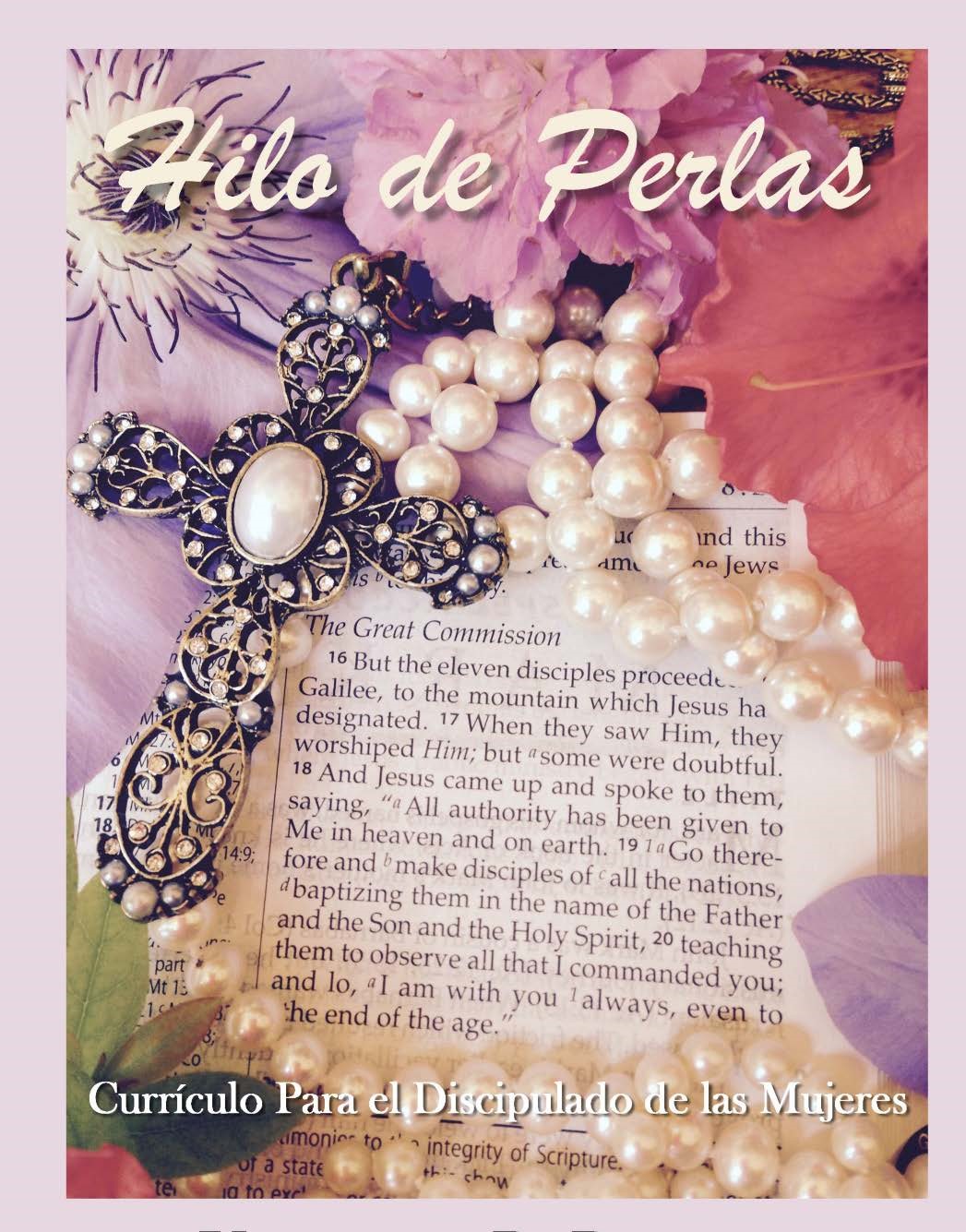
CATALYST MISSIONS WOMEN’S

INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING



**Managua, Nicaragua**

**February 25 - March 1, 2019**

**Agenda**

**Module #2**

**Blessed With a New Identity**

**Day One**

* **Prayer, Introductions, Icebreaker question:** What’s one thing you can do this year, or stop doing, that will make this year better than last?
* **Take a poll:** Who has begun to disciple, what lessons have they taught and the names of their disciples.
* **Session #1** Strand of Pearls Introduction– Teacher: Alicia Guillen
* **Session #2 Signs** of Life–Teacher: Delia Downes
* **Q & A** Break into 4 groups and discuss the passages on Signs of Life

**Day Two**

* **Prayer, Icebreaker question:** What is the most important decision you need to make this year?
* **Review:** Ask for volunteers to reteach session one
* **Session #3** Phase Two Introduction: Blessed With A New Identity–Teacher: Delia Downs
* **Session #4** She Who Has Ears – Teacher: Alba Simeon

**Day Three**

* **Prayer, Icebreaker question, Review:** Ask for volunteers to reteach yesterday’s lessons
* **Session #5** New Identity– Teacher: Delia Downs
* **Session #6** Reclaiming Biblical Sexuality– Teacher: Alba

**Day Four**

* **Prayer, Icebreaker question, Review:** Ask for volunteers to reteach yesterday’s lessons
* **Session #7** Redeemed From A Sinful Past**--** Teacher**:** Angelica Langham
* **Session #8** Abba Father**--** Teacher: Joney Caudill

**Day Five**

* **Prayer, Icebreaker question, Review:** Ask for volunteers to reteach yesterday’s lessons
* **Session #9** Lord, Teach us to Pray –Teacher**:** Ginny Porter
* **Session #10** Building a House of Prayer –Teacher: Ginny Porter
* A time of Prayer and Q & A

**Participantes**

**Delia Downs; Alba Simeon; Yanina Cooper; Alicia Guillen; Margarita Guillen; Fanny Diaz; Maria Haydee Cajina; Sobeyda Jaime; Arelys Bermudez; Yaritza Hurtado; Maria Felix; Silvia Mendez**

**Day 1 Session One**

**Strand of Pearls**

**Introduction**

**Matthew 28:19 (KJV)**

***Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.***

Welcome to our strand of pearls! Our aim for this first session is to give you an overview of what we are all about, how to use this discipling tool and the scriptural basis that governs Catalyst Missions Women’s Discipleship. We esteem God’s Word and it is the foundation of this ministry. Every lesson is a pearl of wisdom and filled with Biblical truth. You may be wondering if this is a Bible study. Absolutely, it is. Yet, you will discover that it is more than that.

The heartbeat of this book, and methodology behind it, comes from the Lord Jesus’ last command to His disciples – past, present and future. It’s called the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Because of the weightiness of His final instructions, and the implications of His mission, it is of the utmost importance that we clearly understand Jesus’ intent when He said, “Go make disciples of all nations.”

How did Jesus make disciples? His approach was brilliant, yet, intuitively simple. He invested three full years of His public ministry into 12 ordinary uneducated men. Read Acts 4:13. Jesus was their seminary, His Word their curriculum, and over the three-year period, He did life with them (John 3:22). They spent the equivalent of approximately 26,000 hours. Make no mistake about it, Jesus was not *spending* His time on them, He was *investing* His life *in them*. There is a big difference.

Time is a precious commodity we can’t afford to waste. Our goal is to leverage our time by committing at least one-year together, learning these Biblical truths, and sharing our lives with one another. However, knowing that our busy lives will not afford us the luxury of 52 weeks of meetings, and, allowing for holidays and such, we have divided this book into 35 weeks of sessions.

**Lesson Learned From Luke**

To get us off on the right foot, here’s lesson one. Luke, the writer of two books of the Bible, was a meticulous **note taker**. How do we know this? It is obvious when we read the introduction to his gospel in Luke 1:1-4. This labor of love was not for his own scholarship. He wrote it to share the gospel with a Roman official named Theophilus. The second personal letter, the book of Acts, was a discipling letter to his new brother in Christ (Acts 1:1-8). Luke hadn’t a clue that his personal letters to Theophilus would make it into the cannon of the Bible. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit and took great pains in researching and interviewing every living eyewitness so that he could accurately compile this information for one person. Think about the treasure trove of truth these two books contain. Imagine all we would miss if he had never written these letters to Theophilus? My point is this: a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who learns God’s truth so that they can give it away. That is not possible if you can’t remember what you hear. A principle tool for learning is as follows: We can remember roughly twenty percent of what we hear, forty percent of what we read, eighty percent of what we write, but we retain almost one-hundred percent of what we consistently repeat. So, always come prepared to take notes.

**Eight Essential Elements**

The following highlighted alliterated words comprise the eight essential elements that Catalyst Missions Women’s Discipleship employs in the disciple-making process.

1. The process begins with a small group of women who **connect** on a weekly basis to put into practice Acts 2:42, 46. This includes, teaching, prayer, and a time of fellowship around a *simple* meal that everyone contributes to. (The meal is optional.) Jesus divided His 12 into 3 groups of 4. The group leaders were Simon Peter, Philip and James, the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:13-18). When a group grows to 10-12 you should split and start another group of four.
2. Disciple-making takes place in the **contexte** of accountable relationships where we share two things. God’s timeless Truth and our lives. To develop this kind of relationship, we must get to know one another. That is one purpose for the Spiritual Survey. Fill out the form this week and discuss your results with your group next time you meet.
3. This requires mutual commitment on the part of all involved. At the end of this session, if you are ready, fill out the **Commitment** to Discipling Relationship form in the back of your book.
4. The hallmarks of true discipleship are *humility* and *teachability* that fostersgenuine love and **concern** for others. Jesus often pointed out to His disciples that He was the disciple of His Father. Read John 8:23-29. In His example, Jesus personifies humility and submission motivated by love and respect. Jesus loved and **cared** deeply for His disciples. He modeled this before them, and fully expected them to follow His lead (John 13:1-35). The same is required of us. Read Mark 10:33-45 and Galatians 5:13. Genuine love and concern, underpins true disciplining relationships.
5. The Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul employed the most fundamental learning tools in their disciple-making: reiteration and repetition. Emulating them, through **consistent** **communication,** we are hearing God’s Word, hiding it in our hearts, applying it to our everyday lives, and like them, we will make disciples (Luke 6:39-40).
6. *Strand of Pearls* booklet is broken down into 5 phases. It comprises the first five of nine modules used on four continents for Catalyst Missions Women’s training. Read 2 Timothy 2:2 and 1 Corinthians 4:16-17. The key phrases here are “the *same things* you have heard,” and, “I teach the *same things* in every church.” For this reason, be it Memphis, Tennessee, Bradenton, Florida, Colombia, Nicaragua, Bolivia, the Philippines, or on the Continent of Africa - we all teach the same **curriculum**.
7. Think of your group as a strand of pearls united and connected to The Pearl of Great Price -- the Lord Jesus. Each member is a vital link to the nations (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15). As of now, our strand of pearls spans the globe. We have not fulfilled the Great **Commission** by discipling a person. The imperative command in the Great Commission is to *make disciples* of all nations! By following the pattern of disciple-making that Jesus left us, we are part of bringing to fruition Revelation 5:8-10. Read John 15:16 and 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 and discuss the source of rejoicing when Jesus returns.

