passage frequently used in evangelism, where the major emphasis is put on the words, “Confess with your mouth,” or, “Call on the Lord”. Yet, seldom is Jesus Lordship conspicuously defined to those they desire to reach for Christ.

**Romans 10:9-13 (NET)**

***Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and thus has righteousness and with the mouth one confesses and thus has salvation. For the scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, who richly blesses all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.***

In Luke 8:21, Jesus succinctly explained Lordship when He said, “My mother and brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it.” And then there is His heart piercing question: “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46) At the very core of rebellion, is a heart that declares, “No one is going to boss me around! - Not even God!” It’s like a dummy in a small dingy, about to be crushed by a battle ship, yelling those famous last words to the captain of the large vessel, “No! You get out of m*y* way!”

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God- I’ll do what I please!” As C.S. Lewis so eloquently put it, “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ’Thy will be done.” All that are in hell chose it.”

Plainly put, if Jesus Christ is not your Lord – then He is not your Savior. Therefore, Lordship is no more and no less than the unpretentious words spoken by Mary, the mother of Jesus, at a wedding in Cana. She said: “Whatever He says to you, do it.” (John 2:1-8)

* Read Romans 10:9-13. What is the connection between calling on Jesus as Lord and sur-rendering to His Lordship? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Is it possible to receive Christ as your Savior without Him being your Lord? Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Think about the following statements and define the differences: Remorse is not repentance, conviction is not confession, and sorrow over sin is not surrender to Christ’s Lord-ship! \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* John 10:1-38; Matthew 7:16-21; Hebrews 11:1-39; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22; 6:9-10; Colossians 1:9-14; Philippians 1:11; Romans 1:18-32, 3:9-26, 6:3-22, 7:4-6, 8:1-33, 10:1-17; Ephesians 2:1-11; Galatians 2:19-23; Titus 1:1, 2:11-14, 3:1-11; 1 John 3:2-15; 1 Timothy 2: 3-6; 2 Peter3: 3-9

**Revelation 3:17-20 (NET)**

***Because you say, “I am rich and have acquired great wealth,and need nothing,” butdo not realize that you are wretched, pitiful,poor, blind, and naked, take my adviceand buy gold from me refined by fire so you can become rich! Buy from mewhite clothing so you can be clothed and your shameful nakednesswill not be exposed, and buy eye salveto put on your eyes so you can see! AllI love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent! Listen! I am standing at the door and knocking! If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come into his homeand share a meal with him, and he with me.***

Speaking to us through the apostle John, Jesus said, “I stand at the door and knock.” Why does He Knock? He wants to come in! But, make no mistake about it, when He comes in, He comes in to take over! The kingdom of heaven is no more and no less than where the ***King of Heaven is on the Throne****!*

So, now let’s get personal here. As you’ve studied through God’s Word, do you hear Him knocking on your heart? Then I would like to admonish you, with the words of Charles H. Spurgeon. He said, *O my dear Hearers, He stands before the door of your heart right now! He is gently knocking, not with a sledge hammer, but with His own pierced hand! … Admit Him at once! If not, it may be that He will never knock again.*

If you have heard the Lord’s voice, please my friend, don’t harden your heart! This is *your invitation* from the King. What will you do with Jesus? If you have access to the internet, I would like to for you to hear a beautiful song written by Steven Curtis Chapman and Geoffrey Paul More. It’s called **“The Invitation.”** (You can find this on YouTube) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hA7q0jA9VtE>

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Let’s talk about it.

1. Define what it means to believe: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What did Paul preach everywhere he went? (Acts 20:17-21) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Read Acts 11:9-24. What was the gift given after they believed, and what did God grant to the Gentiles that lead to life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Read the following passages Acts 11:16-18; 17:30-31; Luke 13:1-5; John 8:24, 58; 12:31-33; Mark 1:15. What was the gospel that Jesus and His disciples preached? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Read 2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 18:32, 33:1-11. What is the stated desire of God in these pas-sages? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. According to all the passages we have studied, can a person have true saving faith with-out true repentance? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Read the account previously mentioned of the woman who was caught in adultery, and another account found in John 5:1-14. What was the last thing Jesus said to these two people? (John 8:1-11) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you think these two returned to their lives of sin? Why or why not? (Proverbs 28:13) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. When all is said, and done, what two things does God want from you and me? Read Luke 8:15-21, 11:27-28; Matthew 7:21-23; Revelation 2:5-7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

## Did you learn something new? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer? How did the Lord speak personally to you through this lesson? What action will you take in obedience to God’s voice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Memory Verse**

**2 Corinthians 6:2 (NET)**

***For he says, “I heard you at the acceptable time, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation!***

**Week # 8**

# Signs of Life



**Key Passage**

**Ephesians 2:5 (NET)**

***… we were dead in transgressions, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you are saved!***

**Introduction**

Is there a person who knows your life story so well that they could write your biography? Timothy was that person for Paul. Sometime after Paul’s departure from the saints, Timothy returned to Ephesus and became their pastor. He remained there for about one and a half years. It was during this time that Paul wrote two personal letters to Timothy.

As his primary disciple, Timothy spent large amounts of time with Paul. Every truth the Holy Spirit entrusted to Paul was passed down to his spiritual son Timothy. This included the account of Paul’s life before Christ, as well as his conversion experience. There is little doubt Timothy could recite Paul’s story verbatim because he had heard it time and time again. (1 Timothy 1:1-17; 2 Timothy 1:1-6, 2:1-2)

In the first letter Paul wrote to his young protégé, he begins by addressing the false teachers and doctrines that had crept into in the Church at Ephesus. But then, just as he often did, he once again recounts his story of amazing grace. Timothy must have been thinking to himself, “Here we go again…. Does he have any idea how many times I have heard this story?” It mattered not to Paul, because unlike so many believers, Paul never got over the wonder of what Jesus had done in his life. Paul’s life before salvation is barely recognizable to the man who wrote an immense portion of the New Testament. After his transformation, Paul was as different as night and day, or you might even day death and life. As every true believer, Paul had experienced the miracle of being raised from the dead!

**Galatians 2:20 (NET)**

***I have been crucified with Christ,***[***59***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Galatians+2) ***and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So***[***60***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Galatians+2) ***the life I now live in the body,***[***61***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Galatians+2) ***I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God,***[***62***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Galatians+2) ***who loved me and gave himself for me***.

It is not necessarily a bad thing to question your salvation. Actually, it’s quite common. But, if you live with anxiety about whether or not you are saved, it may or may not even be warranted. But how can you be sure? If this describes you, then take heart. Based on the authority of the Word of God, you can know for sure. So, please don’t check out on me in this lesson, because ignorance comes at a high cost, and there is too much at stake! Besides that, this is a win, win exercise. So, what we are going to do is this: take the Bible and lay it side by side with our lives. That way, we will see if our lives legitimate proof of salvation. This is such an important issue with eternal ramifications, therefore, we don’t want to miss this opportunity to find out where we stand. Regardless of the outcome of this examination, God loves us and desires for us to live with blessed assurance. There is no time like the present, to settle the matter once and for all.

**Being a Member of Church Doesn’t Make You a Christian**

**Matthew 7:21-23 (NET)**

***Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’***[***24***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Matthew+7) ***will enter into the kingdom of heaven – only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons and do***[***25***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Matthew+7) ***many powerful deeds?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you. Go away from me, you lawbreakers!***

We like to assume that people who attend church must be saved. But, is that so? As I tell Yuki, my sister in Christ from China; just because we eat at her family’s Chinese restaurant, it doesn’t make us Chinese. Likewise, going to a church building and having your name on the roll, does not mean that you’re a Christian. However, many misguided people attending churches of all denominations, are trusting in church affiliations, reformations, confirmation, dedications and family relations as evidence of salvation. But, tragically, some who think they are going to heaven when they die, are in for a rude awakening! So, just because a person attends a church, it does not equal salvation.

