**A Profound Mystery**

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**An In-depth Study of the Book of Ephesians**



**Ginny Porter**

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**Ginny Porter**

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To all those who…………

**The Author**



Mingled among cherished memories, and some I wish to forget, I see the wedding theme woven and spun throughout my life story.  From the time I was newly married, my career and business for seven years was preparing brides for their weddings. But the here is the thing, my husband and Art and I were completely lost and separated from God, even as we took our vows. And because we were still dead in our sins, inevitably those vows were going to be broken, along with our hearts. But God, who is rich in mercy, had a plan all along. I was a broken woman, from a broken home, in a broken marriage and there I was dressing brides for their most important day.

     Ironically, something very important had been missing from my own wedding. It was the One who created marriage in the first place – God the heavenly Father.

When I was twenty-seven years old, I met the love of my life, the Lord Jesus Christ, and I became His bride. The next thirteen years were spent growing in intimacy with my Savior and persistently praying for my husband Art. Then finally, after many painful trials, Art also met the Lord Jesus. The two of us became one. (Ephesians 2:13-22) By God’s grace, and His grace alone, Art and I have now been married for 30 years. The Lord has blessed us with three beautiful children, a son-in-law and a daughter-in-law that God handpicked for our children. But that’s not all, He has given us two of the sweetest granddaughters in the world. I can testify that God is the healer of broken lives.

Today my life is all about dressing the bride of Christ by making disciples from my home to the nations. (Matthew 28:18-20) It’s all about spiritual relationships, so please, by all means, invite a friend or two to join you as together we discover the riches of God’s love through the study of the book of Ephesians.

I am humbled and honored to have the joy of sharing with you, not only the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also bits and pieces of my life story as well. So thank you!

**Forward**



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# Introduction



***Ephesians 5:32 (NASB)***

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

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



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

***...For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.***

Like every book of the Bible, Paul’s letter to the saints in Ephesus contains a rich reservoir of life transforming truth. It also provides an excellent context in which we can learn essential doctrinal truths as well as real life practical application. Within the safe boundaries of God’s Word, we will tackle the needs of a woman’s heart, such as: our insecurities, identity struggles, dealing with our painful pasts, family issues, etc.

Still, what makes this letter unique is that there are no less than six profound mysteries to unearth. These treasures, however, are not found by the casual seeker. They are hidden in Christ, and to find them, you must seek Him with your whole heart. The hope is that you will discover deep, soul healing truth and cultivate an intimate love relationship with God.

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

**Chapter #1**

# History of the Church at Ephesus



**Introduction**

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

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

**A City of Idols**

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

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

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

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

**Spiritual Matchmakers**

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

***Galatians 3:28 (NASB)***

***“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”***

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

Here is one more interesting fact about the city of Ephesus. The belief is that the apostle John had spent his last years evangelizing in the region of Ephesus and that Mary, the mother of Jesus, spent her last days there also. John was in Ephesus when he wrote the gospel of John, as well as 1, 2, 3rd John sometime between A.D. 80-95. In fact, he was arrested while in Ephesus and taken to Patmos, located in the Aegean Sea southwest of Ephesus. This is where he received the Revelation sometime between in A.D. 94-96. Ephesus is the first of the seven churches that the Lord Jesus addressed in Revelation. If you were to take a tour of the ruins of this city, the Basilica of Saint John and the House of Virgin Mary would no doubt be on your “must see” list. At the conclusion of our study, we will learn more about Saint John and his connection to the church of Ephesus. But that will have to wait until the grand finale.

**Paul’s First Prison Epistle**

Of course, you cannot tell the story of the church at Ephesus without talking about the apostle Paul, who penned this letter. Not languishing in self-pity as he was incarcerated in Rome, Paul wrote Ephesians, the first of the four prison epistles. (Ca. A.D. 60-62) (Acts 28:16-31) The other letters written during this time were to the church at Colossae, Philippi and the personal letter to Philemon. As we will discover, much of the New Testament writings are connected in some way to Ephesus.

The mail carrier, if you will, who hand delivered the letter was Tychicus whom Paul called a beloved brother and faithful minister. (Ephesians 6:21-24; Colossians 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12) Although the letter is addressed specifically to the Ephesians, it’s believed to have been intended as a circular letter to be hand copied and read to all the saints who were scattered throughout Asia.

Paul spent the longest amount of time in his ministry in the city of Ephesus. This was the same amount of time Jesus invested with His twelve disciples, about three. By the way, it’s important to note that Luke and Timothy were also in Ephesus with Paul. (Acts 16:1-17) He also wrote first and second Corinthians while in Ephesus. Always exemplifying the lifestyle of Jesus, Paul cared deeply about those in whom he had invested so much of his time and life. These specific saints were entrusted with several divine mysteries, not the least of which is that the Church is the bride of Christ, hence, the wedding theme of this study.

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

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

**An Emotional Departure**

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

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

***And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.***

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

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

After Paul’s departure, the saints in Ephesus were left in the capable hands of Timothy, Paul’s primary disciple. In fact, first and second Timothy are the personal letters of encouragement that Paul wrote to his “spiritual son” while Timothy was the pastor of the church of Ephesus. These were written during Paul’s first and last imprisonment in Rome between A.D. 62-67. (Throughout this study we will be referencing these letters often.) Continuing the work that Paul had begun, Timothy led this flock for about one and a half years. It is safe to say that the church had been entrusted with *much truth*. After all, they had at least five full years invested into their souls. But - would they be faithful to reinvest all that truth? Today, this part of the world is 96.64% Muslim. Christians represent only 0.21 % of the population.

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

* Acts 11:24-26, Acts 18:1-4, 20:1-38; Romans 16:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 1 Timothy 1:1-20; 2 Timothy 4:19; Philippians 2:19-22; Colossians 1:1-8; Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-19; Revelation 2:1-7

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

1. Do you classify yourself as any of the following: Atheist, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, other or Christian? What is your spiritual background? ­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. How well do you know the God of the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. If you know Him, who introduced you to Jesus and how long have you been a believer?

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

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

## **Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

## **Memory Verses**

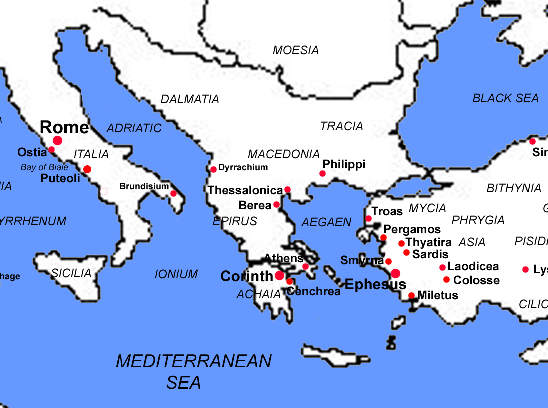
***Acts 19:1 and 10 (NIV)***

***While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 10 This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the providence of Asia heard the word of the Lord.***

## Time Line

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Who & When? | Where? | What & Why? | How  Do we know? |
| Pricilla and Aquila A.D. 52-53 | Ephesus | Evangelize | Acts 18:18-28 |
| Paul, Luke, Timothy, Epaphras A.D. 55 | Ephesus | Evangelize and disciple | Paul wrote 1&2 Cor. Acts 16-20 |
| Paul, Timothy, Luke A.D. 60-62 | Rome in prison | Paul wrote Ephesians, Colossians 1:1, Philippians | Philemon Acts 28 (Luke wrote Luke and Acts) |
| Tychicus A.D. 60-62 | Went to Rome | Carried letters to the saints | Eph.6:21-22, Col.4:7-9, Acts 20:4 |
| Paul Ad. 62-63 | Released from Rome and went to Macedonia |  | Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus |
| Timothy A.D. 62-64 | Ephesus | Pastor of the church at Ephesus |  |
| Paul & Luke A.D. 66-67 | Imprisoned in Rome |  | Paul wrote 2 Timothy 4:1-12 (Paul, Barnabas or Apollos) possible writers of Hebrews A.D. 67-70) |
| Saint John & Mary the mother of Jesus A.D. 80-95 (about 30 years after Paul left Ephesus) | Ephesus |  | John wrote the gospel of John & 1,2,3rd John |
| Saint John A.D. 94-96 | Taken from Ephesus to Patmos | The 1st church Jesus addressed was Ephesus. The had left their first love. | Received the Revelation  Revelation 1:1-11 |

## Map



**Chapter # 2**

# The Address of the Saints



**Key Passage**  
***Ephesians 1:1 (NASB)***

***Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus.***

**Introduction**

If you are a person who is a little obsessive-compulsive, I want to be up front with you. We will not be studying the book of Ephesians chronologically. However, if you’re like me, a bit attention deficit, you’ll have no problem whatsoever, as we skip around. There is a method to my madness and, although we may not be following the verses in sequence, you’ll find we’ve hardly left a stone uncovered as we mine the truth from the book of Ephesians.

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

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

**What’s Your Address?**

Do you like to meet people and hear their life stories? Have you ever sat next to a stranger and tried to strike up a conversation? It usually begins something like this: “What is your name?” or “Where do you live?” By gathering information, we can learn so much about the person. Although this letter was addressed to the saints who lived in Ephesus, actually, they were found in different locations. It is thought to have been a circular letter that was hand copied and delivered to the saints who lived throughout Asia Minor. However, as this passage indicates, the most important and less obvious location of the saints was **“*in Christ*.”** With fifteen references to this location within the first fourteen verses of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, we can know that this is significant. So overwhelmed by the fact that the saints could actually live in Christ, and perhaps to grasp the fact himself, Paul used the phrase “*in* *Christ*” 73 times in his letters. But when you add every inference in his letters to the saints being “in Christ” or “Christ is in us,” it totals around 164 references! That’s quite significant don’t you think? No doubt Paul had long conversations with the apostles about the day Jesus unveiled this truth to His first disciples. Saint John recorded Jesus’ words in his gospel.

***John 15:1-8 (NIV)***

***“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.***

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

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

***Philippians 3:20 (NASB)***

***For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.***

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

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

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

***And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.***

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

**Our Former Address**

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

***Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.***

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

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

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

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

1. Have you lived in different cities, states or countries? If so, list them here: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are the six editorial friends of Rudyard Kipling that are useful in Bible study\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you ever been taught how to study the Bible? Would you like to learn? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. How often do you read the Bible? Do you set aside time each day to dialogue with God through prayer? Do you use a journal? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Why do most people study the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. How much of what you hear do you think you actually retain? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. What apostle, other than Paul, lived in Ephesus and recorded the account where Jesus told His disciples to, “Abide in Me?” ­­­­­ ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Why is it impossible to live the Christian life without abiding in a love relationship with Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. Give four practical ways to abide in Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. Read John 15:15-16 and discuss this question: Does a tree bear fruit to eat the fruit itself? If not, why does a tree bear fruit? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. How many times did Paul use the phrase “in Christ” in his letters? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. 1 Peter 1:13-18 says that we are to live our life here as strangers. Why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. What separates us from God? Read Isaiah 59:1-8. ­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Is it possible to hide from God? Read Psalms 139: 7-15. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. What are some words used in Ephesians 2:11-13 that best describes our first address? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. We are still suffering from the consequences of the fall. From the list of curses found at the bottom of page 22, which ones are most evident in your life at this moment?

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

## Memory Verses

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

***And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.***

**Chapter # 3**

# The Crux of Our Problem



**Key Passages**

***Ephesians 2:1-6 (NASB)***

***“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lust of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.***

**Introduction**

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

**Rotten Family Tree**

All of us began life in some family context. The home is where ideas are formed, and where we learn who we are and who God is. For good or for evil, this is the place where discipling begins. Yet, regardless of what kind of home we were raised in, no one had to teach us to sin. The reality is this: sin is what we do because of who we are. By nature, and by choice we are sinners. As much as we dislike being confronted with our true condition, by comparing ourselves to others, we can delude ourselves into thinking, “I’m not so bad.” But the truth is, we’re not so good. In fact, we are each rotten to the core of our being. Herein lies the root problem of humanity, and it all stems from a rotten family tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You see, the apple - as they say - does not fall far from the tree. The effects of sin are evident by the fact that Cain, the first child born, was a murderer. Who did he kill? He killed the second born - his own brother. And we think *our* family is dysfunctional! (Genesis chapter four)

God told Adam and Eve that if they ate from this one and only forbidden tree, they would surely die. And as sure as God’s Word is true, they died spiritually. Consequently, we will all die physically, and we will all come face to face with this fact each and every time we attend a funeral. (I attended one just yesterday.) The mortality rate of every living creature is 100%.

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

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

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

***Romans 3:9-15 (EVS)***

***What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;***  
***no one does good, not even one.” “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”***  
***“Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.***

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

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

***You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

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

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

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

In light of all we have just learned, I would like to ask you a question. Now I don’t mean to insult your intelligence, but do you know where you live? What is your spiritual address? I ask this question because, at times, I think that even as believers we live as if we are experiencing spiritual amnesia or perhaps we have never been made aware of our address in the first place.

Now if, on the other hand, you are lost, you may feel as if you are reading a letter that was addressed to someone else. If you aren’t sure of your spiritual address*,* please keep reading. I’ve got some ***very good news,*** *and it’s* addressed personally to you! God loves you. He did not send Jesus into this world to condemn you. He came to save you from your sins and give you a new address. (John 3:1-18) Now I don’t want to spoil this for you, but just so you know, there is another *family tree*. But more about that later.

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

1. Read Ephesians 2:11-13 and fill in the blanks. Our address at birth is: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Our address at second birth is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. In your own words, describe what happened in the garden of Eden. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Describe what you think it means to be spiritually dead. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

1. According to Matthew 1:21, what did Jesus come to save us from? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Read the following passages and then answer this question: In addition to our sin, what else, or *who else* did Jesus come to save us from? Hint: there could be more than one answer. (John 3:36; Romans 1:18-32, 2:4-6; Colossians 1:13-14) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. What scale do most people use to measure their own “goodness?” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Fill in the blank: Every saint was born into the world a\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
5. Based on these verses Ephesians 2:1-7, what are the two conditions of every living soul?

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1. Thinking of your background, do others in your family point you to Christ or keep you from Him? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your spiritual background? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Adam and Eve used fig leafs to hide their sins. What kind of fig leaves do people hide behind today? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. According to Isaiah 64:6, how God sees our “self-righteousness.” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Read Romans 3:9-15 (on page 26) and think of a current situation that proves God’s Word is as relevant now as it was 2000 years ago. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

## Memory Verses

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

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

**Chapter # 4**

# The Blood of a Spotless Lamb



**Key Passages**

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

***In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.***

**Introduction**

Thank goodness the story did not end in the Garden. In fact, before the world began God had a plan to redeem us from the curse of sin. The first glimmer of hope is found in the middle of the bleakness. Right there in the account of the fall, God Himself preached the first gospel message that is recorded in the Bible. The unlikely recipient of the gospel was the ancient serpent – the Devil. In the midst of this seemingly hopeless situation, a promise was made. When time had fully come, a woman (a virgin named Mary) would give birth to a Son and He - the God/Man - would ultimately destroy the Devil’s work. (Genesis 3:14-15)

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

***And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Emphasis mine)***

**God Provides**

As seen in the previous passages, the plan was set in motion before the Lord Jesus ever spoke the world into existence. What was God’s plan? The answer lies, in part, within God’s provision to cover Adam and Eve’s shame and guilt through the death of an animal. I believe that animal was a lamb. (Genesis 3:22) Elsewhere we find another account that foreshadowed the plan. In Genesis chapter twenty-two, God told Abraham to take his “only son Isaac, whom he loved” and sacrifice him on an altar. Yet all the while, God intended on providing a ram as a substitution for Abraham’s son. It’s not by coincidence that in this story the word “love” is mentioned for the first time in the Bible. One more noteworthy narrative took place in Exodus chapter twelve when God was about to redeem His people out of slavery in Egypt. He told them to slaughter a lamb and place the blood over the doorposts of their homes. When the death angel saw the blood, he would pass over the house. Each and every one of these blood sacrifices prefigured the One who would come as our substitute…Jesus the Lamb of God. Through the shedding of His precious blood, God would redeem His people from their sins. (John 1:29)

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

***Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.***

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

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

***And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.***

***Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.***

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

***Galatians 3:13 (ESV)***

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

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

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

***Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”***

***The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”***

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

As He was dying, Jesus cried out, “Father, why have you forsaken me.” Why would the Father in heaven abandon His Precious Son at such a time of need? Because, Habakkuk 1:13 says that “God’s eyes are too holy to look upon sin.” Although Jesus knew no sin, *all of our sins* were laid upon Him, and He absorbed the wrath of God and willingly took our punishment. At that moment, and for the very first time, the Lord Jesus was separated from His Father. Because of our sins, Jesus experienced our alienation from the Father. Heaven was bankrupted to pay the wages of sin we owed. You see, *God is holy*, so holy, that He must keep His Word and rightfully punish our sins. On the other hand, *God is love*, albeit difficult for our minds to reconcile the two. God’s justice and His loving kindness are most clearly displayed in the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus.

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

***For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.***

Nonetheless, sadly, most people will readily embrace a God of love, but they wince at the thought that God is holy. Those who fall into this category refuse to believe in the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible. And consequently, they never see their sins or the need for repentance. Yet, even for those who reject Him, God’s love was personified as Christ Jesus lay down His life, not just for His friends, but even His enemies. What kind of love is that?

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

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

God’s divine ingenuity is as magnificent as it is mysterious, isn’t it? Contemplate with me, if you will, the paradoxes woven within God’s plan. If you carefully read Romans chapters 1:18-3:20 you will see the terminal diagnosis of our sin problem. But when you read Romans 3:21-5:21, God prescribes the remedy.

For example, there is irony found in the Latin word for cross--***Crux***! Inquisitive by nature, I chased the origins and derivatives of this word at constellationsofwords.com, and this is what I found. It’s quite fascinating. The crux, or cross, represents many parallel truths that point us to Christ. For starters, the website said that the cross could stand for: “A guidepost that gives directions at a place where one road becomes two.” (Jesus said, “I am the way.”) It is also associated with the color red, like the cardinal bird or like blood. Additionally, it said the word cardio comes from the word crux. It also could mean a hinge, axis or something on which all else depends (the general meaning of the word crucial.) How crucial is the blood of Jesus? The author of the book of Hebrews said, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.” (Hebrews 9:22)

I love to study words, and the more I studied, the more I found. Case in point is the fact that the word crux is connected to the Greek word Kardia - which means heart. The article says, “Because as the heart governs and moves the whole person, so this pivot governs and moves a door. Whence, the proverbial expression, for a matter to be at a turning point.” (Jesus said, “I am the Door.”) As you can see, the symbolisms found in the word crux or cross are numerous, but one in particular stands out above all the others. Here it is, and it’s ingenious:

At the very heart or *crux* of all of our problems is sin. God’s cure for our problem was a crux…the cross of Christ Jesus. This beautifully brings into focus the central turning point to humanities problems. The axis on which all else depends is the substitutionary death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

* Genesis 3:7-21, 22:1-14; Exodus 12:21-28; John 1:1-10, 29-34, 19:17-31; Galatians 4:4-5, 6:14; 1 John 3:8; Hebrew 1:1-13, 9:11-22; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:15-20, 2:14; Romans 10:13-17; Acts 28:4-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21

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

***This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.***

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

1. Who preached the first gospel message, and to whom was it preached? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. In your own words, describe how the killing of the first animal and the sacrifice of Isaac, points to the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Look up Isaiah 53:1-12 and Psalms 22:1-19, and find the specific prophecies that describe the death of the Lamb of God and make a list. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
   \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Take Isaiah 53: and personalize it. “He was pierced for \_\_\_\_... “The punishment that brought \_\_\_\_\_ peace was upon Him.” … “By His stripes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_am healed.”
4. Read Revelation 1:5, 2:4-10; Romans 1:18 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. How do we know that God hates sin? Hint: there could be more than one answer. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Read Paul’s departing words to the Ephesians in Acts 20:25-28 and answer this question: What was the purchase price of the church – the bride of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Read the following passages 1 John 2:2, 4:10; 5:1-19 and make a list of every reference or inference to the cross. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. From 1 Peter 1:18, why did Jesus die? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Are there any songs that come to mind that reference the cross or the blood of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. Read John 8:35-36 and contemplate the price God paid to purchase your freedom from sin. Make mental notes of the sins that once enslaved you. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. With that thought in mind, are there any sins that you continually struggle to overcome?

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

1. Are you comfortable with confessing your sins to God and other trusted believers? \_\_\_\_
2. In your family, do you see unhealthy patterns in relationships such as, passing blame, manipulation, co-dependency, control, or enabling. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. If you are in Christ and He is holy, how should this change how you look at sin?

(1 Peter 1:10-16) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

## Memory Verses

***Ephesians 1:7 (NASB)***

***In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.***

**Chapter # 5**

# Stories of Grace



**Key Passages**

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

***But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.***

**Introduction**

After all we discovered in chapter two, there can be no question that we are born into this world with an insurmountable problem. It is insurmountable for us, but not for God. And then, in chapter three, we learned that through Jesus' death on the cross, God provided the cure for our problem, which if left untreated, leads to death. So now we will see how beautifully all these truths come together.

The key passage for this lesson begins with, “But God." Typically, we skip right over these two words and turn our attention to other words such as “saved by grace” and “through faith." Not that these words are any less profound; they are. We will focus on these crucial words in just a moment. But for now, let’s not hurry past the first two. To do so would be to miss an opportunity to come face to face with the One who is, within Himself, the very personification of Mercy, Grace, Compassion, Peace, and the greatest of all these attributes…unfailing love. May He, by Grace, interrupt our hopeless, helpless, and godless lives with these glorious words, “But God.” And if He does, from this point on, the trajectory of our lives will forever be changed.

**Once Blind but Now I See**

Each of us has a story, a story that should be told, and so I hope you don’t mind if I share a portion of my husband’s testimony before I tell my own. When my husband Art was saved at forty years old, he said to me in astonishment, “How could I have been so blind? How could I have missed salvation, all these years in the church?” The answer is clear. It’s found in the letter Paul wrote towards the end of his ministry in Ephesus to the church at Corinth. After all, when you read Paul’s incredible testimony describing the day he met Jesus and was blinded by the light, it becomes apparent that he knew this truth from personal experience. (Paul’s story will be one of the object lessons for another chapter.)

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

***And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***

My husband Art recounts the day when he first saw the Light. He said, “The Day the Lord saved me, He introduced me to two people. First, I was introduced to Jesus in all His holiness. And that is when God showed me who I was, a sinner, lost and separated from the God who loved me. This is when I understood for the first time that sin was not what I did, it was who I was. The devil worked on me for a few days telling me that God was too holy to save someone who was so sinful. Then, in desperation, I pleaded with Jesus to save me, and by His amazing grace, He did!”

You see, until God leads us, by the heart, to the cross and we see “the Light of the World” dying for our sins, we are blinded by darkness to the fact that we are lost. This revelation, in itself, is a work of God within the human heart and a *gift* of grace. (Ezekiel 36:22-29)

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

* Acts 4:10-12; 5:31; 20:20-21; John 3:1-18, 14:1-6; Titus 2:11-14, 3:3-7

**Christ is a Great Savior**

In 1725 a son of a sailor was born. His name was John Newton, and his is an interesting story. His father owned a slave ship. Like father, like son, John Newton, joined in the deplorable trade and earned his wages through the blood, sweat, and tears of the humans he trafficked. God only knows the unspeakable sins committed on that slave ship. But God, who is rich in mercy, came to John one stormy night at sea. He cried out, “Lord - have mercy on my soul!” The proof that God had mercy on Newton’s soul was obvious. He was no longer a sinner, but now a forgiven saint. His personal testimony has echoed throughout the years, because the world sings his story. It’s depicted in the beloved hymn he wrote…*Amazing Grace.*  This son of a sailor was born, the first time, exactly as each one of us. He was spiritually blind to the gift of God’s grace. And yet, the first line of his song offers a window into his soul and reveals a man who had been twice born.

At the moment of his second birth he clearly saw both who he was, and Jesus - the one who came - full of grace and truth. Newton’s song begins with these words, “Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now I am found, was blind but now I see.” Towards the end of Newton’s life, his physical eyesight was failing, but with the eyes of his heart he had perfect vision. (Ephesians 1:17-18) The following words sum-up his statement of faith: “Although my memory’s fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior.” Today His faith has become sight, and he lives in the presence of the Everlasting Light - his Savior Jesus Christ. Newton, as every recipient of God’s amazing grace, is to be singing the praises of the one whom alone is worthy…we call Him Savior because salvation is found in no one else but Jesus.

When I contemplate the beauty and majesty of my Lord and Savior, I stand amazed at His mercy and grace poured out on such an undeserving sinner such as I. How could I help but sing the praise of the Lord Jesus Christ…the Author, of the song of salvation? (Hebrews 2:5-18, 5:9) So now, I would like to add my line to His eternal song of praise. In Webster’s dictionary, one definition for grace is simply, *to dignify or to adorn*. This definition reminds me of my own story of Amazing Grace.

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

***I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.***

This is my story…

*As I recall the details of my life, I see a wedding theme woven throughout. From the time I was a new bride, my career and business for seven years was preparing brides for their weddings. The name of the business was Memphis Bridal Gallery. One of my jobs, as owner of the bridal gallery, was to write a detailed description of the wedding dress for the mother of the bride. Most descriptions included seed pearls because pearls are the most often used adornment for wedding gowns along with crystals, sequins, rhinestones, silver and gold thread, and lace. Yet, of all the precious gems the pearl is unique, it is the only one formed out of a living organism.*

*Pastor David Lawrence has a message titled: “Turning Problems into Pearls.” In that message, he says, “God never wastes your past.” For the last twenty- six years the Lord has taken an abundance of problems, and rewritten my story with beautiful Memory Verses. However, this was not the case from the beginning.*

*The wedding dress I wore on my wedding day in 1986 was not white and was not embellished with a single bead or pearl. Looking back, it is symbolic of the condition of my spiritually dead heart and what it means to try to cover my sins in my own self-righteousness. We cannot cover the shame and guilt of our sins in religious rituals. No wonder I felt like anything but a beautiful bride on my wedding day.*

*Have you heard of these old wedding traditions: “Something old, something new, something borrowed something blue”? The item I chose as “something borrowed” was a very common wedding accessory, a single strand of pearls.*

*I was 26 years old when the Heavenly Father led me to the foot of the cross of Christ. After an entire lifetime of church attendance, I saw for the very first time the horror of my sins hanging on the love of my life. I was truly undone! In His boundless grace and loving kindness, He led me to see specific sins, but most heinous of all was my religious self-righteousness in black and white contrast to the Holy Son of God. What amazed me the most was that He knew all I had ever done and yet He loved me.*

*On our 18th wedding anniversary my husband Art and I renewed our wedding vows. The second wedding dress was handpicked to fit the description of the gown of the bride in Psalms forty- five, with silver threads and seed pearls woven throughout the pearly white satin fabric. Our God is a God of redemption, and when we give him our testimonies, our past, no matter how shameful or painful, He can turn the ashes into something beautiful and useful for our good and His glory. These years were preparation for the eternal work God has chosen for me-to introduce others to the King and dress the King’s daughters for the wedding.*

*God did not waste the years in the bridal business. It was in those years that I became His Bride! He is still working to remove the spots and wrinkles from my wedding gown. He is not done with me yet. Preparation for this wedding is a lifelong task. Part of this process has been refining me through fiery trials. (I will be addressing some of these trials in the chapter called, The Doctrine of Suffering.) Nevertheless, as I look back on my life’s journey, it is crystal clear that God has surely been good to me, and He continues to turn my problems into pearls. From beginning to the end, this is a story of grace upon grace! (John 1:14-16)*

***Hosea 2:14-23 (NIV)***

***I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals; she decked herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot,” declares the Lord. “Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Anchor a door of hope. There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. “In that day,” declares the Lord, “you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’***

***I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked. In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety. I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord. “In that day I will respond,” declares the Lord— “I will respond to the skies, and they will respond to the earth; and the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and the olive oil, and they will respond to Jezreel. I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called ‘Not my loved one.’ I will say to those called ‘Not my people,’ ‘You are my people’; and they will say, ‘You are my God.’”***

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

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

**God's Love is Not Blind**

I wonder if, like me, you have tried to look good, or be good, or do good, in order to gain love? If so, then you know that is not only exhausting, but it is pointless. And furthermore, where did all this effort get us? Nowhere! Any “so called” relationship that is absent of transparency and acceptance - just as we are- is really no relationship at all. If we have to wear a mask in order to gain acceptance, then we will never be at ease when we are around that person. I’ve just described the majority of my life. And then I met the real Jesus, and it was like finally being home. Do you understand what I’m talking about?

The day I met Jesus and became His bride, I understood that He knew me; He really knew me. He was not blind to what I was. Moreover, He saw what was in my heart, sin such as pride, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy. But then He showed me His heart of love and compassion toward me. How could it be that He still wanted me for His Bride? The only explanation is grace.

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

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

No one, except our creator, has walked the recesses of our minds; He is intimately acquainted with all of our ways. He knows what’s in us, and as He was dying upon the cross, He became *intimately* *acquainted* with our sins. This includes every vile thought and deed conceived in the darkness of our unredeemed hearts. It’s hard for the mind to fathom how vile sin truly is to God. The Lord Jesus is so unlike us. He’s pure and holy and undefiled by sin and yet, to the praise of His Glorious Name, He took our long list of cataloged sins and cast them as far as the east is from the west. (Psalms 103:8-13)

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

***But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.***

As J.C. Ryle so eloquently put it, “God knows what we were before conversion-wicked-guilty-and defiled: yet He loved us. He knows what we will be after conversion-weak-erring-and frail; yet He loves us.”

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

1. Do you have a “But for the Grace of God….” interruption in your life story? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. What do you think it means to be spiritually blind? (2 Corinthians 4:3-6) How does one get spiritual sight? (Psalms 119:130) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Read Romans 5:5-21 and describe what kinds of people Christ died to save. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Ephesians 2:1-8 clearly states how God feels about those who are dead spiritually. What does the text say? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. What are your thoughts about God offering grace and mercy to murders and rapists? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Along those lines, what was so amazing about God having grace upon John Newton?

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1. When a person is the recipient of God’s amazing grace, what are some of the effects that this will have upon their life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Read the following passages Psalms 103:1-14; Isaiah 38:17, 43:25; Zechariah 3:9; Hebrews 9:26. Make a list of what God’s grace has done for every sinner who repents:

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1. Is there anyone in your life with whom you feel completely at ease being yourself? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you think those closest to you feel comfortable being themselves around you? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

## Memory Verses

***Psalms 145:8 (HCSB)***

***The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.***

**Chapter # 6**

# Heirs of Grace



**Key Passages**

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

***But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved.)***

**Introduction**

It is quite difficult to speak with any authority on a subject about which you are unfamiliar. But on the other hand, experiential knowledge affords you the credentials of an expert. As one who had experienced God’s grace personally, the apostle Paul was well qualified to speak on the matter. When he encountered the risen Lord on the road to Damascus, not only was his theology reformed, but his life was forever transformed.

When you read his testimony, it becomes obvious that he had experienced a paradigm shift. His whole life, Paul had been a law abiding, rule keeping, legalistic Pharisee. (25:5-18) But all that changed when God captivated his heart with grace. Out of gratitude and awe he wrote a letter to Timothy, the pastor of the church at Ephesus. He said, “The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, that worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life." (1Timothy 1:14-16) (NIV) Yes, Paul knew experientially that, in His boundless grace, “God justifies the ungodly.” (Romans 4:5)

Perhaps, he just never ceased to be amazed by the fact that he was set free from the futility of striving to earn salvation by keeping the law. What a relief it is to be unfettered from the vain attempts to earn God’s love, or appease Him with empty burdensome rituals.

When Paul finally embraced grace, it became the anthem and theme of his life. As a matter of fact, he spoke of God’s grace more than any other writer in the Bible, and if you believe that he penned the book of Hebrews, that is over 100 times!