**Day 1 Session Two**

Signs of Life

Key Passage

1 John 5:7-15

**Introduction**

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 the 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.

**2 Corinthians 13:5-6**

***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! And I hope that you will realize that we have not failed the test!***

In our last lesson we learned the alarming truth that a person can think that they are on the road that leads to heaven yet be lost and headed for hell. This should serve as a warning and underscores the necessity to find out *now* before it is eternally too late.

Here’s the plan: Together, we will take the Bible and lay it side by side with our lives. In this way, we can determine if there is legitimate proof that we are saved. However, if this subject makes you uncomfortable, please don’t close the book yet! Ignorance or denial comes at a high cost, and there is too much at stake. This is a win-win exercise. Regardless of the outcome of this examination, God loves you and desires for you to live with blessed assurance.

Three Trustworthy Witnesses

If we have been born again, there are three trustworthy witnesses who will testify to the fact. First, the circumstances surrounding the day of your second birthday is witness number one. You might call this a personal salvation experience. If you’re like me, you may not have an actual date recorded. That’s inconsequential because the next two witnesses speak the loudest anyway. However, before we go any further, let’s add a couple of important caveats. The test is *not* someone else’s experience compared to yours. You can’t look at a one-time 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 God’s Word, and this is witness number two. Unlike a circus mirror that distorts things, the Bible is a true mirror and judge of our hearts. His mirror will show us our true condition. The signs of spiritual life are primarily found in the book of 1 John. Witness number three is a changed life. When you are born again by the Holy Spirit, He produces His fruit in you (2 Peter 1:3-11; Romans 8:9-14; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Do You Desire the Hearing of God’s Word?

There are two connections between the Lord and His bride. One is the Bible, and the other is prayer. For the believer, these are not obligations but signs of a true, ongoing relationship. The Bible is God’s love letter to His bride. And what bride does not cherish every word from her beloved? 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. Read the following passages and make note of this key word translated as *abide*, *remain*, or *continue*: **John 8:31-32, 15:7-8; 1 John 2:24; 2 John 9 and James 2:25**. A person who is alive in the Spirit, will hunger for God’s Word and abide in it (1 Peter 2:2).

**John 10:27-28**

***My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; no one will snatch them from my hand.***

On the other hand, spiritually dead people don’t have an appetite for spiritual things such as God’s Word. Let’s look at the words hear, follow, and obey. In Greek, they are as follows: hear—*akouo*, follow—*klotho* and obey—*Hupakouo.* See howthe word obedience is used in the following passages: **Romans 1:5, 6:17, 10:16,16:26, Hebrews 5:9**. It is interesting to note that hear, follow and obey are all derived from the same Greek word. Why does this matter? It matters because Jesus said that those who are His not only hear His voice, they follow and obey Him. This leads us to the next test of salvation.

Do You Obey God’s Word?

**1 John 2:3-4**

***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.***

Jesus is referred to as Savior twenty-four times in the gospels, yet He is called Lord 433 times. Why is that? Because when we believe on Christ for salvation, we relinquish our rights to autonomy and accept Christ’s rule in every aspect of our lives. Jesus explained it this way: “My mother and brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it” (Luke 8:21). He asked another question: “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Someone has said, salvation is a long obedience in the same direction. A lost person has no power in and of himself to obey God (Romans 8:5-10). It is the Spirit of God a believer who creates both the desire and the ability to do what He commands (Philippians 2:13). We all live by a worldview, and thereby act on a set of beliefs. If the Bible does not inform my worldview and translate into my practical everyday life, I can’t legitimately claim that Christ is my Lord. Read **1 Peter 1:1-2 and 2 Peter 1:1-10.** Note the words “*if* *these qualities’ are yours and* increasing.” That is what proceeds Paul’s admonition to check to see if you are really saved. To sum it up, here is a quote by Precept Austin, “It is not our profession of faith that guarantees we are saved, but our progression in the faith that gives us assurance.” Plainly put, obedience (not sinless perfection) will accompany true saving faith, and a heart that is yielded towards God is evidence of salvation.

**Titus 1:15-16**

***All is pure to those who are pure. But to those who are corrupt and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but boththeir minds and consciences arecorrupted. They profess to know God but with their deeds they deny him, since they are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good deed.***

Love, the Birthmark of God’s Children

# 1 John 3:14

***We know that we have crossed over from death to life because we love our fellow Christians. The one who does not love remains in death.***

Above all the other signs that validate a true conversion, love is the one that is nonnegotiable. It’s the tangible evidence and birthmark of God’s children. Whereas, an absence of love clearly indicates there is no relationship with God—and God *is* love! Those who do not love God, will not love His family. Walking away from God’s family, and not returning, is a sure mark of an apostate. Read 1 John 2:18-25. And hate and love cannot co-exist. Please take some time to look up each of the following passages and do some soul-searching. Then you will know if you are alive or dead. Love and obedience go hand and hand (John 14:21-24). A saved person will remain in love (John 15:9).

**DIGGING DEEPER:** Ephesians 1:15; Matthew 5:43-48, 22:37-40; 1 John 2:7-11, 3:10-24, 4:7-21; Galatians 5:13-22; John 13:34-35, 15:12-13; Romans 5:5; James 2:8

**Can God Get a Witness Out of You?**

### **Acts 1:8**

***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 of the earth.”***

You were saved for a purpose. In Acts 1:8, Jesus said that when you receive the Holy Spirit, you *will be His witnesses*. That means that everyone who has the Holy Spirit will bear witness to Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10-19). As C.H. Spurgeon said in a sermon in 1888, *“Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that.”*

**Does God’s Phone Vibrate in You When You Sin?**

If you will notice in this subtitle, I did not say *if* you sin—but *when* you sin. Unfortunately, Christians still have a battle with our old sin nature. Consequently, when the Holy Spirit is subjected to sin, He becomes uncomfortable, and so does the child He lives in. One indicator that a person is saved *from* their sins is that they have the desire to fight *against* sins that once enslaved them. To further quote C. H. Spurgeon, he said, The mere professor’ loves a salvation from hell. The true Christian loves a salvation from sin (Psalm 119:128). When the Holy Spirit lives in you, He won’t let you remain in sin for long. You may find it interesting that the Greek word for **voice** is *phone*. Yes—voice in Greek is spelled PHONE! Do you hear God’s phone ring *inside* of you when you are disobeying God, or is He still *outside* convicting you of your sins (1 John 1:8-10; 2 Corinthians 7:10)?

**God Disciplines His Own**

# Hebrews 12:6

***For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son he accepts****.*

Hebrews 12 clearly states that those whom God loves, He disciplines. When we sin, we dishonor our Father’s name. Out of love, He will allow the natural consequences of our sins to come upon us to teach us. To ignore God’s discipline is to invite calamity. If He must spank us all the way home to heaven (or take us home prematurely), that’s just what He will do. While God is serious about our holiness and does not sweep our sin under the rug by ignoring it, He will never ever stop loving us. Stop and read **2 Samuel 7:14-15; Psalm 89:30-33**. Once we have been placed in Christ, it’s a done deal and we are secure for eternity. Not because of our faithfulness, but because He is faithful (2 Timothy 2:13). As my pastor would say, “that’s a good place for an amen!” Amen?

**When You Pray, Do You Get Any Response?**

# 1 John 5:13-15

***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.***

There is one final evidence of salvation that we need to see—answered prayer. According to Isaiah 59 and other passages**,** God does not hear the prayers of those who are separated from Him in their sins. But because we are in Christ, answered prayers are one of the fruits of having an intimate relationship with Him. Furthermore, as you will see when you look up the following passages, there is ample evidence that answered prayer is a clear sign of salvation.

But, let me clarify. When it comes to prayer, I am not saying that we can simply name it and claim it. What I am saying, though, is that there should be some undeniably answered prayer in the life of every saint. He is our Daddy, and because of Christ, we have twenty-four hour a day access to Him in prayer. Because He is our Father, He delights in taking care of His children. Just today, my friend Cathy, a widow, shared with me how she was talking to the Lord and expressing her needs to him. She said she had been quite specific in her prayer for an exact amount of money that she needed. And do you know what? Within days she received a call that she would receive a sum of money that was part of her husband’s inheritance. The amount? Just what she needed. Our heavenly Father is just good that way. Answered prayers are one way we know He hears us, and we are His.

As we wrap up this lesson, I will leave you with this final thought, in our key passages, 1 John 5:13, the word *know* could also be translated as *see*. In Greek the word is *eido*. It’s akin to the Greek word *idou* that is translated as behold in 2 Corinthians 5:17. To the point: You cannot *know* for certain that you are saved unless you *see* the Biblical signs of life. Do you see them?

**Memory Verse**

**1 John 5:13-14**

Day 2 Session Three

Introduction to Phase Two

Blessed with a New Identity

## **1 Peter 2:2-5**

***And yearn like newborn infants for pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up to salvation, if you have experienced the Lord’s kindness. So as you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but chosen and priceless in God’s sight, you yourselves, as living stones, are built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood and to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.***

**The Main Goals for Phase Two:**

* Introduce believers to God, their heavenly Father.
* Help believers understand that being a Christian means that they are holy.
* Help them discover their new identity in Christ.