This is a big deal for me, because my husband, my father and I were all church members, yet we were lost and empty until the Lord quickened our dead spirits. In fact, because of Biblical ignorance, it took me sixteen years to discover that my moment of re-birth took place when I was twenty-six years old and not when I was baptized at twelve. No one ever challenged me to evaluate my spiritual condition. Like so many people, because I had this experience as a child, I was confused about what happened when I was twelve. I’m not dogmatic about this, but I liken that event to a *conception* of my faith. I guess you could say, I was in the womb of God for about fourteen years before I was born spiritually. God doesn’t have grandchildren – He only has children who are birthed into His family by the Holy Spirit.

**2 Peter 1:10 (NET)**

***Therefore, brothers and sisters,***[***37***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Peter+1) ***make every effort to be sure of your calling and election.***[***38***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Peter+1)***For by doing this***[***39***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Peter+1) ***you will never***[***40***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Peter+1) ***stumble into sin.***

Usually there are at least three witnesses present for a natural birth; the same can be said of the spiritual birth. There are three trustworthy witnesses who testify to our second birth, or “resurrection from the dead.” And all three witnesses will agree (1 John 3:13-14).

**Deuteronomy 19:15b (NET)**

***…A matter may be legally established***[***32***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Deuteronomy+19) ***only on the testimony of two or three witnesses.***

The first witness is a personal salvation experience - like the circumstances surrounding the day you believe was your second birthday. If you’re like me, you may not have an actual date recorded. But that’s inconsequential, because the next two witnesses are more reliable than this one. The second witness is the Bible - the true mirror and judge of our hearts. The litmus test for salvation is the entire book of 1 John. By the way, the apostle John was in Ephesus when he wrote it. The last witness is a changed life that produces the fruit of the Spirit or the evidence that Christ is in you.

Please note, however, these important caveats: the test is *not* someone else’s experience compared to yours. Moreover, you can’t look at a onetime event in your life as proof that you are saved, nor a time of great failure as proof that you are lost. Granted, at times you may not “feel saved,” but that’s not the point. Rather, to build a strong case for assurance, you need to look at *all* the evidence in light of God’s Word.

To help you get some perspective of your life story, use the graph below to mark the major highs and lows in your journey thus far.

* Have you ever served on a jury in a court of law? If so describe what kinds of evidence it takes to convict a person. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* 1 John 2:29, 3:14; John 2:24-25, 3:3-18, 6:63; 1 Peter 1:22-25; 2 Timothy 2:19; Titus 1:16; 1 Corinthians 8:3; Matthew 7:13-24; James 1:21-25; Romans 8:9-11-16; Hebrews 4:12-13

**Am I Alive?**

**1 John 5:11-13 (NET)**

***And this is the testimony: God***[***25***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***has given us eternal life,***[***26***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5)***and this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son***[***27***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***has this***[***28***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***eternal***[***29***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have this***[***30***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***eternal***[***31***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***life. I have written these things***[***32***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***to you who believe***[***33***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***in the name of the Son of God so that***[***34***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***you may KNOW that you have eternal life.***

As we discovered in our last lesson, when someone has been born again, the Spirit of God takes up residency in them. This is the beginning of an internal transformation where their inner character begins the process of metamorphose - just like a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. It’s called sanctification. When this happens, our live will be characterized in such a way that we progressively, bear a striking resemblance to the One whom we belong to, thereby giving proof of a genuine conversion. Just as He was raised from the dead, so are we raised to walk in a newness of life, and will bear some unmistakable birthmarks that authenticate that we are His (Ephesians 1:13-14).

To illustrate, look with me, if you will, at the word ***Know*** found in 1 John 5:13. The Greek word is *eido*. This word is also translated as show, see, or even, to be sure! (1 John 3:13, 5:13, 15,16-18,19 John 1:47-48) Likewise, the Greek word for ***see,*** ***behold or look*** (idou) is also derived from the same word as know.It is found in the following passage.

**2 Corinthians 5:17 (NET)**

***So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away***[***32***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***– look, what is new***[***33***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***has come!***

[***34***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5)

People may try to reform their lives, yet without a spiritual birth, they are incapable of changing themselves. Yet, when God transforms someone - you can see the evidence! My point in bringing these Greek words to your attention is this: if we cannot ***see*** the signs of life, then we cannot ***know*** we are saved. The change should be apparent, not only to us, but also those who know us best. If we claim to be saved yet, there is not one iota of evidence in our actions and attitudes, then this should lead us to ask ourselves this question, “Am I saved?” We may *profess* to know God, but *possess* salvation, and therefore, we are still lost and separated from God who loves us.

**Romans 8:6-9 (NET)**

***For the outlook***[***6***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Romans+8) ***of the flesh is death, but the outlook of the Spirit is life and peace, because the outlook of the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to the law of God, nor is it able to do so. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in***[***7***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Romans+8) ***the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this person does not belong to him.***

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* John 3:1-19; Ephesians 2:1-13; Galatians 6:15; John 12:44-46; 2 Timothy 2:19;

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

**What Are the Signs of Life?**

**2 Corinthians 13:5-6 (NET)**

***Put yourselves to the test to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize regarding yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you – unless, indeed, you fail the test!***[***6***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+13) ***And I hope that you will realize that we have not failed the test!***

Apparently, because of the carnality of the saints in Corinth, it cast some doubt in Paul’s mind about the validity of their confession of faith. Some things in their lives seemed out of sync with the Scriptures.

Have you ever experienced some symptoms that indicated that you may have a serious illness? If so, then you know that the only way to alleviate nagging anxiety and worry is to visit a doctor who will perform a thorough examination. Only then can you have peace of mind, a proper diagnosis and a plan of treatment. Likewise, a checkup of our spiritual health can alleviate the uncertainty of where we stand in relation to God. In this lesson, we’ll be checking our “spiritual pulse” so to speak.

* If you are in the medical field, what are the universal signs of life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Matthew 7:13-24; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; Acts 21:20-21; 2 Peter 3:9; Romans 8:5-17

**Ephesians 5:14 (NET)**

***For everything made evident is light, and for this reason it says:***[***18***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Ephesians+5) ***“Awake,***[***19***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Ephesians+5) ***O sleeper!***[***20***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Ephesians+5)***Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!”***

* **Can you and others (behold or see) that all things are new in you?**

I’d like to tell you about a special brother in Christ whose life was a picture of this kind of transformation. His name was Frank Lucido. Frank was fifty years old when he was born again. We were together on a mission trip to Corn Island, Nicaragua when I joined him and my pastor at a small radio station. This day just happened to be Frank’s seventh birthday. I was excited to know that his testimony would be broadcast throughout two islands, and for reasons I did not understand at the time, I recorded Frank’s story and felt that something very special was taking place. A few months after we taped his testimony, Frank went home to be with Jesus. And through this recording, Frank preached his own funeral service. In fact, you can hear it for yourself by going to [www.catalystmissions.org](http://www.catalystmissions.org) and go to the Women’s Discipleship page.



**2 Corinthians 5:11; 14-18(NET)**

***Therefore, because we know the fear of the Lord,***[***18***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***we try to persuade***[***19***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***people,***[***20***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***but we are well known***[***21***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***to God, and I hope we are well known to your consciences too. For the love of Christ***[***26***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***controls us, since we have concluded this, that Christ***[***27***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised.***[***28***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***So then from now on we acknowledge***[***29***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***no one from an outward human point of view.***[***30***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***Even though we have known Christ from such a human point of view,***[***31***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***now we do not know him in that way any longer. So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away***[***32***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***– look, what is new***[***33***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***has come!***[***34***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+5) ***And all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and who has given us the ministry of reconciliation***.