It is traditionally believed that the book of Galatians - a tutorial on grace - was written while Paul was at Ephesus. We can safely assume that Ephesians 2:4-9 is really a summary of the entire letter he wrote to the Galatians - an emancipation declaration, if you will. The crucial theme of salvation by grace through faith was the hallmark of the reformation. In fact, Galatians has been called “Luther’s book,” because Luther took his stand on the words of Paul’s apologetic letter on this subject, further emphasizing just how vital the doctrine of grace truly is.

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

***yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.***

***But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.***

**Lessons in Mercy**

I have a confession to make. For a large portion of my life, even as a believer, I have misunderstood and misappropriated grace and mercy, even though I was certainly acquainted with the doctrines. After all, I’ve spent a considerable amount of my life attending a protestant church.

Outside of the Bible, I can’t even think of a context that the word mercy is used today. However, one exception comes to mind, and it just so happens to be a great platform for illustration. Let’s think in terms of a court of law, where the judge has “mercy” upon the accused sparing their lives from the death penalty. And then there is another, less noble, example. How often is the word mercy used without the least bit of reverence? For instance, you say flippantly, “Lord have mercy." I'm ashamed to admit - I’m guilty. All too often these words simply roll off my tongue without even a consideration to their significance whatsoever. But recently, the Lord has been readjusting my thinking about grace and mercy.

A few weeks ago our family had a frightening experience when my sister-in-law was in a terrible car wreck. (The Lord spared her life and also protected her newly donated kidney –double miracles!) Being the visual learner that I am, the Holy Spirit (my teacher) seized the moment as an opportunity to give me an object lesson on mercy.

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

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

There’s little doubt that she left there praying God would have mercy on her nephew’s soul and grant him repentance. I silently interceded for her, her nephew and the others in the trauma center. My heart was tendered to the woman’s plight, because, you see, just recently I lost my nephew, Billy. His short life was replete with trials and sorrows. Granted, there were many times he tried to reform his life, but to no avail. So when he couldn’t walk-the “straight and narrow,” he would give up and run from the Lord (I understand, I’ve been there too). Many a pleading prayer had been offered up on Billy’s behalf. The last couple of years of his life, The Lord answered our prayers, and He sent some men who would love him, pray for him and disciple him. When he was finally ready, the Lord, who is rich in mercy, took Billy home. Next week would have been his thirty–forth birthday. Only a fool would claim to fully understand the plans and ways of God. They are far above our pay scale! (Romans 11:29-36) But of this I can be sure, Billy’s life ultimately, brought glory to God. How is that so, you may ask? His life displayed, the enormous heart of God – His patience, mercy, longsuffering and the greatest of all of these attributes… His love.

**Intercessory Prayer Passages**

2 Corinthians 4;3-6; Matthew 18:18-20, 19:23-26, 21:21-22; Luke 11:5-13; 13:6-9, 18:1-8; John 6:39 -44; Isaiah 65:8; Job 22:21-30; Daniel 9:4-19; Revelation 7:10

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

***For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?” For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.***

How unlike us is God? He is merciful and compassionate; He remembers that we are but dust, and our days He has numbered. He could have sent Jesus to condemn us, and justifiably so, but instead, He delights in mercy. He is rich in it. Yet, when we try to define mercy by saying that it is simply “*not* being treated as our sins deserve,” it seems like a colossal understatement!

***Psalms 103:8-17 (NASB)***

***The LORD is compassionate and gracious; slow to anger and abounding in loving-kindness. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.  For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.  As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.  Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.  For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust. As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.  When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, and its place acknowledges it no longer.***

***But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him,  
            And His righteousness to children’s children.***

Are you familiar with the story found in John chapter eight of Jesus’ encounter with the woman caught in adultery? Jesus tells her accusers: “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” (John 8:1-11) (NIV) Isn’t it interesting that the first people to drop their stones and walk away were the older ones? Sometimes, wisdom *does* come with age.

Having already lived beyond the half-way point of a century, I'm fairly certain that if God had treated me, even for one second, as my sins deserve, I would have died a long time ago!

More often than I care to admit, I sin grievously against my God, and then I remember James words about the prayers of the righteous being powerful and effective. (James 6:10-20) And yet, I know full well that I don’t have a righteous leg to stand on before God in prayer, and my heart sinks in shame. That’s when I remember that God, who is my judge, sits upon a mercy seat and at His right hand is Christ Jesus… my righteousness. By the way, the Greek word that is translated as *mercy seat*, is halasterion. It is defined as the means, or the place where sins are forgiven. Here again - an example of mercy. By no means is God obligated to exonerate us, and yet, when we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us. (1 John 1 :5-10) Isn’t He wonderful?

When we’ve been placed *in Christ,* He lives to stand before God the Father as our defender and intercessor. Every now and then, it’s good to take a walk down memory lane and remind ourselves of God’s mercies towards us. This helps us to remember to be grateful and never take it for granted. This seems like a fitting place to stop and do some pondering. Contemplate this: At this very moment, God has mercifully and graciously granted you another day of life. As a matter of fact, as the Psalmist said, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” (Psalms 23:6) Did you get that? You are being followed by God’s goodness and mercy! What could that possibly mean? Perhaps it means, what David said, “You hem me in – behind and before.” (Psalms 139:1-16) What does that mean? I believe that what he meant is this: God’s mercy covers our past (what is behind us) and come what may, God’s mercy is more than sufficient for all the days of our life before us. But what about the present, the brief dash between the day of our birth and the day of our death? His mercy and goodness covers everything in between.

If you have received mercy, then God has put a song in your heart, just as He did the Psalmist. Out of his heart the song flowed: “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shall thou establish in the very heavens.” (Psalms 89:1-2) (KJV) How about you - are you grateful for God’s mercy? If so, when was the last time, others have heard you sing about it?

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

* Exodus 25:17-22, 26:34, 34:5-6; Leviticus 16:2; Acts 20:20-24; Romans 3:25, 8:1-2, 26-34, 11:6; Hebrew 9:5-12; 1 John 1:5-10; John 8:1-11; James 6:1-20

I hope you won’t mind if we will have a brief lesson in Hebrew and Greek. Take a look at the abundance of words translated as grace, mercy, love and compassion. To really appreciate and appropriate these words, and for the sake of clarification, we will place some of the applicable passage alongside of the Greek and Hebrew words they represent. Please note that there are several words translated in Hebrew as mercy, gracious, loving - kindness, compassion or pity. And, as you can see, most are connected.

***Isaiah 54:10 (ESV)***

***For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.***

**WORD SEARCH: From Strong’s Concordance**

* **Mercy / tender mercy** Strong’s # 1653 The Greek word is Eleeo: - *compassionate (by word or deed, spec. by divine grace) have compassion (pity on), have obtained, receive, show, mercy on.* (Used in following verses: Romans 9:14-18; 1 Peter 2:9-10)
* **Mercy** Strong’s #1656 The Greek word is Eleos: - *compassion (human or divine) + tender mercy.* (Used in the following verses: Luke 1:5; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Peter 1:3, 2:10; Matthew 12:7)
* **Compassion / mercy or pity** Strong’s # 7355 The Hebrew word is Rachem: - *to love, have compassion, show mercy, have pity.* (Isaiah 54:5-10; Zech. 10:6; Hosea 2:16-20)
* **Graciousness** Strong’s # 2580 The Hebrew word is Chen: - *graciousness, kindness, favor, beauty, pleasant, precious, well favored*. (Psalms 45:80)
* **Mercy** Strong’s # 2587 The Hebrew word is Channuwn**:** - gracious. Note: both of these Hebrew words come from the word Chanan. It is translated most often as mercy. Here is the definition: - *to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior; to favor, bestow, grant mercy on, or have pity*. (Lamentations 3:22-25)
* **Loving-kindness** Strong’s # 2617 The Hebrew word is Cheched: - (Mercy or loving kindness) *kindness, piety, beauty, favor, goodness, kindly, loving kindness, merciful.* (Gen.19:19; Ex. 34:7; Laminations: 3:33-32; Psalms 130: and 136; Isaiah 55:3; Neh. 1:5)
* **Mercy** Strong’s #2603 The Hebrew word is Chanan: - (*Mercy or Gracious) to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior; to favor, bestow, be kind, grant graciously, merciful, show piety.* (Psalms 123)
* **Grace** Strong’s #5485 The Greek word is Charis: - *graciousness, the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life; including gratitude; acceptable, favor, gift, joy, liberality, pleasure, thanks-worthy.* (Ephesians 1:2-10, 2:5-8, 3:2-8, 4:7,29, 6:24)
* **Forgive** Strong’s #5483 The Greek word is **C**harizomai: - *to grant as a favor, i.e. kindness, pardon or rescue, deliver, forgive, freely, give, grant.* (Ephesians 4:23,32; Colossians 2:13)
* **Forgiveness** Strong’s #859 The Greek word isAphesis: - *freedom, pardon, deliverance, forgiveness, liberty, and remission.* (Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14)

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

**What is Grace?**

At every turn of the page in Scripture, is a story or an analogy of Grace. Moreover, numerous examples could be used in an attempt to define it. Such as this statement, “Grace is: God giving sinners what they need the most, but deserve the least.” Or we might think of grace as an extremely valuable coin. On one side is grace and the other side is mercy. The coin belongs to God. Now suppose, this precious, even, priceless coin was spent to purchase you and me a *gift -* an extravagant gift at that! It’s the gift of salvation. Really, as Paul said to the saints at Corinth, the gift of God is indescribable!

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

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

Grace cannot be earned or bought… at least not by a sinner, because the price to buy it is much too high. Furthermore, if we could work our way to God, then how much work would we have to do? How would we ever know if we have done enough? I have a loaded question for you. When you work a fifty, sixty or eighty- hour work week and your employer hands you your payroll check, are you receiving a gift? Absolutely not! That would be ludicrous. You labor to earn a pay check. People don’t work in order to receive a gift - do they?

The reality is - any attempt to grasp the depth of God’s grace falls woefully short. Even so, as inadequate as it may be, I would like to use the above story of the criminal as an allegory to try to comprehend God’s grace and mercy.

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

Are you rich in God’s mercy and grace? If so, then you have been endowed with great wealth. Yet tragically, even though we have received God’s mercy, without a proper understanding of this gift, we could still live our lives as if we were paupers.

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

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

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

***For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.***

How foreign these concepts of grace and mercy are to our finite minds? Incredible isn’t it? While it may defy the limits of our understanding, and sound too good to be true, this is not just a fairy tale or fable. This, my friend, is Jesus! Paul described Jesus as rich in mercy and in grace, and the apostle John described Him as “full of grace.” The God who put on flesh and dwelt among us is the One who personifies forgiveness, grace, mercy, loving kindness and compassion. Is this the same Jesus that you have come to know?

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

***And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His Glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. 16-18 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (Emphasis mine)***

Appearing to Moses, and speaking to him, “As a friend… face-to-face,” God described Himself to His friend. What would you suppose He would say? “I am a consuming fire.” He was, after all, speaking in a burning bush! Or He could have said, “I am the LORD God the Almighty” (Genesis 17:1) Or, “I am a jealous God!” (Exodus 20:1-5) He could have described Himself in many other ways that would have left Moses trembling in his sandals or, bare feet, as it were. But no. He made all His goodness pass in front of Moses and then He said:

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

***The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”***

In summary, I’d like you to consider this: When God, the ultimate judge, liberates you from the due penalty of your sins… *that is mercy*. But, when He takes you into His home and heart, and loves you as His very own child, now that’s another thing all together … *that is grace*! This is the gift of salvation that God offers. Would you like to know how to receive it? Then keep reading.

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

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

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

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

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1. Can you think of ways religion can distort or corrupt grace? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. The doctrine of Grace was solidified out of what movement? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you ever been affiliated with a religion that insisted that works would earn you an entrance to heaven or favor with God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. When was the last time someone said to you, “I have a gift for you, but I want you to work for it?” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. In what ways have you lived as if you are poor, even though you are rich in grace?

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1. What are some ways that you have tried to earn grace? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Outside of receiving the gifts of grace and mercy from God, have you ever received these precious gifts from someone else? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. If so, do you think this person had themselves been the recipient of God’s grace? \_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Of all the descriptive words in the above Word Search, what meant the most to you personally and why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

## Memory Verses

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

***…Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the Saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His Beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.***

**Chapter # 7**

# “What Must I Do to Be Saved?”



**Key Passages**

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

***But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.***

**Introduction**

***Acts 16:30b (ESV)***

***“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”***

In this lesson we’ll pick up where we left off in the previous chapter and answer this all important question: How does a person receive God’s gift of salvation? If you sincerely desire to know how to receive salvation, then let me assure you that this thought did not simply “dawn on you.” My friend - you are hearing the voice of God, and He is drawing you to Jesus. (Romans 11:6; Hebrew 4:7) For Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws them.” (John 6:44) Although this stirring in your spirit is most definitely a step in the right direction, it’s not the only step. Hopefully, by now we have a firm grip on the concept that salvation is God’s gift of grace. But what good is a gift if you refuse to receive it? Let’s be very clear on this point. We do not come to God on our own terms, we must come on His. So what are these terms? Well - that will be the focal point of this lesson.

**God’s Terms of Salvation**

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

***For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.***

As a segue to our lesson, let’s take a brief look at the Old Testament story of Jonah - the reluctant evangelist. We’ll bypass the parts where Jonah gets swallowed by the great fish, finally repents, and then God commands the fish to vomit him on the shores of Nineveh. After Jonah had wiped the seaweed off his stubborn head, he decided it might behoove him to keep his vows to the Lord. And so he went through the wicked city with his proclamation. His message was short, but not so sweet. “In forty days Nineveh will be overthrown.” And I’ll paraphrase: “Turn or burn!” In spite of Jonah, the whole city believed God and repented, thus averting the annihilation of 120,000 souls and many animals. (Jonah chapters 1-4) We won’t take the time to expound upon all of this short, but rich book; however, there are two pertinent details that we don’t want to miss.

First, God asked Jonah this question: “Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?” Jonah 4:11(NASB) The main point is this: God not only had compassion and mercy on this wicked city, but also upon His disobedient and prideful servant Jonah! Once again, we see God exactly as He described Himself to Moses.

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

***The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.***

The second noteworthy point is this: God’s mercy and grace were contingent upon their belief in His Word, and the people of Nineveh turning from their wicked ways in repentance. Hence, we finally arrive at God’s terms of salvation. According to the Word of God, the two non-negotiables to receiving the gift of salvation are: faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance from sin.

**What Did Paul Preach Everywhere?**

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

***From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.***

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

***Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.***

When Jesus began to preach the gospel at the very beginning of His public ministry, He used two key words, and they are repent and believe. Yet, one of these words is often omitted from gospel presentations. It is the word repent. This is perplexing when you look at the endless list of passages that address the subject of repentance. You see, a gospel that does not include the need for repentance, is no gospel at all, because as Jesus said, “Unless you repent, you too will all perish.” Additionally, just before His ascension, He said, “Repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all nations…” (Luke 24:44-50)

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

* Acts 2:36-38, 17:30, 25:20, 26:20; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10; Matthew 3:1-12, 11:21; Luke 15:7, 24:47; 2 Peter 3:7-10; Revelation 2:1-5; Ezekiel 18:32, 33:1-11

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

***Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. And Jesus said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. “Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all perish.***

I hope you will not mind if I we unpack some more Greek words of great importance to understanding the means by which one receives salvation.

**WORD SEARCH: from Strong’s Concordance:**

* **Believe**: Strong’s # 4100 in Greek is Pisteuo: - *to have faith (in, upon, or with, respect to a person or thing, i.e. credit, to entrust (especially one’s spiritual well- being to Christ) believer, commit, to trust, put trust with.* From FAITH # 4102 (Eph. 1:19; Gal. 2: 16,3:16; John 3:16-18, 36A, 8:24-26; Rom. 1:16, 10:4-11; James 2:19; 1 John 5:13)
* **Faith**: Strong’s # 4102 in Greek is Pistis: - *conviction of religious truth, or truthfulness of God, reliance upon Christ for salvation, constancy in such a profession, assurance, belief, faith, and fidelity.* (Eph. 1:15,2:8, 3:12, 4:5,13,6:16,23, Heb. 1:1-9)
* **Repent/Repentance:** Strong’s#3340 and #3341 in Greek is Metanoeo: - *to think differently or afterwards, i.e. reconsider feel compunction: - repent.*
* **Transformed** Strong’s # 3339 in Greek is Metamorphoo: - *to transform. (Metamorphose) change, transfigure, transform.*
* **Repent** Strong’s # 7725 in Hebrew is Shuwb: - *to turn back (hence away) return to the starting point, recovers, circumcise, repent, rescue, restore, fetch home again.* note: this is only a partial definition. (Ezekiel 14:6, 18:30)

**What is Repentance?**

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

***For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.***

Like Siamese twins, repentance and faith go hand-in-hand, and you can’t have one without the other and receive salvation. Another way to look at it is this: repentance and faith are the two hinges that swing open the doors to the Kingdom of Heaven. In fact, for those who refuse to repent, one day the door will be shut and there will not be a second chance at salvation. ***Jesus is The Door***.

***Matthew 25:1-13 (ESV)***

***Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.***

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

So what does it mean to repent? Essentially, it means to have a change of mind and heart about your sins, and turn away from them. This leads to a change in the direction of your life, and now, instead of running *from God* head long into sin, you are running *to the One* who alone can save you from sin…that is Jesus.

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

***Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.***

Notice in the above definitions that the two Greek words for repent and repentance are *Metanoeo* and *Metanoia.* Meta- means *to change* and *Noia* means: *to think, exercise the mind, consider or understand*. We find these words in the Strong’s Concordance next to the word transformed. In Greek the word is *Metamorphoo*. This is the very word for metamorphosis! *Meta* means *to change* and *Morphoo* means *form*! Without true godly sorrow that leads to repentance, there will be no salvation, and consequently, there will be no change or transformation. (This will be our focus in the chapter titled “Signs of Life”.)

**Biblical Definition of Faith**

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

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

I would like to tell you a story about a woman whose name is Iris Blue. I heard her speak on a radio program several years ago. Her story of amazing grace is quite incredible. Despite being raised in the church; she was in a state of total rebellion. Her life was marked by heroin addiction, prostitution and repeated incarcerations in the penitentiary. In spite of the obvious facts, Iris’ mother was completely blinded to her daughter’s spiritual condition. Each time Iris was let out of prison, her mother would kill the proverbial “fatted calf” and welcome her prodigal home. Iris would eat the meal and head right back to her life of sin. All the while, her mother kept asking her church to pray that, “Iris would get back in church and rededicate her life to God.” When finally, after umpteen times of Iris’ prison stints and subsequent releases, Iris’ mother took off her rose colored glasses. Her daughter was lost - not backslidden! That’s when her mother humbled herself and confessed all of this to her church. That is when her prayers became powerful and effective. Within two weeks the Lord saved Iris. What’s even more amazing is the other part of the story that I read in Dr. Charles Stanley’s in Touch Magazine dated February, 2003 on page 11. This is a small excerpt of the article.

*“Iris’ father was a Sunday school teacher who loved Jesus his whole life. “I taught about him,” he said one day in a confession to her. “But it was like having a crush on a movie star. I knew about Elvis all my life too. But I didn’t know him.” He passed his synthetic - faith along to Iris, who grew up hearing about Jesus constantly without really knowing him either.”*

The reason I included this story is because many people, I fear, have faith just like Iris’ dad’s. It’s synthetic. So what is faith really? Let’s see how the Bible defines it beginning with what is called the “faith chapter,” Hebrews eleven. Most Biblical scholars agree that it was Paul, “the Hebrew of Hebrews,” who penned the letter. Here, faith is described as, “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1) (NASB) And furthermore, “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” Yet, faith, much like repentance, is a gift of God. Furthermore, according to Romans chapter twelve, God has given to everyone a measure of faith.

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

***John 20:24-30 (ESV)***

***Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”***

***Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”***

***Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

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

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

You may be thinking, “If it’s as simple as that, then is saving faith nothing more than mere intellectual assent to the facts of the Bible?” If that is the case, then the demons are saved, because as James said, “Even the demons *believe* in Jesus.” (James 2:19) Are the demons saved? Absolutely not! In light of all we’ve discovered so far, are you beginning to understand what is meant by *saving faith*?

I have learned a great deal about faith through Kevin Twisdale, a fellow disciple maker. He summarizes faith like this: “Faith boils down to three things… conviction, commitment and conduct.” He explained it this way: “You are so convinced about what you believe that you live by that conviction. Conviction is in the head, and commitment is of the heart, but conduct is the thing of the habit or the reality of what we live.” Furthermore, Kevin said that the word believed is followed by the preposition (into). It’s used 36 times. Why does that matter? This suggests that belief is directed to a person, and that person is the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, to believe, is to place yourself fully in Christ and rest in Him alone for salvation. “Faith is man’s impedance continually receiving God’s omnipotence,” Twisdale says. This naturally includes faith in every word the Bible has to say about Christ Jesus. (Acts 16:31; John 20:31)

The Anglo-Saxon word for “believe” is a compound word, and it means by life. It is true that we live, or behave, according to what we believe. So if what I believe does not translate into my practical everyday life, then it is not saving faith. When one has true saving faith, they are relying upon the finished work of Jesus. Therefore, they renounce all other means to earn salvation (including behavior modification) and receive Him as the sovereign Lord and ruler of their life. One’s faith contributes nothing to the gospel and therefore faith, in and of itself, is of no use whatsoever if it is not firmly anchored in Christ Jesus. The only part we play in the gospel, is our sin problem.

If you possess true saving faith, it will be evident by the way you live from that point on. It’s a matter of Lordship. Consider this, Jesus is mentioned as the Savior twenty-four times in the gospels. Compare that to the fact that He is called “the Lord” 433 times. Now let’s take a look at the following passage often used in evangelism.

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

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

Jesus succinctly defined Lordship in the following passage. In Luke 8:21, He said “My mother and brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it.” And then there is His heart piercing question: “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46) If Jesus is not your Lord – then He is not your Savior. Therefore, Lordship is no more and no less than the unpretentious words spoken by Mary, the mother of Jesus, at a wedding in Cana. She said: “Whatever He says to you, do it.” (John 2:1-8) As C.S. Lewis so eloquently put it, “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in hell chose it.”

Because God is just, someone will pay the debt owed by sin. Those who are in Christ have been forever freed of their debt, but for everyone else, they will be paying the wages of sin for all eternity. And what a sad, sad thought?

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

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

***Revelation 3:17-20***

***You say, “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.” But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness, and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.” “As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and REPENT! Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him, and have dinner with him, and he with me.***

Speaking to us through the apostle John, Jesus said, “I stand at the door and knock.” Why does He Knock? He wants to come in, and although He is the Lord God - the Almighty, He will not force Himself on anyone. But He will wrestle with sinners as they struggle to surrender all. He did this for Jacob before he renamed him Israel. (Genesis 33:1-32, Isaiah 1:15-20) But, make no mistake about it, when He comes in, He comes in to take over and make all things new! The kingdom of heaven is no more and no less than where the ***King of Heaven is on the Throne***!

As you read this, do you hear Him knocking on your heart? What will you do with Jesus? The following is a beautiful song written by Steven Curtis Chapman and Geoffrey Paul More. It’s called The Invitation. And this is ***your invitation*** from the King.

**“THE INVITATION”**

In the palace in the land of mercy, The King looked down from His throne, He saw the sick and the homeless and hungry, He saw me lost and without hope.

And moved with compassion He sent out His Only Son, with the invitation, to come,

This is your invitation, come just the way you are, come find what your soul has been longing for come find your peace, come join the feast, come in, this is your invitation

So I stood outside the gates and trembled, in my rags, of unworthiness, afraid to even stand at a distance in the presence of holiness

And just as I turned to go, the gates swung open wide, and the king and His Only Son, they

invited me inside

This is your invitation come just the way you are, come find what your soul has been longing for come find your peace come join the feast, come this is your invitation,

So now will you come with me, to where the gates swing open wide, The KING and His Only Son, are inviting us inside. This is our invitation come sinner as you are, come find what your soul has been longing for, come find your peace, come join the feast, come in this is your invitation, this is our invitation, and this is the invitation.

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

1. Have you ever been hurt by someone who said they were sorry, yet did not repent? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Why are words meaningless when it comes to faith and repentance? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Define what it means to believe: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. What did Paul preach everywhere he went? (Acts 20:17-21) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Read Acts 11:9-24. What was the gift given after they believed, and what did God grant to the Gentiles that lead to life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Read the following passages Acts 11:16-18; 17:30-31; Luke 13:1-5; John 8:24, 58; 12:31-33; Mark 1:15. What was the gospel that Jesus and His disciples preached? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Read 2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 18:32, 33:1-11. What is the stated desire of God in these passages? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. According to all the passages we have studied, can a person have true saving faith without true repentance? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. Read the account previously mentioned of the Woman who was caught in adultery, and also another account found in John 5:1-14. What was the last thing Jesus said to these two people? (John 8:1-11) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. Do you think these two returned to their lives of sin? Why or why not? (Proverbs 28:13) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
11. Read Romans 10:9-13. What is the connection between calling on Jesus as Lord and surrendering to His Lordship? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
12. Is it possible to receive Christ as your Savior without Him being your Lord? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
13. When all is said and done, what two things does God want from you and me? Read Luke 8:15-21, 11:27-28; Matthew 7:21-23; Revelation2:5-7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
14. Think about the following statements and define the differences: Remorse is not repentance, conviction is not confession, and sorrow over sin is not surrender to Christ’s lordship! \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

## Memory Verses

***2 Corinthians 6:2b (ESV)***

***Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.***

**Chapter # 8**

# Signs of Life



**Key Passage**

***Ephesians 2:4 (NIV)***

***But because of His great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.***

**Introduction**

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

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

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

***Galatians 2:20 (NASB)***

***“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I, who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”***

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

Here is a perfect example of a man who entrusted his personal testimony into the life of his child. I’d like to share with you a portion of a book that was my son Robbie’s favorite as a child. It is a true story, a biography if you will, that was written by Cheryl Hicks Settle about her father’s journey of faith. (Cheryl Hicks, like Paul’s spiritual son Timothy, knew her father’s story well.) The title of this little children’s book is *You’ve Heard of Abraham Now Meet Floyd*. As the story goes, when Floyd was only five years old, his father divorced his mom, leaving the family homeless. So they went to live with his grandmother in a small town called Nunnelly, Tennessee. Floyd began attending each of the town’s three churches, alternating between the Methodist church, the Church of Christ, and the Jehovah’s Witness.

Whatever faith Floyd possessed as a little boy was put to the test when his grandmother died, and then his beloved pet, “Sleepy the chicken.” Because the family was starving, Sleepy was killed to feed Floyd’s family. First his Dad, then grandmother and then his constant companion Sleepy. He couldn’t understand why everyone he loved was taken from him. He had learned in vacation Bible school that God loved him, but that brought him little solace in light of these painful losses. (John 3:16)

Floyd grew up and joined the U.S. Navy. Even though this afforded him many great adventures as he traveled the world, happiness and peace was illusive. Something was missing. Even after he married a “good Catholic girl” and began a family, still there was an unexplainable emptiness in his life. His wife began to attend a Baptist church and read the Bible to him at night. Soon thereafter he joined the church, became the Sunday school superintendent, and even chairman of the board of deacons. Everyone thought Floyd was a great Christian leader, but God saw the true condition of his heart. Floyd was still empty.

When their church got a new pastor, he came to pay the chairman of the deacons a visit. Floyd became uncomfortable when the pastor asked him about his relationship with Jesus. Undoubtedly, no one had ever challenged Floyd to do a spiritual examination, and yet when he did, he realized that, even though he was very involved in church, he was still lost and empty. As he knelt down on his living room floor and asked Jesus to forgive him and to come in his heart. His life-long search for unfailing love ended. Floyd began reading the Bible for himself. He read every spare moment and prayed and talked to his Heavenly Father day and night. Like Abraham, God’s friend, God began to speak to Floyd.

So then, what does this children’s book have to do with this lesson? Like Paul, Floyd’s life was transformed by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And like Paul, Floyd was motivated to tell His story. Many people have a false sense of security when it comes to salvation, mainly because of religious affiliation.

My husband, my father and I were all church members, and yet we were each lost and empty - just like Floyd. In fact, because of my Biblical ignorance, it took me sixteen years to discover that my moment of re-birth took place when I was twenty -six years old. When I was twelve years old, I prayed a prayer and was baptized. This gave me a false sense of security - what some have called, “a fire insurance policy, or, a “get out of hell for free, ticket!” No one had ever challenged me to evaluate my spiritual condition. So I am well aware of the fact that, we can be extremely blind to our true spiritual condition as church members even though the reality is, we remain lost and separated from God.

We assume that people who attend church must be Christians. However, as I tell Yuki, my sister in Christ from China; just because we eat at her family’s Chinese restaurant, it doesn’t make us Chinese. Likewise, going to a church building and having your name on the roll, does not mean you’re Christian!

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

***“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’***

Many people who attend churches of all denominations are trusting in church affiliations, reformations, confirmation, dedications and family relations as their salvation. God does not have grandchildren. He only has children, and they were all birthed into His family by the Holy Spirit. If you are trusting in anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ to save you, then you are still lost in your sin.

Do you know where you are spiritually? Have you ever examined yourself to *see* if you are in the faith? If I had a person who really questioned me about my salvation as Floyd did, perhaps I would have come to faith earlier. But only the Lord knows for sure.

And because this is such an important issue with eternal ramifications, we don’t want to miss this opportunity to know for sure where we stand. While we may be confused about our spiritual status - God is not. Yet regardless of where we are now, we can know for sure that He loves us and desires for us to live with blessed assurance. And not only does the Bible state clearly that we can *know for sure*, the Bible also tells us *how to be sure*. There is no time like the present, to settle the matter once and for all.

**Am I Alive?**

***1 John 5:11-12 (NASB)***

***“And the testimony is this that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”***

Many people question their salvation. This is not necessarily a bad thing unless you live with unwarranted anxiety about whether or not you are saved. If this describes you, then I have some very good news. I assure you, based on the authority of the Word of God, that you can know for sure; and even if you fail the test, take heart - there is a remedy!

When the Spirit of God lives in you, He will testify to your second birth and new life in Christ. And likewise, you will know you are alive by seeing some birthmarks that authenticate that you are a Christian. (Ephesians 1:13-14) At the moment of spiritual birth, our inner character begins the process of metamorphose - just like a caterpillar, becomes a butterfly. It’s called sanctification. This is how we are conformed to bear the likeness of the One who has taken up residency within us - the Holy Spirit. We have been raised from spiritual death and now we are alive in Christ. The change should be apparent, not only to us, but also those who know us best. Although people can try to reform their lives, without a spiritual birth, they are incapable of changing themselves.

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

***The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.***

If we cannot *see* the signs of life, then we cannot *know* we are saved. The evidence should be apparent. If we claim to be saved and there is nothing new about our actions and attitudes, then this should lead us to ask ourselves this question: “Am I saved?” We may *profess* to know God, but we do not *possess* salvation. We are still lost and separated from God who loves us.

***1 John 5:13***

***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!***

**WORD SEARCH: from Strong’s Concordance**

* **Know** Greek: Strong’s #1492 Eido *to see*, to *know*, be *aware, behold, can tell-look on-perceive, be sure, understand.*  This word is often translated as the word saw. (John 1:47-48,50) See translated as know or see in the following passages: 1 John 3:13, 5:13, 15,16-18,19 The same word is translated as know and saw in the following verses: John 1:47-48.
* **Behold** Greek: Strong’s #2400 –from # 1492 Idou: *behold, lo, see.* (2 Cor. 5:17) “*If a man be (in Christ) he is a new creation BEHOLD, all things are new.”* This word comes from the Greek word Eido.
* **Follow** Greek: Strong’s #190 Akolotho: *to be in the same way with, as a particle-union, to accompany (specifically) as a disciple: -follow, reach.*
* **Hear** Greek: Strong’s #191 Akouo: *to hear, give in the audience of, come to the ears, hear, and understand.*
* **Obey** Greek: Strong’s #5219 Hupakouo: *to hear under as a subordinate, to listen attentively, to heed or conform to a command or authority hearken, be obedient to obey!*

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

* John 3:1-19; Ephesians 2:1-13; Galatians 6:15; John 12:44-46; 2 Timothy 2:19; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

***1 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB)***

***“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”***

**Three Witnesses**

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

***“…On the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”***

If we’re alive in Christ, there are three witnesses who will testify to our second birth, or “*resurrection from the dead.*” And all three witnesses should be in agreement. (1 John 3:13-14) Please note, however, that the test is *not* someone else’s experience compared to yours. In addition, you can’t look at a *onetime event* in your life as proof that you are saved or a time of great failure as proof that you are lost. You need to look at all the evidence as revealed next to the light and truth of God’s Word. We must examine ourselves in order to *see* if there are any signs of life. By the way, the entire book of 1 John is the test. The apostle John was in Ephesus when he wrote it.