**Phase Two Lessons:**

* She Who Has Ears
* New Identity
* Reclaiming Biblical Sexuality
* Redeemed from a Sinful Past
* Abba Father
* Lord, Teach us to Pray
* Building a House of Prayer

After completing the “Spiritual Growth Survey” in the back of this book and covering the gospel lessons in Phase One, the foundation has been laid and you are now ready to start Phase Two. These lessons are intended for those who have professed faith in Christ. Once a person has heard the gospel and responded to the message of Christ through repentance and faith, they are new creations. In every respect, a new believer is like a newborn babe (John 3:1-12; **1 Peter 1:22-25, 2:2-5**). The work of disciple-making is just beginning. Entering a covenant relationship with God in Christ is monumental. Everything is new and exciting, yet, also mysterious and unfamiliar. They need help navigating the uncharted waters of change. For those who come to faith as an adult, coming to terms with who they used to be can be an agonizing process. The consequences of a life of sin, coupled with the accusations of the devil, can keep them from ever realizing all the blessings God has for their lives (John 1:12-17). Furthermore, if they remain blind to who they are in Christ, they could easily be led astray back to the bondage of past sins, essentially shipwrecking their walk of faith before it ever begins.

Paramount in the journey of faith is getting to know who God is and where He is, and who we are in relationship to Him. Everything we can know and need to know about these things are found in God’s Word (Matthew 4:4;2 Timothy 3:14-17). Hence, the importance of God’s Word in the life of every believer. Discipleship is the God ordained method by which these liberating truths are revealed to His children. That’s where you come in (**1 Thessalonians 2:4-19**). You don’t need to have walked in their shoes or have had the same kind of background to be able to help them. I have observed that when I am lacking in experience, the Lord seems to always supply a person in the group who can relate at a deep level. He comforts us in our sorrows so that we can, in turn, comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3-7).

I have heard it said, “Show me your friends, and I will show you your future. To put this in Biblical terms, “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm” (Proverbs 13:20 ESV). It is all about building relationships. This takes time and patience. So there is no need to rush to complete any of the phases. There are many passages to look up and study if you so wish. Just be mindful of their level of understanding and go at your own pace. Do not teach a new truth until you are certain that they have grasped the main points. By grasp we mean that they can clearly articulate the Scriptural truths from the lesson and are able to reteach it to others (2 Timothy 2:2). Stick to the key passages but feel free to omit content or examples that are not culturally relevant or pertinent to those you are discipling. Our aim is to have a personal encounter with God through prayer and His written Word.

The truths found in Phase Two will help all of us gain a Biblical worldview as it pertains to our identity in Christ (read 2 Peter 1:2-9). The main points in this phase are this: Once we were separated from God. There was no internet connection between us. Yet now, we have been placed in Christ, we have an internal link and direct access to God through the Holy Spirit. God communicates to us through His Word, and through prayer, we can talk to Him as a child to her father. Our past does not have to dictate our future (**Ephesians 1:1-6**). We are daughters of the King, and He is still in the business of replacing beauty for ashes (Isaiah 60:1-6).

**Memory Verse**

**Ephesians 1:3-4**

**Day 2 Session Four**

She Who Has Ears, Let Her Hear

**Key Passage**

**Matthew 13:1-45**

**Introduction**

Technology is a wonderful thing. Through it we can cross time-zones and land masses to see and hear people on the opposite end of this orb we call planet earth. On a weekly basis, women in Catalyst Missions are connecting by cell phones and Facebook Messenger to pray and study these very lessons that you hold in your hands. This brings us close and keeps us close to one another. It works great until it doesn’t. For instance, just today our disciple group in Memphis, Tennessee was trying to connect with two women who live in different areas of Nicaragua. Although we could see one another, there was no sound. After adjusting the volume I said, “Can you hear me now?”. We prayed and thankfully, with the Lord’s help, we were able to hear one another loud and clear. It does not always work perfectly and there are times when we have no connection, but why would we not leverage every conceivable means afforded us through technology to advance the gospel and obey the Great Commission?

I am so very grateful for this and wonder how we ever made it without cell phones and such. As foreign as this may seem to Generation X, I remember the days when my husband was traveling for weeks at a time and connecting this way was not even an option. All of this to say, communication is important in every area of our lives. No connection equals no communication. No communication equals no relationship.

Being born again means that we are in a true relationship with God through faith in Christ. Our identity is in Him and our spiritual address is too (Ephesians 1:3-16, 2:4-8)! Among other innumerable benefits of being placed in God’s family is the fact that we can communicate with God. That is huge! Just think about this: according to Ephesians 2:1-3, 11-13 and Isaiah 59:1-3, God nether hears nor speaks to sinners. That’s what we were by our natural births – sinners, and sin separated us from God. Now we can hear God because the Holy Spirit lives in us and He can hear us when we pray (1 John 5:13-15). Which one do you think is more important- to hear from God or God hearing from us? Both are equally vital in communication. However, we don’t even know how to pray without God’s Word instructing us. Prayer will be our final lesson for this training.

**The Condition of the Heart Determines the Hearing**

Throughout the Bible, there is a great emphasis placed on the necessity of hearing what God says. In Hebrew, the word is s*hama,* and it has special significance to the Jewish people. A prayer known as *Shama Israel* begins with these words, “*Hear, O Israel*” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13- 21; Numbers 15:37-41). The word shama means to listen or to hear obediently. In fact, in different places in the Old Testament it is translated as both hear and obey. To the Jewish people, is was a matter of life and death. Read Deuteronomy 30:1-2, 6-17. The first time the word *shama* translated as obey is found in the account of Abraham’s offering up his only beloved son Isaac. The pivotal verse is **Genesis 22:18** “In your **seed** all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have **obeyed** *My voice*.” Bottom line -- hearing God is synonymous with doing what He says. They were to listen carefully so that they could accurately transfer what they heard to the next generation. Read: Psalm 78:1-8 and Psalm 145:4-13.

When the prophet Isaiah received his commission, he *heard* the voice of the Lord saying, “Who shall I send; who will go for Us?” Isaiah replied, “Here I am. Send me.” The message he was told to preach would fall on deaf ears (Isaiah 6:8-10). Tradition is that Isaiah was killed by being sawed into. How, then, was this Old Testament gospel message preserved? Isaiah had disciples (Isaiah 8:1, 16-20). Although it is sometimes translated as *learned*, the word *disciple* is found only 4 times in the Old Testament. All four are in the book of Isaiah and highlighted below. Read the following passages and make note of the connection between hearing and learning as God’s disciple: Isaiah 8:16-20, 50:4-5, 54:13, 55:1-11.

The people refused to hear the message God sent through His prophet, and so approximately seven hundred fifty years later, God spoke through His one and only Son the same message (Hebrews 1:1-10; John 1:1-14). Jesus’ disciples heard what He said and recorded His reference to the words He had spoken through the prophet Isaiah. For example, read Isaiah 54:13; John 6:44-45 and John 10:3, 26-30. Only true disciples have ears to hear. The question is, are you His disciple?

## **The Soil, The Seed, and The Sower**

Jesus cited Isaiah as He described the people who had ears and eyes, but they remained deaf and blind because of the hardness of their hearts. They failed repeatedly to listen to or obey God’s Word. Reading the full message in context will clarify exactly who had ears to hear the Word of God and who didn’t. As we are about to see, when Jesus spoke in parables, He was not merely saying words. He was depositing His truth into the fertile soil of the hearts of His disciples. Now, let’s read Matthew 12:46-50; Luke 11:27-28; Luke 6:46-47; Luke 8:1-3.

### **Luke 8:18-21**

***So listen carefully, for whoever has will be given more, but whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him. Now Jesus’ mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not get near him because of the crowd.***

***So he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.” But he replied to them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”***

In this parable, *the soil* represents the human heart, *the Seed* is the Word of God, and *the Sower* is the Lord Jesus. In his message, “At What Level Do You Listen,” Herb Hodges said there were four types of people who followed Jesus around. The first three categories of listeners he named the curious crowds, the casual listeners, and the convinced listeners. This group represents about *seventy-five percent* of people whose hearts are exposed to God’s Word. Those who fall into these categories hear God’s Word but do not act upon it. Although they may call Jesus *Lord*, they don’t do what He says.

* **Soil #1** (**Matthew 13:1-4; Luke 8:11-12) The Crowd:** The ones along the roadside were curious listeners. The seed lay on top of the soil, but it had no reception into their hearts (Matthew 7:18-27). Crowds are often fickle, and they will only follow the leader as long as it benefits them.
* **Soil #2 (Matthew 13:5-6) The Casual Listener:** These were the ones whose hearts were rocky. The seed fell on the soil, took root, but the root was not firm. These listeners were confused in their loyalty, the seed did not put down roots. They were shallow listeners, and they soon fell away.
* **Soil #3 (Matthew 13:7, 13-15) The Convinced Listener:** This type of soil represents those whose hearts are full of thorns. The seed fell on the soil and penetrated it. Yet the thorns kept that seed from sprouting upwards, and, therefore, it produced no crop. There was too much competing for their attention**.**

Just because we are exposed to God’s Word, does not mean that we receive it. When Jesus sows His Eternal Seed (the Word), He expects to receive a harvest. For all His labor, only a few will yield a crop. But their productivity will be greatly multiplied. Jesus “weeded” out the uncommitted majority by telling them some hard truths about the cost of being His disciples. Read Luke 9:18-27, 14:25-35 and John 8:43-47.

**DIGGING DEEPER:** Mark 4:1-34; Romans 10:13-18; James 1:21-25; John 5:24-47, 6:32-69; Revelation 3:14-20

## **A Receptive Heart is a Good Heart**

### **Luke 8:11-15**

***Now the parable means this: The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in a time of testing fall away. As for the seed that fell among thorns, these are the ones who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the worries and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. But as for the seed that landed on good soil, these are the ones who, after hearing the word, cling to it with an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with steadfast endurance.***

• **Soil #4 (Matthew 13:8-12, 16, 23-24, 30-43) The Committed Listener:** This last group represents a considerably smaller percentage, and yet, they are Jesus’ true followers; they are the *spiritually reproductive listeners.* The good seed fell upon the good soil of their hearts. These are careful listeners, true Christians, and disciples of Christ. Although they are *few in number, they’re faithful and fruitful investments for the Sower*. Jesus calls them sons and daughters of the Kingdom. And He further identified them as *good seeds and sowers of His Word.*

The word *follow* in Greek is akoloutheo. It could be defined as being united with Christ or accompanying Him as a disciple (Luke 6:40; John 12:26). The root word for follow is derived from the same Greek word for hear and obey. Before we move on, I want to point out one phrase found in these two verses: Matthew 13:24,31. Depending on your translation, it is translated as He told, put forth, or presented another parable. Just a very simple word or phrase, right? One might think so, but it is anything but simple. The Greek word is paratithemi and could be translated as follows: He deposited another parable into the fertile soil of His disciple’s hearts as a trust for protection. They were the keepers of His treasures—yet, not to keep it for themselves. They would sow this eternal seed into the hearts of those they would, in turn, disciple! Now, who would have ever guessed that? Here is the point: only true disciples really hear. And what they hear, they sow into others. Do you get it?