* **Do you desire the hearing of God’s Word?**

There are two internet connections between the Lord and His bride, one is the Bible and the other is prayer. The Bible is God’s love letter to His bride. And what bride does not cherish every word from her beloved? Yet, spiritually dead people do not have an appetite for spiritual things like God’s Word. Since the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible, when He occupies a believer, He brings with Him a hunger for the Bread of Life - God’s Word. (Hebrews 4:12-14; 1 Peter 1:22-23; Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2; John 5:24-25, 6:63-68; 8:43-47; &51-53; 10:27;12:46-48; 15:7-8; 2 John 1:9)

**John 10:27-28 (NET)**

***My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give***[***67***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/John+10) ***them eternal life, and they will never perish;***[***68***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/John+10) ***no one will snatch***[***69***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/John+10) ***them from my hand.***

* **Do you obey God’s Word?**

Interestingly enough, the words hear - akouo, follow - akolotho and obey hupakouo, are all derived from the same Greek word. Why does this matter? It matters because Jesus said, “My sheep *hear* my voice and they *follow* me.” Clearly, obedience, at least on some level, will accompany true saving faith. But of course, we are not talking about absolute sinless perfection here. However, someone who is new in the faith does not know all that God requires of them. And therefore, this necessitates someone discipling them. (Romans1:5-6, 8:7, 16:26-27; Hebrews 5:9; John 3:36, 14:15-26, 15:9-14, 16:8; 1 John 2:3-6, 3:22-23, 5:2-3; 1 John 3:1-11)

**1 John 2:3-4 (NET)**

***Now, by this we know that we have come to know God: if we keep his commandments. The one who says “I have come to know God” and yet does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in such a person***.

* Can you honestly say that you are quick to obey God when He reveals actions that He wants you to take? Or do you require complete understanding before stepping out in faith and obedience? If so, then do you recognize why this could be? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* **This is the major evidence… do you love God and others?**

Love for God and love for others are the tangible pieces of evidence and birthmarks of every child of God. Thus, love is the real acid test of salvation. Whereas, an absence of love, clearly indicates there is no relationship with God - who is love! (Ephesians 1:15; Matthew 5:43-48, 22:37-40; 1 John 3:11-24, 4:7-21; Galatians 5:13-22; John 13:34-35, 15:12-13; Romans 5:5; James 2:8)

**1 John 3:14 & 18-22 (NET)**

***We know that***[***47***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***we have crossed over***[***48***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***from death to life***[***49***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***because***[***50***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***we love our fellow Christians.***[***51***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***The one who does not love remains in death. Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue but in deed and truth.***[***64***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***And by this***[***65***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***we will know that we are of the truth and will convince***[***66***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***our conscience***[***67***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***in his presence,***[***68***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***that***[***69***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***if our conscience condemns***[***70***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***us, that***[***71***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***God is greater than our conscience and knows all things. Dear friends, if our conscience does not condemn us, we have confidence in the presence of God, and***[***72***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***whatever we ask we receive from him, because***[***73***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3) ***we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing to him.*** [***52***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+3)

* **Do you testify and witness to others about what God has done for you?**

In our next lesson, we’ll discuss this is greater detail. But for now, just contemplate these facts: Those who are in Christ have been called out of the darkness. We carry the Light of the World around in us as we walk among the dead, blind, enslaved and hopeless. Like beggars who found a feast, we can’t keep it to ourselves. By the way, God’s love in Greek is defined as a feast of love! Once you have a taste of it, how can you not share it with those who are starving? As C.H. Spurgeon once said, *“If you no wish for others to be saved---you are not saved yourself, be sure of that!”* (John 15:26-27; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:9-18; 2 Corinthians 5:11-20; Isaiah 43:8-12)

* Can you identify a moment when you began to care about other people’s souls? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* When was the last time you shared your testimony? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 1:8 (NET)**

***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts***[***22***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Acts+1) ***of the earth.***

* **Are you convicted by the inside voice of the Holy Spirit when you sin?**

Quite often, believers will go through times when they feel that God is distant. Usually, this is because they are struggling with sin in some area of their lives. One indicator that you are saved *from* your sins is if you’re fighting *against* sin. Because when the Holy Spirit lives in you, He won’t let you remain in sin for long. The Greek word for voice is *phone*. Do you hear God’s voice ring *inside* of you when you are disobeying God, or is He still *outside* convicting you of your need to repent? (1 John 1:8-10; 2 Corinthians 7:10)

* Can you describe a time in your life that God revealed specific sins that were unconfessed? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**John16:8 (NET)**

***And when he***[***16***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/John+16) ***comes, he will prove the world wrong***[***17***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/John+16) ***concerning sin and***[***18***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/John+16) ***righteousness and***[***19***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/John+16) ***judgment –***

* **When you sin, do you experience the discipline of the Lord when you refuse to repent?**

Hebrews chapter twelve clearly states that those who God loves, He disciplines. If you are not corrected by God when you sin, this could be an indicator that you are not His. In speaking of the perfection of His One and Only Son Jesus, C.H. Spurgeon said, “*God had One Son without sin, but not a single child without the rod.”* (Hebrews 12:5-11; Job 5:17-18; Proverbs 3:11-12; Revelation 3:19; Psalm 118:18; 2 Samuel 7:14-15)

**Psalm 89:30-33 (NET)**

***If his sons reject my law and disobey my regulations, if they break***[***52***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Psalms+89) ***my rules and do not keep my commandments, I will punish their rebellion by beating them with a club,***[***53***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Psalms+89)

***their sin by inflicting them with bruises.*** [***54***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Psalms+89)***But I will not remove***[***55***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Psalms+89) ***my loyal love from him,***

***nor be unfaithful to my promise***

* **Do you often receive answers to your prayers as the fruit of your abiding in Christ Jesus?**

As we wrap up this lesson, let’s consider one final evidence of salvation - answered prayer. AccordingtoIsaiah59andotherpassages**,** beforesalvation**,** God does not hear the prayers of those who are separated from Him. Yet, it is quite the contrary for those who are in Christ. In the following passages, you will find ample evidence that answered prayer is a clear sign of salvation. But, please don’t misconstrue what I am saying here. I am not saying that, when it comes to prayer, we can simply name it and claim it. What I am saying though is that there should be some undeniable answered prayer throughout the life of every saint in Christ. When we have a relationship with God as our Father, He delights in taking care of His children. Answered prayers is one way we know He hears us. (Isaiah 59:1-3; Ephesians 3:12; John 14:11-17, 15: 7-8, 16; Matthew 7:7-12)

* List some recent answers to specific prayers. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**1 John 5:13-15 (NET)**

***I have written these things***[***32***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***to you who believe***[***33***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***in the name of the Son of God so that***[***34***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have before him: that***[***35***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***whenever***[***36***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know***[***37***](https://lumina.bible.org/bible/1+John+5) ***that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, then we know that we have the requests that we have asked from him.***

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights**

**and personal applications.**

* 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Titus 3:3-11; 1 John 1:5-6; 10; 2:3-11; 29, 3:6-1; 13-24

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Let’s talk about it.**

1. Have you ever examined your life to see if you are in the faith? (2 Cor. 13:5-6) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Describe the differences Christ has made in your life. (1 John 3:13-24) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. If you have ample evidence of these signs of life, do you feel like you are growing in your faith and love relationship with God? Why or why not: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Read Paul’s personal testimony. (1 Timothy 1:12-17) Can you relate in any way to his story? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you have anyone with whom you have entrusted your personal testimony? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. If so, who is this person and why do they know your testimony? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. When is the last time you shared your story of grace? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Your small group is a good place to practice if you have never told your story. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Read Romans 8:31-39. From these passages, once we are placed in Christ, what are the specific things that can never separate us from the love of God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. If you were put on trial for being a Christian, do you think that there would be enough evidence to convict you? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. Do you struggle to surrender to the will of God when it costs you: time, money, relationships, reputation or convenience? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

Did you learn something new? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer? How did the Lord speak personally to you through this lesson? What action will you take in obedience to God’s voice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Memory Verses

**1 John 5:13-15 (NET)**

***I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have before him: that whenever we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, then we know that we have the requests that we have asked from him***.