1. A personal salvation experience (your second birthday). (John 3:3-18; 1Peter 1:22-25; 1 John 2:29)
2. The Word of God is the true mirror and judge of our hearts. (James 1:21-25; Hebrews 4:12-13; John 2:24-25)
3. A changed life produces the fruit of the Spirit - the evidence that *He* is in you! (Romans 8:9-11&16)

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

***Therefore, brothers, make every effort to confirm your calling and election, because if you do these things you will never stumble.***

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

* 1 John 3:14; John 6:63; 2 Timothy 2:19; Titus 1:16; 1 Corinthians 8:3; Matthew 7:13-24

**Test Yourself**

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

***Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you— unless indeed you fail the test? But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.***

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

The words *know* in 1 John 5:13 and *behold* in 2 Corinthians 5:17 come from the same root Greek word. (See the WORD SEARCH: from Strong’s Concordance below) We cannot *know* we are saved unless we can *see* the evidence and the evidence is seen in God’s mirror – His Word. If what we are calling salvation is not in agreement with what God says is salvation - then we are deceived.

Let’s examine the evidence and see if we can identify a turning point (repentance and faith) when we passed from death to life. If you’re like me, you may not have an actual day or month recorded, however, if God Himself has taken up residency within a person, they cannot remain the same.

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

* Matthew 7:13-24; 1 Timothy2:3-4; Acts 21:20-21; 2 Peter 3:9; Romans 8:5-17

**What are the Signs of Life?**

***Ephesians 5:14 (NASB)***

***“For this reason it says, “awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”***

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

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

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

***Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, (BEHOLD), the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.***

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

Spiritually dead people do not have an appetite for God’s Word until the Holy Spirit abides in them. (Hebrews 4:12-14; 1 Peter 1:22-23; Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2; John 5:24-25, 6:63-68; 8:43-47; &51-53; 10:27;12:46-48; 15:7-8; 2 John 1:9)

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

***My sheep HEAR my voice, I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them from my hand.***

* **Do you obey God’s Word?**

Obedience always accompanies true faith, and yet someone who is new in the faith does not know all that God requires of them. In order for them to obey all that He has commanded them, someone one must disciple them. (Romans1:5-6, 8:7, 16:26-27; Hebrews 5:9; John 3:36, 14:15-26, 15:9-14, 16:8; 1 John 2:3-6, 3:22-23, 5:2-3; 3 John 3:1:11)

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

***By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him”, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.***

* **This is the major evidence… do you love God and others?**

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

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

***We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. The one who does not love remains in death. 18Little children, we must not love in word or speech, but indeed and truth; 19 that is how we will know we are of the truth, and will convince our hearts in His presence,20 because if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things. 21 Dear friend, if our hearts do not condemn us we have confidence before God, 22 and can receive whatever we ask from Him because we keep His commands and do what is pleasing in His sight. 23 Now this is His command: that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as He commanded us.***

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

Inthe next chapter we’ll discuss this is great detail. *“If you no wish for others to be saved---you are not saved yourself, be sure of that” ---*C.H. Spurgeon (John 15:26-27; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:1-1; 2 Corinthians 5:11-20; Isaiah 43:8-12)

***Acts 1:8 (HCSB)***

***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”***

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

Many believers go through times when they question if they are saved. Most of the time, this is because they are struggling with sin in some area of their lives. One indicator that you are saved *from* your sins is if you’re fighting *against* sin. Because when the Holy Spirit lives in you, He won’t let you remain in sin for long. Now, on the other hand, some people wrestle with doubts because they are still dead in their sins.

The Greek word for voice is Phone. Do you hear God’s voice ring *inside* of you when you are disobeying God, or is He still *outside* convicting you of your need to repent? (1 John 1:8-10; 2 Corinthians 7:10)

***John16:8 (HCSB)***

***When He comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment.***

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

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

***Psalms 89:30-33 (HCSB)***

***If his sons forsake My instructionif they dishonor My statutes then I will call their rebellion to account with the rod, their sin with blows. But I will not withdraw My faithful love from him or betray My faithfulness.***

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

Beforesalvation**,** accordingtoIsaiah59andotherpassages**,** God does not hear the prayers of those who are separated from Him. It is quite the contrary for those who are in Christ. In the following passages, you will find ample evidence that answered prayer is a clear sign of salvation. (Isaiah 59:1-3; Ephesians 3:12; John 14:11-17, 15: 7-8, 16; Matthew 7:7-12)

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

***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.Now this is the confidence we have before Him: Whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked Him for.***

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

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

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

1. Have you ever examined your life to see if you are in the faith? (2 Cor. 13:5-6) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Describe the differences Christ has made in your life. (1 John 3:13-24) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. If you are in the medical field, what are the universal Signs of life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Read Paul’s personal testimony. (1 Timothy 1:12-17) Can you relate in any way to his story? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you have anyone with whom you have entrusted your personal testimony? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. When is the last time you shared your story of grace? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Your small group is a good place to practice if you have never told your story. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Read Romans 8:31-39. From these passages, once we are placed in Christ, what are the specific things that can never separate us from the love of God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. If you were put on trial for being a Christian, do you think that there would be enough evidence to convict you? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. Can you honestly say that you are quick to obey God when He reveals actions that He wants you to take? Or do you require complete understanding before stepping out in faith and obedience? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. Do you struggle to surrender to the will of God when it costs you: time, money, relationships, reputation or convenience? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

## Memory Verses

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

***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.Now this is the confidence we have before Him: Whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked Him for.***

**Chapter # 9**

# The Good News is for All People



**Key Passage**

***Ephesians 1:13 (NASB)***

***In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with Holy Spirit of promise.***

**Introduction**

We live in a world that is replete with tragedy, do we not? And thanks to the internet and social media, we have access to twenty-four-hour a day streaming of all the bad news our weary minds can handle. If you want to be sad and depressed, just turn on the news. For instance, just today here in “God blessed America” we are reeling from yet another senseless mass shooting that left fourteen dead and even more injured. In Managua, Nicaragua, a volcano that has been quiet for 100 years exploded with fire, ash and smoke. Not only did the earth quake, but the hearts of people did also. (These are my spiritual family, and so what affects them, also affects me.) All of this is in addition to the news that my pastor lost his mother today. Yesterday, we received the very sad news that a 3-year-old girl we were fervently praying for, died and went to be with Jesus. Our hearts break when we hear bad news. Even though I seldom watch the news, there is just no escaping it. I have a question for you: Why is it that bad news spreads faster that good news? Couldn’t we all use some good news? Well, you’ll be glad to know, that is precisely what this lesson is all about!

**What is the Gospel?**

If someone were to ask you to define the gospel, what would you say? When pressed to give a definition, most people will respond: “The gospel is the Bible, or, “The gospel is the good news.” In a very broad sense, they would be correct. You see, the Greek word for gospel is euaggelion and it is defined as “the good news.” Euaggelizo is the Greek word for is someone who heralds the good news is an evangelist. Do you remember from the introduction the other name we might call someone who tells others about Jesus? (1 Corinthians 16:19) The first ones to evangelize in Ephesus were Priscilla and Aquila. In fact, their home was the meeting place for the church.

The impact of the good news on this pagan society was so radical, that the sinners in Ephesus became saints. And while Pricilla and Aquila first brought the gospel, they were by no means the last to do so. According to tradition, the apostle John and Mary, the mother of Jesus, watered the gospel seeds that others had sown. Regardless of who plants the gospel, or who may water it, as Paul said to the Corinthians, “It is God who brings the increase.” (1 Corinthians 2:5-7)

The majority of my life I have attended church on a weekly basis, and therefore you would think I could easily define the gospel. Obviously I’m a slow learner, because that was not always the case. Oh, I knew that the gospel means the good news, and I could quote a few passages from heart - like Ephesians 2:6-10. However, it was just a few years ago while listening to a message, a question popped into my mind – “What is the gospel?” And that’s when it dawned on me: I really didn’t know. I was further perplexed when I asked a youth pastor if he could give me a passage that would summarize the gospel, and the question seemed to stump him also. I left without an answer. Thankfully, it is written in Luke 11:9, “Seek and you will find,” and when I did, the Lord led me to 1 Corinthians 15:1-9. Unlike the saints in Ephesus who had been thoroughly discipled by Paul and others, I was not discipled until I had been a Christian for almost twenty years! Undoubtedly, the Ephesians were the recipients of every truth that Paul wrote to the other churches. A prime example is the letter he addressed to the saints at Corinth. He was in Ephesus when he wrote the following.

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

***“Now brothers, I want to clarify for you the gospel I proclaimed to you; you received it and have taken your stand on it. You are also saved by it, if you hold to the message I proclaimed to you, unless you believed in vain. For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve.” (emphasis mine)***

**Gospel Parables**

Did you know that about sixty percent of the world’s population are oral learners? That is to say, they either can’t read or write, or they have no written language. So how can you preach the gospel in a way that they can understand? You communicate with them the way Jesus did: by using gospel stories. Jesus had an innate ability to seize teachable moments and use earthy things in parables to communicate spiritual truths. Each of His parables are chock-full of gospel principles. In this lesson, we’ll follow the Master’s example and mine the gospel messages found within a few of His parables. Let’s start with The Parable of the Pearl of Great Worth.

***Matthew 13:44-46 (NIV)***

***“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.***

***“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.***

Dr. Adrian Rogers told the story of the largest pearl ever found.  I searched the internet and this is what I found from Wikipedia.org.  The largest pearl (that human eyes have seen) was found in the Philippines in 1934. It is known as the Pearl of Lao Tzu. It was formed inside of a giant clam and weighed about 14 pounds. The pearl is said to be valued at nearly 60 million dollars. The diver who discovered it lost his life in an attempt to bring it up to the surface. What was the pearl worth to him? Obviously, it was so valuable to him, it was worth risking his life to possess it!  Clearly, it’s not difficult to see the similarities in Jesus’ parable and this story. But this is where the stories deviate. The value of the Pearl of Lao Tzu, pales in comparison to the Pearl in Jesus’ parable. Just below the surface of the narrative, is even more treasure to unearth.

Here, as in other passages, it’s apparent that Jesus did not entrust His pearls of wisdom to those who would trample them under foot. These truths were far too valuable to be wasted. He hid these treasures in the hearts of His twelve disciples. Likewise, He does the same today for the ones who have spiritual ears to hear and value what He has to say.

In his commentary on the Treasure Hidden in the Field and The Pearl of Great Worth, John MacArthur stated that these two parables have identical meanings. Both picture salvation as something hidden from most people. But, for those who have received salvation, it is so valuable to them that they are willing to give up all they own to possess it. According to MacArthur’s explanation, the “field” that the treasure is hidden in is the gospel message. He makes a good point, and when you test his exegesis next to the Word of God, he is spot on. Jesus’ disciples had the “spiritual ears” to both hear - and understand His parables. And furthermore, their martyrdom bears witness that they treasured Christ. They esteemed Him of such great worth, they forsook all, even unto death, to share Him with others. (Matthew 12:46-50, 13:1-45)

God’s Word is like a multifaceted diamond. Just as each one of the four gospels examine the accounts of Jesus from their own angle and perspective, so God gave gifted teachers to the Church for the same purpose. Haven’t you visited the same familiar passage many times and found a jewel of truth you have previously overlooked? Proper biblical exegesis requires comparing one passage to another, thus allowing scripture to interpret scripture.

Therefore, looking at the Treasure and The Pearl of Great Worth from another angle, in Matthew Henry’s commentary, he sees Jesus as the Pearl of Great Worth, and the true Christian as the merchant who is seeking Him. I agree with Matthew Henry’s commentary, but only on this one point: Both the Treasure and The Pearl represent the Lord Jesus Christ. (Galatians 2:20, Isaiah 53:1-12)

**Who Is the Seeking Merchant?**

***Romans 3:9-10 (NIV)***

***What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.***

Without discounting MacArthur’s or Henry’s commentaries, I will defer to Dr. Adrian Rogers’ interpretation of this passage from in his message on the Pearl of Great Worth. To the best of my recollection, in Dr. Rodgers message he said, (and I’ll paraphrase,) “We seek God as much as a criminal seeks a police officer!” We don’t seek God… He seeks us! Like the diver who found the pearl of Lao Tzu, the Lord Jesus left His kingdom and plunged into the depth of a sea full of broken, sinful humanity in search of the Pearl of Great Worth. He is the merchant in search of the pearl. It’s not hard to guess at what the Pearl represents - it’s the Church - His Bride. King Jesus paid everything He had to buy her…. It cost Him His life.

***Luke 19:10 (NIV)***

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

We have broken His laws, and just like criminals we hide from the law, and we hide from God. Even so, He searches us out, not to apprehend us and hold us accountable for our crimes, but to save us. He has already paid our ransom and purchased a people for Himself from every tribe and nation.  (Romans 5: 6-12; John 3:14-19; Ephesians 2:1-15)

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

***Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.’***

Have you ever been curious about Heaven, or wondered what goes on there? It just so happens that in the parables of lost things, each one ends with a rare glimpse into the Kingdom of heaven. Notice in each instance, when the lost things had been found, a joyful party broke-out in the presence of God. What caused all this rejoicing? Look closely at the story of the Prodigal Son. The joyful celebration began when the lost son repented and finally returns home to his father. Truly, God is a God of second chances. Even when we leave the Father and squander the wealth of His love, the Good Shepherd will still leave the ninety-nine others in search of one lost sheep.  Could you be the one that He seeks?

However, often the instruments He uses to draw us, seem like a contradiction to His love. This is especially true when it involves suffering. During one such time in my life, the following passage became very real and intimately personal to me. ***Psalms 18:16 He reached down from on high and took hold of me and drew me out of deep water. He rescued me.*** And honestly, Jesus is still rescuing me out of deep waters of many kinds. It should not be surprising that the word *rescue* is found in the definition of the Greek words: forgive, grace, and save.

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

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

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

According to several statistics, only about two percent of the people who profess to know Christ have ever shared the gospel with another person. That means that ninety-eight percent of the people who say they have believed in Jesus are hoarders of the gospel. Why is this? Could it be that while many profess to know Christ, they are not *in* Christ? Perhaps they need to hear the gospel and be saved.

In the midst of a world that is full of corruption, chaos, carnage, conflict and confusion, we have hidden the gospel treasure safely within our church buildings, all the while a world full of people who “God so loves,” go to Hell. (Matthew 5:13-16) Coincidentally, the more we hoard the gospel, the more hell breaks-loose on earth, and we all suffer the ramifications that are too numerous to count. Furthermore, as we are about to discover, we mustn’t think that the Master will be pleased with us when we are called to give account at the judgement seat of Christ.

**We are Stewards of the Treasure**

***Matthew 25:14-30 (ESV)***

***“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’***

Now let’s take a closer look at the Parable of the Stewards. Here, Jesus said, “To whom much is given, much will be required.” I know that in my country, the United States of America, we have been entrusted with much gospel wealth.  But, have we been good stewards of all that we have been given?  We can scarcely claim the excuse of ignorance. Granted, along with the true gospel, we have an abundance of “false gospels” as well as “different Jesuses” (more on this subject in another chapter). If we have been redeemed and reconciled to God, then we have been given the ministry of reconciliation. And part of this ministry, as Paul told Timothy, is a ministry of continual intercessory prayer for the advancement of the gospel. (1 Timothy 2:1-6) So, prayer is vital, but we mustn’t stop there. Our prayers do not negate our individual responsibility to share the gospel. (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Luke 24:47) Furthermore, not one ethnic group of believers is excluded from this command. (Revelation 5:9-19) Here are some facts: Did you know that 2 out of every 7 people in the world have no idea who Jesus is? And most of them live in countries where the gospel is restricted. Sadly, the precious few indigenous believers in these parts of the world have not been equipped to share the gospel with their own neighbors.

The undiluted and unpolluted message of the gospel is the power of God to save souls. Yet, for this to happen, people must *hear* the gospel. But how can people hear it if we - the redeemed - don’t tell them? You see, Holy Spirit operates *through* those who have *received* the Treasure…. The Treasure is Jesus!

We use all sorts of excuses for not sharing the gospel. I would like to elaborate on a few. As an example, many people, myself included, have erroneously believed that this was the job of pastors, evangelists, and the theologically trained professionals. But is this the truth? Absolutely not! Although this doesn’t negate the importance of their function in the church.

You can be assured that the notion that only “professionals” are to take the gospel to the world did not originate with God. It originated in the heart of the Devil! There are no professionals in the kingdom of God - only born again saints. To drive home this point, look at the credentials of Jesus’ first disciples, Peter and John. In Acts 4:19 it said they were “ignorant and untrained men,” but they were recognized as having been with Jesus. I encourage you to stop and read the account that took place before Paul’s conversion, making note of who was going everywhere preaching the Word of God. (Acts 8:1-5)

Herein lies the problem. To the extent that we buy into the lie that only “professionals” like pastors and missionaries are qualified to share the gospel, determines what we do with the gospel. When we do nothing with it, we are like the slothful servants in the parable. We should shudder at the thought of the righteous anger of God against His people who have squandered the treasure He entrusted to us.

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

***For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you.***

For those of us who, like Paul, realize our personal responsibility and stewardship of the gospel, it’s imperative that we understand a few things. First of all, we don’t save anyone; salvation belongs to God alone. We mustn’t be mistaken about our role. Second, we don’t have a clue who will be saved and who will not. And furthermore, that’s the Lord’s business - not ours. And while Jesus declared in Matthew chapter seven that *many* will not be saved, this does not negate the fact that He desires for all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. How do we know that? Because, as the apostle Peter said, “He’s not willing that anyone perish but that all come to repentance.”

Now, I may not be a theologian, nor have seminary training, but it does not take a rocket scientist to understand the words *all* and *every*! Clearly, God desires that *all people hear the gospel*! Even so, many will *hear* yet few will *head* the gospel. But you may ask, “Why is it important for people to hear it if they are going to reject it anyway?” Because, even those who reject it, will one day stand at the Great White throne of Judgement and be reminded, although they refused the message, that God gave them a chance to hear.

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

* 1 Timothy 2:1-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Romans 2:16, 3:19, 10:9-21; 2 Peter 3:8-9; Matthew 7:13-23; Hebrews 4:1-7; Revelation 20:11-15

And finally, here are some questions for personal reflection: Is Jesus is the unequaled treasure of your life? Were you even aware that you are a steward, and that God expects a return on what He invested in your soul? Are you sharing Him with others? These questions are not meant to evoke feelings of guilt or conviction, but as an admonition, to contemplate your responsibility and privilege of being a co-worker with God. God saved you and I for a purpose. And as someone has said, “We weren’t saved just to smuggle our souls into the Kingdom of heaven!”

I would like to offer a word of encouragement for those of you who are by nature a bit timid. If just the thought of trying to share the gospel causes you to have an anxiety attack, then please take heart. You can find comfort in the fact that even Paul ends the letter to the saints at Ephesus by asking the saints to pray for him to have boldness in proclaiming the gospel. Now, if *he* needed prayers for boldness, don’t you think we do also? The lesson here is this: No matter who we are, or what our social bent, sharing the gospel is not something that comes natural. That’s why, when Jesus called His first disciples, He said, “Come follow Me and I will *make* you fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19) (The emphasis is on the word make, or we could say, “turn you into” fishers of men.) Sharing the gospel is a work of the Holy Spirit. To cooperate with Him we need the encouragement and instruction of others who have had more practice. Why do you think the Lord Jesus sent the seventy out in pairs of two? (Luke 10:1-18)

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

***Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given to me so that I will fearlessly make know the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.***

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

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

The following Old Testament story is a fitting comparison and a glaring example of selfishly hoarding the gospel. I have only printed a portion of the story, although you may want read it in its’ entirety. (2 Kings 6:24-7:1-9)

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

***Now there were four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate. They said to each other, “Why stay here until we die? If we say, ‘We’ll go into the city’—the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let’s go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die.”***

***At dusk they got up and went to the camp of the Arameans. When they reached the edge of the camp, no one was there, for the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army, so that they said to one another, “Look, the king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!” So they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents and their horses and donkeys. They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives.***

***The men who had leprosy reached the edge of the camp, entered one of the tents and ate and drank. Then they took silver, gold and clothes, and went off and hid them. They returned and entered another tent and took some things from it and hid them also.***

***Then they said to each other, “What we’re doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let’s go at once and report this to the royal palace.”***

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

1. Will everyone believe the message of the gospel? Why or why not? (Romans 2:13-16, 10:16-21) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Read Romans 1:16-18 and 1 Corinthians 1:17-25. To those who are perishing in their sins, what is the gospel to them? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Has anyone clearly defined the gospel for you or taught you how to share it? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you regularly share the gospel? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. If not, what are some things that keep you from doing so? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Read the entire passage above, 2 Kings 6:24-7:1-9. Using this Old Testament account as an allegory, compare what is it like when we, the recipients of the gospel, hoard it. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 and 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2. What is meant by “vain belief” or receiving the grace of God in vain? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Whose responsibility is it to take this good news to *all* Nations? (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:19-23) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. The Lord Jesus gave the apostle John a glimpse of the church or His bride. What does heaven look like and what role will you personally play in this scene? (Revelations 5:9-10) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. Are we responsible for anyone’s salvation? (Acts 2:39-41; Revelation 7:9-12) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
11. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. Why do you think Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
12. Do you have to leave your own country to reach others ethnic peoples groups? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
13. Would you like to learn how to live the lifestyle of an evangelist? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
14. Let’s discuss practical application to this lesson. List some ways here: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
15. Think of a person that you know who is effective in sharing the gospel. Would you be willing to ask them if you can join them so you can learn? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

**Memory Verses**

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

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

**Chapter # 10**

# New Identity



**Key Passages**

***Ephesians 1:4b-5 (NASB)***

***Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.***

**Introduction**

It’s alarming to think of all the evil inventions that are conceived in the hearts of man. But this is nothing new. Two-thousand years ago the Holy Spirit warned us through Paul’s letter to the Romans of just such a time as this.

***Romans 1:28-31 (ESV)***

***And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.***

Thanks to the internet, there is a plethora of new criminal enterprises, not the least of which is identity theft. Have you been one of the unfortunate victims of this crime? If so, then you know that it robs you of security and leaves you feeling vulnerable, fearful and distrusting. This lesson is about another kind of travesty: when believers are robbed of their spiritual identity. Perhaps you have never been discipled, and you are not even aware of your true identity in Christ. In this case, ignorance of who you are spiritually is not bliss - it’s emotional bondage. Its high time to take back what sin and the devil have taken from us and whole heartedly embrace the Truth, and when we do, the Truth will set us free.

**Saints in Christ**

***Colossians 1:21-22 (NASB)***

***And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.***

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? To get to the bottom of these important questions is to discover one spiritual blessing after another. The first blessing I would like for us to contemplate is this: although we were born sinners, if we’re in Christ, we are saints. And when we become saints, we are holy. If you fall into the following category, you may find the truths we will uncover intensely evocative and deeply personal.

In over twenty years of experience in women’s ministry, nearly half of the women I meet in the Church have had their innocence robbed of them at an early age by sexual abuse. Now mind you, these are women who are *in the Church*. But for those of us who have worked with women in prison, and in other countries, (especially third-world countries) the statistics are even higher. A staggering 85 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.

I recently sat next to a brother in Christ on a plane, and as we discussed this heinous problem, he wrote down his personal testimony. I sat in shock reading his painful life story. In chronological order he listed one horror after another - the kind of things that no child should ever have to endure. As I realized the shame and pain he had suffered, the tears began to flow, and I was unable to speak for fear that my tears would become open sobs. Tragically, his story is not the exception… it has become the rule in a world spiraling toward hell.

The fastest growing global criminal enterprise today is not the buying and selling of drugs or weapons, as you might think. It’s something much more lucrative - the trafficking of women and children as sex slaves. “The love of money,” Paul wrote to Timothy, “is the root of all evil.” (1Timothy 6:10) The victims of this horrific evil, represent an estimated *21 to 27 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, as well as binding up the physical, emotional and physiological wounds of these victims. The Christian origination I am most familiar with is International Justice Mission. (For more information, go to ijm.org)

If you don’t know God’s love personally, you may be cynical… believing 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 about how He feels about the perpetrators of this heinous treatment of women and children, the following passage should bring clarification.

***Matthew 18:5-14 (ESV)***

|  |
| --- |
| ***And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.***  ***“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.***  ***“Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.***  ***“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.*** |

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 wounds 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.

After living through the atrocities of war and concentration camps, Cory Ten Boom surely knew depression and despair, and yet she survived it all with her faith intact. This is one of her quotes: “There is no pit so deep, that God’s love is not deeper still.” If you, or someone close to you, has suffered these unspeakable traumas, then take heart. The love of God is deeper still, and the Great Physician still makes house calls!

***Luke 4:17-21 (ESV)***

***And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me***  
***to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives***  
***and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”***

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

* Psalms 107:8-21; Jeremiah 8:20-22; Proverbs:1-5; Hebrews 4:12-13

Isn’t it time to take back what’s been robbed from us and discover our true identity? Those who are in Christ, are clean, pure, blameless and holy. Yes, you heard that correctly*. If you are a saint, then you are holy!* As you look at the following word search from Strong’s Concordance, you will see that the words holy and saint mean the same thing. In fact, they are translated from the exact same Greek word - Hagios.

***Zechariah 3:4 (NIV)***

***The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.” Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.”***

**WORD SEARCH: FROM STRONG’S CONCORDANCE**

* **Saint/Holy**: Strong’s #40 – Greek: Hagios -*most holy one, saint. Sacred, pure, morally blameless, consecrated.* See: Ephesians 1:1, 4, 13, 15, 18, 19, 2:19, 21; 4:12, 30; Romans 1:6-7
* **Sanctified**: Strong’s # 37-John 17:17,19; Ephesian 5:2; 1 Cor. 1:2, 6:11; 1 Timothy 4:5; 1 Thessalonian 5:3
* **Pure:** Strong’s #53 – Hagnos from holy /saint*, clean, innocent, modest, perfect, chaste, clean, pure.*1 John 3:3; 1 Peter 2:9
* **Pure**: Strong’s #2513 Katharos*, clean clear, pure*. Hebrews 10:22
* **Cleansed**: Strong’s #2511/2513- Karharizo: *to cleanse, make clean, purge, purify, pure.* John 13:10-11
* **Blameless**: Strong’s # 298 Amometos–*unblamable.* 2 Peter 3:14
* **Blameless**: Strong’s # 410-*unaccused, irreproachable blameless*. 1 Cor. 1:8,
* **Blameless**: Strong’s #274- Amemptos- *faultless, blameless, un-blamable*. 1 Thess. 5:23

***Psalms 103:1-5 (ESV)***

***Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!***  
***Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity,***  
***who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.***

I don’t know about you, but given the sins of my past, it’s quite difficult to see myself as blameless, and yet that is what the Bible calls me. Although, at one time we were “guilty as sin,” but now we are clean and blameless in His sight. Do you think of yourself that way? My guess is not, because there is someone who loves to bring up our past to taunt us. Also called “the accuser of the brethren,” Satan loves to reminds us of our shameful past. And when he does, we wonder, “How can God see me as holy and blameless?”

Before conversion, Saul was the same man who had held the cloaks for the men who stoned saint Steven to death. And this was in addition to all the other Christians who he hunted down, persecuted and had killed! Just consider how Paul must have felt as the Holy Spirit inspired him to write these words, in light of the facts of his past. How could Paul possibly go forward to serve the Lord unless he truly believed what God said about him in spite of the painful reminders of the accuser? Thankfully, precious few of the saints have the kind of painful past to deal with that Paul did. Nonetheless, our shameful past can haunt us just the same. Regardless of how dirty we may feel, that is not how God sees us. In actuality, when God looks at us, He sees us in Jesus – the sinless One.

***Ezekiel 37:14 and 36:25-27 (NASB)***

***“I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life. 36:25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put MY Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe MY ordinances.”***

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

* 1 Peter 1:14-17; 1 John 1:7; 2 Peter 3:14; 1 Corinthians 3:17; 6:9-20; 7:12-15; Ephesians 5:25-27; Col. 1:19-22; Titus 2:11-15; 3:3-7

Spiritual songs are scriptures put to melody. One example is the following song, by Kari Jobe. The lyrics so beautifully remind us of how the Lord views us…clean, spotless, pure, and holy. Better yet, you can hear her song on YouTube. The song is based upon the words king Solomon wrote to his beloved bride.

***Song of Solomon 4:7 (NASB)***

***“You are altogether beautiful, my darling, and there is no blemish in you.”***

**Kari Jobe-My Beloved**

“You’re my beloved, you’re my bride; to sing over you is my delight; Come away with me my love

Under my mercy come and wait; till we are standing face to face; I see no stain on you my child

You’re beautiful to me; so beautiful to me; I sing over you my song of peace; Cast all your care down at My feet; Come and find your rest in me; I’ll breathe my life inside of you; I’ll bear you up on eagle’s Wings; and hide you in the shadow of my strength; I’ll take you to my quiet waters; I’ll restore your soul Come rest in me and be made whole; You’re my beloved, you’re my bride; To sing over you is my delight; Come away with me my love.”

***Acts 10:15b (NASB)***

***What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.***

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: LET’S TALK ABOUT IT.**

1. Would you describe yourself as a sinner or a saint? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you think of yourself as pure? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you ever felt as though you were “damaged goods?” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. If so, have you ever confided in a trusted friend about why you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Have you struggled with any addictions that could have resulted from past wounds? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. If so, have you sought help through counseling or A.A.? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Has God revealed to you any aware in your life that need further growth, healing, deliverance or equipping? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. If so, would you like to address them following from a Biblical perspective? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you think some of our insecurities come from an unhealthy fear that God will treat us as our sins deserve, or perhaps that God cannot truly love us because of what we have done?
10. How confident are you in the love of God? Do you feel like you must perform or strive to earn His love? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
11. Read: Psalms 103:1-14. In verse 4, the Psalmist describes deliverance from the pit. Can you describe a “pit” that he Lord has delivered from? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

1. If you are in Christ, these words apply to you. (Romans 8:1; John 3:16-18) Fill in the blank: “There is now no condemnation for those who are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

## Memory Verses

***1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (ESV)***

***Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. 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.***

**Chapter # 11**

# Redeemed by Love



**Key Passage**

***Ephesians 1:7 (NIV)***

***In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.***

**Introduction**

Chances are, the word redemption is not a word you are familiar with. For those of us who live in suburban America, the only time we are likely to use that word is when we “redeem a coupon.” In case you don’t know what that means, it’s a piece of paper that is used to get a discounted price on an item. However, for the saints at Ephesus, the word redemption had great significance. The following commentary on Ephesians 1:7 from the (N.I.V.) Study Bible, sheds light on the customs in Ephesus. (1 Timothy 6)

*Ephesians were familiar with the Greco-Roman practice of redemption: Slaves were freed by the payment of a ransom. Similarly, the ransom necessary to free sinners from the bondage of sin and the resulting curse imposed by the law was the death of Christ (called here “his blood”).*

One of the best novels I have ever read that paints a portrait of redemption is Redeeming Love by Francine Rivers. She was a very successful author of romance novels when she met the love of her life – the Lord Jesus. Like so many of us, she too had called herself a Christian before she was truly born–again. You can read her testimony recorded in the back cover of this novel. A masterful allegory on the book of Hosea, the story beautifully portrays the amazing grace of God towards His lost sinful humanity. The hero is a mirror image of the Lord Jesus. He passionately loves a bride who runs away from Him into the abusive arms of one man after another. Her lovers use, abuse and abandon her. Yet, even after she is sold into slavery to sin, he woos her, pursues her and ultimately gives up everything to buy her for Himself. While Rivers’ story is fiction, God’s story is not. And it’s His story that gives us eternal hope for our future, regardless of our past. In fact, the underlying theme of the Bible is God’s redeeming Love. Eugenia Price said it best, “In the deepest heart of everyone, God planted a longing for Himself as He is: A God of love.”