Those without spiritual ears will not hear Jesus. Consequently, they cannot understand what He says, and they certainly don’t follow Him. Those who don’t follow Jesus do not fish for men and women, and there is no return on the Word that was planted within them. They are not “good seeds,” and they don’t become sowers of the Eternal Word. And since they don’t plant, there is no harvest. The Sower—the Lord Jesus—receives no return on His investment in them. In the end, they will receive no reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But, on the other hand, those who have ears to hear the Word of God understand what Jesus says, and they act on what they have heard. These are His true disciples!

If you have ears to hear, you will understand the will of your Father in heaven. You will obey what He says because He is your Lord. As you go through your life, you will sow the Word of God and obey His last command by making disciples. Through investing His Word into the fertile soil of the hearts of His sons and daughters, He will receive a bountiful harvest. The plan has not changed. If you are truly a daughter of the King, then through you He will reap a large harvest. And one day you will hear these words: “Well done my good and faithful servant, you were faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s joy” (Matthew 25:23).

**DIGGING DEEPER:** John 14:23-24, 15:14-16, 16:1-16; Matthew 4:9, 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 2:6-15, 5:11-20; 1 Peter 1:22-25; Isaiah 60:1-5

**Memory Verse**

# Luke 8:21

***But he replied to them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”***

Day 3 Session Five

New Identity

**Key Passage**

# Ephesians 1:1-5

**Introduction**

It was Paul’s custom to address his letters to the *saints****.*** Now you may find this term confusing if you have always believed that saints were holy people who have died. But if the recipients of this letter are dead, then why is Paul writing letters to them? So, you may be wondering how does a person become a saint, or what is a saint? By investigating these important questions, you will discover one spiritual blessing after another. The first blessing I would like for us to contemplate is that although we were born sinners if we’re in Christ, we are saints. And when we become saints, we are holy.

In Ephesians 4:12, the word translated into English as *equipping* the saints has deep and significant meaning. It is rooted in another Greek word which means to bind up or to mend what has been broken. The fact that so many of us have been affected by the subject matter we are about to address only magnifies the immense need for this truth. Learning how to apply the gospel message to the wounded soul is at the very core of disciple-making. That’s exactly what this lesson is intended to do.

Saints in Christ

# Colossians 1:21-22

# *And you were at one time strangers and enemies in your minds as expressed through your evil deeds, but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you holy, without blemish, and blameless before him.*

In over twenty years of experience in women’s ministry, I have found that nearly half of the women I meet in the Church had their innocence robbed at an early age by sexual abuse. Now mind you, these are women who are *in the Church*. For those of us who have worked with women in prisons and in other countries (especially third-world countries), the statistics are even higher. A staggering eighty-five percent of these women were abused as children. Ironically, many of the ones who perpetrate such vile acts were molested themselves as children. The psychological effects of this despicable sin are innumerable, and the casualties are escalating at an alarming rate. Did you know that statistics now show that one in six children will be sexually abused? What that means is that you or several people you know are victims. May the Lord have mercy upon us! Satan, seizing the opportunity afforded him through the internet, is appealing to the most debased cravings of our sinful nature. Thus, entrapping men (as well as women) in the soul-destroying addiction to pornography.

The fastest growing global criminal enterprise today is not the buying or selling of drugs or weapons, as you might think. It’s something much more lucrative—the trafficking of women and children as sex slaves. Truly, “The love of money is the root of all evil” (1Timothy 6:10). The victims of this horrific evil represent an estimated twenty-one to twenty-seven million human beings! About half of these are defenseless children. And moreover, these numbers do not even reflect the growing numbers of people being sold as slave laborers. Thankfully, the plight of those captive in these hopeless situations have reached the ears and hearts of believers. As tangible expressions of God’s love and concern, many are actively working to do something about it. This includes buying their freedom and binding up the physical, emotional, and physiological wounds of these victims. The Christian organization I am most familiar with is International Justice Mission. (For more information, go to ijm.org). Another example of this kind of ministry that I’m excited to tell you about is New Hope Girls in La Vega, Dominican Republic. Their ministry is holistic. We are elated to offer their leaders this tool to use to disciple these precious young women. (For more information, go to [www.newhopegirls.co](http://www.newhopegirls.com)).

If you don’t know God’s love personally, you may be cynical and believe the lie that God does not care. And yet, as many who have been rescued by His love will tell you, His heart is grieved by this evil. Furthermore, Jesus came, in part, to destroy the insidious work of the devil. In case you are wondering how He feels about the perpetrators of this heinous treatment of women and children; the following passage should bring clarification.

**Matthew 18:5-6**

# *And whoever welcomes a child like this in my name welcomes me. “But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a huge millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the open sea.*

I have heard this statement often repeated by those whose lives have been destroyed by such horror. They say: “I feel so dirty, unclean, and worthless.” Consequently, many of these victims spend their lives treating themselves or allowing others to treat them, as worthless. Moreover, it’s not just the abused who feel dirty and worthless. If you have lived a life of shame and guilt for sins you have committed, then you know personally the words of the prophet Jeremiah are true. *The heart is more deceitful than all else and it is desperately sick; who can understand it* (Jeremiah 17:9)? As you read these words, I wonder if you are feeling a stab of pain from wounds that may have been bandaged but never truly healed. You may not even be aware of the many ways these psychological injuries have shaped your life. If this is the case, then most likely you already know that there is no quick fix for these kinds of wounds. However, when you are in Christ, healing is possible. If you, or someone close to you, has suffered these unspeakable traumas, then take heart. The love of God is deeper, and the Great Physician still makes house calls. Read **Luke 4:16-21, Mathew 9:10-13, 18-37**.

In Christ, you have been made clean, pure, and blameless. You are a saint, and that means that you are holy. In fact, the words holy and saint are translated from the exact same Greek word *hagios*. Do you think of yourself as holy and blameless? Probably not. There is someone who loves to bring up the events of our pasts and throw them in our faces. Satan is not called the accuser of the brethren for nothing! When he hurls those accusations at us, we can remind the accuser what God says about us. Romans 1:1-39 has the most beautiful bookends. It begins with no condemnation. It ends with no separation form God’s love. The passage below is a beautiful metaphor that illustrates the heavenly reality that takes place when the Lord forgives us and dresses us in His righteousness. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the precious blood of Jesus.

**Zechariah 3:1-5**

***Next, I saw Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, with Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan, “May the Lord rebuke you, Satan! May the Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Isn’t this man like a burning stick snatched from the fire?” Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood there before the angel. The angel spoke up to those standing all around, “Remove his filthy clothes.” Then he said to Joshua, “I have freely forgiven your iniquity and will dress you in fine clothing.” Then I spoke up, “Let a clean turban be put on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the Lord stood nearby.***

**Digging Deeper**: Ephesians 1:1, 4, 13, 15, 18, 19, 2:19, 21, 4:12,30; 5:2; Romans 1:6-7; John 13:10- 11; 17:17,19; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1:8, 6:11; 1 Timothy 4:5; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 3:14; Hebrews 10:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:13, 5:23; Psalm 103:1-5

In conclusion, let’s think about Paul before his conversion. He was the one who held the cloaks for the those who stoned Saint Steven to death. This is not to mention the other Christians he hunted down, persecuted, and had killed! How could Paul possibly go forward to serve the Lord unless he truly believed what God said about him in the face of the painful reminders of the accuser? Paul received the healing redemptive truth that he was forgiven of all his sins—past, present, and future! Paul embraced (and so should we) the reality of the truth that when God the Father looks at us, He sees His Son Jesus—the sinless One.

**Ezekiel 36:25**

***I will sprinkle you with pure water and you will be clean from all your impurities. I will purify you from all your idols.***

**Memory Verse**

**1 Peter 1:18-19**

**Day 3 Session Six**

**Reclaiming Biblical Sexuality**

**Key Passage**

**1 Corinthians 6:9 - 7:1-9**

**Introduction**

From the bedroom to the board room and everything in between, all Scripture is useful for instruction in every area of life (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Curiously though, when it comes to sex, there are some passages that are never addressed from our pulpits. Broaching this subject in Bible study may seem a bit taboo. Yet, when the church remains silent on the matter, we’re allowing the world to conform us into its image of sexuality (Romans 12:1-2). No wonder that even Christians are confused about such an important part of life. For heaven sakes - sex was God’s idea! Lately, though, I have noticed that this has become a central issue for discussion on Christian broadcast. It’s about time! There is much at stake.

Maybe you are single, or widowed and thinking, “This subject doesn’t apply to me.” Or, “Where is she going with all of this?” Please bear with me for a moment. As uncomfortable as the subject is, I can assure you that there are some married and single folks you know who could greatly benefit from addressing this issue from a Biblical viewpoint. God is pro-marriage, but He has also given the gift of singleness to some. They should not be ostracized or ignored in the church because they play a vital role in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 7:10-40). We would do well to learn how they steward their sexuality in a way that is God honoring (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).

Once again, this is but one of a gazillion life issues that is best suited to be addressed in the context of gospel-centered discipling relationships. It is high time we bring this subject out of the shadows of darkness and into the light of God’s Word. However, as with all our lessons, this is but a tool to get the conversation started, not a thorough Biblical exposition on this rather sensitive subject--nor is it intended to be. It is, however, an attempt to glean from Paul’s letters to the saints and uncover some insights on this relevant matter.

**Biblical Sex Education**

**Titus 2:11-14**

***11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. 12 It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. 14 He gave himself for us to set us free from every kind of lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are truly his, who are eager to do good.***

To be transparent, virginity was not a virtue that was highly esteemed in my family. My sex education came primarily from a high school health class, what I saw on tv, and read in secular magazines. Consequently, I had a warped world-view that led to a lifestyle of sin. Believe me when I tell you, I have many scars and shameful regrets to prove it. Oh, how I wish I had been saved before I got married and had a godly woman to disciple me. Now, in my fifties, I have learned that procreation is not the only God ordained purpose of sex (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:23-25; 18:11-13). How about you, did you have a godly woman instruct you with “the talk”?