**Week #9**

**The Gospel of Your Salvation**



**Key Passage**

**Ephesians 1:13-14 (NET)**

***And when you heard the word of truth (the gospel of your salvation) – when you believed in Christ – you were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit, who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of his glory.***

**Introduction**

Can you believe that we have arrived at our final week? Spiritual life begins with the gospel, but it doesn’t end there - the best is yet to come. And we haven’t even got to the Profound mystery yet! It will take us four more books until we reach the culmination of the story that ends with a wedding. Before I tell you about all of that, we want to take all we have learned in the last few weeks and pull it all together so that we can see how Ephesus fits into the big picture of the New Testament. This will allow us to make some real-life application.

To do that, let’s return to where it all started with the history of the church at Ephesus. I think it would be worthy of further consideration, to take another look at the some of the folks who played a role in this important story of church history. Every single saint has a role in God’s eternal story and therefore every one of us has the potential to impact history. Saint of God - that includes you! To find our place in God’s story requires that we assimilate God’s Truth into the narratives of our life.

**A Change of Address**

Think about the condition of the city of Ephesus when a couple of tent makers named Priscilla and Aquila first arrived there. The whole place was under the power and dominion of the devil, who was masquerading as a goddess that feel from the sky named Diana. But then, God sent these two “spiritual matchmakers” carrying in their bosoms, a message that had the power to change everything. And so, as the citizens of Ephesus, heard and received the gospel proclaimed by Pricilla and Aquila, their address changed and they became citizens of heaven. You could say, the embassy, or meeting place for the church, was the humble abode of Priscilla and Aquila. Their home was ground zero, for the crucial work of discipling these new believers.

While, they were the firsts to bring the gospel to this city, they were by no means the last to do so. Eventually, Paul, Luke, Timothy, Mary, the mother of Jesus, the apostle John and some others came along and watered the gospel seeds that had previously been sown.

Yet, regardless of who plants the gospel, or who waters it, “It is God who brings the increase” (1 Corinthians 2:5-7). Incidentally, Paul was in Ephesus, when he wrote this letter to the church at Corinth and it was Titus who delivered it. In this letter, Paul was mitigating a dispute over who was the most important leader to follow. This underscores the importance of discipleship. If we lead people to Christ, but don’t disciple them, we should not be surprised at the problems that ensue when you have a new church full of self-centered babies in Christ.

The conflict involved another key player in the history of the church at Ephesus; remember *Apollos*, Priscilla and Aquila’s disciple? (Acts 18:1-28) But, we would be amiss to overlook some less known, but invaluable people in the story of the church at Ephesus, like Tychicus, who delivered the letters to the saints at Ephesus and throughout Asia Minor. Where would we be today if not for servants of God like Tychicus? Although, he could not possibly have known the life-giving power bundled up in the documents he transported, he was faithful and trustworthy. (Ephesians 6:21-22)

As the citizens of Ephesus heard the Word of Truth and responded to the gospel, the whole culture and spiritual atmosphere of the city changed. Pagans became preachers. Idol worshipers became true worshipers of God. Sinners became saints. Light burst forth in the darkness of a hedonistic society because people who had the Light of the World *in them* became like a city on a hill. (Philippians 2:15) The impact was far reaching. All of Asia Minor was ablaze with the knowledge of God and His great salvation. At least for a while. Eventually though, their zeal and love for the Lord grew cold. It’s been said, that those who don’t learn the lessons from history are destine to repeat it. May it not be so of us!

**Evangelism… Spiritual Matchmaking**

**Psalms 68:11 (NET)**

***The Lord speaks;many, many women spread the good news.***

My maiden name is Page; my married name is Porter. Both names represent the occupations of servants. For example, the primary role of a page is to deliver messages, but in Medieval times, a page was like a disciple in training to become a knight. Once they proved themselves faithful, a knight would pledge their loyalty to their lord. Now, a porter, on the other hand, is a person employed to carry luggage or assist passengers on a train. In Biblical times, though, a porter was a door or gate keeper. I hope you will forgive me for over spiritualizing my names, but frankly, I can’t help myself.

So, here is my point: For me, to be a Page, signifies that I am a servant of the Lord, and a messenger of the gospel. Every page of this book was written with the humble intent of sharing the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ with you. And, in addition, the second purpose of this study is to give you a tool to use in sharing the gospel with others! What about the name Porter? Well, as a “door keeper,” my desire is to swing open the doors to the kingdom of heaven so wide that others will see Jesus – the King of glory in all His radiant beauty. The Sons of Korah were the “porters” to the temple of God, but the most remarkable thing about them is that during the time of king David, they were the music directors, who wrote eleven Psalms of praise and thanksgiving to God. So, not only were they the doorkeepers, they were also the worship leaders! We have already read some of their songs throughout this study, but this is one more:

**Psalm 84:10 (KJV)**

***For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper (porter) in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.***

Now, as I promised from the start, I will tell you about being a matchmaker. I have had two successfully matches in my life. The first match was over 30 years ago. Chuck and Diane recently re-connected with me on their thirtieth anniversary, and I am delighted to report, they are still happily married. The second *match* was more like an arranged marriage between my daughter Allie and her husband Justin.  Allie was in high school when I asked Justin, a young man at our church, if he and I could make an agreement that he would wait on Allie (He is 5 years older than she is). This is what he said: “You make the contract, and I will sign it!” A risky proposition, I know. If he took me seriously or not, I couldn’t be sure. I had always prayed for Allie to have a husband who loved the Lord Jesus with all his heart, and, after observing Justin’s life, I believed that he was the one. Thankfully, they both were delighted with this arraignment. After all the brides, I dressed over the years, it was my greatest joy to dress my beautiful daughter and present her to Justin at their wedding. That’s my story and I am sticking to it! So, these are my credentials as a matchmaker.

Now let’s talk about what it means to be a spiritual matchmaker. The issue at hand is this: there are people all around us that have not yet met the Bridegroom. This is what evangelism is all about, and this is the first step of disciple making. I hope you will join me in the next book, as we delve into this mystery in great depth. When we introduce our friends and family to the Lord Jesus, we are “spiritual matchmaking” … only these matches were made in advance in heaven!

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Psalms 42-50, 62 and 72-85, 103:1-14; Joel 2:23-26; 1 Corinthians 15:1-3; Ephesians 1:2-6; John 15:16

**What Is the Gospel?**

If someone were to ask you to define the gospel, what would you say? When pressed to give a definition, most people respond: “The gospel is the Bible,” or, “The gospel is the good news.” In a very broad sense, they would be correct. The Greek word for gospel is euaggelion, and it is defined as “the good news.”