**Redeemed from a Sinful Past**

We live in the information age; and because of this, through the internet, there is an abundance of sites that afford us the opportunity to trace the steps of our family’s blood-line. Have you ever done a search of your ancestry to see where in the world your forefathers came from? If you have, then you probably found all sorts of interesting folks. There are some who you would be proud to hang their picture on your family’s hall of fame - while others you would rather keep hidden in the closet of shame. Every family has it’s proverbial “skeletons in the closets.”

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, because what your family “handed–down” to you was a life filled with pain and shame. If you don’t have a Godly heritage, please do not lose heart. As we are about to learn, in Christ, we have a new blood line, and in Him we’ve been given life to the full. Through the encouragement of Scripture there is hope for us all.

***1 Corinthians 1:25-31 (ESV)***

***For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”***

I would like to do a quick review of the women listed in the earthly genealogy of Jesus. (Matt. 1:3-6) For starters, you should know that women were hardly ever listed in the family tree. So 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. I don’t know if that means anything to you, but to me, it causes great joy and gratitude to over flow from my heart and on to this page…. Oh how I thank you Lord Jesus!

Before we look at these women, there are three significant points that we don’t want to miss, and these are directed toward all kinds of people.

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 kind” of people.

Once again, we see the paradoxes in God’s plan. Just take a look at the scandalous list of women chosen to be in the royal blood line of Jesus. 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 boy; the first born was Perez. (Gen. 38:1-30; Ruth 4:1-22) Now 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 it 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. Incidentally, the line or cord that hung out her window in Hebrew means *hope*. Through her marriage, this former prostitute now began a new honorable bloodline for her descendants. She had a baby who would 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. (Gen. 19) But because Boaz chooses to redeem Ruth, she was promised 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, also 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 “a man after God’s own heart,” David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and then he got her pregnant, then killed her husband, and because of all this sin - their baby died. (2 Sam. 11) Yet, in spite of their checkered past, God had mercy on these adulterers. He gave them a son, wise King Solomon. While we read about his wedding in Psalms 45, the book of Hebrews attributes this passage of scripture to one of Solomon’s offspring… His name is the Lord Jesus Christ! (Hebrews chapter one.)

Ironically, all of these women had a shameful past; yet, each one was chosen by God to be in the royal lineage of Jesus, right up to the Virgin Mary who would give birth to our Redeemer. Jesus’ earthly ancestry so 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! For those who have had a spiritual birth, they have an opportunity to begin a new legacy and leave a godly inheritance for their offspring. What God did for these women - He can do for you. How do I know this? He has done this for me.

Sometime has passed since I penned the above record of Jesus’ earthly lineage. Meanwhile, we have celebrated the wedding of my first-born son. My precious, beautiful and godly daughter-in-law, has been around this family of ours long enough to know about our shameful past. I will refrain from sharing the details, but trust me when I tell you, it’s not a lovely story! Jessica was forewarned of what she was getting herself into when she married into this family. At their rehearsal dinner, there was no shortage of tears as Jessica’s brother, followed by my husband, gave the couple encouraging words of wisdom and admonition. In the midst of this joyful, yet highly emotional moment, it became apparent to all of us that God was giving our two families a second chance, a do-over, and a fresh start. Jessica’s brother and my husband both said the same thing in different way. What they said in essence was this: “Ethan and Jessica, in light of all of our sordid past, God is giving you the opportunity and responsibility to break the cycles of generational sin and start a godly legacy. The only reason this is even possible is that Christ Jesus is Lord of their lives. By God’s grace, this house will be built upon the Rock, if they will love the Lord their God and keep His commandments.

***Exodus 20:1-6 (KJV)***

***And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.***

**WORD SEARCH: FROM STRONG’S CONCORDANCE**

* **Redeem/ Redeemer** Strong’s #1350 Hebrew word Gaal: *to redeem; of oriental law of kinship; i.e. to be the next of kin and as such, to buy back a relative’s property, marry his widow, avenger, deliver, kinsfolk-man, purchase, ransom, redeemer, revenger.* See: Ruth 4:4,14; Psalm 103:4; Isaiah 43:14; 49:7,26; 54:5,8
* **Redeem** Strong’s # 3085 # 3804 from #3803 Greek word Lotrosis: *a ransoming redeemer; loosen with a redemption price; atonement.* See: Titus 2:14; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12
* **Redeemed** Strong’s #59 Greek word Agorazo: to go to the market place; to purchase; redeem; buy. See: Revelation 5:9
* **Redeemed** Strong’s #629 Greek word Apolutrosis: *act of ransom in full; salvation; deliverance; redemption.* See: Ephesians 1:7 -14, 4:30; Colossians; 1:14; Hebrews 9:15
* **Redeemed/Rescue** Strong’s # 1805 Greek word Exagorazo: *to buy up, i.e. ransom; to rescue from loss (improve opportunity) redeem.* See: Galatians 3:13, 4:5; Ephesians 5:16

**Accepted in the Beloved**

***Ephesians 1:6b (KJV)***

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

Quite often you come upon a passage of Scripture that you have read before, and yet you never thought much about it. To the casual reader, its’ just a simple clause. Yet when you approach it with prayerful consideration, digging just below the surface, you find a diamond. Case in point, is Ephesians 1:6. In this chapter we will hold this jewel up to the light and be amazed with wonder at the riches the prisms reveal. Be prepared to be blessed…*favored one!*

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…. He is the Beloved*. In King James, the word is *accepted*, however, other translators choose 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 instead of half full, 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 - the Holy Spirit had an altogether different messages 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 key words: *pleased or well pleased.* Almost exclusively these words are used in reference to the Lord Jesus, with a few exceptions. In the following passages, they are they are applied to those who are in Christ. I will highlight the words in the following passages.

Luke 2:14 (KJV) “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, ***good will*** toward men.

Ephesians 1:5 (KJV) “Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the ***good pleasure of his will***.”

Ephesians 1:9 (KJV) “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his ***good pleasure*** which he purposed in himself.”

**WORD SEARCH: From Strong’s Concordance**

* **Highly** **Favored**/ **Accepted:** The Greek word is charitoo. (It comes from the word grace.) It means to: *to grace, i.e. endue with special honor, make accepted, and be highly favored.*  As a side note: the words gift and forgiveness are connected with both of these words!
* **Good Will/ Good Pleasure:** The Greek words areedudokia or eudokeo. Here are the definitions: *satisfaction, delight, kindness, purpose, desire, good pleasure, will, to think well of i.e. approve, to approbate, think good, be well pleased, be the good pleasure, and be willing.*

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

* + - * 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, every time the Father spoke from heaven, He said: “This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” The Son of God is the unrivaled object of the Father’s affection. In Christ and Christ alone, is the Father pleased. We mustn’t forget that the Father’s love and acceptance of us, rests solely upon His love for His Beloved Son Jesus. We’re not just accepted by God, but highly favored!

Remember that at Jesus birth, 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 rest*.” (Luke 2:13-14) In this instance, the words pleased and favored are the exact 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 please with Him*, the Father’s *favor* now rest “upon us.” It’s mind boggling - is it not? Now if you find these facts hard to comprehend, then just wait till you see what comes next!

In order to make some personal applications, perhaps we need to step aside for a moment to think through the implications of these wonders. Do you struggle with the feeling insignificant? When you read the Bible, do you think about the people listed as supper humans? Well - they are not. They were every bit as human and you and me, granted they lived in another time in history.

Take Mary, the mother of Jesus for example. Can you imagine the thoughts running through her teenage mind when she was visited by the angel Gabriel? Yet even before He made the announcement that her womb would soon become 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 don’t we? 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****.* Do you understand the implications of that? Albeit hard to believe… if you are in Christ, then you are as highly favored by God as the Virgin Mary!

***Isaiah 43:3-4b (NASB)***

***For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place. Since you are precious in My sight, since you are honored and I love you.***

If this fact in itself were not hard enough to embrace, then consider a further wonder. As Mary carried the Son of God (her Creator) within her, we too carry God the Holy Spirit in us- although, we are seldom cognizant of the fact. And what a difference it could make in our hum-drum everyday lives if we lived fully aware that we carry God around with us? Yes, my friend, in Christ, we have been honored indeed!

Contemplate this - Just as we learned in the earlier chapters of this study, we were once separated from God. But now, not only is *God with us*, but, like the Virgin Mary, *God is in us*! And furthermore, because we are in His Beloved Son, the Father is well pleased to give us all things *in and through Him*. How can this truth liberate the person who struggles with feeling of insignificance?

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

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

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. The value of anything is set by one criteria. Do you know what that is? An item’s value is appraised by the price that someone is willing to pay to have it. The pastor who was used by the Lord to speak to my lost and broken heart on the day I was saved was Dr. Adrian Rogers. This is his quote: “We are not loved because we are valuable; we are valuable because God loved 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, and held Him there, was His matchless love.

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

* Mark 10:13-16; Matthew 21:28-32; John 8:1-11; Luke 5:27-32; Colossians 1:14; Galatians 3:13, 4:5; Revelation 5:9

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

1. Could you relate to any of the women listed in Jesus’ lineage? If so, how has this chapter given you hope? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are your true feelings about God choosing these “kind of women?” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Read 1 Corinthians 15:10 and then fill in the blanks: “But for the grace of God\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

1. From Exodus 20:1-6, what do you think is meant by the sins of the fathers being visited (KJV) upon the children to the third and fourth generation? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. When God said He would show His love to a thousand generations, it was contingent upon two things. What are they? (Exodus 20:1-6) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. In what ways has the Lord redeemed your past? Make a list of everything that comes to mind. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Has anyone ever paid a debt you owed but could not afford to pay? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Can you think of anyone who needs to hear this truth? Would you prayerfully consider sharing this with them? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Jesus came to redeem us from the “empty way of life” handed down from our forefathers. What kind of “hand-me-downs’ did you get? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

**Memory Verses**

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

***Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.***

**Chapter # 12**

# Abba Father



**Key Passages**

***Ephesians 1:3-5 (NASB)***

***Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In loveHe predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.***

**Introduction**

Just the mention of the name father can conjure up a myriad of emotions - some good and some bad. Generally speaking, most of us base our concept of God as a Father on our experience with our earthly fathers. For those who were fortunate enough to be 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 could possibly evoke memories that are anything but pleasant. Maybe this describes you. If so, you may be thinking, “If God is anything like my father, then I want no part of Him!” And frankly, who could blame you? This thinking makes perfect sense if you don’t know God. If this is the situation that you most easily relate to, then your concept of God could be tainted by the wounds inflicted by your father. And regrettably, this has 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 their children.

The truth is, the majority of us are quite familiar with difficult family dynamics. As already discussed, these are the effects of the fall and part of the curse. 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. There is a God - placed intrinsic need in all of us to know God our Father as He *really* is… A God of love, real, unending, soul healing love. So, 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 glum will be turned to gladness. With that being said, you may need to get your tissue box handy, not because of tears of sorrow, but tears of joy when you meet your ***heavenly Father***.

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

***Harvest is past, summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I am broken; I mourn, dismay has taken hold of me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has not the health of the daughter of my people been restored?***

**The Father Chose the Bride for His Son**

You may find it interesting that *Father* is the first word in the Hebrew dictionary. And, as it just so happens, the first time in the Bible that the word father is mentioned is at the wedding of Adam and Eve. God, Himself, presided over the ceremony, and 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. As previously mentioned, Ethan, my first born son, has recently left his father and I 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. In the last month, both of my sons graduated from the University of Memphis and promptly left my “nest.” I’m officially an “empty nester!”

When we finally arrive at chapter five of Ephesians and discover the “profound mystery,” we will gain a better understanding of the implications of leaving and cleaving. But for now, let’s focus our attention on the one who ordained marriage in the first place - God the Father. As foreign as the custom may sound to us, in many cultures the father is the one who selects the bride for his son. The same can be said for the bride of Christ. God the Father *chose us* as the bride for *His Son*. Furthermore, the Father not only selected us *for Jesus*, but He is the One who draws us *to Jesus*. (John 6:39-65; Ephesians 1:3-5) And it is *through Jesus* that we can have the same intimacy, familiarity and tender affection that exists between God the Father and God the Son.

***John 6:44-45 (NASB)***

***“NO one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, “And they shall be taught of God.” Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.”***

Picture if you will, this poignant moment: As Jesus was dying to bridge the chasm between sinful man and God the Father, He cried out in Aramaic, “Abba,” which is translated… ***Daddy***. Here is some more food for thought: The prophet Isaiah called Jesus, *“The Everlasting Father.”* Incidentally, no other prophet described the passion of Christ as vividly as Isaiah.

We’re about to see the significance of what it means to be chosen and adopted by God. Yet before we do, please take a moment and read Isaiah’s account of the passion of Christ in Isaiah chapter fifty-three. Keeping in mind that God the Holy Spirit, showed Isaiah this gospel message seven hundred and fifty years before Christ was born. In verse ten of this passage, what is the stated will of the Father?

***Isaiah 53:10-12 (NIV)***

***Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.***

Let’s use our holy imagination here for a moment. In eternity past, God the Father looked through all of time and He saw you - warts, blemishes, hurts and all. Then He look to His right hand at His Precious Son Jesus, and He said, “My Beloved, I have chosen for you a Bride, and her name is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” (If you belong to Him, place your name there.)

***Ephesians 1:5b (KJV)***

***“The good pleasure of His will.”***

**WORD SEARCH: From Strong’s Concordance**

* **Pleasure:** Strong’s # 2107 Greek word Eduokia: *satisfaction, delight, kindness, wish, purpose, desire, good pleasure, will.* See: Eph. 1:5 &9 from # 2106 **Well Pleased:** See: Luke 3:22; Matthew 3:17, 12:18, 17:5; Mark 1:11
* **Will:** Strong’s #2307 Greek word Thelema: *a determination, i.e. act, choice, specific purpose, decree, volition, inclination, desire, pleasure, will.* See this used in: Eph. 1:5, 9, 11, 5:17, 6:6-7; John 6:38-40; 1 Peter 2:15, 3:17, 4:2-3, 4:19; 2 Peter 1:21
* **Chose**: Strong’s #1586 Greek word Eklegomi: *to select, make a choice, choose out, chosen.* From #1588 eklektos: *select by implication, favorite, chose, elect.* See this used in: Ephesians 1:4; John 13:18, 15:16 -19; 1 Peter 2:4- 9

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

* Matthew 3:13-17, 25:31-34; John 1:1-18, 3:1-18, 6:45-65, 8:16-58, 10:25-38, 14:1-26, 17:1-6; Isaiah 49:14-16, 53:1-12, 54:13; 1 Peter 1:9-25, 2:4; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Ephesians 2:11-14; Colossians1:1-13; 1 John 3:1-10, 4:10-19; Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:3-7; Titus 1:2-4; 3:4-7; Jeremiah 31:3, 31-34

**Our Daddy in Heaven**

***Ephesians 3:14-19 (NIV)***

***For this reason, I kneel before the Father,from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.***

Paul’s prayer for the saints, in the above passage, stands out like an artesian well in the midst of a desert wasteland. To those who are powerless, empty, and thirsty for love, these truths are like an oasis to a barren soul. At least, that’s how David described his thirst for the love of God in Psalms 42:1-3 and Psalms 63:1-8. The above prayer could possibly be the most meaningful prayer that one could ever pray for another individual. Because God’s Word is alive, living and active, these words have the potential to unleash a flood of miraculous healing power. (Hebrews 4:12-13)

As if this prayer itself were not enough, there is something quite unique about this passage. 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!

Yet, if you think Paul’s prayer is impressive, then consider the Lord’s Prayer. Just before He went to the cross, Jesus had a conversation with the Father about those the Father had given to Him. The prayer is recorded in John 17:1-26, and through it, we are privy to the specific request Jesus made on our behalf. This prayer is chockfull of truths too numerous to ponder in one chapter. So for now, we’ll focus on just a few words like: “This is eternal life, that they may *know you*, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” And…. “I have revealed you to those whom you have given me out of the world. They were yours: you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.” (John 17:3-6) (NIV) Often we think of eternal life as “living forever,” yet how does that line up with God’s Word? “Eternal life,” Jesus said, is “*knowing God the Father.”* So how do we know Him? We can’t apart from knowing the Lord Jesus, because, as He said, “No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:1-6) and…. “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,” John said, “but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known.” (John 1:14-18) (NIV)

***Romans 8:14-16 (NASB)***

***“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of Slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.”***

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 from Iran and one from Lebanon. We were riveted by their compelling stories. Gilbert Hovsepian, 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. In spite of the fact that they are hated by 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, and each one stands in stark contrast to the Christian faith. There are numerous differences. 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 - much less understand. For them, prayer is a religious duty, an obligation, and to refuse to pray is an offence punishable by death! It’s little wonder, because the word Islam means submission.

To the saints in Christ, however, 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 - not an obligation. But this is not so for a Muslim; they don’t even know who they are praying to.

At the 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 ask 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. 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, so she secretly read the forbidden book. As she as she got older, one day she passed a Christian church and heard singing. So 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.” That’s when she heard in Aramaic: “Our Father (Abba) who art in heaven, hollowed 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*.

In his book Engaging Islam, (page 84) Andrés’ father, Georges Houssney said, “Those in Christ see themselves as adopted children, whereas Muslims see themselves as slaves who have no choice but to perform their preordained duties.” Also, in his book he mentioned the story of Bilquis Sheikh, a Pakistani who was born in a Muslim noble family. She turned from the Qur’an and started reading the Bible. Like Maha, she too was overwhelmed when she learned that the Christians worship a God who is a loving Father. She was amazed that He actually desires an intimate relationship with His children, and that He is actively involved in their lives. You can read her story in her book titled I Dared to Call Him Father.

**Adopted to Himself**

***Psalms 68:5-6 (NASB)***

***A Father of the Fatherless and a judge for the widow, Is God in His holy habitation. God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity.***

Rarely does a person make it through life without knowing rejection in some 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 the orphaned child or women who have been deserted by their husbands. 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 these insidious thoughts, Satan will begin to replay the sorrowful record tormenting us and insuring that the wounds remain open and agonizing. He adds to the lyrics with words like, “Something is wrong with you…. No one loves you!” This can set you up for a lifetime of self-pity and victim mentality. 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, replacing it with His song of love. May He quiet and comfort you with His love as He sings over you. (Isaiah 66:13)

***Zephaniah 3:14-18 (ESV)***

***Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.  
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak.  
The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach.***

Maybe you have experienced adoption, as an adoptee, or you have been an adoptive parent. Before we delve into what it means to be chosen and adopted by God the Father, we must clarify a few things. Every one’s situation is unique. These points don’t apply to every person who is orphaned or abandoned. Nor are those who have been widowed by the death of a spouse or orphaned by the death of a parent. Furthermore, there are situations when a parent will sacrificially give up their child because they could not feed them or care for them as they ought.

Such is the case of the two babies who were found in a mud hut in Ethiopia, still sucking on the breast of their dead mother. With her last breath, this woman was caring for her babies. These beautiful children are now part of my family. My cousin and her husband went to great expense to adopt them. They welcomed them into their hearts and home that is now comprised of *eight* multi-ethnic children. What a beautiful picture of God’s family they are. I’m just beginning to work with a young woman who gave up everything to follow Christ and serve “the least of these” by opening an orphanage in Haiti. I’ve heard many a story of mothers abandoning their babies simply because they had no food to feed them, and they could not bear to watch their children die of starvation. As a mother of three and grandmother of two, I cannot even imagine it, can you?

***Isaiah 49:13-19 (ESV)***

***Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. But Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.” “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me. Your builders make haste; your destroyers and those who laid you waste go out from you.  
Lift up your eyes around and see; they all gather, they come to you. As I live, declares the Lord,  
you shall put them all on as an ornament; you shall bind them on as a bride does.***

Think about this: 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. Please don’t miss this: God has always known you, and He has always loved you! You are blessed with every spiritual blessing. You inherited them, not from your earthy father, but from your heavenly Father. That fact alone, makes you pretty special don’t you think?

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

* + - * 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; Psalms 10:14, 27:10; 45:10-11; 8:5-6; 66:13; 103:13-17; 49:15-16; Deut. 10:18

**Joney’s Story**

One of my spiritual mothers in Christ is Joney Caudill. She has graciously agreed to open her heart and share with us her story of finding her true father. This is Joney’s story….

*Even when I type the word “father” it’s hard for me to bring to mind any image of my earthly father, because he died before I was three. Have you heard your mom or dad recount their first meeting? I haven’t. In fact, I know very little about their lives together. I was born in 1946, in Washington, D.C. I don’t know why my parents were in Washington or where they lived prior to that: I only know that they met in North Carolina. I think my father owned a business there and my mother worked for him. She was twenty-three and he was over forty-five. Their illicit relationship developed despite the fact that my father was a married man.*

*As a result, my parents lived a secret life, always careful to hide, not only their affair, but also my existence. Robert Wilmoth had two families. Family number one, his “legitimate family,” lived in North Carolina, where he spent his weekends. Family two, lived in another state where he “worked” and lived his secret life. He kept up that lie until September, 1949, just before my third birthday, when suddenly, without warning, he was gone. He left that Friday afternoon and expected to return, as usual, on Sunday night. Sometime after arriving home, he suffered a major heart attack and died a short time later. The devil had come to collect his due! He was fifty-three. It’s been wisely said that sin always takes you further than you want to go, it keeps you longer than you want to stay, and it will cost you more than you want to pay.*

*My parent’s selfish actions cost everyone. Like the devastation after an earthquake, shame and heartache tore gaping holes in not only me and my mother, but in my father’s legitimate family, as well. As for my mother and I, we were left nothing, not even his name. My parents were so ashamed, that they even changed their names on my birth certificate. As a mistress and an illegitimate child we had no legal right to any inheritance; we were penniless.*

*Sadly, mother carried the guilt and shame of their sin for the rest of her life. She believed that she was past God’s mercy and it destroyed her, first emotionally, and then physically. Her perceived unworthiness and disgrace drove her to marry another abusive man which subsequently led her to abuse alcohol. Immersed in a self-punishing, victim mentality she stayed with my stepfather for 17 years and would have stayed longer, had she lived. She died at the age of 49. Cancer had consumed her liver, the end result of years of alcohol abuse. Consequently, I am forever aware that, were it not for God’s grace and mercy, I would have continued my mother’s same sin pattern.*

*When I lost my father, somewhere deep in my little girl heart I felt abandoned. In those days, not much was known about the psychological effects abandonment has on children. But today, as many of us know all too well, the damage cannot be underestimated. It’s catastrophic!*

*Wikipedia gives this very insightful information about abandoned children.*

*Abandoned child syndrome is a behavioral or psychological condition that results primarily from the loss of one or both parents or sexual abuse. (In my case it would include both loss and sexual abuse) Abandonment may be physical (the parent is not present in the child's life) or emotional (the parent withholds affection, nurturing, or stimulation). (Ironically, my mother would often withhold affection as a way of punishing me.) Parents who leave their children, with or without good reason, can cause psychological damage to the child****. This damage is reversible,******but only with appropriate assistance****. Abandonment experiences and boundary violations are in no way indictments of a child's innate goodness and value. Instead, they reveal the flawed thinking, false beliefs, and impaired behaviors of those who hurt them. Still, the wounds are struck deep in their young hearts and minds, and the very real pain can still be felt today. The causes of emotional injury need to be understood and accepted so they can heal. Until that occurs, the pain will stay with them, becoming a driving force in their adult lives.*

*You see, no human being could understand the emptiness left by my father. But God… my real Father knew, and He had a plan. Of course, it was years before I understood what was missing, and that I was looking for love and acceptance in all the wrong places. I didn’t know my heavenly Father - but He knew me. Furthermore, He had a plan for my life, and it was a good plan.*

***Jeremiah 31:3 (KJV****)*

***“The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: Therefore, with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”***

*As strange as it may seem, God used all my painful past to draw me to Himself. It was later in life when I met my Heavenly Father and the truth of His love healed my afflicted soul. I am His, He chose me as the Bride for His Son. I am wanted, and He will never ever abandon me because I am in Christ. He took what the enemy of my soul intended for my destruction and turned it into beauty.*

*My life today is completely the opposite of my mother’s, for one reason… the Lord Jesus Christ! If it weren’t for Jesus, I’m fairly certain, I would be the town drunk! But because He saved me, I can hold my head up and walk in His grace all the way home till I get to my Father’s house. And best of all, my children and grandchildren and great grandchildren will have a Christian legacy.*

*Our study of the book of Ephesians has reminded me of how very blessed I am to be adopted by God my Father. His Word is personal and healing to me, and it can be for anyone who has suffered the sting of someone else’s sin. To the praise of His Glorious Name, I’ve been healed by the love of my Father!*

***Joel 2:25 (MSG)***

***“I’ll make up for the years of the locust, the great locust devastation— Locusts savage, locusts deadly, fierce locusts, locusts of doom, that great locust invasion I sent your way. You’ll eat your fill of good food. You’ll be full of praises to your God, The God who has set you back on your heels in wonder. Never again will my people be despised. You’ll know without question that I’m in the thick of life with Israel, That I’m your God, yes, your God, the one and only real God. Never again will my people be despised.”***

Joney’s story is not that uncommon is it? But you know what? There’s no such thing 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. And when they do, as Joney testified, God can use this hunger and thirst for love to show us something is missing.

***Isaiah 48:10 (KJV)***

***Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.***

C.S. Lewis wrote, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains.” 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:

***Psalms 45:10-11 (NASB)***

***Listen O daughter, give attention and incline your ear: Forget your people and your father’s house; then the King will desire your beauty. Because He is your LORD, bow down to Him***

This Psalm was composed for the King on His wedding day. (Don’t forget, the Father gets to pick the bride for His Son.) Hebrews chapter one, ascribes this passage to the Lord Jesus, and if you are the bride of Christ, then I believe these words certainly can apply to you: “*Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father’s house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him.* Psalms 45:10-11 (ESV)

This song by Chris Tomlin, is a fitting conclusion to this lesson. I hope these lyrics will serve to convince you that God is the perfect Father. In fact, He is the Daddy of our dreams. We are not fatherless. We never have been - we just never Knew Who He was. He loves us, knows us personally and intimately…. He’s a good Father, but even more…. He’s our *Daddy.*

Chris Tomlin

Good Good Father

Oh, I've heard a thousand stories  
Of what they think You're like  
But I've heard the tender whisper  
Of love in the dead of night  
And You tell me that You're pleased  
And that I'm never alone  
  
Chorus  
You're a good good Father  
It's who You are, it's who You are, it's who You are  
And I'm loved by You  
It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am  
  
Verse 2  
Oh, and I've seen many searching  
For answers far and wide  
But I know we're all searching  
For answers only You provide  
‘Cause You know just what we need  
Before we say a word  
  
Chorus  
You're a good good Father  
It's who You are, it's who You are, it's who You are  
And I'm loved by You  
It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am  
  
Bridge  
Cause You are perfect in all of Your ways  
You are perfect in all of Your ways  
You are perfect in all of Your ways to us  
  
You are perfect in all of Your ways  
Oh, You are perfect in all of Your ways  
You are perfect in all of Your ways to us  
  
Oh, it's love so undeniable  
I, I can hardly speak  
Peace so unexplainable  
I, I can hardly think  
As You call me deeper still  
As You call me deeper still  
As You call me deeper still  
Into love, love, love  
  
Chorus (x2)  
You're a good good Father  
It's who You are, it's who You are, it's who You are  
And I'm loved by You  
It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am  
  
Bridge 2  
You're a good good Father  
  
You are perfect in all of Your ways  
You are perfect in all of Your ways  
You are perfect in all of Your ways

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: LET’S TALK ABOUT IT.

1. What does the name Father mean to you, and how do you feel about God being a Father? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why is the role of Father so important? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Can you think of any ways society has diminished and dishonored fathers? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Have you ever been selected to receive an award or honor? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. If you had siblings, did your parents seem to favor one over the others? If you were not the favorite, what emotions come to your mind? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. When were we chosen by God the Father? Read John 17:1-6, 23-26. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Have you ever felt that you had to earn God’s love? If so, how do you relate to God when you sin? Do you hide from Him? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Does God’s love end? Why or why not? (Romans 8:31-39) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. The first time in the Bible the word Love is used in in Genesis 22:2. What is the context and why in this significant? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. What are the differences in being born into a family and being adopted? Romans 3:9-31

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

1. Read Ephesians 1:4-5 (NIV) and fill in the blanks: “In \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ He predestined us to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_as His sons through Jesus Christ.”
2. Read Acts 2:39 and Mark 3:13-14 then fill in the blank: We have been called, not to a place, nor to a work, but God has called us to… \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!
3. Read these passages: Jeremiah 1:4-10; 1 Peter 1:1-2; John 15:16; Isaiah 43:10-13. From these verses, what is the stated purposes we were chosen by God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. In the last words of the Old Testament, the Lord speaks to the issue of fathers and their children. Read Malachi 4:6 and write in your own words how the Father feels about fathers who leave their children and also what is it He desire for the relationship between fathers and their children? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the difference in a man who simply fathers a child and a man who is a real father? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. How does God feel about widows and orphans? (James 1:27; Psalms 68:5-6; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 23:3) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. In the light of all we have learned, can you thank God for the man who fathered you? Do you recognize the role he played in bringing you to God the Father? If he is still living, would you be willing to express to him how you feel? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

**Memory Verses**

***Ephesians 1:3 (NASB)***

***Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.***

**Chapter # 13**

**Behold Your God**

**Who is Jesus?**



**Key Passage**

***Ephesians 1:19-22 (HCSB)***

***And what is the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His vast strength. He demonstrated this power in the Messiah by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavens—far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put everything under His feet and appointed Him as head over everything for the church.***

**Introduction**

Without a doubt, Jesus Christ is the most polarizing figure in all of history. And yet, for reasons we have discussed in a previous chapter, a large portion of the world’s population has never even heard the name Jesus. As for the those who have, some hate Him, some deny His existence and still others, while believing the historical facts about Him, are simply indifferent towards Him. Saul would be one who would be numbered in the category of those who hated Jesus. But all that changed when he was stopped in his tracks while on the road to Damascus. When Jesus called Saul by name, he must have wondered who in the world could this possibly be. (Acts 9:1-31) Saul asked the risen Savior, **“*Who are you Lord*?”** In this lesson we’ll be answering that question from both a Biblical, as well as a personal perspective.

That’s not a simple question, but it is one of the most important questions we could ever ask. For this reason, we’ll be taking a different approach to this chapter than the previous ones. Since we can’t describe who Jesus is, we’ll just have to allow the Bible to do so. Having said that, we’ll be covering a significant amount of Scriptures, and while this may be an exhausting list, it is by no means an exhaustive list; so you’ve been forewarned. Here is our aspiration, to encounter the ***Living Word of God*** within the pages of the ***written Word of God***.

Although many passages have been printed for you, I urge you to be like the believers in Berea, and search the scriptures for yourself. (Acts 17:11) You may want to use a highlighter to mark the references to Jesus we will find throughout these passages. Additionally, you may want to start a list of everything you learn about Him. I apologize for all the extra Word searches in this chapter, but I promise it will be worth our time to behold Christ Jesus as He truly is… the very embodiment of God’s radiant glory. And so this is our lofty goal… to behold our God and King.