**Titus 2:3-5**

***Older women likewise are to exhibit behavior fitting for those who are holy, not slandering, not slaves to excessive drinking, but teaching what is good. 4 In this way they will train the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be self-controlled, pure, fulfilling their duties at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the message of God may not be discredited.***

**Digging Deeper**: Proverbs 5:15-23; Hebrews 13:4; Song of Songs 1:5-11; 5:1, 6:4-8:4; Ephesians 5:28-33

A few years back, something very peculiar happened at our small country church. An elderly man who’s been widowed for some time, bought a case of books for the young married Sunday School class. Would you believe his gift to us was a Christian book on marital sex? “Well, I never!”, you say. Me either, sister. The name of the book is *The Act of Marriage: The Beauty of Sexual Love*, by Tim and Beverly LaHaye. I am a little embarrassed to admit this, but I was over fifty-years old, had been married for three decades, and had three grown children when I read this book. I learned things about my body and the “marital bed” that I had never heard before. Suffice to say, the book was quite the Christian sex education and I highly commend it to you. Once I understood God’s redemptive plan for sexuality, I wanted to fully embrace the beauty of this all-important mystery of oneness in my marriage. Now, this same Sunday School class is using another book by Jay Harvey titled *Knowing the Bible Song of Solomon*. It is also a real eye opener!

Normally, our church uses a quarterly curriculum that explores a book of the Bible, and it is my preference to study the Bible chapter by chapter and verse by verse. Occasionally, I substitute teach the senior ladies Sunday school class, and I jump at the opportunity to be with these women and learn from their wisdom. On one such occasion, they were just starting the book of 1 Corinthians. To my dismay, our lesson skipped over some passages. So, I asked if they would mind reading the whole book and expounding on it verse by verse. When the Sunday came to teach 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, followed by 1 Corinthians 7:1-9, I began the lesson by asking a loaded question. I said, “How many of you are struggling with being tempted by prostitutes? They all laughed awkwardly. One of the senior saints said that she and her husband had talked about it and neither of them wanted to study it! I told her honestly – neither did I! But the more I studied and prayed about it, the more the Lord taught me. And this is what I want to share with you now.

Before we dive into this letter, let’s get some context. In Acts chapters 17-18 we learn that Paul spent roughly 18 months in Corinth where he evangelized, made disciples and planted churches – i.e. family homes (1 Cor. 1:11). When Paul left, Apollos, a disciple of Priscilla and Aquilla, came to Corinth and did the same as Paul. Five years passed and Paul was in Ephesus when the church at Corinth sent a delegation of men to settle some issues that had arisen in this yet immature group of believers (1 Corinthians 1:11-17, 3:1-9-17, 16:15-18). The chief issue we are going to look at is the licentious and pagan sexual practices that were not only tolerated but embraced in the church at Corinth.

Let’s read **1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 6:9-20, 7:1-16**.

**He Made them Male and Female**

**Genesis 1:27-28**

***God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them,***

***male and female he created them.  God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.”***

Hardly a week goes by that we don’t hear another story from a broken-hearted mother whose children or grandchildren have abandoned their Christian upbringing in favor of a sexual lifestyle totally opposed to God’s design. The devil, through media and government legislations, is overtly pushing a demonic agenda that our children are buying into, hook, line and sinker. Like the early church in Corinth, we are embracing and slowly molding ourselves into the image of this corrupt world. We are living in a time of wholesale sexual identity crisis that rivals Sodom and Gomorrah.

It all stems from a lack of knowledge about who God our creator is, who we are without Him, where we are and how we got there, and lastly, God’s remedy in Christ (Genesis chapters 1-4; John 1:1-18; 1 Corinthians 1:18-24; 1 John 4:1-19). In short, we have either missed the gospel all together, or, diluted it to a man made, man centered gospel that is good for nothing. To put it in Biblical terms, without knowledge of God and His truth, there is no vision. Without vision, people through off all restraints. (Proverbs 5:19-23, 29:18; Hosea 4:6). Case in point, let’s see what happens when people are unrestrained and in the dark about God. Even righteous people can become defiled by the world influence. Read **Genesis 13:10-13, 19:1, 20-38; Romans 1:18-32; 2 Peter 2:1-9.**

**Digging Deeper:** Lev. 18:22; Judges 19:22-24; Luke 17:29; Jude 7; Titus 1:10-16, 2:11-14; Revelation 2:18-23, 9:2, 18:9

Using broad strokes, we have merely broached a deep, yet pertinent subject. One that could demand an enormous amount of pen and ink. Therefore, I will defer to those who are more qualified to speak with expertise on these matters. Rosaria Butterfield is one of these people. A pastor’s wife and mother, a writer, speaker, former professor of English at Syracuse University, she is also a *former* atheist and lesbian. In her first book, The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert, she details her radical conversion to Christ. Her second book, Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ, is a must read for anyone dealing with this subject. Additionally, you can find numerous YouTube videos where you can hear her beautiful redemptive story. The Lord has given this sister to equip the church for such a time as this.

If we are to find the heart of God in this matter and desire to reach those struggling with sexual identity, we would do well to do some research and listen to those who know experientially, from which they speak.

**Titus 3:3-6**

***For we too were once foolish, disobedient, misled, enslaved to various passions***

***and desires, spending our lives in evil and envy, hateful and hating one another. 4 But “when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, 5 he saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us in full measure through Jesus Christ our Savior.***

Now, in light of all the Lord has done to forgive us and free us from our sins, how are we to apply this truth? We will conclude with some admonitions from God’s Word. Let’s read **Romans 6:12-22, 12:1-2; 1 Peter 1:13-19; 1 Peter 2:9-11 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.**

**Memory Verse**

**1 Corinthians 6:11**

***11 Some of you once lived this way. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.***

**Day 4 Session Seven**

Redeemed from a Sinful Past

Key Passage

# 1 Peter 1:18-19

**Introduction**

We live in the information age; through the internet, there are an abundance of sites that afford us the opportunity to trace the steps of our family’s bloodline. Have you ever done a search of your ancestry to see where in the world your forefathers came from? If you have, then you’ve probably found all sorts of interesting folks. You would be proud to hang the pictures of some of them in your family’s hall of fame—while others you would rather keep hidden in the closet of shame. Every family has it’s “skeletons in the closet.” The apostle Peter aptly describes our earthly ancestry this way: “An empty way of life handed down to us from our forefathers.” Perhaps, the word empty doesn’t quite describe your heritage. Maybe your family “handed down” a life filled with pain and shame. If you don’t have a Godly heritage, take heart. As we are about to learn, in Christ, we have a new bloodline. Through the encouragement of Scripture, there is hope for us all.

# 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

# *Think about the circumstances of your call, brothers and sisters. Not many were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were born to a privileged position. But God chose what the world thinks foolish to shame the wise, and God chose what the world thinks weak to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, what is regarded as nothing, to set aside what is regarded as something, so that no one can boast in his presence.*

**New Bloodline**

Let’s do a quick review of the women listed in the earthly genealogy of Jesus. Stop and read Matthew 1:3-12. Women were hardly ever listed in the family tree. Surprisingly, the fact that the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to list them by name speaks volumes, not to mention, the *kind of women* that are listed here. But before we look at these women, there are three significant points that we don’t want to miss.

* Number one: God chooses all kinds of people, even those who others deem insignificant.
* Number two: God chooses sinful people—for only sinners can be saved.
* Number three: God gives honor and dignity to “these kinds” of people.

The women chosen to be in the royal bloodline of Jesus are shockingly scandalous, to say the least. The first one listed had a sordid past. Tamar was the widow of one of Judah’s sons; she was cheated out of a kinsman to redeem her, so she posed as a prostitute and had sex with her father-in-law. This produced twin boys; the firstborn was Perez (Genesis 38:1-30; Ruth 4:1-22). Perez became the great, great, great-grandfather to Salmon. Salmon married a Canaanite prostitute named Rahab. She was the one whose scarlet cord was used to lower the Hebrew spies out of the window of her “house of ill repute.” Not only did her act save her whole family before the walls of Jericho fell, it also won the heart of Salmon (Joshua 2:1-13, 6:17-25).

Incidentally, the line or cord that hung out her window in Hebrew means *hope*. Through her marriage, this former prostitute began a new honorable bloodline for her descendants. She had a baby who would grow up to become a kinsman redeemer; his name was Boaz (Ruth 4). Boaz redeemed a Moabite widow named Ruth. Now Ruth’s family heritage was also marred by sexual sin. The Moabites were the product of Lot’s incestuous relationship with his own daughters (Genesis 19). But because Boaz chose to redeem Ruth, she gained the promise that one of her offspring would be a famous redeemer in Bethlehem—the city of David. Bethlehem, by the way, means house of bread—a foreshadowing of the coming Redeemer who is called the Bread of Life. The kinsman redeemer and Ruth had a child. His name was Obed. He was the father of Jesse whose son was King David. Although we know that David was “a man after God’s own heart,” David committed adultery with Bathsheba, got her pregnant, and then killed her husband. Their baby died because of all this sin (2 Samuel 11). Despite their checkered past, God had mercy on these adulterers. He gave them a son: wise King Solomon. We read about his wedding in Psalm 45, but the book of Hebrews attributes this passage of scripture to one of Solomon’s offspring—the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:3-10).

Of course, the last one listed was the Virgin Mary, the mother of our Redeemer. We must not forget the insinuations and accusations inflicted on her by those around her. After all, who had ever heard of a virgin getting pregnant? All of this is to say that Jesus’ earthly ancestry poignantly stresses a weighty reality: regardless of how dishonorable our heritage may be, our earthly family’s past does not have to dictate the future of a child of God. Please don’t miss this! If you have been born again, you have an opportunity to begin a new legacy and leave a godly inheritance for your offspring—even your disciples and their children’s children. What God did for these women, He can do for you.