Most my life I have attended church on a weekly basis, and, therefore, you would think I could easily define the gospel. Obviously, I’m a slow learner because that was not always the case. Unlike the saints in Ephesus who had been thoroughly discipled by Paul and others, I was not discipled until I had been a Christian for almost twenty years! Sure, I knew that the gospel meant the good news, and I could quote a few passages by heart -- like Ephesians 2:6-10. However, a few years ago while listening to a message, a question popped into my mind – “What is the gospel?” And that’s when it dawned on me: I really didn’t know. I was further perplexed when I asked a youth pastor if he could give me a passage that would summarize the gospel. The question seemed to stump him, and so, I left without an answer. Thankfully, it is written in Luke 11:9, “Seek and you will find,” and when I did, the Lord led me to 1 Corinthians 15:1-6. Undoubtedly, as the Lord inspired Paul with a new truth, the Ephesians got to hear the message first. Here is the succinct explanation of the gospel that Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

**1 Corinthians 15:1-6 (NET)**

***Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters,the gospel that I preached to you, that you received and on which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. For I passed on to you as of first importancewhat I also received – that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sistersat one time, most of whom are still alive,though some have fallen asleep.***

“Extra! Extra! Read all about it,” newsboys would shout from the street corners as they peddled their newspapers. That’s how news was spread in the olden days. In Bible times, news was carried by l it was spread by word of mouth. Nowadays, we have social media, internet, cell phones, television and a plethora of other inventions. However, God’s preordained method to propagate His news was, is, and always will be through His servants – “good newsboys,” as it were. We might call them evangelist, or spiritual matchmakers (1 Corinthians 16:19).

The world we live in is replete with tragedy and good news is scarce. Thanks to the internet and social media, we have twenty-four-hour a day access to all the bad news our weary minds can handle. Isn’t it strange that bad news spreads faster than good news? Even though I seldom watch the news, there’s just no escaping it. And quite frankly, it’s just sad and depressing. For instance, just today in “God blessed America” we are reeling from yet another senseless mass shooting. In Managua, Nicaragua, a volcano that has been quiet for 100 years exploded with fire, ash and smoke. Not only did the earth quake, but the hearts of people did also. These are my spiritual family, and so what affects them, also affects me. All of this is in addition to the news that my pastor’s mother passed away. And yesterday, we received the very sad news that a three-year-old girl we were fervently praying for, died and went to be with Jesus. Our hearts break when we hear bad news, and it seems to get worse by the moment. In makes me want to scream, enough already! Couldn’t we all use some good news?

* If you were put on the spot and were asked for a definition of the gospel, how would you answer? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Has anyone clearly defined the gospel for you or taught you how to share it? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Are You a Gospel Herald or a Gospel Hoarder?**

**Mark 8:38 (NET)**

***For if anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of himwhen he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.***

Only twenty percent of people who profess to know Christ, have ever shared the gospel with another person, according to bible.org. That means that eighty percent of the people who say they have received salvation are hoarders of the gospel. Why is this? Could it be that while many profess to know Christ, they are not *in* Christ? Maybe they need to receive the gospel and be saved!

In the United States of America, we are gospel-rich, but dirt poor spiritually. There are churches on almost every corner and bookstores full of Bibles. But are we being good stewards of this gospel wealth that we have been given? Granted, along with the true gospel, we have an abundance of “false gospels” as well as folks preaching “different Jesuses” (more on this subject in another lesson).

How tragic, that in the midst of a world full of corruption, chaos, carnage, conflict and confusion, we keep the good news to ourselves, hidden safely within the walls of our church buildings while the world full of people who “God so loves,” go to Hell (Matthew 5:13-16). Where you aware that Jesus had more to say about hell then He did about heaven? Consequently, the more we hoard the gospel, the more hell breaks loose around us. The ramifications are too numerous to count. Furthermore, we mustn’t think that the Master will be pleased with us when we are called to give account at the judgment seat of Christ. We should shudder at the thought of the righteous anger of God against His people who have squandered the gospel treasure He entrusted to us.

Here is a lesson from the Old Testament of a glaring example of selfishly hoarding the good news. I have only printed a portion of the story, although you may want to read it in its’ entirety.

**2 Kings 7:3-9 (NET)**

***Now four men with a skin diseasewere sitting at the entrance of the city gate. They said to one another, “Why are we just sitting here waiting to die? If we go into the city, we’ll die of starvation,and if we stay here we’ll die! So come on, let’s defect to the Syrian camp! If they spare us,we’ll live; if they kill us – well, we were going to die anyway.”So they started towardthe Syrian camp at dusk. When they reached the edge of the Syrian camp, there was no one there. The Lord had caused the Syrian camp to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a large army. Then they said to one another, “Look, the king of Israel has paid the kings of the Hittites and Egypt to attack us!” So they got up and fled at dusk, leaving behind their tents, horses, and donkeys. They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives. When the men with a skin disease reached the edge of the camp, they entered a tent and had a meal. They also took some silver, gold, and clothes and went and hid it all. Then they went back and entered another tent. They looted itand went and hid what they had taken. Then they said to one another, “It’s not right what we’re doing! This is a day to celebrate, but we haven’t told anyone. If we wait until dawn,we’ll be punished. So come on, let’s go and inform the royal palace.”***

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Matthew 12:46-50; Matthew 13:1- 43; Luke 8:4-18; 10:1-16; Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Psalms 78:1-8, 145:4-13; Revelation 2:1-7

If we are in Christ, then we’ve been given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). And part of that ministry, as Paul told Timothy, is a ministry of continual intercessory prayer for the advancement of the gospel (1 Timothy 2:1-6). Furthermore, Jesus told us to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His filed, but undoubtedly, it is the labors who are the ones praying for others to join them. (John 4:30-35) So, as we have already discussed, prayer is vital! (See the list on pages 53-54) But, praying for the lost does not negate our individual responsibility to share the good news (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Luke 24:47). Those who have been freely given the gift of salvation, should be busy trying to give it away.

**Mark 16:15 (NET)**

***He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned.***

What’s more, no ethnic group in the body of Christ is excluded from this command (Revelation 5:9-19). Did you know that 2 out of every 7 people in the world have no idea who Jesus is? Most of them live in countries where the gospel is restricted. What that means is that approximately, 1.7 billion people live in areas where they have no access to the gospel. And sadly, the precious few indigenous believers in these parts of the world have not been equipped to share the gospel with their own neighbors. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. But people must *hear* the gospel. As Paul told the Romans, how can people hear it if we -- the redeemed -- don’t tell them?

I would like to tell you about two women who are not ashamed of the gospel. The first one is still impacting the small corner of the world in which she lives, and the second one is now at home with Jesus receiving her rewards.

In our small town, just north of Memphis, Tennessee, there is an older African-American sister who stands on a street corner with a bag full of Bibles and a bullhorn in her hand. She unashamedly proclaims the gospel to anyone who will take the time to listen to her message. I’m sure that many people mock her (Luke 10:10-16). She is like the seed sower in Mark 4:26-29. Only heaven knows what will becomes of her efforts. But, as Jesus said about the woman who anointed his feet, she did what she could, and I’ve no doubt, the Father in heaven smiles upon His faithful servant.

**Mark 14:8-9 (NET)**

***She did what she could. She anointed my body beforehand for burial. I tell you the truth,wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”***

Approximately 20 years ago, before my husband came to Christ, he was on a flight returning home from a business trip. It just so happened that he was seated next to a woman on the plane who was “fishing for my man.” The funny thing is that in her “B.C.” days, she might have been trying to catch Art for *other, less noble, reasons*. Art came home with her business card and told me about how she had been witnessing to him. (At the time, Art was confident that he was a believer, but I knew better.)