**Who is Jesus Really?**

***Revelation 1:10-20 (ASV)***

***I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet saying, What thou seest, write in a book and send it to the seven churches: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.***

***And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.***

***And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.***

Personally speaking, even after having spent the last 27 years of my life getting to know the Lord Jesus, I’m convinced that a *full knowledge* of Him is unattainable, at least while we are still here on earth. (1 Corinthians 13:12; Romans 11:33-36) And furthermore, what I do know of Him only leaves me hungry and thirsty to know Him more.

Looking back over my life, I’m humbled and grateful for the moments my Lord has allowed me even the tiniest glimpses of Him. And I’m not just talking about all that I have seen concerning Him in the Bible. You may be thinking, “Are you saying that you have *seen* the Invisible God?!” Obviously not! But what I am saying is this: He’s made Himself known to me in very tangible ways - too numerous to recount, and when He does, I am left awe-struck by His glory!

You see, I’m just a housewife, and yet, in the mundane, as well as the monumental moments, Jesus has been very real and present in my life. I’ll not take up our time now to elaborate, but I have seen Him move a typhoon, heal my broken heart, find a needle in a hay stack at my request, (well - a ring in a field) and I’ve personally heard His voice as he speaks to me through His Word. On these rare but wonderful occasions, I find myself asking the same question that Paul ask of Jesus: “*Who are you Lord*?”

By the way, as we’re about to see, ***Jesus is the Word***, and as one of His sheep, it’s my honor to hear His voice. As a side note: you may find it interesting to know that the Greek word for *voice* is *phone.*

On one occasion Jesus asked His disciples a probing question: “Who do you think I am?” Peter responded, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 16:13-19) When it comes right down to it, only God can reveal the true identity of Jesus. And when He does, we will all answer this question personally: Who do you say Jesus is? Your response to that question will set the trajectory for your life now, as well as your eternity. So don’t you think we need to get this right?

C.S. Lewis, author of The Chronicles of Narnia, was once a skeptic. In his classic book, Mere Christianity he wrote:

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

**Jesus in the Old Testament**

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

***For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.***

Hidden from the writers of the Old Testament in shadows, signs, types and symbols is a mystery. In the third century Saint Augustine wrote, “In the Old Testament the New lies hidden, in the New Testament the old is laid open.” Here is the principle that we must understand to unlock all the mysteries of the Bible. Without a proper understanding of the Old Testament, the New Testament doesn’t make much sense, and vice versa. The Bible, therefore, must be viewed as a seamless story. A useful tool you can use to see the story as it unfolds in sequence is the Chronological Bible.

When Christ Jesus is referenced in the Old Testament, before His incarnation, it is called a Christophany. Remember, the Old Testament was the Bible Jesus quoted from. It was after His resurrection and before His ascension that Jesus did a chronological Bible study with two men on the road to Emmaus, and then later with His disciples.

It makes perfect sense that Jesus would wait until He had fulfilled at least 353 specific Old Testament passages before He laid the Bible open and revealed the mystery to His disciples. As the old adage goes, “Hind-sight is twenty -twenty.” As Jesus went from the Law of Moses to the Prophets and the Psalms, they realized He was the Lord God Almighty. Wouldn’t you have loved to be part of that Bible Study?

***Luke 24:25-49 (NASB)***

***And He said to them, O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Then beginning with the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in ALL the Scriptures. They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?” Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you: but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” AMEN.***

The terms used for the study of interpretation of the Scriptures are hermeneutics and exegesis, and they are frequently used interchangeably. The word hermeneutics comes from the Greek word hermeneuo and it means to *translate, interpret, to explain thoroughly, and expound on.* Jesus used this word in the above text; specifically, in Luke 24:31, 32, 45. It’s translated as: *opened their eyes* *or minds* and *explained.*

Herb Hodges, whom I consider a spiritual father, is the man who was instrumental in casting the vision of Biblical disciple making for my church. In my ignorance of the Greek language, I had always assumed that exegesis, was referring to “exiting Jesus” from the Scriptures. I always seize the opportunity to learn from Brother Herb. So, as we were seated next to one another on a plane bound for Nicaragua, I ask Brother Herb to explain exegesis to me. This is what He said, “Exegesis means to take by the hand and lead out from invisibility to visibility.” In reality, I was not too far off base. Jesus took them by the hand and hearts and exited Himself from the Scriptures!

**His Name is Above Every Name**

***Philippians 2:9-11 (NIV)***

***Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***

Each name or title for God is a Self-revelation, and there’s a scarlet thread that ties each of the names of God together. There’s only One who ever lived up to the Name. And it is written: “Jesus Christ is thesame*, yesterday and today and forever****.***” (Hebrews 13:8)

***Acts 4:10-12 (NASB)***

***BY THE NAME of JESUS CHRIST, the NAZARENE, who you crucified, whom God raised from the dead- by THIS NAME this man stands here before you in good health. And there is SALVATION in NO one else; for there is NO OTHER NAME under heaven that has been given among men BY WHICH WE MUST BE SAVED.***

Remember that John was in Ephesus when he wrote his gospel and his letters. John begins his gospel by stating that Jesus *is the Word of God*. And in Revelation he said of Jesus, “His name is the Word of God.” (The Word of God translated in Greek is Logos.)

***John 1:1-4 (NASB)***

***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.***

As we’re about to see in the following Word Search, there is a word that parallels the Greek name for the Word of God,and in Hebrew the name is Memra. Used interchangeably with the name LORD, Memra is synonymous with God Himself. In other words, there is no distinction between the LORD Himself and the *Word of God*.

**WORD SEARCH: From Strong’s Concordance:**

### Targum: The Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Scriptures for the Jews who came out of captivity in Babylon, possibly translated by Ezra. (Neh. 8:6-7) In Greek the Memra is God, yet is a separate personality from the Father and Holy Spirit. (Source: from the internet: oneinmessiah.net/TargumMemraTheWordOfGod.htm edited by Malachi Yosef)

### Memra/ The Word of the LORD: Strong’s #3982 and #3983 an Aramaic word meaning, command, or appointment. It comes from the Aramaic: Strong’s #565 imrah or emrah. It means: *commandment, speech, or word*. (Ps. 147:15, Is. 55:10-11) It is the equivalent of Logos/ The Word. (Source: from Bible word.org) John 1:1-3, 10, 14; Psalms 33:6; Gen. 1:27; 9:17; 28:20-21

### Word: Greek: Strong’s #3056 Logos; *something said a topic, subject of discourse, also reasoning, or motive, the Divine Expression (i.e. Christ): - account, cause, communication, doctrine, fame, mouth, utterance, word, work.*

### Word: Hebrew: Strong’s #1696 and #1697, Dabar*; to speak, commune, declare, commune, promise. A word spoken, communication, message, act, answer, counsel, message, power, word and a work.*

***John 11:25 (NASB)***

***Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.’***

When God introduced Himself to Moses, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He said, “*I Am Who I Am,*” *The LORD God Almighty.* Now compare this, to the preposterous “I Am” statements of Jesus, and keep in mind that Jesus Christ is eternal and unchanging. If His claims were not true, then they would sound extremely arrogant wouldn’t they? But, on the other hand, if He was and is the Great I Am, then these are not the words of one who is narcissistic. Jesus was just speaking the truth. For as He claimed I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life!” (John 10:9; 14:6)

But did Jesus’ actions speak louder than His words? Take if you will, the conversation Jesus had with Martha as she was grieving the loss of her brother Lazarus. “***I am the resurrection and the life,***” Jesus said, and then He proceeds to raise Lazarus from the grave. Now mind you, this was *not just a resuscitation*; Lazarus had been stone cold dead for three days! Jesus hates death, for He stated plainly: “I Am the life!” On one occasion he turned a funeral into a party by bringing a young man back to life, and on another occasion gave a 12-year-old girl back to her parents.

If all of that were not enough, what do you make of all the dead saints who followed Him up out of the grave? It makes one wonder what that must have been like, both for the resurrected and for those who saw them walking about wearing their grave clothes! It is one thing to claim to be the resurrection and the life, and it’s an altogether different thing when you take authority of a dead body and command it to live. Only God could do that! And you know what? One glorious day, He will do away with death all together.

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

* + - * John11:1-44; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56; Matthew 52-53; 1 Corinthians 15:26; Revelation 20: 13-15, 21:1-4

***Isaiah 45:21-25 (NIV)***

***Declare what is to be, present it—let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. “Turn to me and be saved, all you end of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength.’” All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.***

***Isaiah 42:8 (NASB)***

***I am the LORD, that is MY NAME; I will not give MY GLORY to another, Nor MY praise to graven images.***

***Acts 10:42-43 (NASB)***

***And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is THE ONE who has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. Of HIM ALL the prophets bear witness that through HIS NAME everyone who believes IN HIM receives forgiveness of sins.***

**WORD SEARCH: From Strong’s Concordance:**

* **I AM** inHebrew is Hayah. It is the root word for the next name LORD.
* **LORD** in Hebrew is Yehovah-Jehovah: ***T****he LORD-The Self-Existent or Eternal Jehovah, Jewish national name of God.* The root of this word is the name: “**I Am**”.
* **Jesus or Joshua** in Hebrew is Yehowshuwa. In Greek this name is **Jesus**. This Hebrew name is made up of two words, one we just saw, the **LORD-Jehova**, from the root word **I AM**, and the second word that the name **Jesus/Joshua** comes from is the word save or **Savior.**
* **Savior or Save** in Hebrew is Yasha**:** -*to be open wide or free-rescue be safe-bringing salvation, save, savoir, get victory.*
* **Isaiah** in Hebrew is Yeshayahuw. This name comes from the word **Savior**. His name means, *Yesha has saved*. (Did you note that Isaiah’s name means “*Yesha has saved”* – in the past tense?)

I know this is a lot of Greek and Hebrew, but I hope you will not skip over these Word Searches. I implore you to take a closer look. As you look at those words, do you see Jesus? Do they answer the question of His identity? In case you’re not yet convinced, were not done yet. By the way, Jesus’ favorite “Self- title” is - The Son of Man. This is curious because we know that based on the Bible He is The Son of God. So why did He speak of Himself in third person as the *Son of Man*? After you read the following passages, give an explanation as to why Jesus called Himself the *Son of Man*. (Revelation 1:13; Mark 8:31) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Matthew 24:30 (NASB)***

***And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will morn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.”***

***Mark 13:26 (NASB)***

***Then they will see The Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.***

***Daniel 7:13-14 (NASB)***

***I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven ONE LIKE a SON OF MAN was coming, and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And He was given Dominion, GLORY and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve HIM. His Dominion is an everlasting Dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.***

***Matthew 28:18 (KJV)***

***“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”***

***Deuteronomy 4:39 (NIV)***

***Know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.***

***Psalms 103:19 (ESV)***

***The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.***

***Isaiah 45:11-12 (NASB)***

***Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: “Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons, and you shall commit to Me the work of My hands. “It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with My hands. And I ordained all their host.***

***Isaiah 43:10 (NASB)***

“***So that you may know and believe Me and understand that I AM He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after me. I, even I am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me.”***

***Genesis 17:1 (NIV)***

***When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless.***

***Exodus 6:2-3 (NIV)***

***God also said to Moses, “I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself fully known to them.***

***Isaiah 54:5 (NIV)***

***“For your Maker is your husband – the LORD Almighty is his name – the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.”***

***Exodus 3:13-15 (NIV)***

***Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.…***

***John 8:58 (NASB)***

***Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”***

***1 John 1:1 (NASB)***

***“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the WORD OF LIFE.”***

***Revelation 2:8 (NASB)***

***“The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this”***

***Revelation 3:14 (NASB)***

***“The AMEN, the faithful and true Witness, The Beginning of the creation of God”, says This.***

***Revelation 21:6 (NASB)***

***“Then He said to me, it is done. I am the Alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. “***

***Revelation 22:13 (NASB)***

***“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”***

***John 1:10-14 (NASB)***

***He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, the glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

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

* Acts 5:31; Romans 9:5; Psalms 2:6-12, 83:18, 86:9-10, 97:7, 45:6-7, 101:1-13; Daniel 7:13-14; Isaiah 42:8, 45:5-6, 52:10; Hebrew 1:1-13; 12:2-3, Acts 5:31, 10:36; Matt. 8:29, 22:41-45, 24:30, 26:64, 28:18

**He’s Alive**

***1 Peter 1:3-9 (ESV)***

***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.***

As we have already observed in previous chapters, faith and belief must have an object to rest upon. The Christian’s faith rests securely upon the Rock of Ages… the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 3:20-22) Yet, without a clear understanding of who He truly is, we have no security whatsoever, and therefore, we are no different than those who worship any other dead god.

Therefore, the single most important thing that sets Christianity apart from all other religions is this: our God conquered death…. He is alive! Belief in the fact of Christ’s resurrection is foundational to true saving faith.

***Romans 10:9 (NASB)***

***That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.***

Let’s make some application here. What does the resurrection of Christ have to do with your life and mine as believers? The answer is absolutely *everything*! In his book entitled, Sacred Marriage, (page 150) Gary Thomas said, “Christianity doesn’t make much sense without the reality of heaven.” Let’s ponder that statement for just a moment. Having recently buried several loved ones, I can attest to the fact that without the prospect of life beyond the grave, the rest of Jesus’ claims are a moot point. Likewise, the prospect of living in this sin cursed world and then nothing, makes this option pretty bleak wouldn’t you say?

So here’s some food for thought for the scoffer. For the sake of the argument, let’s suppose Jesus is dead. There is no heaven, and there is no hell. If Christians have believed in a lie, then how do you reconcile the justice of someone, say, an Adolf Hitler? He certainly did not receive his due penalty on earth did he? And what about someone like Mother Teresa? Where’s her reward?

You’ll find an extensive explanation of this in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians in chapter fifteen. As Paul said, “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.” (1 Corinthians 15:18) (NIV) And besides that, how can we endure the trials of this life, much less have a hope beyond the grave. (Those who are not “in Christ” are without hope!) (Ephesians 2:1-13)

***1 Timothy 4:10-11 (NIV)***

***That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things.***

Yet, Christ has risen - just as He said He would! (Matthew 27:63, 28:6; mark 16:6) And we are not without hope because Jesus conquered death. He walked out of the tomb. He is alive, and through faith in Him, we too have life beyond the grave. We can walk confidently through the valley of the shadow of death with hope and without fear. The fact that Jesus is alive has a great deal to do with how we face death. We have hope for living and hope for dying, and because He lives, as the hymn says, “I can face tomorrow.”

***1 Corinthians 15:25-27 (NASB)***

***For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For He has put all things in subjection under His feet.***

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

* 2 Corinthians 1:18-20; Colossians 1:1-20; John 11:25-26; 10:15-18; Matthew 27:33- 28:20; Revelation 1:5-18, 19:13-16, 22:16-21; Hebrew 6:19-20; 2 Timothy 1:10

**He is Seated at the Right Hand of God**

***Hebrews 12:2 (NASB)***

***Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.***

If you’ll recall, Paul was imprisoned in Rome when he wrote this letter. Nevertheless, in spite of his situation, Paul reminded the saints (as well as himself) of this life sustaining truth: ***God is in control!*** As the Lord God - the Almighty, Jesus Christ rules and reigns over all. Not a single minute detail of our lives, nor the tiniest molecule in the universe is outside of His sovereign dominion. Beyond a shadow of doubt, Paul was convinced of Jesus’ true identity. So much so that, in reading the end of chapter one, you might even think Paul got a little carried away with adjectives. Now, if he was describing anyone else, the chapter could have ended something like this: “Well, that about sums him up.” But Jesus is not like anyone else; He has no equal. You can’t simply “sum Him up” with words! The fact is: one day *all things* will be *summed up* and *filled up*… *in* Jesus! But what about the here and now -where is Jesus? Just where He said He would be – on His throne at the Right hand of His Father with all the power and authority in all of heaven and all of earth under His feet.

The writer of the book of Hebrews (Paul) collected no less than seventeen Old Testament passages to shine the spotlight on the One who is seated at the right hand of God – King Jesus!

***Hebrews 1:1-13 (ESV)***

***Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father,  
and he shall be to me a son”? And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,***

***“Let all God’s angels worship him.” Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds,  
and his ministers a flame of fire.” But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed.   
But you are the same, and your years will have no end.” And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand  
until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?***

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

* John 1:14, 3:17, 4:24-26, 42, 5:39-46, 8:29,58; 10:26-30; 14:6, 17:1-3, 20:26-28; Luke 24:25-27; Mark 12:29-37; Matthew 1:21; 16:13-16; Isaiah 5:16, 9:6-7, 40:1-31, 42:1-12, 45:15-22, 43:11, 49:26; 60:16; Exodus 3:6-18; Revelation 1:8;11;17-18; 2:23; 22:13-16; Titus 2:10-13; Jude 25; Acts 2:33-38, 4:8; 1 John 4:14; 1 Peter 2:9, 2 Peter 1:11; Romans 10:7-18

***Revelation 1:8 (NASB)***

***I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, The Almighty.”***

***Colossians 1:15-20 (NIV)***

***The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.***

**WORD SEARCH: FROM STRONG’S CONCORDANCE:**

***Acts 3:15 (NIV)***

***“But you put to death the author of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.”***

* **Author*/* Prince Strong’s** #747 in Greek is Archegos- arkhay-gos *a chief leader*: - *author, captain, prince*. See this word translated *prince or Author* in the following verse.
* **Beginning**: Strong’s # 746 in Greek is Arche: commencement, or chief, in order, time, place or rank, beginning, at the first, magistrate, power, principality, principle, and rule. (Colossians 1:15-18, John 1:1-2, 1 John 1:1, Revelations, 1:8,3:14,21:6,22:13)
* **First** **Begotten**/**Born** Strong’s #4416 in Greek is Prototokos, and #4413 Protos: *foremost (first place in time, place or importance) before, beginning, best, chief, first, of all, former.* From #4253 Pro: fore, i.e. in front of, prior, superior to above ago before or ever. # 4250 Prin: prior, sooner before that era. (John 8:58) #4386: prorteron: previously-before, at the first, former. (John 6:62, 17:5, 24; Colossians 1:15,17,18; Hebrew 1:6, 11:28-12:23; Matthew 1:25; Romans 8:29; Rev. 1:5)
* **Begotten** Strong’s #1088 in Greek is Genos: kin, born, generation, and offspring. (Hebrews 1:5, Acts 13:33
* **Only** **begotten**: Strong’s # 3438 in Greek is Monogenes: only born, sole-only begotten child.; John 1:14,1; 3:16,18, 36; Hebrew 11:17; 1 John 4:9; John 8:24; 28; 12:32-34; 19:37 Please make note of the fact that the titles “only begotten” or “firstborn” are *only used in reference to Jesus*.

As we conclude this long chapter, I want to end with some very practical, yet personal applications. I’m curious to learn what might be going on in your life at this moment. What are the situations that weigh you down emotionally, physically and mentally? I hope this lesson has given you an arsenal full of uplifting passages to meditate on.

For me, I suppose there is nothing that rocks my world quite like knowing that someone I love deeply does not really know or believe in Jesus. I get a lump in my throat just thinking about a recent conversation with a person who is very dear to my heart. The topic of discussion was “what is truth” and “who is Jesus Christ.” It was not so difficult to open the Bible and show them who Jesus is, but when it comes to answering the more personal question of, “Who is Jesus to me?” I’m at a loss for words, because when you come right down to it… I don’t quite know how to articulate Him. But I can honestly, unashamedly and unequivocally tell you this: The Lord Jesus Christ is my Savior and my God! He is not only the love of my life, He is my life! So the question was posed: “What if you are wrong about Jesus?” Here was my response: “I know Him personally, and I’m not wrong about Jesus. But to answer the question, if I were wrong, I will live and die with love, joy, purpose and peace, and then I’ll die *a very happy fool*!”

This person knows quite well my sorrows, pains and tears. So this removes any delusion that I only believe in Jesus because He has blessed me. But make no mistake about it, He has blessed me… some of these blessings come disguised as life crushing sorrows. Is Jesus worth it? Oh, *yes He is*… a thousand times - *yes He is*! And I’m living for the day, when I behold Him face- to-face at the wedding, and I can hardly wait! (Revelation 1:7, 21:1-7)

In every generation, there is a song inspired by Scripture, a spiritual song that resonates within the hearts of believers. These kinds of songs become anthems of praise that will endure the test of time. In my estimation, this song written by Donald A. Koch and Andrew Shawn Craig, is one of those songs. It is the gospel, put to music.

**In Christ Alone**

In Christ alone my hope is found  
He is my light, my strength, my song  
This cornerstone, this solid ground  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm  
  
What heights of love, what depths of peace  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease  
My Comforter, my All in All  
Here in the love of Christ I stand  
  
In Christ alone, who took on flesh  
Fullness of God in helpless babe  
This gift of love and righteousness  
Scorned by the ones He came to save  
  
Till on that cross as Jesus died  
The wrath of God was satisfied  
For every sin on Him was laid  
Here in the death of Christ I live  
  
There in the ground His body lay  
Light of the world by darkness slain  
Then bursting forth in glorious Day  
Up from the grave he rose again  
  
And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me  
For I am His and He is mine  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ  
  
No guilt in life, no fear in death  
This is the power of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath  
Jesus commands my destiny  
  
No power of hell, no scheme of man  
Can ever pluck me from His hand  
Till He returns or calls me home  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

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

1. Why is the fact of Christ’s resurrection so important to believers? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. If you were told today that you had a terminal illness, would you face death with fear or with faith? Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. In C.S. Lewis’ quote, what are the three conclusions he came to about Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Read the following passages: John: 9:35-38 20:27-28; Matthew 4:11, 28:16-18; Luke 2:9-14; Deut. 6:13, 10:20; Ex. 34:14; Psalms 2:6-12 Did Jesus receive worship? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. If so, who was He declaring Himself to be? Read Hebrews 1:6; Luke 2:9-14. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Read the following passages: Psalms 2:2-7, 83:18; John 1:14-18, 12:15; Heb.1:3; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Zechariah 9:9; Daniel 7:13-14; Hebrews 12:2; Revelation 19:16 Since God will not give His Glory to another, why is Jesus full of Glory? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. As you read these passages, can you determine who will ultimately Judge of the world? Isaiah 33:22; Revelation 19:11; Matt. 10:28, 16:21; Romans 1:18-32 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do those who believe in Jesus worship a different God than the one in the Old Testament? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. In light of everything we have discovered, what in this world is not under the sovereign control and rule of the Lord Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. What situation in your life that seen to be over your head? To you feel that you could be overwhelmed by it? that you could be easily overwhelmed by it? Make a list. When you are done, take every situation and find several passages to apply to your situation. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
11. Jesus our Lord is the Great I AM. What are the greatest needs in your life at this moment? Can you apply any of the many passages about Him to these situations? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
12. How does Jesus’ position in Heaven relate to our position? (Ephesians 2:5-6) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
13. Now it’s *your* turn, who do you say Jesus is? But more importantly, who is He to you? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

**Memory Verses**

***Colossians 3:1-4***

***Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.***

**Chapter # 14**

**God Within Her**

**Key Passages**

***Ephesians 1:6-14 (ESV)***

***To the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.***

***In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.***

**Introduction**

In summing up man’s attempt to write about God, the great theologian, Thomas Aquinas said, “It feels like straw.” And it does indeed. How can one explain or define the invisible God? Well, we can’t. Besides that, the goal of Bible study is not to define or explain God. The goal is to know Him intimately and personally. But you see, that is impossible without the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It’s no wonder Paul included this prayer in his letter to the saints: “I do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.” (Ephesians 1:16-17) (NIV)

You will not find the word Trinity in the Scriptures, although this foundational doctrine is found throughout the Bible. It’s a difficult concept to grasp, much less explain, even for Biblical scholars. It’s not surprising that there has been some confusion surrounding this doctrine. So, I broach this subject with a little trepidation. Yet, nonetheless, we would be amiss to overlook this crucial doctrine.

Each person of the trinity has different, yet unique rolls. To the degree that we understand each of their roles, will greatly affect our view of God. And so we have met God the Father and then God the Son so now we will turn our attention to God the Holy Spirit. This will not be an exhaustive study of the Holy Spirit, but hopefully we will learn enough to make some real life application and begin to recognize His work in our lives.

**Three in One**

***Genesis 1:1-2 (NIV)***

***In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.***

In the last chapter, we learned that Jesus is “God the Beginning.” Would you like to see the first sign of the Trinity in the Bible? They are right there in Genesis: God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit. But, unless you have some knowledge of Hebrew grammar, they will not be so recognizable. Let me explain. In Genesis one, the Hebrew for God is Elohim, and it’s used here in the plural form. Obviously this is referring to *God the Father and God the Son*. Now the puzzling thing is this - the verb *created* is singular. Based on the following passages we know that Jesus is creator God. (John 1:1-10; Colossians 1:13-20 and Hebrews 1:1-10).

The Holy Spirit is there in the second verse of the Bible. we see the third person of the Trinity -God the Holy Spirit. He was there, “Hovering over the waters.” The question begs to be asked, since the Bible states that God is One, then why is the name Elohim plural? Clearly, God is both Father, Son and Spirit! And all three persons of the Trinity took part in creation, including the creation of man. This is evident in Genesis 1:26 where they said: *“Let* *us make man in our image.”* In Isaiah 6:8 at Isaiah’s commission they asked, “Who will go for *us?”* We will look at this, and other essential doctrines, in detail in another chapter. (Genesis 3:22)

Many analogies have been used in an attempt to explain the Trinity. Perhaps you’ve heard this comparison: The Trinity is like H2O, no matter if it’s steam, ice or liquid -- it’s still water. And then there is this analogy: He is like the sun, fire, light and heat. Yet analogy that we can think of seems to fall short doesn’t it? Perhaps that’s why some have erroneously denied His very existence. Still others, out of ignorance or the fear of being labeled too extreme, refuse to even broach the subject of the Holy Spirit. To follow this line of thinking, would be to miss the most intimate part of our relationship with the Lord… and that we most certainly do not want to do.

***1 John 4:13-16 (NIV)***

***This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.***

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

* John 1:29-34; Luke 3:21-22, 9:28-36; Mark 1:19-11, 9:2-13; Matthew 3:13-17, 17:1-13

***Psalm 46:4-7 (NIV)***

***There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Highest dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in***

***uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.***

The Lord Jesus is “*God with us*,” and the Holy Spirit is “*God within us*!” Even as I begin to write about God who lives “within me,” I am more than a bit overwhelmed at the task. In fact, I can’t do this without Him! And so I am pleading with Him to open our minds and bring illumination to this book He wrote!

First of all, when you talk about studying the Bible, you realize that He - the Holy Spirit - is the Arthur! (2 Timothy 2:15) How do we know this? Well, He inspired both, Peter and Paul to tell us. Have you ever heard of a ghost writer? In this case, we are talking about the Holy Ghost writer! So you may be wondering, how this ties back to the church at Ephesus. I am glad you ask. If you’ll recall, Timothy was the pastor of the church at Ephesus, when Paul wrote the following letter to him. So it is safe to assume that the saints at Ephesus were privy to this fact first.

# *2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)*

***All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

***2 Peter 1:19-21 (NASB)***

***So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.***

For many people, the Bible is just another book written by men. However, if anyone will take the time to learn the historical facts, they will learn that this is no ordinary book. Written over a span of 1000 plus years, the sixty-six books of the Bible were written and recorded by the Holy Spirit on the hearts of approximately 49 different writers. Each one of these men, being inspired by God, took scrolls, most likely made out of papyrus paper, and ink in hand and meticulously begin to write. (Luke 1:1-4) Throughout the ages God has preserved His Holy Book, and because of this, we can hold in our hands the very ***WORDS*** of ***GOD.***

**Word Search:**

* **God breathed/ inspired** Greek word Theopneustos: *divine breathed in, given by inspiration of God.* This word comes from the word for Spirit. 2 Timothy 3:16
* **Spirit**: # 4151 Pneuma: *to breathe, to blow, Holy Spirit, Christ’s Spirit, life, Spirit, Mind, and breath*.
* **Comforter Strong’s Cordance #3875 Greek parakletos: an intercessor, consoler, advocate, comforter.**
* **Holy Spirit in Ephesians 15 times**
* **53 times in 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians**
* **16 times holy Spirit lives in me**
* **8 times Jesus lives in me**

**John 3:5-8; 4: 6:63, 7:39; 14:2,6,10,16- 17, 23, 25-26; 15:4-10,26; 16:7, 13-15; 17:17, 19, 21,23;**

**1 John 5:6-8**

**Galatians 1:15-16; 2:20 ;4:19**

**Ephesians 3:17**

**Colossians 1:27**

**2 Thess. 1:10**

**1 Cor. 2:13, 4:6-7; 6:19, 12:3; 2 Cor. 6:6; 13:5,14**

**Revelation 2:7,11,17,29, 3:6, 13, 22,**

**Romans 5:5, 8:10,**

**Luke 4:, 12:12**

**Digging Deeper**:

John 6:63, 7:37-39; 1 Thess.2:13; 2 Timothy 3:13-4:4; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 1 Corinthians 2:4-16; 2 Corinthians 1:20-21)

**The Acts of the Holy Spirit**

Now, no one would fault a person who never had the opportunity to hear about the third person of the Trinity. For instance, the disciples Paul met when he first arrived in Ephesus. (Acts 19:1-7) However, the person who remains in ignorance because they refuse to learn, now that’s an altogether different thing. But that’s not us, because this study is all about growing in grace and Knowledge of God. I hope that all we have learned thus far has served to whet your appetite to know Him more. So, with that being said, we’ll be staying within in the pages of the Book that the Holy Spirit wrote - the Bible - and we will find ample opportunity for Him to learn exactly who He is. Because after all, He is, among other things… our Teacher!

***Acts 19:1-2 (ESV)***

***And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”***

In the above passage, the Holy Spirit was teaching in Ephesus through Paul.

Basically, the Spirit is the precious, personal presence of “God with, and in us.” In Robert E. Coleman’s book, The Master Plan of Evangelism, He said: “Jesus was God in revelation; but the Spirit was God in operation.”

Here are just a few examples of the Spirit in operation. He was there at the beginning God the Spirit was at creation, moving over the surface of the waters. (Gen. 1:1-2) To the woman at the well, Jesus introduced Him as a “fountain of living waters.” Jesus also told the woman that any who would come to Him, and believe on Him, “From his innermost being would flow rivers of living waters.” He was speaking of the Holy Spirit. However, for those who have not received the Spirit, it’s impossible for them to comprehend these truths. (1 Corinthians 2:4-16) Take for instance, the statement Jesus made to Nicodemus, about being born again. Even though Nicodemus was a Bible teacher, he did not get it. Why? Because Nicodemus did not have the Spirt to translate for him! You see the Holy Spirit wrote God’s Word on the hearts of men. For those who have the Spirit, we carry around the internal spiritual word processor.

In His customary way, Jesus uses things in His creation, to teach us heavenly truths. Like comparing the Spirit to the wind, or breath of God or Living Water. Think about why He would be compared to living waters? What’s so important about water? Why, did the astronauts look for water when they went to the moon? Because, there is no life without it.

***John 6:63 (NIV)***

***The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.***

One glorious day, everything will be conformed to the will of God’s eternal plan and all things will reach their fulfillment.

Then we will behold the Triune God. The apostle John described Him in the book of Revelations. Pictured in the imagery of the river of the water of life…. is God the Father and God the Son who is seated upon the throne, and from them the Spirit flows as the river of life. And on either side of this river is the tree of life. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the Nations. (Revelation 22:1-6) Through the study of God’s Holy Word, which is Spirit and Life, we will tap into this healing water.