**Accepted in the Beloved**

Ephesians 1:6b (KJV)

*Wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.*

Every now and again, you come upon a passage of Scripture that you have read before but never thought much about. To the casual reader, it is just a simple clause. Yet, when you approach it with prayerful consideration, digging just below the surface, you find a diamond. An example is Ephesians 1:6. We are going to hold this jewel up to the light and be amazed at the riches that are revealed. Be prepared to be blessed!

The interpreters of the King James Bible picked a seemingly inconspicuous word to describe the honor bestowed upon the ones who have been placed in Christ*.* In the King James translation, the word is accepted, however, some other translators chose the word favored. When you think about the word accepted, don’t you normally think in terms of receiving something half-heartedly? If you’re a person like me who tends to see the glass half empty, the word *accepted* has negative connotations. For example, “She accepted the position, although it was not the job she wanted.” Or perhaps, “He accepted the fact that he didn’t have long to live.” Yet as we explore the deeper truths contained in this tiny passage, it becomes apparent that the Holy Spirit had an altogether different message in mind.

To discover the gems in this lesson, we need to look closely at the original Greek words translated as *highly favored* or *accepted*. But before we do, let’s focus on two other keywords: *pleased and well pleased*. These words are used, with just a few exceptions, in reference to the Lord Jesus. In the following passages, they are they are applied to those who are in Christ. I will underline the words in the following passages. “Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Ephesians 1:5). “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself” (Ephesians 1:9).

* **Highly Favored**/ **Accepted:** The Greek word is charitoo. (It comes from the word grace.) It means to *grace or highly honor.* As a side note: the words gift and forgiveness relate to both words.
* **Good Will/ Good Pleasure:** The Greek words are edudokia or eudokeo. Other definitions are *satisfaction, delight, to think well of, to approve of.*

**DIGGING DEEPER:** Habakkuk 1:13; Isaiah 59:1-2; Colossians 1:16-23; Luke 3:22; Matthew 3:17, 12:18, 17:5; 2 Peter 1:16-17; Mark 1:11

As we have just seen in the passages above, when the Father spoke from heaven, He said: “This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Because Jesus is the unrivaled object of the Father’s affection, the Father’s love and acceptance of us rests solely upon His love for His Beloved Son. Because of this, we are not just accepted by God, but, in Christ, we are highly favored and enormously blessed. The following is a case study that illustrates the principle in these lessons. Read the following accounts: Genesis 36:1-5; Exodus 6:21-24; Numbers 16:1-40, 26:9-11,58.

Now read the following Psalm 44-49, 84-85, 87-88. Considering who they were, what stands out to you in the writings of the sons of Korah? Read the following passages and make a detailed list of how they personally apply to you in Christ. Mark 10:13-16; John 8:1-11; Luke 5:27-32; Galatians 3:13, 4:5; Revelation 5:9; 1 Corinthians 15:10

At the birth of Jesus, a heavenly host appeared and declared: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace among men with whom *He is pleased*.” The King James version said, “On whom His favor rests” (Luke 2:13-14). In this instance, the words pleased and favored are the same word applied to Jesus! Do you understand the significance of that? Because Christ Jesus now lives “in us,” and God the Father is *well pleased with Him*, the Father’s *favor* now rests “upon us.” It is mind-boggling. Think through the implications of these wonders. Do you struggle with feelings of insignificance? When you read the Bible, do you think about the people listed as superhumans? They were not. They were every bit as human as you and me.

Take the mother of Jesus, Mary, for example. Can you imagine the thoughts running through her teenage mind when she was visited by the angel Gabriel? Before He announced that her womb would be the incubator of Immanuel, in fact, “the Holy of Holies,” he declared her standing with God. Gabriel said: “Greetings, you who are *highly favored.* The Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28 NIV). We marvel at this encounter and the great honor bestowed upon Mary—and rightfully so. But please don’t miss this hidden treasure; the words *highly favored* are the exact same word used in Ephesians 1:6 for *accepted.* Here is the truth: If you are in Christ, then you are as highly favored by God as Mary!

Consider a further wonder. Mary carried the Son of God (her Creator) within her. Likewise, we also carry God the Holy Spirit within us. Once we were separated from God in our sins. Like Mary, not only is God with us and in us, but we are in Him. No one can snatch us from His hands -- that is security. If we could but grasp this reality, it would change our lives completely.

**DIGGING DEEPER:** Romans 8:28-32; Luke 12:32; John 1:10-18, 14:6-24, 16:27; Matthew 3:17, 12:18, 17:5, 21:28-32; Colossians 1:12-19

The value of anything is set by one criterion. Do you know what that is? An item’s value is appraised by the price that someone is willing to pay to have it. Every living soul is valuable. Not only because they are made in God’s image, but also because of the price He paid to redeem us. If you will look to the cross of Christ, you will know exactly how valuable you are to God because of the price He paid to have you. The catalyst that drove Him to the cross was love.

**Day 4 Session Eight**

Abba Father

Key Passage

Galatians 4:4-7

**Introduction**

Just the mention of the word father can conjure up a myriad of emotions—some good and some bad. Most of us base our concept of God as a father on our experience with our earthly fathers. For those who were raised by a loving father, this lesson will bring up fond memories. Whereas, if you were raised in a family with an ungodly, abusive, absent, or emotionally disconnected father, then what we’re about to study may evoke memories that are anything but pleasant. Does that last statement describe your father in any way? If it does, you may be thinking, “If God is anything like my father, then I want no part of Him!” This is understandable if you are tormented by the haunting memories of an abusive or absent father. If this is the scenario that you most easily relate to, it may have left you with a false image of God that in no way resembles the God of the Bible. Therefore, it cannot be stressed enough the crucial role a father plays in the lives of his children.

Father is the first word in the Hebrew dictionary, and the first time in the Bible that the word father is mentioned is at the wedding of Adam and Eve. Here, God Himself presided over that ceremony. This was His charge to the couple: “*For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24). Perhaps they were a bit confused by this statement. If you’ll remember, they didn’t have any parents—only God the Father. Genesis 2:24 is a passage that is typically used in marriage ceremonies, and it’s quite relevant to me. Ethan, my first-born son, has recently left his father and me to become united with his new wife Jessica. And while the “uniting” part gives me great joy, the “leaving” part evokes other emotions in this mother’s heart. (I’m still adjusting to having an empty nest.) We often forget that marriage was God’s idea from the start. Did you know that in many cultures the father is the one who selects the bride for his son? The same is true of the bride of Christ. Our Father chose us for His Son. The Greek word for chose really defines just how special we are to God. It means to *select as a favorite.* God, the Father has favorites—all His children are His favorite!

The truth is, many us are quite familiar with difficult family dynamics. However, as we deal with what could be for some, an extremely sensitive subject, let me assure you on the front end, our goal is healing. Intrinsic in all of us is a need to know God, our Father, as He really is—a God of real, unending, soul healing love. If you are apt to become depressed or despondent when thinking about your earthly father, when you come to know God as your real Father, your gloom will be turned to gladness. You may need to get your tissue box handy for the tears of joy you will shed when you meet your heavenly Father. Make notes from the following passages of how the word chose is used: Ephesians 1:4; John 13:18, 15:16 -19; 1 Peter 2:4-9.

Not only did God the Father, selected us for Jesus, He draws us to Him (John 6:39-65; Ephesians 1:3-5). We can’t come any other way. What an honor that through Jesus we have the same intimacy, familiarity, and tender affection that exists between Him and His Father. Nowhere is this relationship so poignantly displayed than the moment when Jesus cried out from the cross in Aramaic, “Abba,” which is translated as *Daddy*.

**John 6:44**

**No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.**

The prophet Isaiah gave several names or titles to Jesus in Isaiah 9:2-17. What are they? Read Ephesians 1:3-7 and Deuteronomy 7:6-8. Note every similarity. After reading those two passages, what is the stated purpose of God’s choosing people?

Our Daddy in Heaven

# Ephesians 3:14-15

# For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on the earth is named.

There is something quite unique about the passage above. In the entirety of the New Testament, the one and only time the word *family* is used is in that prayer. And did you notice the location of the family? We’re a family in heaven and on earth, and we have the honor of bearing our Father’s name. The above prayer could possibly be the most meaningful prayer that you could ever pray for another individual. Yet as impressive as Paul’s prayer is, it doesn’t even compare to the Lord’s Prayer, recorded in John 17:1-26.

Just prior to the cross, Jesus had a conversation with the Father about those the Father had given to Him—His disciples. This prayer gives us a rare opportunity to hear Jesus talk to the Father about us. The prayer is full of truths too numerous to ponder in one chapter. We’ll focus on just a few statements such as, “This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

We think of eternal life as living forever, yet that is not what the passage says. “Eternal life,” Jesus said, is “knowing God the Father.” But, how is it possible to know the unseen God? We can’t, apart from Jesus! He stated plainly, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:1-6). He also said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father” and “I and the Father are One” (John 10:30-38). And furthermore, “No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known” (John 1:14-18).

Romans 8:14-16

***For all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. 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 to our spirit that we are God’s children.***

While working on this chapter, my husband and I attended a mission conference where we met three brothers in Christ, each from different Muslim countries. One was from Morocco, one was from Iran, and one was from Lebanon. We were riveted by their compelling stories. Gilbert, an Iranian Christian, endured the martyrdom of his father for the gospel. Brother Rachid, the son of a Moroccan Imam, was disowned by his family when he believed in Jesus. And then there was André Houssney, whose believing parents still live in Beirut. Even though they are sometimes alienated from their Muslim neighbors, they faithfully share the gospel. These three brothers in Christ taught us so much about Islam and how to love and reach those who are enslaved by the fastest growing religion in the world. We learned that Muslims adhere to Five Pillars of Faith. Each one stands in stark contrast to the Christian faith. For instance, take Islam’s second pillar—prayer. Five times a day they must bow down and recite rote prayers in Aramaic—a language that few Muslims speak or understand. For them, prayer is a religious duty, and to refuse to pray is an offense punishable by death! It’s little wonder because the word Islam means submission. Conversely, for the child of God, prayer is communion with God our Father (Hebrews 4:16). Although He is our creator and the King of the universe, He knows us each personally and intimately. It’s a privilege to talk to Him and not an obligation.