Her name was Sister Denise K. Smith and on the back of her card she wrote down her old stage name - AKA Vanity. She was once the back-up singer for the artist known as Prince. If you look her up online, you will see a woman whose life was completely transformed by the gospel. Just this year, after Prince died, I remembered her and found her old business card. She was a beautiful woman but what impressed me the most was what was printed on her card. Under her name were these words, “I’m about my father’s business” (with a fish besides it.) And below that is printed “Pure Heart Ministries” and 4-u- Jesus. I looked her up and discovered she too had recently passed away. I thought about her sowing and watering seeds in my husband’s heart and I like to think of her hearing the Lord say, “Well done, My good and faithful servant. Welcome home!”

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Matthew 5:13-17; John 8:12; 1 John 1:5-7; 1 Peter 2:9-12; Colossians 1:12-14
* From the above passages, make a list of the things light does to darkness. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**A Gospel Story**

Did you know that, according to orality.net, about 80% of the world’s population are oral learners? Roughly 5.7 billion people either can’t read or write, or they have no written language (2016). So how do you share the gospel with them so that they can understand? Obviously, you can’t just give them Bibles. You communicate with them the way Jesus did by using stories. My all-time favorite narrative is the gospel of the Three Crosses. The message originated from one of Brother Herb Hodges’ lessons. But this is my adaptation of this treasured story, and every time I revisit it, the Lord opens my eyes to truths not previously discovered.

By way of introduction to this message, I would like to tell you about my third mission trip to Nicaragua. In many ways, it was by far the most difficult trip. We arrived in Bluefield, Nicaragua, only to miss a small boat that was to take us to the village of Pearl Lagoon, and from that moment on, it was one spiritual battle after another. We arrived in Pearl lagoon in the middle of the night in pitch darkness. We had no electricity, no lights, and no water. I spent the first night unable to breathe because of the heat and afraid to unlock the door to get air, so I prayed the scriptures all night long. By day number two, knowing that food does not keep when there is no power, I decided it was a good time to add fasting to my praying.

The first two trips were relatively uneventful; therefore, I was not prepared for all the difficulties we would face. Sometimes the attacks of the enemy are more covert, yet other times, there is no doubt of his frontal assault; this was one of those times. Even so, after this long night of prayer, I experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in my great weakness as we got to share the gospel of the Three Crosses in each school in two villages, and then teach the women from some of the churches, the Biblical model of discipleship. Their hearts seemed very open and receptive to the Word of God. However, this was only the first two days of our trip. Then we traveled by small boat, and small plane and finally we reached Corn Island, Nicaragua.

**Spare Coffins**

Once on the Island, we were greeted by yet another power outage! I had planned to meet and teach the ladies while our youth taught the young people. Monday through Thursday was my time with the ladies and every day someone died, and a funeral was held on the same day. On Monday, my plan to meet with the ladies was cancelled due to the first funeral. But, God had another plan. After the funeral, one of the faithful disciples, Gwen, rode up on her motorcycle and asked if I would like to come speak on her new radio station. I asked Doug, our youth pastor, if he wanted to go and speak, but he declined. I was wearing a dress and discovered you cannot ride a motorcycle side-saddle! I was smiling the whole time at the thought of this unexpected opportunity, and myself, in a dress, on a motorcycle! I must admit, it was fun. This was the second motorcycle ride of my life (my Daddy took me on the first ride). While on the slow ride around the island, Gwen told me how she had been traveling all over looking for opportunities to share the gospel since our first trip. The radio station was next to her house, and when she went inside to change shoes, I stepped outside to pray because my nerves were getting the best of me. I asked the Lord to calm me and help me to boldly proclaim the gospel, as I should. Between Gwen’s house and the station was her husband’s workshop, and out in front was a small coffin. Gwen said that was the spare coffin and he had provided the one for the funeral she has just attended. I do not know how many spares he had, but three more would be needed before we left the island on Friday.

I was extremely nervous and shaking - so was my voice. To make matters worse, our team was in the mission house listening to the program on the radio and critiquing me. They said I got really loud when I quoted Jesus’ words from Luke 13:1-5 “UNLESS YOU REPENT YOU ALL WILL PERISH.” I was so loud, in fact, one of our team members said, “There has just been a mass exodus to Little Corn Island!” What he and I did not know was that the program was reaching Little Corn Island too. It is not beyond the Lord to plan the home-going of one of His saints to give opportunity for the proclamation of the gospel to the perishing while they still have time to repent! The good news proclaimed through the airwaves that day - the Gospel of the Three Crosses.

On the morning of our last full day on the island, just as we were starting a lesson, we received some terrible news. A 26-year-old man had been violently murdered and mutilated. At the same time Pastor Eli and our oldest team member, Frank, were at the prison giving out Gideon Bibles and sharing the gospel. (I told you about Frank in our last lesson.) Frank could relate to the men in prison. Before the Lord saved him, he himself had been in the notorious Folsom prison in California. Unfortunately, when the call came in, most of the guards had to leave and missed hearing the good news.

   Regrettably, we had walked passed this young man every day, but never shared the gospel with him. We could not possibly know that would be his last moments before eternity began.  My hope is that this man somehow heard the message on the radio before it was too late.

My last ministry to the women on the island was to go with them to this young man’s funeral. Alba, the pastor’s wife, had to leave to find clothes in which to bury the young man.  She was so upset; she could not even make it to the funeral. The seen was surreal. We stood in the yard of this young man’s home, maybe only five hours after his death. His poor mother looked as if she was in complete shock with her young son there in that “spare coffin” sitting on an old iron twin bed frame. I doubt she heard a word Eli said. We sang a few hymns, and Eli spoke a warning to all who would hear. In his Creole accent, he said, “The angel of death is moving all over the island” and he gave a call to come to Jesus now before it was too late. What had this young man done, that he died such a violent death? The same kind of question was posed to Jesus – I implore you, listen carefully to His response.

**Luke 13:1-5 (NET)**

***Nowthere were some present on that occasion who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. He answered them, “Do you think these Galileans were worse sinnersthan all the other Galileans, because they suffered these things?***  ***No, I tell you! But unless you repent, you will all perish as well! Or those eighteen who were killedwhen the tower in Siloam fell on them,do you think they were worse offenders than all the others who live in Jerusalem? No, I tell you! But unless you repentyou will all perish as well!”***

Please hear the words of the LORD JESUS, “UNLESS *YOU* REPENT *YOU* WILL *ALL* PERISH.” It matters not if you attend church, prayed a thousand prayers, or, like me, experienced baptism twice, or have been a good, moral, upstanding citizen. Unless you ***repent…*** what did Jesus say would happen to you? It is not a suggestion; it is a command and it’s also a requirement of salvation (Acts 17:30-3). Now, let’s look at Luke’s account of the passion of Christ and see if we can distinguish between the two thieves on either side of the cross of Christ.

**The Cross of Rebellion**

**Luke 23:37-39 (NET)**

***Two other criminals were also led away to be executed with him. Sowhen they came to the place that is called “The Skull,”They crucifiedhim there, along with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [But Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”] Then they threw diceto divide his clothes. The people also stood there watching, but the rulers ridiculedhim, saying, “He saved others. Let him savehimself ifhe is the Christof God, his chosen one!” The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, “Ifyou are the king of the Jews, save yourself!” There was also an inscriptionover him, “This is the king of the Jews.” One of the criminals who was hanging there railed at him, saying, “Aren’tyou the Christ? Save yourself and us!”***

We know that the cross in the middle was prepared for a murderer (Luke 34:1-30). The murderer was set free, and in his place was the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. The cross in the middle is the great dividing force of all of humanity for all eternity. One day, God will put His sheep on the right, and the goats on his left. (Matthew 25:32-34) The man on the left of the cross of Christ represents the goats, all the once born, unbelieving, unrepentant, eternally lost sinners whose destiny is hell. This man had sin in him and sin on him. (Romans 3:9, 23, 5:12, 6:23 Ephesians 2:1-5) He was blinded in his unbelief to the Gospel on display on the cross in the middle. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4.)