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

* + - * Ephesians 1:10-14; Matthew 10:19-20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12; John 4:3-25, John 6:36, 7:37-39; Psalms 1:1-3, 46:4-11; Jeremiah 17:5-14;

***1 Corinthians 12:13 (NASB)***

***“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”***

**What is the significance of the seal?**

***Ephesians 1: 13b-14a (NASB)***

***Having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance.***

If you have experienced this new birth, through the Spirit of God, then you have a pledge and a promise that He is yours and you are His. In Modern Greek language, there is a word used to describe a wedding ring. It is the exact word used in our text for *seal*. The Holy Spirit is like our wedding ring. He is the mark that our faith is authentic and we are betrothed to the Beloved son! We are not just spoken for, but purchased by the Bridegroom. In addition, the seal of the Holy Spirit also works to protect those who are in Christ - the Shelter of the Most High. He is a place of intimate and divine protection. (Psalm 91:1-16) A good illustration of this truth is the Rock Moses was placed in as God passed by. (Exodus 33:13-23)

***Titus 3:5-7 (NASB)***

***He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.***

**WORD SEARCH: FROM STRONG’S CONCORDANCE:**

* **Holy Spirit**: Greek: Peuma; *a current of air, breath, exhalation, life, spirit mind.*
* **Holy Spirit:** Hebrew: Ruwach; *wind; by resemblance breath, exhalation, life, air, anger, blast, breath, courage, mind, spirit, and tempest.*
* **Seal:** Greek #4972: Sphragizo: From #4973: *to stamp with a signet or private mark, for security or preservation, to keep secret, to attest, seal up.* Eph. 1:13; 4:30; Romans 15:28; 2 Cor. 1:22; John 3:33
* **Seal**: Greek #4973: Sphragis: *a signet, (as a fencing in or protecting from misappropriation); the stamp impressed (as a mark of privacy, or genuineness) seal.* (2 Tim.2:19; Rev. 9:4)
* **Hiding place/ secret place:** Hebrew: #5643 Cithrah from #5641; *a cover, covering, covert, hiding place, protection, secret place.* #5641; *to hide by covering, to keep close, conceals, hide, and keep secret.* Psalm 18:11; 31:20; 32:7; 91:1; 119:114; Psalm 139:15; Isaiah 45:3

**Christ in Me the Hope of Glory**

Because you have spent all these hours with me working our way through the book of Ephesians, I desire to be very transparent with you. And so, I have a confession to make. It’s my shameful secret. Please let me explain. When I was in Kinder-garden, my grades were not so bad. I colored between the lines pretty good, or so my report card said. But then there were those frowning-face marks beside these words, “Ginny needs to learn how to be quiet.” I am not sure what in the world a six-year old had to talk about. So talking has never been my problem. Because you have made it thus far in this study, then you can see that my problem is...I can’t tell a short story because the details are too important! When God told Moses to, “Go tell the people,” Moses replied, “Lord, you know I don’t speak well!” Now for me, this is not my problem. The gifts the Holy Spirit has given me, to uses for His body-and Bride, are: Speaking and Teaching.

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

1. What is difference in the words accepted and favored?
2. How can the truth that you are not just accepted, but highly favored by God change your attitude about looking for significance from others?
3. What difference should it make in the life of a believer, to know that your body is God’s dwelling place on earth?
4. In your own words, describe every way we and relate to Mary, the mother of Jesus.
5. Explain how we, who were once objects of God’s wrath, can now be highly favored.
6. Where were we created and by whom? Psalm 139:15; Eph.2:10; Colossians 1:15-19
7. Did you ever receive a promise ring? If so, was the promise kept?
8. Do you struggle with fear of the future and insecurities?
9. Have you ever had an event in your life that could only be described as an intervention of God’s protection?
10. What is our inheritance?
11. Look up these verses: Numbers 18:29-32; Deut. 10:9, 18:2; Ezekiel 44:28
12. Are you a priest? 1 Peter 1:23-25; Revelation 1:4-6, 5:9-10
13. How well do you think you understand the role of the Holy Spirit in your life?
14. Are you learning how to listen and cooperate with His leading?

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

* + - * John 3:1-16, 4:20-24; Romans 8:1-12; Titus 3:3-7; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14

***2 Corinthians 1:20-22 (NASB)***

***For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore, also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.***

**Our Inheritance**

***Ephesians 1:14 (NASB)***

***Who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.***

If the Holy Spirit is like our engagement ring, then what is our inheritance? Within the discovery of the greatest blessing of all, we’ll also learn an important aspect of our calling. Before unearthing the riches of our inheritance, we will need to come to grips with truth about those who are in Christ that is hard to fathom. And this will be especially true for some who have been raised in certain religious affiliations. May the Holy Spirit give us illuminate and the ability to embrace these realities as our very own. For when we do, we will have some excellent context in which to appropriate this truth. For the purpose of clarification, in the next three passages, there are at least nine, titles given to believers.

***1 Peter 2:5 (ESV)***

***You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.***

***Revelation 1:5-6 (ESV)***

***From Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.***

***1 Peter 2:9 (NASB)***

***“But you are a Chosen Race, a royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, and A People for God’s Own Possession, so that you may proclaim the excellences of HIM who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”***

What are the titles?

List them here\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Did you notice that we are: A Holy Priesthood; a Holy Nation; a Kingdom of Priest? Have you ever really contemplated what that might mean? For now, we won’t expound on each of these titles, we’ll just focus upon the significance of being a Holy Priesthood.

No doubt Paul, being the Old Testament scholar that he was, must have been jumping for joy as he thought of the implications of these realities for the saints. In like manner, the writer of Hebrews (who most believe was Paul) had the same things in mind when he wrote of Jesus being our Great High Priest of a New Covenant. In the following verse, notice the great exchange: our shame we’ll receive a double portion – instead of disgrace, everlasting joy in our inheritance. And these are just a few of the fringe benefits of our redemption!

***Isaiah 61:6-7 (NIV)***

***And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.***

Remember in a previous chapter, we learned what the name s*aint* means? The Greek word *Hagios* is translated as two different words: saints and holy, and the two are interchangeable. Keeping this in mind, let’s explore what it means to be a priest. The office of priest is mentioned some 700 times in the Old Testament, and approximately 80 times in the New Testament. You can read about some examples in the following passages, but for now there are five aspects to the priesthood that we want to point out.

Number one, out of all the tribes of Israel, only the tribe of Levi was *chosen* by God to be His priest. Number two, they were to make sacrifices and *pray to God* on behalf of the people. And, as we will see in the next Chapter, so are we. Number three, they had to be *blameless* before God. (Deut. 18:13) Number four, they were the *only ones who could approach God* or be in His presence in the Holy of Holy. And number five, we saved the best for last…. The ***­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­****Levites had no allotments or inheritance*. No private ownership of land (our next point.) “Why might this be,” you may ask. Because for them, and for every saint - *the Lord Jesus Himself is our inheritance.* He is the treasure of heaven and earth; and that makes us rich indeed!

***Joshua 13:33 (NIV)***

***But to the tribe of Levi, Moses had given no inheritance; the Lord, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as he promised them.***

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

* Genesis 15:1; Numbers 18:1-32, 26:3; Deuteronomy 18:1-8, 28:9; Joshua 13:14, 33; 18:7; Ezekiel 44:28; Isaiah 61:1-6; Hebrew 4:14-8:13; 1 Peter 2:9-10

**God’s Own Possession**

***2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (NIV)***

***Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.***

Our last nugget of truth to mine from this passage is the fact that we belong to Christ. Christian stewardship is a matter of ownership. He owns everything and we are but managers of His positions. He possesses the world and everything in it. That includes our very lives; we are His, body-mind-soul-and spirit! He has purchased us with His blood and He is the rightful owner. We are now under new management. For those of us who have bankrupt our lives, it is a great relief to know He is in control, and in Christ, has given us all things for life and godliness through Him who loved us. (2 Peter 1:3) That makes us pretty special, because God said so.

***Song of Solomon 7:10 (NASB)***

***I am my Beloved’s and his desire is for me.***

**WORD SEARCH: FROM STRONG’S CONCORDANCE:**

* **Possession#** 4047 Greek: Peripoiesis; *acquisition; preservation; obtain; peculiar; purchased; possession; saving.* (Eph. 1:14)
* **Peculiar**-#4041 Greek: Periousios; *being beyond usual, i.e. special (One’s Own)-peculiar.* (Titus 2:11-14)
* **Redeem** Strong’s # 3085 # 3804 from #3803 Greek Lotrosis, *a ransoming redeemer; loosen with a redemption price; atonement.* See: Titus 2:14; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18; Colossians 1:14; Heb. 9:12

***Malachi 4:17 (NASB)***

***They will be MINE,” says the LORD of Hosts, “ON the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.***

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

* Titus 2:11-14, Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 2:10, 4:7, 6:15-20, 10:26, 12:27; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:8-10; Psalms 4:3; Romans 11:33-36, 12:1-2, 14:8; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:3; 1 Timothy 2:3-6

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

1. Read Titus 2:11-14. What does the word peculiar mean?
2. Have you identified any area of your life that you have not surrendered to God?
3. Make a list of things you call “mine.”
4. Read the following verses and make note of the things that belong to God. Job 41:11; Psalms 24:11, 50:10-12, 145:14-16; Acts 17:24-28; 1 Chronicles 29:14
5. Read Isaiah 43:1-4 and fill in the blank: “I have called you by name; you are\_\_\_\_\_\_?
6. In 1 Peter 2:9, the word “proclaim” means to publish a spoken message. What is the message that brings salvation?
7. Describe Christian Stewardship.
8. Can you honestly say that your relationship with God impacts how you live, where you spend your time and resources?
9. In what areas do you need to be a better steward?

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

**Memory Verses**

***Deuteronomy 18:1-2 (ESV)***

***The Levitical priests, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel. They shall eat the Lord’s food offerings as their inheritance. They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; the Lord is their inheritance, as he promised them.***

**Chapter # 15**

**5 Stages of Spiritual Growth**

**Key Passages**

***Ephesians 4:11-16 (ESV)***  
***And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.***

**Introduction**

Perhaps you have noticed that there is a common thread that runs throughout our study of the book of Ephesians; it’s the theme of home and family. This is not a coincidence. The family is the first institution God established. Society is only as healthy as the families that make up that society. For instance, as seen in our key passages, the Father is very concerned with the growth and spiritual health of *His family*. A healthy family is made up of both a mother and a father who are well equipped to care for their children. So it is with God’s children, and clearly Paul recognized how important this is. For instance, to the saints at Thessalonica, he was like a nursing mother, as well as a spiritual father. And then there is the apostle John and Peter, who wrote of the concept of spiritual birth and infants needing milk to grow up in the faith.

When we’re born physically, there is a natural growth process, and the same is true when we are born spiritually. Whether it be physical, educational, mental or spiritual, we are either moving forward growing and learning, or we are regressing. But we never stay in the same place. It matters not if we call this equipping the saints, building the body, parenting God’s children or making disciples; all this falls under the umbrella of growth and health of the church.

As we work our way through the five stages of spiritual growth, notice the numerous references to birth, infancy, children, young adults and finally spiritual parents. You may be surprised at the amount of similarities. So it’s time to find out where we are in the five stages of spiritual growth. Let’s take a look at the growth chart.

**Stage 1**

**Spiritually Dead**

***Ephesians 2:1-7 (NIV)***  
***As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.  But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.  And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.***

In the beginning of the study of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, we discovered that we have an enormous problem. In reality, it is the root cause of *all* our problems, and we can trace it all the way back to the Garden of Eden. We’ve got a sin problem. By birth, by nature and by choice we are all sinners. And this brings us to our second dilemma. Because we’re born sinners, we are spiritually dead and separated from God. What’s more, if we remain in this condition (once born) we will be eternally lost. To alter this sad state requires a miraculous birth - a ***spiritual birth***! (John 3:1-20)

***John 3:3-7 (ESV)***

***Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’***

How does a person who is spiritually dead come to life? Or how can a person be born spiritually? If you are inquisitive about these matters, you’re in good company with Nicademus - the Bible teacher! For one thing, wouldn’t you agree that it takes something living to bring life to something that is dead? And just as a natural birth begins with a seed, so does a spiritual birth. The life giving “seed” is the Word of God!

***1 Peter 1:23-25 (NIV)***

***For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, “All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.***

Conversion or regeneration, as Peter said, is accomplished by the power of God’s Word. It’s is alive, living and active, accomplishing the resurrection of the spiritually dead. Peter quotes the prophet Isaiah who said, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the *Word of our God stands forever*.” (Isaiah 40:8)

When all is said and all is done, there are two things that will last forever: the Word of God and the souls of men. And consequently, it is the Word of God that brings salvation to the souls of men. (See an Old Testament parallel in Ezekiel chapter thirty-seven.) People must hear the gospel to be born again. But who’s going to tell them? (In case you have forgotten, take a look back at chapter #9) After all we have learned thus far in the book of Ephesians, we hardly have an excuse do we? Of course were assuming that we have received the gospel ourselves. Disciple making is a natural venue for the advance of the gospel message.

***1 John 5:11-12 (NASB)***

***“And the testimony is this that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”***

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

* Matthew 4:19; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:15-20; Romans 1:16, 10:9-18; Acts 1:8, 20:20-21; 1 Peter 1:22-25; Hebrew 4:12-13; Romans 10:9-18

**Stage 2**

**Infant in Christ**

***1 Peter 2:2-3 (NIV)***  
***Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.***

Once a person has experienced a miraculous birth, spiritually speaking, they can’t do anything for themselves. Just as a baby needs to be cared for, so does a new believer. They desperately need someone to feed them the Word of God. In an ideal world, this person would be a parent, but we don’t live in an ideal world do we? Sadly, so few of us have been discipled, that there is hardly anyone equipped to nurse God’s babies! And if they are not fed, the prospect of them growing up to maturity is slim to none. If they are going to grow and thrive, they must be cared for by adults who are themselves spiritually healthy. Translation: *they need to be discipled*. And furthermore, we mustn’t think an infant in Christ can be cared for a few hours a week. Babies are full time work!

**Healing for the Broken**

The Greek word for *equip,* found in our Key passagecomes from the word translated as *restore* or to “*mend what is broken.*” (Ephesians 4:12) When one woman is discipling another, this is a crucial step. Without addressing these issues on the front end, it will be quite difficult to help her grow to maturity. For example, have you ever torn the ligaments in your leg (I have) or broke a bone? If you have, then you know that in order to walk again you must first mend what is broken.

We have already addressed the fact that we are all broken in some way or another. Even when we are born again into the family of God, we bring a lot of baggage with us. For instance, we may be dealing with issues like depression, bitterness or past wounds. Personally, my spiritual growth was stunted for almost 20 years after I became a Christian. I have dealt with some of these issues myself like depression. Hence, the motivation for the lessons “The Health of My Countenance,” on dealing with depression. This lesson can be found on our website strandofpearls.org.

The spiritual application is this: If these broken places are never dealt with, then our growth will be stunted, and the heavenly Father’s plan to care for His children’s needs is within the family of God. This necessitates staying connected to the Body of Christ, because He lives, works and moves within His body. So here is a question: When we say that we must be connected to a local body of believers, do we mean, say, a once or twice a week gathering? Although that is what I have always been taught, now I know better.

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

* Proverbs 4:20-22; Psalms 34:19, 42:11, 107:8-21; Jeremiah 8:8-22; Hebrews 5:11-6:2; 1Peter 2:2; 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, 15:1-22; Acts 8:18-22; 1 Timothy 1:1-11; Acts 2:14-36; Deut. 6:5-9; 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-17

**Stage 3**

**Child in the Faith**

# *1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 (NIV)*

***Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.***

I love being a grandmother. Naomi, my first grandchild, has just turned three, and her sister Ada is one and a half. It is amazing how fast they grow and change. When I look at Ada, Naomi looks more and more like a little girl. And yet they both are children who are totally dependent on adults to care for and protect them. The same can be said of someone who is a child in their faith*.* And like a child, they will most likely be self-centered. (I observe this even in my granddaughters, cherubs, as my husband likes to call them.) It’s funny how quick they can go from being cherubs one moment, to acting like the devil the next. This is not surprising, because after all, they have inherited our sin nature.

Now, what if no one ever teaches them that selfishness is a sin, and that “life does not revolve around you”? It quite unrealistic to expect them to simply morph into kind and generous adults, isn’t it?

***1 Corinthians 13:11-12 (ESV)***

***When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.***

When children speak and act as children, it’s cute. But when they have reached the teenage years and they are still acting as children, something is wrong. Just take a look at what happens to believers who never grow up.

***1 Corinthians 3:1-4 (NIV)***

***Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings?***

In Robert E. Coleman’s book, The Master Plan of Evangelism, used throughout the world in discipling, he describes the model of spiritual parenting. On pages 40 and 41 of his book he said:

“When will the church learn this lesson? Preaching to the masses, although necessary, will never suffice in the work of preparing leaders for evangelism. Nor can occasional prayer meetings and training classes for Christian workers do this job. Building men and women is not that easy. It requires constant personal attention, much like a father gives to his children. This is something that no organization or class can ever do. Children are not raised by proxy. The example of Jesus would teach us that it can only be done only by persons staying close to those whom they seek to lead. The church obviously has failed at this point, and failed tragically.” Furthermore, he says: “Of course, most churches insist on bring new members through some kind of a conformation class which usually meets an hour a week for a month or so. But the rest of the time the young convert has no contact with a definite Christian training program, except as he or she may attend the worship services of the church and the Sunday school. Unless new Christians, if indeed they are saved, have parents or friends who will fill in the gap in a real way, they are left entirely on their own to find the solutions to innumerable practical problems confronting their lives, any one of which could mean disaster to their new faith.”

**We Can’t Grow Without Nourishment**

***1Timothy 4:6 (NIV)***

***If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith \*WORD OF GOD and of the good teaching that you have followed. \*emphasis mine***

The goal of God the Father for each and every one of His children, is that we grow up to maturity as healthy, reproducing adults. But this will never happen unless we are well nourished.

When is the last time you kept a child and they ask you for broccoli, salad and whole grains? It’s not going to happen. They are perfectly content to augment their diet with sweets and junk food. Here’s another question. Do you feed a child one meal a week? That would be absurd! Let’s turn this around and look at this from a spiritual perspective. Too many believers remain spiritually children because they are malnourished. Of course they are unhealthy when they are living off the junk food of the world all week. The only spiritual nourishment they get is a Sunday morning meal consisting of whatever their pastor is serving up! Honestly, how long do you think a person would live if they ate only one or two meals per week? Likewise, the believer who only eats the “Bread of Life” occasionally, will remain disconnected from the Lord, and they’ll never grow up in the faith. (John 15:1-16)

How sad that so many believers never even get a taste of the nutrition found in the meat of God’s Word. Can we be honest? Life, even at its best, can be difficult, so what do these half-starved folks do when the realities of life come crashing in on them? When a child in the faith is not discipled, life’s inevitable storms have the potential to de-rail them spiritually. But that’s not all, a babe or child in Christ is susceptible to all kinds of false teaching. Therefore, it is vital that they are well grounded early in sound doctrine! For this reason, we will study the foundational doctrines of the faith in the chapter called “Promised to One Husband” based on 2 Corinthians 11: 1-15.

On the flip-side, when a child in the faith remains connected with a spiritual parent who can feed them, they will not be blown off course when trials come. For one thing, they’re not alone to face these difficulties, and second, they will know how to lay hold of God’s promises, find encouragement, strength and real help whenever they need it. (Matthew 4:4; Romans 15:4) Additionally, a believer who is well fed and living off of “Every Word that comes from the mouth of God,” will become the source of ***spiritual food*** for a multitude of starving souls!

***2 John 1-4 (ESV)***  
***The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father’s Son, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.***

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

* Luke 1:80; 1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:10-17; Titus 1:4-10; 2:1-15; 1 John 2:12-29, 3:1-24, 4:1-21, 5:21; 2 John 1:1-4; 3 John 4; 1 Thess. 2:7-13; John 15:1-16; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 3:1

**Stage 4**

**Young Adult**

***2 Timothy 2:1-2 (NIV)***  
***You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.  And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.***

One example of a young adult is found in Acts chapter eighteen with Priscilla, Aquila and a Jew they met in Ephesus. His name was Apollos. Although this man was powerful in his knowledge of the Scriptures, some of his doctrine needed correcting. He still had much to learn. Priscilla and Aquila took him home and taught him. As a side note, the buildings that the early church met in were “family homes.” Here they “lived the gospel” before Apollos. This “at home” approach to discipling resulted in all the Jews and Greeks who lived in Asia hearing the Word of the Lord. Here, then, is the ultimate outcome of true Biblical disciple making: The Gospel is multiplied, and God’s name and fame will reach the ends of the earth. (Acts 18:18-28; Matthew 28:16-18)

This brings to light an important principle of disciple making. The core meaning of being a disciple of Christ is to be one who learns from others. To cease to learn is to cease to grow, and it’s a lifelong process. Furthermore, if you become nothing more than one who contains truth, and never passes it on to others, you will lose it. To do so is to become like the Dead Sea - taking in, but never giving out. Priscilla and Aquila were faithful stewards of the truth they had received. They invested in Apollos, and because he was humble and teachable, the return on their investment was multiplied!

Theoretically speaking, by the time we become parents, we should know intrinsically how to nurture our children. Isn’t that the way we were wired? But looking at society, we wonder, “If we are born with the instinct to nurture our young, then something has gone terribly hay-wire!” The tragic consequences of the fall remain.

It’s been said that the Father is the head of the home, but the mother is the heart. What happens in the home when the “head” (the father) is missing, and the “heart” (the mother) is broken? Chaos ensues, and that house comes crashing down. The children from these broken homes will grow up and become just like their parents, thus, perpetuating the cycle.

Now in the physical realm, when we reach young adulthood, we have the capability to reproduce. But what happens when a person has reached the age where they can reproduce physically, but emotionally they are still a child? It happens every day. Children having children is not healthy. It is the same in the spiritual realm. This unhealthy pattern, must be broken within the body of Christ. His remedy to fix this dysfunction is through spiritual adults parenting the children in His family! Jesus called it disciple making, and he modeled it for us with His twelve disciples.

As we have seen in Paul’s example, this takes place within the framework of spiritual relationships. Furthermore, you cannot have a spiritual relationship without these two key components: The Word of God and a life on life connection with a more mature believer. John Maxwell called it the law of the lid. What did he mean by this phrase? We can never lead another person to a level higher than what we ourselves have attained. We reproduce spiritually at the level we are.

**This is What is Missing**

***Titus 2:3-5 (NASB)***

***Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.***

When our church began to reexamine the Biblical mandate to make disciples, our pastor got a group of us together - there were eighteen of us in all. These were the church leaders, deacons, teachers and two pastors. Our pastor asked us this question, “When you were saved, did you have anyone come along beside you and disciple you?” Would you believe that out of eighteen, only one of us was discipled? But even this relationship was for a short period of time. Even after years of church service, we had not even seen someone make disciples! Something is very wrong with this picture, especially if we are serious about obedience to God’s Word. The bottom-line is this: we have not made disciples, not by Jesus’ mandate, model and methodology!

I asked a group of older women if they had ever been discipled by women like those described in Titus 2:1-14. Had they ever been taught how to truly love their husbands and children in a Biblical way? Out of the 12 senior saints, only one said her mother had taught her, but after her mother died she had no one. This is incredibly sad to me. The writer of the book of Hebrews describes the condition of most of the professing church.

***Hebrews 5:11-14 (NIV)***

***We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.***

**Stage 5**

**Spiritual Parent**

**A Nursing Mother**

***1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 (NASB)***

***But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.***

***For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children,so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.***

If we are to follow Jesus' strategy, we must first understand what disciple making really is. A spiritual parent is someone who has been through the previous cycles, matured in their faith and is now ready to help others along the way. While making disciples happens as you go through your everyday life, it does not happen by accident. Jesus intentionally spent three years investing His life and truths into a small group of men. This was the equivalent of approximately 36,000 hours. (Mark 3:13-14) By this fact alone, we can see that disciple making takes time!

**Spiritual Child Abuse**

***1 John 2:12-14 (NIV)***  
***I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.  I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.***

After a person has been led by the kindness of the Lord to repentance and salvation, they are infants in Christ and with proper nourishment, the infant becomes a child. With all the descriptive words chosen by the Holy Spirit to describe conversion as a “new birth,” why do we not understand the needs of a child in Christ? We simply cannot grow up in the faith unless someone who is well fed on the Word of God cares enough to feed us!

Contemplate with me, if you will, some parallels between we flawed humans and God the Eternal Father. If you dropped your precious baby off at the day-care and returned to find them wet, un-fed and crying because of neglect or worse yet, abuse, how would that make you feel? What would your reaction be? Would you recommend them to others? Would you place your children back into the negligent hands of the so-called caregivers? With this thought in mind, how do you think the heavenly Father feels about a church body that neglects His children?

There is a world full of people who never grew emotionally, because they did not have healthy parents to invest their lives into them. The results are an entire society affected by abandonment. Now take this analogy and apply it to babies in Christ. Unless God brings a spiritual parent into our life, we could remain infants, or, at best, self-centered children in the faith.

Consequently, with precious few exceptions, people grow up and emulate what they know, passing down a cycle of brokenness to their own children. Fredrick Douglass said it best, “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.” Many who are born again into the body of Christ have already had a life time of brokenness that will take real effort and hands on care from loving spiritual parents to mend. This is the only possible way to break generational dysfunction.

# *Acts 20:28 (TLB)*

***“And now beware! Be sure that you feed and shepherd God’s flock—his church, purchased with his blood—for the Holy Spirit is holding you responsible as overseers.***

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

* John 21:16-17; Romans 2:4-5, 2 Corinthians 7:9-10; Hebrews 5:11-14; 1 Peter 2:2; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Titus 2:1-14;1 Thessalonians 2:7-13

**Biblical Examples to Emulate**

***2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NIV)***

***But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

Herb Hodges has often said, “You cannot be what you do not see,” and “Discipling is caught, more than taught.” Without a living example to follow, they will not know what to emulate. Along these same lines, Robert Coleman sums it up with this statement: “It is good to tell people what we mean, but it is infinitely better to show them. People are looking for a demonstration, not an explanation.” - Master Plan of Evangelism, page 68.

***Philippians 3:17 (EVS)***

***Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.***

**WORD SEARCH: from Strong’s Concordance**

* **Imitators /examples in** Greek: #5179 tupos-*a die, a stamp, scar, shape, style or resemblance, a sampler, type, a model for imitation, pattern-print.*
* **Follow/imitate in** Greek #3401/3402: *mimetes or mimeomai- (a mimic); to imitate-follow****.***

***1 Corinthians 11:1 (HCSB)***

***“Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ.”***

In spite of the scarcity of men and women in the church who understand the concept of making disciples, the Lord has not left us without Biblical examples to emulate. My two favorite spiritual mothers are Lois (the grandmother) and Eunice (the mother of Timothy). Timothy’s father was not a believer; however, from the time of his physical birth, his mother and grandmother invested God’s Word into him. By the time Paul became the spiritual father of Timothy, he had already been well fed at the spiritual breast of His mother and Grandmother. The Word of God made Timothy wise unto salvation, and then he grew from infancy and childhood into young-adulthood in Christ.

***Proverbs 6:20-23***

***My son, keep your father’s commands and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.Bind them always on your heart; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you.For this command is a lamp, this teaching is a light, and correction and instruction are the way to life.***

**Fruitful in Old-Age**

***Psalm 92:12-15 (ESV)***

***The righteous flourish like the palm tree  
    and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord;  
    they flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age;  
    they are ever full of sap and green, to declare that the Lord is upright;  
    he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.***

When it comes to spiritual growth, we are not talking necessarily about physical age, but spiritual maturity. For all the reasons mentioned previously, many believers never grow up spiritually. So, if age is not the criterion to gauge spiritual parenthood, then what is? Well first, this person is a lifelong learner and follower of Christ. They are not super Christians, nor perfect people, they are in the life-long process of sanctification. I heard of a woman who is in her late 90’s who is still bringing young women into her home weekly to disciple them. She is still yielding fruit in her old age, and long after she is gone, her godly influence will be impacting generations. As an added benefit, it is a proven fact, that when we stay mentally active, this can even slow down the ageing process.

A spiritual parent is one who is willing to share their struggles, as well as victories, with others in the family of God. This person lives dependent on Christ; knowing full well that apart from Him they can do nothing. They stay connected to Him through abiding in God’s Word and the life giving relationships they have within the family of God. Of course this would include continuing to learn and follow the lead of others who are following the Lord Jesus in obedience to the Great Commission. In the context of spiritual relationships, this parent will have children in the faith with them all their lives as they impart an abundance of Biblical wisdom. By following the pattern Jesus left for them, they’ll be fishing for men and women and teaching those who are with them to do the same.

This person will be bearing spiritual offspring, not only in their lifetime, but long after they have gone home to heaven. Their spiritual descendants will be well equipped and reproduce God’s truth into multitudes. There are three factors that determine fruitfulness, and they are: abiding in the Lord Jesus, obeying His last and greatest commandment to make disciples. And lastly, and this can’t be stressed enough, your fruitfulness will depend on the faithfulness of those in whom you have invested. Don’t you think it is unrealistic to think just a few of us can care for all God’s children? That is precisely the point. There has never been a child born again into God’s family that he did not intend to bear spiritual children. He chose us and commanded us to be fruitful and multiply! (John 15:16)

**Flowers for the King’s Daughter**

Before we end this lesson, I have a story to share with you. A few years ago, before I became a grandmother, God brought beautiful young woman named Jamie into the family of faith that I am part of. Jamie was a wife and the mother of two little girls when she had a miscarriage and almost lost her life. Through this incident, she realized if she had died, she did not know where she would be. When she came to faith, I invited her over to get to know her. I discovered that she did not have a father for most of her life. He was imprisoned for acts he had committed against her and her sisters. Jamie’s mother has passed away. My heart went out to her, so we began the process of disciple making. I have learned new truths from every person that I have attempted to disciple. These are a few lessons that I learned from Jamie.

When Jamie found out she was pregnant again, this brought some fear because of the previous miscarriage. So we prayed. When it was time for the birth, she and her husband had no family at all to be there for them. Kirk and Donna Bishop, who were on staff at our church, were instrumental in bring this family to the Lord. The day of delivery came and Jamie had to have an emergency cesarean-section. Kirk and Donna were the only ones with them to pray over them in this very frightening time. Praise the Lord, they came safely through this delivery. The next day, I was on my way to get some cheap flowers to take to Jamie at the hospital. I was thinking about my own daughter and what it would be like when she gives birth to her babies. I was thinking about how many people would be at the hospital to welcome this new life into the world. And then I was thinking about Jamie and Kyle as new believers in the family of God, yet all alone. At that moment, the Lord interrupted my thoughts. He spoke into my spirit, “If that was your daughter in the hospital, would you give her cheap flowers?” Ashamedly, the answer was no. Very clearly in my heart the Lord spoke, “Jamie is ***My*** ***daughter,*** I give good gifts to My children, and I want her to have the best!” I turned around and went to the florist to have flowers made up for the “King’s Daughter.” When I carried the flowers into the room, there they were. It was just the three of them - the King’s daughter, Jamie, the King’s son, Kyle, and their new born baby girl. I told Jamie that I was just delivering the flowers that the “Heavenly Father” had ordered for her. You see, Jamie and Kyle, much like their new born baby, both need someone to mother and father them. Do you think the Heavenly Father feels the same way about all of His children? Do you see the point? It is much like parenting, in the same way we care for our own families, through spiritual relationships, the body of Christ will grow and thrive also.

Likewise, as we mature we will reproduce, ensuring that the gospel is passed from generation to generation. The German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “A truly righteous person lives for the next generation.” So, here is the bottom line of this lesson: When your life on earth has ended and your body is returned to the dust from which it came, how much truth will die with you? How many generations will reap the spiritual benefits of what you have sown?