At the same conference, André told the story of Maha, an Egyptian girl who was raised in a devout Muslim home. One night while praying with her mother, Maha asked her mother, “Who are we praying to?” Her mother did not know. So, because Maha had a loving father, she began to picture in her mind that she was praying to her loving daddy (in Arabic– “Abu” or “Baba” related to the Aramaic word Abba). One day, as she walked along the street, a lady drove up beside her and gave her a little, white New Testament. Then she simply drove away. (That’s one way to evangelize.) Maha was curious, but she would not dare to read the forbidden book, so she hid it for years. One day she passed a Christian church and heard singing, and she drew near to listen. After the singing stopped, she heard the pastor say, “Let us pray.” She thought to herself, “I wonder who Christians pray to.” As they bowed their head to pray, she heard the first words of their prayer “Abnua” Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” The Lord had tendered her heart even before she knew Him personally. Her heavenly Father was speaking to her. Andre’s Lebanese parents led her to the Lord. Now Maha knows the intimacy of a personal relationship with God, her loving Father—her *Abba*.

Adopted to Himself

# Psalm 68:5-6

***He is a father to the fatherless and an advocate for widows. God rules from his holy palace. God settles those who have been deserted in their own homes; he frees prisoners and grants them prosperity. But sinful rebels live in the desert.***

Rarely, does a person make it through life without knowing rejection in one form or another. Yet there is an altogether different kind of pain inflicted upon those who are rejected and abandoned. This is especially true for an orphaned child or a woman who has been deserted by her husband. Quite often these could be haunted by some nagging questions like: “Why I am not wanted?” or “Am I not worthy of love?” When we take the bait of those insidious thoughts, Satan will begin to replay the sorrowful refrain to torment us and to ensure that the wounds remain open and agonizing. This can set you up for a lifetime of self-pity and victimhood. Perhaps you can relate. If so, then my prayer for you is that the heavenly Father will break this record of lies once and for all and replace it with His song of love. May He quiet and comfort you with His love as He sings over you (Isaiah 66:13).

**Memory Verse**

**Ephesians 1:6**

# Zephaniah 3:14-15

***Shout for joy, Daughter Zion! Shout out, Israel! Be happy and boast with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has removed the judgment against you; he has turned back your enemy. Israel’s king, the Lord, is in your midst! You no longer need to fear disaster.***

There are no such things as perfect parents, perfect children, or perfect families! Can we just be honest and admit it? We’re all broken. There has never been an earthly mother or father who could fill the shoes of God. They weren’t meant to. So, when we try to make “little gods” out of people, they will inevitably let us down. When they do, God can use this hunger and thirst for love to point us to our heavenly Father. Contemplate these truths: the hands of God the Father hold you, and the hands of Jesus formed you in the womb. When His hands were pierced on the cross, you were forever engraved there. No one will ever snatch you away from Him. Now, that is security! You are God’s child, precious to Him and loved by Him from eternity past. Because you are His, you are blessed with every spiritual blessing. You inherited them, not from your earthly father, but from your heavenly Father. That fact alone, makes you extraordinary—don’t you think? Someone once said that it’s hard to hear God in pleasures, but we hear Him loud and clear when we are in pain. If rejection and wounds from the past bring pain to your heart, then listen to the words of your Heavenly Father: “I am the Father to the Fatherless.” Whenever you are reminded of your painful childhood in the home of your earthly father, here is a passage to cling to.

# Psalm 45:10-11 (KJV)

***Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.***

**DIGGING DEEPER:** John 6:37-47; 1 Peter 1:2, 2:9-10; James 1:27; Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:3-6; Jeremiah 1:4-10; Isaiah 43:1-21; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Revelation 17:14; Psalm 10:14, 27:10, 45:10- 11, 8:5-6, 66:13, 103:13-17, 49:15-16; Deuteronomy 10:18

**Memory Verse**

**Galatians 4:6-7**

**Day 5 Session Nine**

Lord, Teach Us To Pray

Key Passage

**Luke 11:1-13**

**Introduction**

Thanks to the movie The War Room, the church has been awakened to the need for discipleship in the arena of prayer. What a novel idea--that older women should teach the younger women to pray. It’s brilliant. It’s even Biblical! But sadly, it’s rare. Since the move hit the big screen, young women have come out of the wood work, searching for mature Christian women to teach them how to pray. A couple have approached me with the request. The truth be told, all I have learned about prayer, I learned from some mature godly women who come to my home for discipleship. By praying with me and for me, they discipled me in prayer.

When we come together and bombard the throne of the King in prayer, the most amazing thing happens. The presence of God is almost palatable. There is a reason for that. Prayer is not just bringing request to God. Although, that is certainly part of it. The very essence of prayer, though, is to draw near to God in worship and adoration. In this lesson we are going take a good long look at the model prayer, better known as The Lord’s Prayer, and learn what it means to become a family or house of prayer.

The Model Prayer

The account of Mary and Martha proceed Jesus teaching on Prayer. That fits in perfectly with our lesson because that is just what we are doing. We are going to sit at Jesus feet, and learn from Him. Let’s begin by reading **Luke 11:1-13** and see what the Lord will teach us about prayer.

To state the obvious, Jesus prayed. That alone speaks volumes about our need to pray. Most likely, the anonymous disciple asking the question was John – who was also discipled by John the Baptist. Highlighting the fact that disciple-makers are the ones who teach people to pray. Then there is the Greek word didasko that is translated as *teach* and is also found in the Great Commission. It simply means to learn, to teach. What does that tell us about disciple- making?

Jesus said, “When you pray,” inferring that saved people *will* pray. Yet, what exactly is prayer? It’s a sacred communion between God, who needs nothing, and His people who can do nothing without Him.

You see, by praying we presuppose that the Lord of all creation desires to meet with us; having full assurance in the fact that He is all powerful and is actively engaged in the details of our lives. Someone has said, “Prayer is practicing the presence of God.” In other words, prayer brings God’s presence into every situation of life. Someone has said, worry is me having a conversation with myself about things I have no control over. Prayer is me having a conversation with God who can change everything!” Prayerlessness my declaration of independence from God.

**Who are You Talking to?**

I have a video on my phone of my six, four, and two-year-old granddaughters singing the Lord’s prayer. To hear their angelic voices singing God’s Word is music to my ears. Oh that they will come to know Him intimately, is the cry of my heart. When Ada, the middle child, was two-and-a-half she stayed the night with us and woke up at 6 am calling for her Nonie… that’s my name. When she calls, I come running because that’s what Nonnie does. Hoping we might all get to sleep a little longer, I scooped her up out of her little bed and brought her down stairs and put her in bed between her Poppy and me. The silly little thing doesn’t say a word. She just lays there looking back and forth between us. My husband Art, thinking that she may be getting a little home sick, starts talking about the big pancake breakfast he is going to fix. Then, out of the clear blue, she says those now famous words, “Poppy, who are you talking too.!?” I don’t know why, but every adult in this family, loves to quote babies. It’s so bad that, not only do Art and I say to one another, “Who are you talking to?” When Art told his boss what Ada said, his boss now says it too!

Ada got me to thinking about my prayer life. I wonder if the Lord ever looks down and says, Ginny, who are you talking to?!” “Surely not I.” How easily we forget that equal to the attribute of love, is God’s holiness. That’s what hollowed means. He lives in a high and holy place that is set apart from sinners (Isaiah 57:15, 59:1-2). When we pray “Your kingdom come and Your will be done,” we are talking about His sovereign power, authority and rule to be established on earth, as it is in heaven (Luke 17:21; Ephesians 1:19-24). He’s the King of King and Lord of lords--the almighty God. He’s all that and so much more but, in Christ, He is our Father… our Poppy… our Daddy. That’s intimacy (Galatians 4:6; 1 John 5:14-15).

**Let Us Pray**

Curiously, in Luke 11:3 there seems to be a hint that this is not an individual prayer. Look closer at Jesus’ instructions, “Give *us* this day *our* daily bread.” In a message on prayer, my pastor, David Lawrence, pointed out that of the 37 times in scripture where Jesus taught on prayer, 33 of those passages were speaking of corporate prayer. Additionally, he noted that the prayer closet was a private meeting space like the upper-room where a small group of people prayed together. He then took us through the book of Acts and showed us clearly why the gospel was advancing with such great power. Every great movement of God was preceded by a group of people who were devoted to prayer.

The Greek word for pray is *pros-euche*. It means, to pray earnestly, supplicate and worship. The Greek word for draw near as used in Hebrews 10:19-23 and James 4:6-10, is akin to prayer. It’s pros-*erchomai* and means to come near and worship. Another related Greek word translated in Acts 6:4 as *continually* (KJV) is pros-katteroe and means to persevere, constantly, diligently attend assiduously to a task. In this context, *they* devoted themselves continually to prayer and God’s Word.

“Prayer,” said A.W. Tozer, “is the greatest power on earth if it is practiced in the true fear of the Lord.” Tozer brings up an important aspect of prayer – humility (1 Peter 5:5-7). And humility is the key component of the next part of Jesus’ model prayer. That is confession. Read **James 4:6-10** and **1 John 1:7-10**). If you are not quite sure of what specific sins you are guilty of, then ask God to show you (Psalm 139:23-24). The only way you can obtain forgiveness is by confessing them and forsaking them. That includes the sins of anger, bitterness and unforgiveness. If we want to be forgiven, we must forgive others and pray for them (Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 5:43-46).

Confessing our sins to the Lord is only part of the process (Psalm 51:1-19). Read **James 5:13-20.** No proud person is going to own-up to their sin. Case in point, see Luke 18:10-14. If you don’t share your burdens, others can’t bare your burdens. In over 30 years of being saved, with precious few exceptions, I have never seen this practiced outside of Biblical discipling relationships. It works both ways. The discipler confesses her sins, and in doing so, teaches the disciple to confess her sins.

**We Have Not-- Because We Ask Not**

Let’s take a quick look again at **Luke 11:5-10** and then we will parallel theses passages with **Luke 18:1-18**. There are times when it seems as though God’s listening to our prayers. When this happens, we mustn’t jump to the conclusion that He did not hear us or that He doesn’t care. It is a test of our faith in Him. His answer might be no, or yes, but not now. Or, perhaps the answer is coming, and it will be even better than we dared to ask (Ephesians 3:20). This is the time we must diligently seek Him in prayer and get to know Him more personally through His Word. Here is where we find Him. In finding Him is the greatest reward of prayer (Luke 9:28-36). Read **Luke 11:9-13** and **James 1:5-7**.