Jesus said, in John 8:24-28, “Unless you believe I am who I say I am, you will die in your sins.” He also said that when He was lifted up, all would know he was the great “I AM”. The man to the left of the Son of Man was condemned to eternal death already for his unbelief. “He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36) This man had no fear of God. He was unrepentant and remained in his sin under the wrath of God. His desire was to be saved from the painful consequence of his sin. His present suffering was nothing compared to the fires of the undiluted wrath of God he was about to experience in hell (Luke 12:4-5).

**2 Corinthians 7:10 (NET)**

***For sadness as intended by God produces a repentance that leads to salvation, leaving no regret, but worldly sadness brings about death.***

**Romans 2:4-6 (NET)**

***Or do you have contempt for the wealth of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, and yet do not knowthat God’s kindness leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornnessand your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourselves in the day of wrath, when God’s righteous judgment is revealed!***

The man on the cross of rebellion had to walk all over the One in the middle to enter hell, in spite of these incredible facts. Number one: The God who hung in the middle did not come to condemn him, but to save him. He did not desire that he perish, but for him to come to repentance. Number two: The cross in the center is a perfect display of two attributes of God; His Holiness and His Love. When we look at the one who hung naked between the two sinners, we see a God who is holy, so holy that He must punish sin. Greater love has no one than this that he would lay down His life, not for his friends, but his enemies. If you only embrace a God who is love and not a God who is holy, you will never repent, and you will perish! On the cross of redemption hung the true God who is Holy and who is Love. Through His death we are offered life. As if two planets had collided in space, we see suspended on the cross of Christ both of these attributes: His holiness and justice to punish sin and Love like none other. Number three: Hanging just to the right of this ungodly man on the cross of rebellion, with out-stretched arms, was the one and only true God. (John 3:16-20,36, Romans 2:4, 5:6-12, 2 Peter,3:9, 1 Timothy 2:3-4) Not only is the Lord longsuffering, but these words come to mind when I envision this thief just to the right of Jesus, “All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.” (Romans 10:21, Isaiah 65:2) Isaiah 59:1-2 “Indeed, the LORD’s hand is not too short to save, and His ear is not too deaf to hear. But your iniquities have built barriers between you and your God, and your sins have made him hide his face from you so that he does not listen.”

**The Cross of Repentance**

**Luke 23:40-43 (NET)**

***But the other rebuked him, saying, “Don’tyou fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we rightly so, for we are getting what we deserve for what we did, but this man has done nothingwrong.” Thenhe said, “Jesus, remember mewhen you come in your kingdom.” And Jesussaid to him, “I tell you the truth, todayyou will be with me in paradise.”***

Now let’s look at the sheep on the right hand of God incarnate. He was born in sin, as all of us were, from Adam and Eve in the garden. We sin because it is who we are by nature, and sin separates us, from birth, from the God who loves us. This man had sin in him, but in the end, he had no sin on him. All his sin was on the God-man in the middle. The man on the right hand of Jesus started out on this cross just like the one on the left, a criminal dying for his sins. But, this man is alive today -- he is saved. He is in paradise with the KING. He had a second birth on the cross. One moment he was cursing God, just as the other thief, and the next moment he was a preacher (Matthew 27:44). What happened?

**All Things New**

I believe his eyes were opened to the God who hung next to him on the cross in the middle, when he heard Jesus pray these words on his behalf, “Father forgive them they do not know what they are doing.” Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. This man was led by the love and kindness of God to godly sorrow and true repentance. His transformation was instantaneous! One moment he was dead in his sin, and the next he was alive in Christ. He went from an unbelieving criminal, with a mouth full of cursing, to words of belief in the King who was dying in his place. Then he became a preacher! He was a new believer, and instantly became a messenger of reconciliation. His preached his first sermon to the other thief. He said, “Don’t you fear God?” He was trying to get the other one to look at the God on the cross in the middle.

**2 Corinthians 5:17-19 (NET)**

***So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away– look, what is newhas come! And all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and who has given us the ministry of reconciliation.***  ***In other words, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people’s trespasses against them, and he has given usthe message of reconciliation.***

When he saw the holiness and perfection of the Lord Jesus, but he could not help but see his own sins. He said, “We deserve every think we are suffering, But He has done nothing wrong. (1 John 1:7-10) “God made HIM (Jesus) who knew no sin, to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God.” (1 Peter 2:24, 1 John 3:5) He confessed Jesus as LORD, and He believed in Jesus’ resurrection from the grave when he said, “Remember me *when* you enter your kingdom!” (Romans 10:8-13) And lastly, he called on the only one who had the power to save him. “There is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus.” (Acts 4:12)

This man is eternally alive because the one in the middle is alive! He had a second birth on the cross of **repentance**. This man, by grace through faith, took hold of the outstretched hand of the One in the middle and rode a cross into heaven, the cross of Christ Jesus. It just struck me afresh that very day the Good Shepherd put his *found sheep* on his shoulders and carried him straight home to heaven and into a party! In the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son only one thing makes all of heaven break into joyful celebration: one sinner who **repents**! (Luke 15:4-7, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-16) This man had true godly sorrow and repented. He is saved and home with the Good Shepherd (John 10:11). The other had worldly sorrow and is eternally dead and separated from God.

**The Center Cross of Redemption**

**1 Peter 1:18-19 (NET)**

***You know that from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors you were ransomed – not by perishable things like silver or gold, but by precious blood like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb, namely Christ. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was manifested in these last times for your sake. Through him you now trustin God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.***

Now let’s turn the spotlight on the center cross. The Son of God was wearing all the shame, guilt, and sin of the world. He, who knew no sin, became our sin, and at that moment His Father had to look away from His Son because His eyes are too holy to look on sin. Jesus bore the undiluted wrath of God in my place and in yours. Jesus had no sin in Him, but He had all sins on Him. As He hung suffering and separated from His Father who loved Him, He experienced the emptiness and loneliness that each of us are born into as sinners far away from God. (Ephesians 2:12-14, 2 Corinthians 2:21, 1 Peter 2:24, 1 John 1:5, 3:5, Galatians 3:13) The door to the kingdom of heaven was open to sinners by the One and Only God on the center cross. Remember, from our last lesson, there are two keys that open the door of salvation. What are they?

**Acts 20:20-21 (NET)**

***You know that I did not hold back from proclaiming to you anything that would be helpful, and from teaching you publiclyand from house to house, testifyingto both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus***

The gospel has the power to save anyone who repents and puts their faith in the One on whom God put their sins, The LORD JESUS CHRIST! The cross of Redemption is the greatest dividing force of all of history. And yet, it’s also the greatest reconciler for those who will believe in the God-man who was on the cross in the middle.

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make note of any insights and personal applications.**

* Mark 1:14-16, 16:15; Matthew 4:19; Romans 10:9-18; Galatians 3:13

**Excuses! Excuses!**

We use all sorts of excuses for not sharing the gospel. I’ll elaborate on a few. Many people, myself included, have erroneously believed that this was the job of pastors, evangelists and the theologically trained professionals. The extent to which we believe this lie determines what we do with the gospel. When we do nothing with it, we are like the slothful servants in the Parable of the Talents. Furthermore, you can be assured that the notion that only “professionals” are to take the gospel to the world did not originate with God. It originated in the heart of the devil! There are no professionals in the kingdom of God -- only born again saints. To drive home this point, look at the credentials of Jesus’ first disciples, Peter and John. In Acts 4:19 it said they were “ignorant and untrained men,” but they were recognized as having been with Jesus. I encourage you to stop and read the account that took place before Paul’s conversion, making note of who was going everywhere preaching the Word of God (Acts 8:1-5).