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

* Acts 16:1-5, 2 Timothy 1:2-5, 2:1-3, 3:14-17; 1 Corinthians 14:20; 2 Corinthians 12:14-15; Galatians 4:19; Psalms 78:1-7; John 15:16; Isaiah 54:1-13

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

1. As you look at the 5 levels, can you identify where you are? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Look back over the 5 levels and make a list of characteristics or markers for each of the five. (Example: a child in the faith is self- centered)

Spiritually Dead \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Infant \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Child \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Young Adult \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Spiritual Parent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Read Hebrews chapter 5:11-14. After we have heard the word of God and been taught, what does this passage say we should be doing? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. In your own words describe why the Word of God is important in each stage of spiritual life. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Can you think of any obstacles that have hindered your spiritual growth? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Who are the individuals who have helped you the most to grow in the knowledge of God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. From Ephesians 4:11, what did we learn about the word “Equip?” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Why do you think areas of brokenness that are not addressed Biblically might hinder someone’s growth? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Describe a family dynamic that you have observed, where you have seen what happens when children fail to thrive and grow in the following areas: physically, emotionally, socially, or spiritually. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Precisely, how does God intend for us to grow up and be built up? (Ephesians 4:16; 1 John 4:7-20) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. Explain “The Law of the Lid.” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. Keeping in mind that you can only lead some else to the level you have yourself have attained, who are the people around you that you could disciple? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Think on These Things**

Did you learn something new? What did the Lord say to you from this Chapter? Is there a new promise to claim as your own? Is there a sin to confess or avoid? Did you find a command to obey or a passage you could pray?

**Memory Verses**

***Ephesians 4:15-16 (ESV)***

***Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.***

**Chapter # 15**

**GOD’S POEM**

**Key Passage**

***Ephesians 2:10b (NASB)***

***For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.***

**Introduction**

In their daily devotional booklet entitled, “Daily Spirit Blessings, authors Burk and Sylvia Gunter began with this blessing for day number one with this heading: *I bless you with identity and legitimacy.*

“Spirit, your Father made you special. You are a very special person, created and crafted and designed by God your Father. He planned for you. You are no accident. Your Father made you beautiful and beloved. God invested an incredible amount of effort and concentration in designing you. You are unique, one of a kind. God has thought extensively about you. He smiled on the day He created you. He designed your spiritual heritage. There is a spiritual treasure chest of generational blessings with your name on it. I bless you in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Have you ever contemplated the fact that you are God’s workmanship? What does that mean? The Greek word for workmanship comes from our English word Poem. We are God’s poem!

**It’s Not Good Unless It’s God’s Work**

Please get this straight: God does not love us because of *anything* we do, however He saved us *for good works*. Grace can’t be earned, but faith is not lazy. (James 2:14-26) If you happen to be a woman who has a “Martha personality,” laziness is not your problem. (Luke 10:39-40)

We are bombarded, on a daily basis, with work that needs to be done. And then, other people have their own ideas of what work is ours to do. If we allow them, they will load our plates full of g*ood* t*hings*. But, are these God things for me? This is especially true for those of us who have a reputation as a "work-horse". Jesus work, done in His power, is easy and His burden is light. (Matt. 11:28-30) However, if it is *not God’s work* for you - it is *not good*. As a matter of fact, it can be down-right sinful if we are operating outside of plan God has for us. What is good work for me may be sinful for you. Quite often, we’re doing the good work God had planned for someone else to do. So how can I know the difference between good work verses what is God’s work for me? The work may be different from day to day, or change with the seasons of life. We will see the different kinds of working of the Spirit when we get to Chapter 4 of Ephesians. One day at the Judgment Seat of Christ, our works will be tested. We may need to let go of some “good things” to take hold of God’s things!

I will never know what He had planned for me unless I seek and find Him first. Remember, He will not be found by casual seekers, and the plan for you is hidden “in Christ Jesus.” The only work that will survive is the work He has ordained for me. His power is not given to do the work I have chosen but His power is given to energize *His* *Work*.

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

* Genesis 1-3; Titus 2:3-14, Ephesians 1:4; 2:6-10; 4:1-19, 24, 32; 5: 19; Colossians 1: 15-21; 3:10; Proverbs 3:3-8; Jeremiah 29:11-15, Psalms 139:13-16, 90:14-17; 1 Peter 4:8-10; Romans 12:4-16; 1Corinthians 3:8-11; 12:1-27; 14:3-5

His work is people, and what we do for them, we do for Him. *“And the King will answer them, I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine,* ***you did for me****.” (Matthew 25: 31-46 40)* Who are the priority people in your life?

**WORD SEARCH: From Strong’s Concordance**

* # 4161 Workmanship: Poiema, a product, i.e. fabric, thing that is made, workmanship. This word has been translated as: Masterpiece. The next word comes from this word. These two words make up our English word *poem*. (Eph. 2:10)
* #4286 Ordained (Matt. 3:14) and Purposed in Christ Poieo, to make; or do abide; appoint; band-together; commit, fulfill; purpose; preform; provide; rise up; work and yield. (Eph. 3:11)
* # 4282 Purposed (Eph. 1:11, 3:11) Ordained (Eph. 2:10) Prothesis from #4388 Pro-tithemai; a setting forth; i.e. proposal intention, the show bread in the temple, as exposed before God, purpose.
* # 2041 Work (Eph. 2:9,10;4:12,5:11; John 4:34,14:10-12,17:4; Philippians 1:6, Col. 1:10, Matt. 5:15) Ergon/ergo: to work, toil, as a n effort or occupation, an act, deed, doing labor work. #2040 Workman (2 Tim. 2:15) workman/teacher.

The next two words, translated in the following passages, give us a key to where we get the (energy) to do this effective “good work”. As a mater-of-fact, we get our English word *energize* from the word.

* #1753/1754 (Effectual/Work) (Eph.1:19; 3:7; 4:16; Phil.2:13; Col. 1:29; James5:16) READ THESE PASSAGES.
* #1753-energiah: efficiency, (“ENERGY”) Operation, strong, effectual, working. #1754 energeo: to be active, effectual, efficient-do, fervent, be mighty in, show forth, self, work, effectually in.

**Work that Satisfies**

# *John 4:31-34 (NIV)*

***31Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.***

In the narrative of Jesus’ encounter with the Woman at the Well, is followed by an important lesson for Jesus disciples, this includes those who are living today. I would like to share with you why the second story is very precious to me also. This is the passage of Scripture that the Lord used, some 18 years ago, to confirm the specific calling on my life to the ministry of His Word to women. (Titus 2:3-5)

In this narrative, Jesus and His disciples had walked seventy-five miles. They were weary, thirsty and hungry. The disciples went to Samaria get bread to fill their bellies - Jesus, on the other hand, went there to get something far more valuable, the despised woman.

Jesus said to His disciples, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.” What food was He referring to? The food, that satisfied even the physical hunger of Jesus, was the ***love of*** ***His Father***. God’s love, in Greek, is Agape. The definition of this word is short and sweet…. It means a love feast or a banquet of love!

Through her, He would reach all of Samaria. When the others believed in Him also, they declared Him to be, “The Savior of the world!”

# *Song of Songs 2:4 (NIV)*

***Let him lead me to the banquet hall, and let his banner over me be love.***

What Jesus taught me is this: His ***food was*** to do the ***will of His Father and finish his work.*** The same satisfying work the Father sent Jesus to do… is our work also. What is the work of God that satisfied the Lord Jesus? It was the ***work of building twelve men- making disciples***! How do we know this is so? We know it by the study of The Lord’s Prayer found in John chapter seventeen. By the way, you may be thinking, “Isn’t the Lord’s Prayer found in Luke chapter eleven?” To be exact- no! That is the model prayer. The Lord’s Prayer is found recorded in the entire chapter of John seventeen.

***John 17:1-6 (NIV)***

***After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:***

***“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. 2For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. 3Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. 4I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. 5And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.***

Herb Hodges interpretation of this passage, and he uncovered a hidden treasure, I had never seen in the word, *“finished.”* This word is derived from the same word Jesus used on the cross where the work of redemption was completed! Herb pointed out the fact that the prayer in John seventeen was spoken prior to the Lord’s crucifixion. By studying it in context, it becomes clear what or (more accurately-who) Jesus was referring to. This is the most detailed prayer of the Lord Jesus. The subject of the entire prayer was *His disciples*. *The work He had finished was making disciples*!

***John 6:27***

***Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”***

**Practical Application for Women**

***Titus 2:3-5 (NASB)***

***Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.***

**Our Ministry to the Lord**

Our first and foremost ministry is to our Savior - the Lord Jesus Christ. He desires that our relationship with Him be a divine romance, not empty religious rituals. In our lesson, **Holy Habit - How to Have a Quiet Time**, we learn what it looks like to nurture this relationship. One hundred percent of our lives belong to Him, and everything else falls under His ownership. Without this first ministry, everything else we do will be vain, empty, fruitless work. The next two ministries will be useless without private worship. However, private worship in no way excludes the necessity of corporate worship within a local body of believers. It greatly enhances it! How else are we to fulfill all the other “together ministries”? You will find several lessons in level number four that further address this need.

**Digging Deeper:** Matthew 6:29-33; Luke 10:39-42; John 15:1-16; Acts 13:2-4

**Our Ministry to Our Family**

Our second ministry, for the woman who is married, is her husband. If she has children, they are to follow a close second. For the woman with a family, the majority of your time and energy needs to be invested into the precious lives of those whom God has entrusted to your care.

In his message, What is A Healthy Church, Pastor David Lawrence, underscoring the priority of family said, “Everybody wants to change the world, but no one wants to change diapers. But the world is changed one dipper at a time.”

If you are a single woman, you are under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. You too can be a spiritual mother to other women if your first ministry is to the Lord. However, this will look different in each season of life. For example, when you are caring for aging parents, or when your children have grown and “left the nest”, then this would be a great time to bring a few younger women into your life and home and model for them what this looks like to **live for others.** Before we look at our third and last ministry, please don’t forget this important fact: If we get our priorities out of order, we will find ourselves ineffective or unproductive in all the other areas of our lives.

**Digging Deeper:** Titus 2:3-5; Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:12-24; 1 Timothy 2:9-15; 1 Corinthians 7:1-40

**Our Ministry in Discipling Relationships**

This brings me to our last ministry - discipling relationships with other women. Please understand this; *it is a lifestyle, and not a program*! Because of this, discipling takes place as we go and wherever we go. ***Instead of adding more to our very busy schedules, we are inviting people to join us in our daily routine!*** You can only invest in as many people as you can bring into your heart and home. You must see them as an extension of your own family, as if God had entrusted a few of His own children into your care. If you cannot let her see how you walk with God in all areas of your life, she will not know how to follow you. It is vital that she not only hear the truth, but learn by your example how to live the truth. This requires transparency, accountability and an investment of your life. With that being said, I can testify to the fact that your life will be blessed more than you can ever imagine. I heard about a woman whose aging mother lives several hours away. Even though she cannot be there to care for her mother as often as she would like, she is comforted by this fact: her mother has several “daughters” (not by birth) who come and care for her. Do you know how she obtained these other daughters? She was a teacher who brought these younger women into her home, her heart and her life. Likewise, spiritual relationships will reap lifelong dividends, but keep this in mind: ***If it is not a spiritual relationship, then it is not discipleship!*** (1 Thessalonians 2:5-20)

What seems small and insignificant in the world’s eyes can be monumental in God's sight. When God chose a man named Zerubbabel to rebuild a smaller version of Solomon’s temple, God encouraged His servant with these words: ***For who has despised the day of small things. (Zechariah 4:9-10)***

Making disciples by Jesus’ blueprint is to *build a few people* who ***become*** ***the*** ***temple or Church*** of the living God. God’s plans are always better than our *building programs*. When one person invests his or her life into the lives of a few others, the results are the nations being impacted with the gospel. God’s magnificent plan of reaching His Bride is encapsulated in His last command to “**Make** **disciples** **of** **all** **Nations**!" Roy (Soup) Campbell is a disciple maker, whose spiritual offspring are scattered throughout the globe, yet his home base is Memphis Tennessee, in what is known as “the Hood”. This community has a reputation for poverty, crime, and gangs and it is in this dark place he, his wife Linda, and their disciples are bringing light into the darkness. This is his quote: “The light that shines the farthest away will shine the brightest at home.” I live in a small town just north of Memphis, Tennessee, in a yet smaller community called Lucy, and my family belongs to a small country church: Lucy Baptist. For the last twenty years I have been a stay-at-home mom. At present, I have two sons in “the nest” while they complete their college education. My home is the classroom where the lord Jesus has taught me the most.

The motivation for obedience to the last command to make disciples, is the greatest command, “***Love the Lord your God***" and to "***Love your neighbor as you love yourself.***” Without love, our teaching will be without power. It is our love for Him that empowers our love for them.

**Digging Deeper**: Matthew 19:18-19, 22:36-40; Luke 10:25-27; Galatians 5:14

**I Need You and You Need Me**

***1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (NIV)***

***For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.  For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.  Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.***

Woven together like golden threads in a tapestry, is the Body of Christ. In the Master’s plan, He has gifted each one of us and designed that our lives be so intertwined that we are incomplete without the others. The most profound lesson a mature believer can learn is how very dependent they are on God and others within the Body of Christ. We are not made to work alone. When God gives a vision to one person, it cannot be fulfilled without many people supplying their skills. He designed us that way.

Collectively, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is God’s poem to the world and each of us has a line. Yet, if you remove a line, the poem no longer rhymes. To use another analogy, before the foundation of the world, the Lord wrote a “*good work-order” with each* of our names written on it. We have been commissioned and skilled for a particular job. When the work is complete it will be a magnificent masterpiece reflecting His creativity and Glory.

“*We cannot obey a multitude of God’s commands without being in regular, close fellowship with other believers. He has designed this world so that many of our needs get met only through mutual interdependence.”* --- Charles Stanley

**Gospel community is lived out through transparency. (v.9)**

***Let love be without hypocrisy,*** ESV: ***genuine.***  It comes from word for *hypocrisy* which means, *speaking behind a mask* from the theater*.* We are not to be *play actors or phonies*. ***The masks must come off!*** In our culture we ask each other, *How are you?* The answer is: *Fine! How are you?* Sadly, people don’t really want to know, and so often, we don’t really tell the truth! Dustin Willis in Life in Community said, *Honesty is one of the greatest means of fostering Biblical community.*

**ILLUS. Chuck Swindoll said, *fences must come down. Masks need to come off. Welcome signs need to be hung outside the door. Keys to the locks of our lives must be duplicated and distributed. Bridges need to be lowered that allow others to walk across…and then to share our joys and sorrows.***

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

* Luke 10:1; Exodus 17:12; 31:1-11; 35:31-34; Ephesians 1:4,15-19,2:10,20-22, 3:20-21; 4:15-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

**What is a Christian?**

***Acts 11:26 (NASB)***

***When He had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*Footnotes:**

[Zechariah 4:6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zec.%204:6&version=NASB#en-NASB-22929) Lit *said to me, saying*

**Cross references:**

1. [Zechariah 4:6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zec.%204:6&version=NASB#en-NASB-22929) : [Ezra 5:2; Hag 2:4, 5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra%205:2,%20Hag%202:4-Hag%202:5&version=NASB)
2. [Zechariah 4:6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zec.%204:6&version=NASB#en-NASB-22929) : [Is 11:2-4; 30:1; Hos 1:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%2011:2-Isa%2011:4,%20Isa%2030:1,%20Hos%201:7&version=NASB)
3. [Zechariah 4:6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zec.%204:6&version=NASB#en-NASB-22929) : [2 Chr 32:7, 8; Eph 6:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Chr%2032:7-2Chr%2032:8,%20Eph%206:17&version=NASB)

Where do we get the name Christian, and what does it mean? We will attempt to answer these questions with Biblical and historical facts. The name Christian is found only three times in the entire Bible. However, the name “Christian” was a term of derision given by *unbelievers* to the followers of Christ. (We are about to see why.) (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16) Believers were called disciples 273 times in the New Testament until book of Acts. Then, the believers were called, disciples, Saints, the House-Hold of God, the Bride of Christ, Bond Servants, Church of the Living God, His Body, Children of Light, Elect, Chosen Ones and as we have just seen, God’s Workmanship.

After the disciples had been taught by Paul and Barnabas for a year, the unbelievers saw the lives of the disciples and what they were doing and they gave them a new name… Christians. The name Christian is made up of the Greek words Christos, *The Anointed Messiah*, and Christianos, *a follower of Christ, i.e. Christian.*

In Herb Hodges Chapter entitled, “What is a Christian?” he makes this point, “The word Christian has become a much misused, abused, and confused term today.” He goes on to qualify the meaning of being called Christians. He said, “To be a Christian, means that you are *spiritually busy* for Jesus Christ.” It is your vocation. He gave this illustration,

“One night in early manhood, Augustine had a dream. In his dream, he approached the gate of heaven and was met by a gatekeeper. ‘Who and what are you?’ the gatekeeper asked. My name is Augustine, he replied, and I am a Christian. No, you are not a Christian, the gatekeeper answered. In this place, we do not judge people by their words, but by their actions. You are not a Christian; you are a Ciceronian, because you spend most of your time studying Cicero, you are a Ciceronian.’ Augustine awakened from this sobering dream and determined to devote his life to Jesus Christ, and spend his time studying Christ and His truth.”

The Greek word used in Acts 11:26 for *called* is: Chrematizo – *to constitute a firm for business, i.e. bear as a title, be called, reveal and speak*. Another Greek word that is derived from this word is Chreia. Jesus used this word in Luke 10:39-42 to express the “one thing that is *needed*.” What was this one thing? Mary made it her business to be His disciple and sit at His feet listening to His word. That is the first business of every Christian.

This Greek word means *employment, business, necessary and useful.*  We get many of our names from the old English practice of naming a person by their occupation: such as the family names Baker or Goldsmith. My married name is Porter; a porter’s job was to keep the gate. My maiden name is Page; a page is one whose job it is to deliver a message. Both these occupations are the jobs of a servant. Christians had to *earn* the title by *doing* the ***business***; their business was Christ’s business-fishing for men and women and making disciples! If we’re not sharing the gospel message so others can believe on Him, we should not expect to experience God’s power and authority to fulfill our own purposes and plans! (Matthew 28:18-20)

***Acts 1:8 (NASB)***

***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.***

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

1. What do most believers call themselves?
2. Why is divine power given to Believers? (Colossians 1:27-29; Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20)
3. What is the power like?
4. In the Great commission, what is the one command given of the 4 verbs?
5. From the above answer, what is the connection to the power of God? (Matt. 28:17-20)
6. What does the word Christian mean?
7. In our last Chapter we saw the definition of the word follow. What does it mean, and what will we be doing if we are following Jesus?
8. Think in terms of what you are currently involved in and make a list of non –negotiable commitments. Prioritize that list.
9. Have I asked the Lord if this is *His plan* or is it *my plan*?
10. Does this activity fit in the practical plan for my life at this moment?
11. Does it hurt or hinder my priorities relationships, including neglecting my “first love”?
12. Do I feel stressed or drained physically when I do this work?
13. Do I feel energized and at peace with God and men?
14. Examine your motives by asking yourself: “Why do I do what I do?” Be honest, the Lord already knows.
15. Describe a time when you found that two are better than one in getting a job done. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)
16. Read Proverbs 3:5-7 and answer this question. If I don’t consult Him, my only option is to lean on my own \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I operate in the\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I settle for good and forfeit God’s best.
17. If I continue, directing my own paths, then one day all my work will be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the judgment seat of Christ.

**Think On These Things**

Did you learn something new? Did the Lord speak personally to you through this chapter? Did you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer?

**Memory Verses**

***Ephesians 4:1(KJV)***

***“Walk worthy of the vocation to which you are called.”***

**Week #10**

**Red and Yellow Black and White**

**Key Passages**

***Ephesians 2:11-17 (ESV)***

***Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.***

***And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.***

**Introduction**

I will never forget the time our youth pastor taught from this passage and then had us break into small groups for discussion. I was assigned the “younger” youth boys. You can imagine how uncomfortable I was when they ask me what circumcised meant! At first, all the color draining from my face and then I turned several shades of red as I stammered my way through that conversation. But don’t you worry. This lesson is not about circumcision. It’s about finding the key to peace on earth, racial reconciliation. You may be thinking, “How in the world is she going to pull all of that together!” You just might be surprised.

Saul was a proud Jew, an educated man, an expert of the Old Testament, and a bigot. One might even say, he was raised to be one. And isn’t it true that, generally speaking, our upbringing will shape the way we treat other people? We build walls of segregation. To keep people in, or to keep people out. We find this is all levels of society. However, the beauty of the gospel is that, in Christ, the walls that divide us are obliterated and we become one. Although we may not have the same blood pulsating through our veins, we are all washed in the blood of Jesus. And because of this, there is the possibility of real peace and racial reconciliation. And Oh, don’t we need this now? The only hope for peace on earth and good will toward mankind is to be reconciled to God through Jesus …. He is our Peace.

**Two Were Made One**

***Ephesians 2:18-22 (ESV)***

***So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.***

Peace…. We so often use the word but do we have even the slightest notion of it’s true significance? For example, we talk about world peace or peace on earth and good will towards men, and then we hear talk of peace treaties that never seem to materialize. Or some say, “I need some peace of mind,” or, “Can’t I just get some peace and quiet?” A priest, or pastor may ask a dying person, “Do you want to make peace with your maker?” On tomb stones we engrave “rest in peace.” And yet, in a world that seems to be in perpetual conflict, peace seems to be elusive. But wouldn’t you agree that in our heart of hearts, peace is something that none of us can live very long without?

But what about when there is no peace among the ones who live with you in your own home? It is one thing when the walls of hostility exist between nations and races, but it’s altogether different when the walls of hostility become the four walls in which you live.

When Art and I got married, we were lost sinners who were equally yoked. But, two years after we were married I was saved and the dividing walls of hostility came up in our marriage. I was yoked to the Lord Jesus and Art remained yoked to sin. I had been rescued from the kingdom of darkness, but Art was still under the dominion of the one who comes to kill still and destroy. Light and dark don’t mix. (Colossians 1:12-14) And this went on for thirteen years. As you might expect, it was not the happily ever after! Some of you know quite well what I am talking about.

The peace treaty was finally signed for us when Art bowed his knees to the Prince of Peace by repentance and surrender to the Lordship of Christ. About two years later, at the suggestion of a counselor, we renewed our wedding vows. It was our seventeenth wedding anniversary.

I hope you will forgive me for taking the liberty of using our key passage out of context to illustrate a personal application. But if you knew my whole story, you would understand why we choice these verses at the renewal of our vows. The following was printed on our program for our second wedding. The chosen passage was Ephesians 2:14-22.

“On the third day of May, seventeen years ago, we took our vows before God, whom we only knew from afar. Today, we take great joy in sharing with you our vows before the One who is our Father, Lord, Savior and God. How fitting it is that Jesus first miracle was at a wedding on the “third day”. Today you are our witness to another display of His miraculous grace. He, who is our peace, has redeemed our marriage and brought us together as one. The greatest miracle of all is new-birth through Christ Jesus and redemption from sins. Through Him all things are made new! It is our desire to give Him, who alone is worthy, all the praise and honor and glory. Jesus is the reason we are here today. Thank you for making our joy complete with your presence!”

**Walls of Hostility**

As you read through the narratives found in the gospels and observe how Jesus interacted with people, it becomes clear the God is not a respecter of men. While the Jews are God’s chosen people and through them the Christ would come, His plan all along was to bless all Nations.

Even from the beginning of His ministry, Jesus broke all the rules to show that salvation was for all people. This point is perfectly illustrated in chapter four of John in the story of the Samaritan Woman at the Well. Racial reconciliation was one of the first lessons Jesus taught His disciples. Sadly, many today have not yet learned this lesson.

***John 4:3-9 (NIV)***

***So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.’***

The Jews and the Samaritans had a long history of animosity. The Samaritans were half breads because the Jews who had intermarried with Gentiles. It was considered taboo, even scandalous, for Jesus to even speak to her. Jews had no dealings with Samaritans; they were considered to be “unclean.” Furthermore, they would normally walk seventy miles out of the way to stay out of Samaria! And yet, He purposely went to Samaria to find her, and change both her identity and her destiny. She had the great honor of being the first person, to whom Jesus revealed His true identity as… Christ… the long awaited Savior of the world.

**The Arrogance of Racism**

***Ephesians 3:1-13 (ESV)***

***For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.***

***Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.***

I grew up in Memphis Tennessee during a time when the United States, and especially in the south, was divided by racism. In 1968 I was in kindergarten and oblivious to the fires of hate that ultimately led to the assignation of Dr. Martin Luther King in our home town. My husband Art was in the second grade at the time, and he remembers the National Gard tanks coming down his street. One of the few memories I have from my first year in school, was running hand in hand with my friend to the playground. His skin was brown and mine was lily white and we did not know we were different. We were color blind…and that was a good thing.

By the time I started the fourth grade, the powers that be though it would be a good idea to integrate our public school system. Because we were going to be bussed to a school on the other side of town, some of the churches formed a school called; “Citizens Against Bussing School.” To make a long story short, I missed the forth-grade, and spent the fifth-through-the-ninth grade in a private church school where, instead of being taught, I worked on packets and then when outside to play. This was coupled by the fact that I did not wear the glasses that were prescribed to me in the first grade. It was not until I was twenty-four years old that I realized how blind I had been, and I’ve been wearing glasses ever since. Subsequently, I missed an enormous part of my formative years of foundational education. The results of all of this is that I have spent my entire adult life with a shameful secret, an insecurity about my lack of education and poor written communication skills. To be brutally honest, my own insecurities became a justification for a sinful prejudice against those who were well educated.

You see, prejudice comes in many shapes and sizes - such as, the intellectuals verse the uneducated, the haves verse the have nots, blacks verse the whites, etc. But in Bible times the great divide was between the Jews and all other races – the Gentiles. Before Saul became Paul, he was perhaps one of the worst of the worst at looking down his nose at the Gentiles. But the irony is, God has a since of humor. As we learned in our previous lesson, before the foundation of the world, God assigned Saul, the persecutor of Christians, to become Paul the evangelist to the Gentiles. (Remember how we said we are called by the name of our occupations) God is jealous for His glory. And when He changes hearts, bringing peace, love and reconciliation between enemies, God gets the glory. It is obvious, that God Spirit is at work.

***John 10:16 (NASB)***

***I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear my voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.***

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

* John 4:3-42, 11:50-52; Luke 18:9-14; Acts 10:34-48, 22:21, 26:1-18; Romans 2:11, 11:1-36; Ephesians 3:1,13, 6:19-20; Colossians 1:25- 27

**Holy Nation in God**

**WORD SEARCH: From Strong’s Concordance**

**Nation #1484 1 Peter 2; Rev. 5:8-9, 7:9; Matthew 28:19**

**Family # 3958 Eph. 3:15**

**Father # 3962 Eph. 1:2,3,17,2 ;18,3:14,4:6,5:20,31; 6:2,23**

**Whole # 3958; Eph. 3:15, 4:16**

**House # 3609 Eph. 2:19**

**House in Hebrew #1004 Bayith: a house, especially Family: - court, daughter, home born, inside, palace, steward+ tablet, temple within**

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

* Hebrew 3:6; Romans 10:9-16; Revelation 5:8; Acts 10; John 4; Matthew 28; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 Peter 2:5-16; Isaiah 28:16

**Home - A Place We Are Built For**

***Proverbs 24:3-4 (NASB)***

***By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.***

My Daddy is a builder. He has built at least fifteen dwellings for his family including my dream house, a place my family calls “Home”. He also built room additions and several homes for other families including my husband’s older sister Sheila. This is ironic to me because my husband lived next door to his sister and so Art met my father years before I did. I am told that Art and his family even came to our house during those years but I don’t remember it. Stranger still, Art and I had seen one another when we were much younger at the wedding of my Uncle Jim and Aunt Sharon. My sister Sybil and I were the flower girls, and I think we were about seven and nine years old. I don’t have memories of my uncle passing out during his wedding, but because my aunt Sharon put the photo of us on Facebook to commemorate their anniversary, I have the picture of my lovely bouffant or birds nest hair do. Art (who is two years older than I) and his parents were in attendance at this wedding, as friends of the Bride’s family. I don’t think it was love at first sight for Art and me. But I do know that God predestined that that we would meet one another and become part of His family.

What is my point? My heavenly Father is also a builder- He is building an eternal home for His children. Do you remember Jesus’ earthy father’s occupation? Joseph was a carpenter and Jesus worked with him in the family business for thirty years. And then Jesus began His most important building project-- the building of His, “***Twelve ordinary*** ***men***.” I recommend John MacArthur’s book by that titled. When the work of building them was complete, He prayed for them and then then He went to the cross to purchase their redemption. (John 17:1-26) On the third day, He was resurrected and spent the next forty days giving them their marching orders before He returned home to His Heavenly Father to start construction on the eternal home for His family.

***John 14:2&6***

***In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 6 Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.***

In Randy Alcorn’s book The Treasure Principle (page 48) he said:

When the Kings wedding day comes, the universe will screech to a halt (Revelation 19:7-9). Nothing else will be on heaven’s calendar. The Groom from Nazareth and His beloved bride will take the center stage. Every day of our lives we’re traveling toward that wedding – our wedding! It’s closer today than it was yesterday. Our Bridegroom, the Carpenter, is building a place for us in heaven. Everything we send on ahead will be waiting there for us. It’s our gift to Him, but in His Generosity He will give those treasures back to us. Jesus is a builder by trade. He’s also omniscient and omnipotent, qualities that come in handy on a building project! Don’t you think that the home He’s been building for us the last two thousand years is something incredible? Paradoxically, our home is a place we’ve never been. But it’s the place we were made for, the place made for us. If we would let this really sink in, it would forever change the way we think and live. We would stop laying up treasures in our earthly hotel rooms and start sending more ahead to our true home.

**A Home for God’s Children**

***Ephesians 2:12-21 (NIV)***

***12remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13But now in Christ Jesus you who once were faraway have been brought near by the blood of Christ.***

***14For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.***

***19Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, 20built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.***

The two Greek words translated into the words (house or household) both imply not only a dwelling or residence, but a family. When we think of home, we think of the people we love. Our family *is* our home.

According to Focus on The Family over 24 million children in the United States today live apart from their fathers. That’s one out of every three. Doctor Meg Meeker spoke at a Downline Ministries discipling conference I attended on the role of a mother in the lives of her sons. She described her interview with a grown married man. He gave this discretion of his mother. He said, “My mother is my home!” Isn’t it interesting that he would he describe his mother as his home? Our mothers play a more intimate role in raising us. It is at her breast we are nurtured, and for the most part, she is the teacher or first disciple maker. What we learn or don’t learn from our mothers will have lasting effect on our lives. How many of us had harsh, critical words written upon our hearts by our parents? I ask the women in prison, how many of them were affected negatively by their fathers and I found the majority were. But, what surprised me the most, was the women whose lives were negatively impacted by their mothers. I am always interested in hearing people’s life stories because it gives you great insight into the person’s soul. For example, the poem Crystal wrote in prison, that I included in the chapter titled “You can know if you can see”. It truly amazes me how some of these women even survived to adult hood. We live in a broken world full of broken people. The only difference between us is the various degrees of brokenness.

**The Building of a Spiritual House**

***Proverbs 24:3-4 (NASB)***

***By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.***

In a previous chapter I made mention of the fact that my father is a builder. Daddy has built at least fifteen dwellings for his family including my dream house, a place my family calls “Home”. He also built room additions and several homes for other families including my husband’s older sister Sheila. This is ironic to me because my husband lived next door to his sister and so Art met my father years before I did. I am told that Art and his family even came to our house during those years but I don’t remember it. Stranger still, Art and I had seen one another when we were much younger at the wedding of my Uncle Jim and Aunt Sharon. My sister Sybil and I were the flower girls, and I think we were about seven and nine years old. I don’t have memories of my uncle passing out during his wedding, but because my aunt Sharon put the photo of us on Facebook to commemorate their anniversary, I have the picture of my lovely bouffant or birds nest hair do. Art (who is two years older than I) and his parents were in attendance at this wedding, as friends of the Bride’s family. I don’t think it was love at first sight for Art and me. But I do know that God predestined that that we would meet one another and become part of His family.

What is my point? My heavenly Father is also a builder- He is building an eternal home for His children. Do you remember Jesus’ earthy father’s occupation? Joseph was a carpenter and Jesus worked with him in the family business for thirty years. And then Jesus began His most important building project-- the building of His, “***Twelve ordinary*** ***men***.” I recommend John MacArthur’s book by that titled. When the work of building them was complete, He prayed for them and then then He went to the cross to purchase their redemption. (John 17:1-26) On the third day, He was resurrected and spent the next forty days giving them their marching orders before He returned home to His Heavenly Father to start construction on the eternal home for His family.