**Deuteronomy 4:7 (NIV)**

***What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to Him.***

When God’s children pray, especially, when we are together, not only are we coming near to God, but He comes near to us (Matthew 18:20; 2 Chronicles 7:14). You may be thinking, “As saints, we are already near God?” It’s true, in fact, we are already seated with Christ in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6-8). How could we be any closer than that? Think about it this way: When we pray and our souls are in tune with the frequency of the Holy Spirit, we are right there worshiping Jesus at the mercy seat of God. When we know the Word of God, believe the Word of God, and obey the Word of God, we can confidently pray the Word of God (**1 John 5:13-15; John 15:7-8, 16; Proverbs 28:9).** When our lives are aligned with the Lord and His Word, like Elijah, in the spiritual realm, our prayers are a force to be reckoned with (James 5:15-18; 1 Peter 3:10-12).

**Psalm 145:18-19 (NIV)**

***The LORD is near to all who cry out to Him, to all who call on Him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.***

As we conclude this lesson, here is a powerful story that illustrates the reality of the above passage. In May 22, 2011 a catastrophic EF5-tornado struck Joplin, Missouri. There was a group of people hunkered down in a convenient store beer cooler. As the killer tornado barreled towards them, someone pulled out their cell phone and videoed what took place. (If you Google “First Person video of Joplin MO tornado” you will find two short videos of this.) It was pitch black, so you can’t see much, but the sounds are deafening. In the midst of the chaos, you hear people screaming and crying out to “god.” They don’t even know His Name. Then you hear the voice of one woman calling on the only name that has the power to save (Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9; Ephesians 1:20-21; Philippians 2:9-11). You can hear her calling out… “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus... oh Heavenly Father… Jesus watch over us… thank you Jesus”. You know what? God came near His daughter right there in that beer cooler. He heard her cry and saved them all. We’ll end on this note with some food for thought: You might just be the only one in your current situation who can call on God your Father and bring Him near. How many people might be saved if you do?

**Memory Verse**

**Luke 11:1-4**

Day 5 Session Ten

Building a House of Prayer

***Isaiah 56:6-7***

***“And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the Name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant-these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my House of PRAYER. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on My alter; for my house will be called a HOUSE of PRAYER for ALL NATIONS.”***

My daddy was a carpenter. In his life time, he build close to 100 homes and businesses. I live in a house that my daddy built. The last time I saw him, he was working on the foundation of my house. One morning in April of 2018, daddy woke up, and, as was his custom, he went into his prayer closet, got out his prayer list and he prayed. When he was done interceding for others, he walked into his kitchen and Jesus took him home to the Father’s house. At his memorial service, with full assurance of where he was, I read John 14:1-6 and John 11:25-26. As nearly 600 people filed past the wooden box that held daddy’s earthly tent, they saw his prayer list.

I also have a well-worn prayer list. My husband Art and my daddy’s names are at the top of that list. From the moment the Lord saved me, I pleaded with my Father in heaven on their behalf (Romans 10:1). After thirteen years of persistent prayers, to the praise of His mercy and grace, the Lord miraculously saved them both. What role did my prayers play in their salvation? I cannot say. There is so much about prayer that I don’t understand. But this I know is true… prayer changes things. Aside from the Word of God, prayer just may be the most powerful key to unlock the kingdom God. Read **Matthew 16:15-19**.

Jesus was a carpenter, you know. When He said, “On this rock I will build my church” He was referring to Himself as the Chief Cornerstone (1 Peter 2:6-9; 1 Corinthians 3:11.) Before He built His church, though, He began by building 12 ordinary men. Just prior to His work of redemption, He prayed what’s been called His High Priestly prayer. Read **John 17:1-26**. You were on His prayer list. So, were the ones you are going to disciple. Disciple-making at its core is about building people to be life-long learners and followers of Christ – disciple-makers (1 Corinthians 3:5-17**.** Obedience to the Greatest Command is what propels us to obey Jesus’ last command to **make disciples** of all nations (John 14:10-24; Matthew 28:18-20). The question is, who loves Him enough to finish what He started? A major part of the fulfillment of His work can only be accomplished through prayer. I would go so far as to say, that none of His work can be done without it! The blueprints for building people into “houses of Prayer,” is found in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness.

**A Prototype of Prayer in the Tabernacle**

The most basic principle of Biblical interpretation is cross referencing. In doing so, we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. Today’s lesson affords us a perfect opportunity to practice this skill. As we do, we’ll observe the cohesion between the Old Testament and New Testament. Let’s begin by readying the following passages in order: **Acts 6:3-5, 8:26-39; Isaiah 56:3-8 and Matthew 21:12-14.**

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness and the articles in the Tent of Meetings picture, not only a heavenly perspective of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, but Jesus, the True Tabernacle! And lest we forget the purpose of the Tabernacle, let’s read **Exodus 25:8.** It may be helpful to look in your Bible or on the internet to see a rendering of this Holy meeting place. As we assign some specific passages on prayer to the articles, we’ll discuss the symbolism found there.

**The outer Court**

* **The Gate:** We enter in with **thanksgiving:** Psalms, 95:2, 100:1-5
* **The Brazen Alter:** Adoration for **His blood atonement:** Hebrews 9:22-24; John 1:29; Ephesians 5:2
* **Laver:** confession**, cleansing:** Ephesians 5:26; James 1:22-25; Hebrews 10:19-23; James 4:6-10; 1 John 1:7-10; Psalm 24:4; 50:8-9

**The Holy Place**

* **Door: Jesus** our **High Priest:** John 10:1-4,9; Hebrews 7:24-26; 8:1-2, 10:11-18
* **Golden Candlestick: Holy Spirit Illumination:** John 6:63,68, Colossians 3:15; Ephesians 5:18 Hebrews 9:2; Romans 8:9-15, 14-16,26-27; Acts 1:14, 2:1-7,
* **Table of Showbread: The presence of Jesus- the Word:** Matthew 4:4; John 6:31-35, 48-51
* **Alter of Incense:** Prayers of praise and worship:Acts 10:1-6**;** Psalm 141:2; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; Revelations 5:8-14, 8:3-4

**The Holy of Holies**

* **The Veil:** His body: Hebrews 10:19-23
* **The Ark of the Covenant:** Hebrews 9:4
* **The Mercy Seat: Supplication and Intersession:** 1 Timothy 2:1-8;James 5:13-18; Romans 3:25; 8::9-15, 34; 1 John 2:2; Hebrews 7:24-26; 9:24, 22-24; Acts 12:5-12
* **The Cherubim’s:** Psalms 80:1, 91:11-16, 99:1-3; Hebrews 1:2-8, 13-14

As the Lamb of God, Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice and interceded for us (John 1:29; Luke 23:43; Isaiah 53:4-12). When He died, the veil (His body) was torn from top to bottom. Though His sacrifice, we can enter the Holy of Holies. Now, as our Great High Priest, He continues this prayer ministry on our behalf (Hebrews 4:15-16, 6:19-20, 7:24-26, 8:1-2, 31-39, 9:22-24, 10:11-18; 1 John 2:1-2; Romans 8:34).

Once we were far off from God, outside the gates, without Him and without hope (Ephesians 2:11-22; Hebrews 13:12). Now, cleansed with the blood of the Lamb, we can enter the Holy place through the door (Jesus). The Hebrew word for *draw near* is qarob or qurab. It mean the nearest place, or even, the next of kin. See how this word is used in the following verses: Isaiah 55:6; Jeremiah 30:21; Psalm 73:28, 145:18; Deuteronomy 4:7.

He has made us to be a royal priesthood (Isaiah 61:4-6; 1 Peter 2:5-10; Revelation 1:6, 5:6-10, 8:3-4). What that means is we have access to God the Father. We are invited to join Him in a ministry of intercessory prayer as we speak to the Father on behalf of others. Through prayer, we are transported to the very throne of God where Christ is seated as Prophet, Priest, and King. Here, we can boldly come and cast our cares upon Him for He cares for us. And everything that concerns us under His feet (Ephesians 1:19-23). Sisters, God has so much He desires to give us, and yet, we have not because we ask not (James 4:2-30). Prayer is an honor and a privilege that Jesus purchased for us by His blood. Since He made prayer a priority, shouldn’t we?

**Further Instructions on Prayer**

* Matthew 6:9; Galatians 6:4: We pray *to* the Father.
* John 14:6,13-14, 16:23-24; 1 John 2:1-2: We pray *in the Name* of the Son.
* Ephesians 6:14-18: We pray *in the Spirit* with all prayers and supplications.
* Philippians 4:4-7: Pray about everything with thanksgiving we make our request known to God.
* 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Colossians 1:3: Pray without ceasing and with thanksgiving.
* Romans 12:9-12; Colossians 4:2-3, 12: Devote yourself to prayer.
* Luke 11:5-13; Mark 7:24-30: Pray persistently with boldness.
* James 4:1-10, 5:13-20: Pray for your needs.
* Psalms 35; 42; 46; Isaiah 50:6-11; 1 Peter 1:21-23, 4:14-18: Pray when in despair and in times of trouble.
* Lamentations 2:19; Isaiah 49:22-25, 54:1-5, 13; 3 John 2-5: Pray for our physical and spiritual children.

We began this training with the lesson on Signs of Life. Answered prayer was the last sign we looked at. Without the blessed assurance that we are God’s children, we cannot come to Him in confidence when we pray.

In the Hebrew and Greek languages, the words *house* and *family* are interchangeable. The kingdom of God is advancing every time one precious child is added to His family. Multiplication happens when God’s children are discipled to become part of His house of prayer for all nations. When at last His kingdom comes and His will is done on earth all the prayers of the saints will be answered here is the family portrait: **Revelation 5:8-9**.

As we conclude our training, how are we to appropriate all this truth? By being disciple-makers who teach others to pray. This we do, by praying with them and for them. Now sisters, let’s practice His presence and pray!

**How Can You Become a Part of Catalyst Missions Women’s Discipleship?**

* Find one or more faithful women from each country represented who will join one of our cell groups here in the United States. This is a year’s commitment.
* This person will be faithful and accountable to a woman who is part of Catalyst Women’s Training. She will, in turn, find one or more women who are willing to learn from her on a weekly or by weekly bases.
* These leaders will also find a faithful woman from their own country to invest in. This person will become our regional director for Catalyst Missions Women’s Training.
* Let’s brainstorm to find some ways that we can start right now.