* Paul said in Romans 1:16 that he was not ashamed of the gospel. Why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What do you think it means to be ashamed of the gospel? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Ephesians 3:1-2 (NET)**

***For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles – if indeedyou have heard of the stewardshipof God’s grace that was given to me for you.***

For those of us who, like Paul, realize our personal responsibility and stewardship of the gospel, it’s imperative that we understand a few things. First of all, we don’t save anyone; salvation belongs to God alone. We mustn’t be mistaken about our role. Second, we don’t have a clue who will be saved and who will not. That’s the Lord’s business -- not ours. And while Jesus declared in Matthew chapter seven that *many* will *not* be saved; this does not negate the fact that He desires for all men to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth. How do we know that? We don’t want to be found guilty of putting words in God’s mouth, let’s see what is written.

* Take each of the following passages and beside each one, make note of what the will of the Lord is, as it concerns the souls of all mankind.
* Titus 2:11 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* 1 Timothy 2:4\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* 2 Timothy 2:24-26 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* 2 Peter 3:9 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Ezekiel 18:23\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Now, I may not be a theologian, but it does not take a rocket scientist to understand the words *all* and *every*! Clearly, God desires that *all people hear the gospel*! We know many will *hear*, yet few will *head* the gospel. So, you may ask, “Why is it important for people to hear it if they are going to reject it anyway?” Because those who reject it will one day stand at the Great White throne of Judgement and be reminded that, although they refused the message, God gave them a chance to hear it.

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* 1 Timothy 2:1-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Romans 2:14-16, 3:9-23, 10:9-21; 2 Peter 3:8-9; Matthew 7:13-23; Hebrews 4:1-7; Revelation 20:11-15

**Ephesians 6:19-20 (NET)**

***Pray for me also, that I may be given the message when I begin to speak – that I may confidently make knownthe mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may be able to speak boldly as I ought to speak.***

Now, a word of encouragement for those of you who are by nature a bit timid. If just the thought of trying to share the gospel causes you to have an anxiety attack, then please take heart. You can find comfort in the fact that even Paul ends the letter to the saints at Ephesus by asking the saints to pray for him to have boldness in proclaiming the gospel. Now, if *he* needed prayers for boldness, don’t you think we do also? The lesson here is this: No matter who we are, or what our social bent, sharing the gospel is not something that comes naturally. That’s why, when Jesus called His first disciples, He said, “Come follow Me and I will *make* you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). The emphasis is on the word *make*, or we could say, “turn you into” fishers of men. Sharing the gospel is a work of the Holy Spirit. To cooperate with Him, we need the encouragement and instruction of others who have mastered the craft of fishing for men. Why do you think the Lord Jesus sent the seventy out in pairs of two? (Luke 10:1-16)

The best tool I have ever found to share the gospel with is a little book by Charles Brock called The Good News For You. Not only is it available in many languages, but they cost only $1.00! It is widely used all over the world for evangelistic Bible studies and as a gift to hand out everywhere you go. You can order them at [www.churchgrowthinternational.com](http://www.churchgrowthinternational.com). Or contact them at [www.cpqa.org](http://www.cpqa.org). Additionally, in case you haven’t noticed already, this study itself is laid out in such a way that you can use it to share the gospel. (I told you that there is a method to my madness). So, all you need to do is ask someone if they would like to do this study with you. It’s that simple!

And finally, here are some questions for personal reflection. Is Jesus the unequaled treasure of your life? Were you aware that, as a recipient of the gospel, God has made you a steward of it and that God expects a return on what He invested in your soul? Are you sharing Him with others?

These questions are not meant to evoke feelings of guilt or conviction. They are, instead, an admonition to contemplate your responsibility and the privilege of being a co-worker with God. God saved you and I for a purpose. And as someone has said, “We weren’t saved just to smuggle our souls into the Kingdom of heaven!”

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make notes of any insights and personal applications.**

* Matthew 13:1-46, 25:14-24; Luke 12:37-38, John 2:5-9, 4:34-42, John 17:18-20, 20:19-22; Romans 1:16- 17, 10:9-18; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Isaiah 42:5-10, 49:6; Psalms 40:3, 67:1-7

As we end our time together, I sincerely hope you will accept my invitation to continue this journey through the book of Ephesians. I hope that you have found a group of saints with whom you can do life with as well study the Bible with. Pleases don’t let it end here! Otherwise, when you close this book, there may be an emotional departure like the one between Paul and the saints at Ephesus when they parted ways. And we wouldn’t want that, now would we?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Let’s talk about it.**

1. Read the entire passage above. Using this Old Testament account as an allegory, compare what is it like when we, the recipients of the gospel, hoard it. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Will everyone believe the message of the gospel? Why or why not? (Romans 2:13-16, 10:16-21) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Read Romans 1:16-18 and 1 Corinthians 1:17-25. To those who are perishing in their sins, what is the gospel to them? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you regularly share the gospel? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. If not, what are some things that keep you from doing so? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 and 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2. What is meant by “vain belief” or receiving the grace of God in vain? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Whose responsibility is it to take this good news to *all* Nations? (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:19-23) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you believe that the responsibility of sharing the gospel is only for special people like pastors, missionaries and theologians? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. If so, where did you get this idea? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. The Lord Jesus gave the apostle John a glimpse of the church or His bride. What does heaven look like, and what role will you personally play in this scene? (Revelation 5:9-10) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
11. Are we responsible for anyone’s salvation? (Acts 2:39-41; Revelation 7:9-12) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
12. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. Why do you think Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you have to leave your own country to reach others ethnic peoples groups? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
14. Would you like to learn how to live the lifestyle of an evangelist? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
15. Let’s discuss practical application to this lesson. List some ways here: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
16. Think of a person that you know who is effective in sharing the gospel. Would you be willing to ask them if you can join them so you can learn? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

Did you learn something new? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer? How did the Lord speak personally to you through this lesson? What action will you take in obedience to God’s voice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Memory Verse**

**Romans 1:16 (NET)**

***For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.***

**Afterthoughts**

Congratulations! You have just taken the first of 5 steps towards spiritual growth. I want to say a heartfelt thank you for joining me through this gospel study. For the gospel is the bedrock of our faith and so it’s the starting place. Whether you have solidified your conversion or better yet, had a “but God’ kind of experience, to use the platitude of an oft used wedding song, “We have only just begun”. We haven’t even got to the Profound Mystery yet!

My hope and prayer is that you have developed some close bounds with a few other women, learned a lot about yourself, but most importantly, that you have achieved our primary goal of growing in the knowledge of the Lord. One thing is for certain, life is all about changing, and the Lord refuses to allow us to become stagnate. Remember, we are in preparation for the wedding to end all weddings! There is so much more to do as the wedding approaches. That is what discipling is about.

It matters not if you are the person in the group who is being discipled, or the one who fills the role of a group leader, please don’t stop here! We learn from each other and the whole strategy falls apart if you don’t have these kinds of spiritual relationships.

Some of us have had an entire lifetime of issues that need addressing from a Biblical world view. We have four more steps to go, in this discipling process. I can hardly wait to share with you, our new identity in Christ. And then we get better acquainted with our Father in Heaven, the Lord Jesus- our Bridegroom, and last, but not lease, we will learn more about our Helper – the Holy Spirit. I think you will find an enormous amount of soul healing truth here. So, gather your friends together and be prepared to be blessed as we uncover the divine mystery of Christ and His bride the church.