***John 14:2&6***

***In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 6 Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.***

**The Family Portrait**

***Ephesians 3:14-15***

***For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray the out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.***

I find it very interesting that the word ***family*** is used ***one time*** in the entire New Testament. It is significant that Apostle Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians. So what other names identify God’s family? Just as each name of God reveals a specific part of His character and nature, so do the specific names given to us His family. We are called Saints, Disciples, Christians, the Elect, the Chosen, the House of God, the Temple, The building and Dwelling of God, the Body of Christ, Living Stones, A Kingdom, Priest, and the Bride of Christ. When we finally arrive at our eternal home with Him, we’ll be called the Wife of the Lamb. For now, I want to focus in upon the description of the Household of God.

The following is a biblical “family portrait“. The house the Lord is building, through local communities of believers, is a family, which bears His name. It is a functional family because Jesus is the glue that holds it all together. It is a house where real Love lives. Because God is there in the midst of them and He is love! It is an eternal family, made up of people from every nation on earth. Some are already home in heaven and some are on earth. It is a house that the gates of hell will not prevail against! It is a family built one precious seed pearl at a time, and the house will stand whatever storms may come because the foundation of the house is Jesus Christ the Rock of ages.

Both the Hebrew and Greek words for ***house*** beautifully describe His dwelling place on earth- the Church. The Hebrew word for House in Strong’s Concordance is Bayith. This is the definition: a house in the greatest variety of applications, especially family: court, ***daughter,*** door, ***palace***, steward, tablet, ***and temple.***

The Greek word for House in Strong’s Concordance is Oikia. This is the vivid description of this word found in the Strong’s Concordance: - residence, an abode; a family, domestics: - home, household. From this word oikos: a dwelling, a family, home, and temple. The words in Greek for building and Build are derived from this root word for house. (Ephesians 2:19-21)

# *Hebrews 2:10-13 (NIV)*

***10In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. 11Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. 12He says, “I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters;  in the assembly I will sing your praises.” And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again he says, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.”***

He sets lonely people in families. (Local communities of Faith) He wants all His children to be connected to His living body so that His life can flow in and through us. (Psalms 27:10, 45:10-11, 68:5-6

***Isaiah 61:4-9 (NASB)***

***4Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, They will raise up the former devastations; And they will repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations.5Strangers will stand and foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers. 6But you will be called the priests of the Lord; You will be spoken of as ministers of our God. You will eat the wealth of nations,  
And in their riches you will boast.7Instead of your shame you will have a double portion,  
And instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land, Everlasting joy will be theirs. 8For I, the Lord, love justice, I hate robbery in the burnt offering; And I will faithfully give them their recompense And make an everlasting covenant with them.9Then their offspring will be known among the nations, And their descendants in the midst of the peoples. All who see them will recognize them Because they are the offspring whom the Lord has blessed.***

**How Wide, and Long and High, and Deep is the Love of God!**

***Ephesians 3:14-21 (NIV)***

***For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray the out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love may have the power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.***

So what other names identify God’s family? Just as each name of God reveals a specific part of His character and nature, so do the specific names given to His family. We are called Saints, Disciples, Christians, the Elect, the Chosen, the House of God, the Temple, the building and Dwelling of God, the Body of Christ, Living Stones, A Kingdom, Priest, and the Bride of Christ. When we finally arrive at our eternal home with Him, we’ll be called the “Wife of the Lamb.” But, for now I want to focus in upon the description of the Household of God.

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

* John 14:2-23, 15:4-10; 1 John 2:6-14, 3:17-24, 4:12-16, 2 John 2; Psalms 90:1, 91:1

Both the Hebrew and Greek words for ***house*** beautifully describe His dwelling place on earth- the Church. The Hebrew word for House in Strong’s Concordance is Bayith. This is the definition: *a house in the greatest variety of applications, especially family: court,* ***daughter,*** *door,* ***palace****, steward, tablet,* ***and temple.***

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***Psalm 45:10-11, 13-15***

***Listen daughter give attention and incline your ear: Forget your people and your father’s house; then will the king will desire your beauty. Because He is your Lord, bow down to him. The Kings daughter is all glorious with in; her clothing is interwoven with gold. She will be led to the King in embroidered work; the virgins, her companions who follow her, will be brought to You. They will be led forth with gladness and rejoicing; they will enter into the King’s palace.***

He sets lonely people in families. (Local communities of Faith) He wants all His children to be connected to His living body so that His life can flow in and through us. (Psalms 27:10, 45:10-11, 68:5-6) In Robert Colman’s book, The Masters Plan of Evangelism, he speaks of the wisdom of God in putting us together as the Church. He says:

“Really the whole problem of giving personal care to every believer is only resolved in a thorough understanding of the nature and mission of the church. It is important here to observe that the emergence of the church principle around Jesus, whereby one believer was brought into fellowship with all others, was the practice in a larger dimension of the same thing that he was doing with the Twelve. Actually it was the church that was the means of following up with all those who followed him. That is, the group of believers became the body of Christ, and as such ministered to each other individually and collectively. Every member of the community of had a part to fulfill in this ministry. But this they could only do as they themselves were trained and inspired. As long as Jesus was with them in the flesh, he was the Leader, but thereafter, it was necessary for those in the church to assume this leadership. Again this meant that Jesus had to train them to do it, which involved his own constant personal association with a few chosen men.”

The following is a song written in 1866 by Samuel J. Stone. In it he beautifully describes the life of the Church and Her final victory over the world and death.

The Church’s One Foundation

***1 Corinthians 3:11***

***“For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”***

*The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her LORD She is His new creation by water and the word.*

*From heaven He came and sought her to be His Holy Bride, with His own blood He bought her and for her life He died.*

*Elect from every nation yet one o’er all the earth. Her charter of Salvation, One LORD, One Faith, one birth, one Holy Name she blesses, partakes one Holy food, and to one Hope she presses with every grace endues.*

*Mid toil and tribulation and tumult of her war, she waits the consummation of peace forevermore till, with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest and the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest.*

**Memory Verses**

***Isaiah 61:4-9 (NASB)***

***4Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, they will raise up the former devastations; And they will repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations.5Strangers will stand and foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers. 6But you will be called the priests of the Lord; You will be spoken of as ministers of our God. You will eat the wealth of nations,  
And in their riches you will boast.7Instead of your shame you will have a double portion,  
And instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore, they will possess a double portion in their land, Everlasting joy will be theirs. 8For I, the Lord, love justice, I hate robbery in the burnt offering; And I will faithfully give them their recompense and make an everlasting covenant with them.9Then their offspring will be known among the nations, And their descendants in the midst of the peoples. All who see them will recognize them Because they are the offspring whom the Lord has blessed.***

**Understanding Your Spiritual Gifts**

**Key Passages**

***Ephesians 4:1-16 (ESV)***

***I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore, it says,***

***“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,***  
***and he gave gifts to men.***

***(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.***

**Introduction**

Imagine if you will a baby girl was given a gift on the day she was born. Her benefactor was a wealthy distant relative. Her parents never opened the gift; they simply placed it into a safety deposit box. As the child grew, no one knew what was in the box except the giver who had long since passed away. The gift was never opened. As the years went on, the parents forgot about the box and the child never knew she had a gift. Although the girl and her family had many financial needs, yet it never crossed their mind to open the gift in the safety deposit box. And yet the gift in that box contained an abundance of wealth to meet all the needs of this family. In fact, it was enough to bless her entire family for generations to come! Regrettably, she never knew that she had such a value gift!

The point to this little parable is this: When a person is born again into God’s family, they have been endowed with valuable spiritual gifts. And like the girl I the story, we could live our entire Christian life, and never even open them. Furthermore, the entire family of God will be cheated out of the blessings that would have come to them through you.

My prayer is this: that the Holy Spirit will use His Word to help you open the gifts you received at the day of your second birth, and that you would be blessed along with the family of God for generations to come.

**The *Me* Life Vs. The *You* Life**

***1 Thessalonians 3:5-10 (ESV)***

***For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—for this reason, brothers in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?***

Herb Hodges, in his exposition of 1 Thessalonians 3:8, said that there is one word in this passage that the Holy Spirit raises His voice for major emphasis. That word is ***YOU***! From his lesson I learned that there are two lifestyles that we can live, the Savior’s lifestyle, or Satan’s. But if you have been a Christian for any length of time then you know that we can vacillate between the two. That is why, we must get up every day and choose who we will live for

* **Satan’s self-centered life**.

This is called the outside ***in*** lifestyle or the lifestyle that is all about ***me***. This person can never be happy or get enough. Everything she gets is for self-use and in the end, this life implodes into self. This is the only life a sinner can live. It is impossible to follow Jesus and live the self-centered life!

**Digging Deeper:**  Philippians 2:19-22; Romans 12:9-12

***Luke 22:24-27 (HSV)***

***A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.***

* **Savior’s life.**

In 1 Thessalonians chapters one through three, Paul and two of his disciples, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy, used one word 50 times. You guessed it; the word is ***you*!** Clearly they lived the Saviors’ lifestyle. To live this way takes humility, and “Humility,” someone has said, “is not thinking less of yourself, it’s not thinking of yourself at all!”

***Philippians 2:1-8 (ESV)***

***So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.***

To follow Jesus example, we live in inside *out* lifestyle. What do we mean? A person who lives inside out realizes that everything they have belongs to the Lord. For this reason, everything in our life, time, energy, wisdom, and resources are used for the growth and benefit of *others*. Do you know the primary difference in merely doing Bible studies and disciple making? Most people study to benefit themselves, but a disciple maker studies and gathers truth in order to give it away to others! And when we follow Jesus strategy, His Truth is multiplied to a multitude of others. This kind of lifestyle explodes the gospel all over the world.

***Mark 10:44-45 (HCSB)***

***And whoever wants to be first among you must be a slave to all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life-a ransom for many.***

**Digging Deeper:**  Luke 9:22-23, 26-27, 14:25-35; Gal. 2:20; John 13:12-17, 34-35; Mark 10:44-45; Romans 12:9-16

**Speaking Gifts and Serving Gifts**

* 1 Peter 4:8-11 Above all, keep your love for one another at full strength, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 be hospitable to one another without complaining. As *each one* has *received a special gift*, employ it in *serving one another* as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving; so that *in all things God may be glorified* through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen
* Romans 12:4-9 Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function. In the same way we who are many are one body of Christ and individually members of one another. According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the standard of faith; if service, in service; if teaching, in teaching; if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.
* 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11 & 26-27 Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same LORD. And there are different activities, but the same God is active IN EVERYONE and EVERYTHING. A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial: to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit, to another, a message of knowledge by the Spirit, to another, faith by the same Spirit, to another, prophecy, to another, distinguishing between the spirits, to another different kinds of languages, to another, interpretation of languages. But one and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each one as He wills. 20 Now there are many parts, yet one body. 26-28 So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it.

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

There are two categories of gifts: **Speaking and Serving**. Whether the gift is speaking or serving, if it is not done in the **Spirit of love,** it is **useless**! (Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7)

1. Speaking gifts -1 Peter 4:8-11; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5,13-15; 4:14-19; 12:4-18; 14:1-5 &19; Ephesians 4:4-11; 25; 5:18-21; Colossians 1:16; Romans 3:2; Acts 7:38
2. Serving gifts –Ephesians 5:25; James 2:14-22; Philippians 2:25; 3:3; 4:18-19

Each Member is a mediator of Christ, each Christian is a minister of Christ, every contact a Christian has is to be used as a means to fulfill Christ's ministry on this earth. He indwells His body to do His work. Spiritual gifts are not earned they are received to give away. The gifts are for others but we will find our greatest joy in being His vessel to work through to meet the needs of others. It truly is better to give than receive. Discipling others is the only way they can learn what the gifts are, and what to do with them. You can experience the joy of the LORD as you see others being built up-grow up to the point they too are using the gifts for others! Romans 8:10-11 His power enables us to do the good work He planned for each of us before the foundation of the earth.

This is a work of the Spirit functioning through His body. We are co-workers with Christ Ephesians 2:10. His power working in us Philippians 4:13 & Eph. 1:18-20; People are God's building 1 Cor. 3:1-16 The treasure and the power in us is HIM! 2 Corinthians 4:7 We love with His love, serve with His strength, speak His words so in all things He gets the glory, honor and praise. The Holy Spirit operates in, and through us to *build His – body as each one does their part.*

***Colossians 1:24-29 (ESV)***

***Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.***

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

* Ephesians 2:10; 20-21 & 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 3:5-11; 2 Corinthians 3:2-9; Philippians 2:13

In his commentary on 1 Peter 4:10, John Macarthur said, “A special gift or spiritual gift is a graciously given supernaturally designed ability granted to every believer by the Holy Spirit by which the Holy Spirit ministers to the body of Christ. A spiritual gift cannot be earned, pursued, or worked up. It is merely received through the grace of God. (1 Cor. 12:4, 7, 11, 18) Each believer has one specific gift, often a combination of various categories of gifts blended together uniquely for each Christian (Roman 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-10)” Spiritual gifts were used not for the exaltation of the person with the gift, but in loving concern for the benefit of others in the church (Romans 5:5; 1 Cor.12:7; 13:2) “A steward is responsible for another’s resources. A Christian does not own his gifts, but God has given him gifts to manage for the church and His glory. “

The 2 categories of gifts are: speaking and serving. But, we must always remember: The gifts are not for us, but for others. And furthermore, whether it is speaking or serving, if it’s not done in the Spirit of love, it is useless! (Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7)

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

* Speaking gifts: 1 Peter 4:11; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5,13-15; 4:14-19; 12:4-18; 14:1-5 &19; Ephesians 4:11; 25; 5:18-21; Colossians 1:16; Romans 3:2; Acts 7:38,
* Serving gifts: Ephesians 5:25; James 2:14-22; Philippians 2:25; 3:3; 4:18-19

And lastly, we are to be ministering outward to reach the world that God so loves. The first step in making disciples is to win them to Christ. Then comes the work of turning them into disciples who will follow Him, and win others, and then - build others. Yet, unless we have been intentionally ben taught to do so, it’s highly unlikely, that we will ever really become a true follower and fisher on men. Statistically speaking, only 2% of believers in America ever share their faith. How can this be when Jesus said, “Come follow Me and I will make you fishes for men.”?

C.H. Spurgon addresses this subject directly when he said, “Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself, be sure of that!”

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

* Matthew 4:19; 2 Corinthians 5:13-6:2; Romans 10:19-20; John15:26-27; Acts 1:8
* See how this ministry grew in the early church: Acts 5:42, 6:1, 7, 8:4; 9:31; 11:26; 12:24, 14:21

In chapter one, from the example of Priscilla and Aquila, it becomes evident that no one who is part of the bride and body of Christ, is excluded or disqualified for this work. And furthermore, it’s the Spirit of Christ living in you, who is doing the work anyway! (1 Corinthians 14:12:1-13) In Herb Hodge’s message entitled “The Hand in the glove,” is perhaps one of the best illustrations I’ve ever seen, depicting the futility and impotency of trying to do anything for God, without the Spirit of God. Based on Herb Hodges testimony, I’ve heard him speak twice on this subject, this message was birthed in his heart as he struggled in vain to do the work of God in his own strength.

His analogy is spot on. Picture with me if you will, a limp glove, trying to move on its own. Here is the explanation of the symbolisms. We are the lifeless, useless glove. The Holy Spirt, is the hand that must be fully formed within the glove, and the mind that tells the hand what to do, is the mind of Christ. And when the hand is fully formed inside the glove, it can do anything and everything that the mind tells it to do! Do you understand this parable? Do you have the mind of Christ? (I Corinthians 2:16; Galatians 4:19-20) The entire body of Christ is to be engaged in all three ministries, just as Jesus did when He walked this earth in a physical body. He desires to do the same today in you. And, furthermore, He has determined the exact time and place for each of us to live. He planted us as “good seeds” to bear much fruit for His kingdom and glory. (Acts 17:24-26 & Matthew 13:37-38) Are you engaged in His 3-fold ministry? If not, should you not start now, start near, start small?

**Week #**

**The Doctrine of Suffering**

**Key Passages**

***Ephesians 3:11-13 (ESV)***

***This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.***

**Introduction**

Mingled in the mosaic of our lives are joys and pains, births and deaths, blessings and trials. King Solomon described this in the book of Ecclesiastes. Even though we know this in our head, we resist the trials when they come. But come they will because suffering is part of the human experience on this side of the garden. The rain falls on the just and the unjust. No one gets a pass from heartache. It’s the effect of the fall. From God’s One and Only Son, to you and I, none of us are insulated from problems and pain. On the contrary. Human history bears witness to the fact that, “all God’s children got troubles.” Nevertheless, we all want to avoid suffering like the plague, and justifiably so!

I’m not sure if it’s the result of Biblical illiteracy or what, but somewhere we got the notion that this world should be like heaven. This kind of delusional thinking becomes evident when troubles come our way and we behave as if something somethings not right, or unnatural has happened. Ignorance, as they say, is bliss until we become educated by reality.

It’s important in any Bible study to always keep in mind the circumstances surrounding the message being communicated. When you do, this always sheds an abundance of light to the interpretation. If you’ll remember, Paul was writing this letter to the saints while he was imprisoned for the gospel in Rome. It is safe to say he received his P.H.D. in the field of suffering. After Jesus called Paul to Himself, He made it clear on the front end; the journey would not be one of all health, wealth and happiness. It wasn’t for Jesus, Paul or any of the disciples and subsequently, it won’t be for us either.

***Acts 9:15-16 (NASB)***

***But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for my name sake.***

**A Man of Sorrows**

***Luke 9:22-26 (NIV)***

***And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”***

***Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.***

God’s ways are radically different from ours. For instance, death bring life. The clearest example of this enigma is found in the fact that Jesus is a “Man of Sorrows and familiar with grief.” He asked His disciples, “Who do you say I am?” Peter quickly confessed, “You are the Messiah!”. Jesus replied, and I’ll paraphrase, “I am the Suffering Servant that Isaiah wrote about. Yes – I Am the Chosen One - The Messiah.” But then Jesus dumb-founded them all with the revelation of *why* He came. I came to absorb the wrath of God on your behalf. I am going to suffer, persecution, rejection and death. He held nothing back. He said simply and plainly –He said “I came to this earth to suffer and die. I am going to the cross. Now… Who want to follow me there?

The Germany theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, understood exactly what Jesus meant. He said, “When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.” Bonhoeffer was executed for his faith. As someone has fitly put it, “The “tongue” in his mouth, matched up with the “tongue” in his shoes.” This is why the road is *narrow* and *few* follow Him. The definition of the Greek word Christian is follower of Christ. (Mat. 7:13-24; Luke 9:22-23) Most count the cost too high and choose comfort instead of a cross. (Galatians 2:20) But, if we desire to live we must die. This is the cost of discipleship.

How foreign and contradictory is the teachings of Jesus to the prosperity gospels being taught today? This is one example; take if you will, the book by Joel Osteen with the title: Your Best Life Now. What merit do we find in this kind of gospel? Is this really the gospel that Jesus propagated? Quite the contrary!

But just for the sake of argument, I will concur with Osteen on one point. For the lost person, here and now *is* their best life. In reality for them, living in this sin cursed world is truly all the heaven they will ever experience.

We have already noted in a previous lesson that Satan give the best at first and always saves the worst for last. Like the moment of indulging in sinful sexual gratification with a person whom you are not married to, is just that- it’s as good as it’s going to get. Then comes the consequences that are not simply momentary. Like, sexually transmitted diseases, babies conceived that end up killed or raised by a single mother. And this is not to mention, broken marriages and homes and years of shame, guilt and regret.

***Ephesians 5:3-13 (ESV)***

***But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible.***

Not so for the saints in Christ, praise His Name, our temporary residence in this world is all the hell we are ever going to know, because, not only has He saved the best for last, but our best life will last forever! Amen!? Our hope and future home is a place where there is no sin, death, crying or pain. Furthermore, if we have been saved from this wicked and perverse generation, should we not become more and more uncomfortable with the darkness that is so prevalent in the here and now!

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

***“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.***

***“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’***

***“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”***

The cost of being a disciple of Jesus Christ requires death - death to sin, self-rule and love for the world. We could sum it up in two words-surrender and trust. This is what the Kingdom of Heaven is - where Christ the King rules!

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

* Luke 9:18-22, 47-59, 16:9-13, 17:33, 18:28-30; 14:25-34; John 6:60-66; Matthew 16:13-26, 19:29; Mark 10:24; Isaiah 53: 21-12; 1 Peter 2:24-25; 2 Corinthians 1:5-11, 5:21; Hebrew 12:1-13, 13:12-14; Revelation 21:1-9

**The Rude Awakening**

***Acts 14:28 (HCSB)***

[***After they had evangelized***](http://concordances.org/greek/2097.htm) [***that***](http://concordances.org/greek/1565.htm) [***town***](http://concordances.org/greek/4172.htm) [***and***](http://concordances.org/greek/2532.htm) [***made many***](http://concordances.org/greek/2425.htm) [***disciples***](http://concordances.org/greek/3100.htm)***,*** [***they returned***](http://concordances.org/greek/5290.htm) [***to***](http://concordances.org/greek/1519.htm) [***Lystra***](http://concordances.org/greek/3082.htm)***,*** [***to***](http://concordances.org/greek/1519.htm) [***Iconium***](http://concordances.org/greek/2430.htm)***,*** [***and***](http://concordances.org/greek/2532.htm) [***to***](http://concordances.org/greek/1519.htm) [***Antioch***](http://concordances.org/greek/490.htm)***,*** [***strengthening***](http://concordances.org/greek/1991.htm) [***the***](http://concordances.org/greek/3588.htm) [***disciples***](http://concordances.org/greek/3101.htm) [***by encouraging***](http://concordances.org/greek/3870.htm) [***them to continue***](http://concordances.org/greek/1696.htm) [***in the***](http://concordances.org/greek/3588.htm) [***faith***](http://concordances.org/greek/4102.htm) [***and***](http://concordances.org/greek/2532.htm) [***by telling them,***](http://concordances.org/greek/3754.htm) ***“***[***It is necessary***](http://concordances.org/greek/1163.htm) [***to pass***](http://concordances.org/greek/1525.htm) [***through***](http://concordances.org/greek/1223.htm) [***many***](http://concordances.org/greek/4183.htm) [***troubles***](http://concordances.org/greek/2347.htm) [***on our***](http://concordances.org/greek/2248.htm) [***way into***](http://concordances.org/greek/1519.htm) [***the***](http://concordances.org/greek/3588.htm) [***kingdom***](http://concordances.org/greek/932.htm) [***of God***](http://concordances.org/greek/2316.htm)***.”***

If you have been a follower of the Lord Jesus for any amount of time, then you know by experience that the life of faith is never monotonous. It certainly wasn’t for Paul. Just read about his adventures and near death experience. For me, life with Christ has been a wild, exciting, joyful ride and yet there have been plenty of days that were so hard, that I just wanted to throw in the towel and give up. Yet, even so, I would not trade even the *worst* *days* *with* *Jesus,* for a thousand problem free days without Him. However, my understanding on the subject of suffering has changed considerably over time.

***2 Corinthians 6:4-10 (ESV)***

***but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.***

As an infant in the faith who was not discipled, I was completely baffled when Christ’s suffering began to overflow into my life. In my naivety, my impression was that Jesus came into my life to make me happy; I did not know His ultimate goal for my life was not just happiness but holiness and perfection. In summary, to make me just like Jesus! No one ever pointed out to me that I was appointed not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer with Him.

For this reason, I am committed to preparing others with the full counsel of God’s Word on the doctrine of suffering, in order that they can come safely through these trying times with their faith intact. Paul did the same for the saints in Corinth.

***2 Corinthians 1:3-10 (ESV)***

***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.***

***For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.***

In the darkest days of suffering, the Lord has placed in my hands and in my heart some rich treasures. I count them now as plunder snatched from the assaults that have come from the enemy of my soul. These are my memory verses. The Lord has some treasures for all His children, but we need to be informed that they exist and where to look for them in His book of wisdom - the Bible.

***Isaiah 45:3 (NASB)***

***I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, so that you may know that it is I, The Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.***

Here is just one personal example. On one occasion, after the diagnoses of cervical cancer, I got a little black book and wrote a list passages to meditate on. I took it with me into surgery and meditated on these precious passages right up to the moment they put me under anesthesia. These verses subdued my fears and fortified my faith. God will not revoke a single promise He has made, and He has given three hundred and sixty-five, “fearnot” passages (one for every day of the year), and most of them are followed by these words- “***I am with you.***” The following passage is one of my favorites.

***Isaiah 43:1-5***

***But now, this is what the Lord says--he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel:  
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.2When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. 3For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;  
I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. 4Since you are precious, and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. 5Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east, and gather you from the west.***

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

* 2 Timothy 3:12; Romans 8:17-22; Philppians1:29; 3:10; 1 Peter 3:10-18, 4:13;

2 Corinthians 1:5, 4:7-11, 6:4-10,7:5, 11:23-28; Colossians 1:24; Luke 9:21-26;

1 Thessalonians 3:2-4; Acts 9:15-16; 14:19-22, 16:22, 19:11-41, 20:17-24

For the child of God, suffering always has purpose. One such purpose is the refining influence it has on our life. It cures us of being enamored with this temporary world in which we are in but no longer of. Albeit these facts offer little consolation when your heart is shattered and your mind is numbed with pain. Perhaps you have asked yourself this question, “Where is God when we are suffering?” But more importantly, when we are in the midst of trouble, we, the saints, are hidden in the Rock of Ages…the Lord Jesus. He is our Stronghold!

***Psalm 37:39 (NIV)***

***The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord; he is their stronghold in time of trouble.***

**Chapter #**

**A FAMILY WHERE LOVE LIVES**

**Ephesians 3:14-21**

**Faith’s Expression**

**Key Passages**

***Ephesians 1:15-16 (NASB)***

***For this reason, I too having heard of the Faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the Saints do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers.***

**Introduction**

In previous chapters we saw the Spirit is the pledge and seal of our new birth. Likewise, there is one identifying mark of a child of God…. love. At the very moment we receive Christ, the Spirit of God comes to live in us, and we bear the characteristics of God; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. But the greatest of these is love. How can we know if we have true faith; what marks us as the true Bride of Christ? Love! When we love others, we look the most like the Bridegroom. This cliché is true: “You simply cannot give what you have not first received.” The origin of love is God – it’s what He does because of who He is. He doesn’t hoard love; He gives it away freely. (John 3:14-18)

When Jesus reinstated Peter, He asked Peter this question three times, “Do you love me Peter?” (John 21:12-17) The dialog between Jesus and Peter will apply to every true believer. If we love Jesus, we will love others.

***1 John 4:16 (NASB)***

***We have come to know and have believed the Love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.***

We can clearly see the seal of authenticity on Paul’s life. His letters reveal His new heart, filled with love, and gives evidence of a changed life. He went from a man who hated the church to a man who “Loved the Lord with all his heart and his neighbor as himself.” For three years Paul taught the Ephesians to obey all the commands of Jesus: the greatest of these was to love God and all the Saints, and last was to make disciples. (Matthew 22:46-40; 28:18-20)

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

1. Explain the following statement: “Our actions speak so loud; people can’t hear what we say.” (James 2:24-26)
2. What do people hear about your faith and love?
3. What is the first fruit or evidence of the Spirit? (Gal. 5:19-24)
4. Where is love to begin? (Titus 2:2-5)
5. What is the one and only source of love? (1 Tim. 1:1-3,14; 2 Tim.1:13; Eph. 1:4 1 Jn. 4:8)
6. How can you serve the body of believers in love? Make a to-do list.
7. Do you know the love language of your family members?
8. Ask them to fill in the blanks: I feel loved most when\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?
9. What will you do to show love to the members of your family?
10. What is your labor of love? (1Thess. 1:1-5)
11. List the evidence of love between Paul and the Saints at Ephesus. (Acts 20:13-38; 2 Tim. 1:13-18)

***Galatians 5:14 (NIV)***

***The entire Law is summed up in a single command: “LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”***

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

* 1 John 3:14 -24 & 4:7-5:4; John 13:1-4, 34-35, John 15:7-13,17; 17:21-23; Gal. 5:12-15; Romans 5:5; James 2:8; 1 Cor.13:1-13; Colossians 1:1:4; Philemon 5; Ephesians 3:18; Matthew 22:34-40

***1 John 3:14 & 18-24 (HCSB)***

***14 We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. The one who does not love remains in death. 18 Little children, we must not love in word or speech, but indeed and truth;19 that is how we will know we are of the truth, and will convince our hearts in His presence, 20 because if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things. 21 Dear friend, if our hearts do not condemn us we have confidence before God, 22 and can receive whatever we ask from Him because we keep His commands and do what is pleasing in His sight.23 Now this is His command: that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as He commanded us. 24 The one who keeps His commands remains in Him, and He in him. And the way we know that He remains in us is from the Spirit He has given us.***

The one most recognizable birth mark of a child of God is love. The world will never know who God is and how much He loves them unless we represent Him well. In fact, in His prayer just before His passion, Jesus prayed that we would be united to one another in love. The greatest expression of our love for Jesus is to obeying His greatest command to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. This is how Jesus knows that we love Him. Let’s take this to heart and really become doers of the Word and not hearers only.

**Memory Verses**

***Galatians 5:6 (NASB)***

***For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor un-circumcision means anything, but faith working through love.***

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**Week #11**

**I Remember You in My Prayers**

**Key Passage**

***Ephesians 1:15 (NASB)***

***Do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers.***

***Ephesians 3:14-21***

**Introduction**

Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians was the first of the four prison letters written sometime around A.D. 60-62. The others included Colossians, Philippians and the last was the personal letter to Philemon, a member of the church at Colossae, which met in his home. You would think Paul would be wallowing in self-pity while he languished there on house arrest. (Acts 28:16-31) So what was Paul doing with his time while he was locked up? Paul was thanking God for these Saints and ministering to them in prayer. I do believe his prayers included their physical needs, but what is recorded is his great concern for their spiritual needs. In our next Chapter, we will focus on the specifics of those prayers and learn how to pray for the ones we love. Prayer is one the most unselfish acts one person could do for another.

**Teach us to Pray**

***Luke 11:1-3***

***It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “LORD, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.” And He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.”***

How many of us have been taught how to pray? Jesus’ disciples were present and privy to some of the intimate conversations of the Lord Jesus and His Father. Jesus taught them to pray by praying with and for them. In a message by my pastor, Bro. David Lawrence, he noted that of the 37 times in scripture where Jesus taught on prayer, 33 of the passages were speaking of corporate prayer. He taught us that the prayer closet was a private meeting space like the upper-room where a small group of people prayed together. (Mat.6:5-6; Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1; 6:4; 12:5; 12:12; 16:13-16) Pastor David walked us through the book of Acts and showed us clearly why the gospel was advancing in great power. All the great movements of God were preceded by a group of people who were devoted to prayer.

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

* 1 Timothy 1:2, 2:1, 4:5, 5:5; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 4-7, 22-24; Colossians 1:3, 4:2-3, 12; Ephesians 6:18; Acts 10:4; 20:36; 1 Peter 3:12; Philippians 1:3-10; 19; 4:6; Romans 10:1, 12:12; James 5:13-18

**What is Prayer?**

In any relationship there must be healthy, open communication. When communication breaks down, so does the intimacy, and then love begins to grow cold. In our relationship with the Lord Jesus, we have two life lines that bind us to Him in divine relationship: the Word of God and prayer. He communicates to us through His written Word, and we communicate with Him through prayer. The Holy Spirit who lives in us is the internet connection between the two. If you pray, but don’t open His Word, then you cannot hear His reply. That is a one - way conversation. But to the ones who remain connected to Him through His Word, a promise is given that they will see much evidence of their relationship through answered prayers. And this proves we are His disciples and brings the Father glory. The word of God is a love letter to His bride. My friend Joney, who just lost her husband after 49 years of marriage, has over 100 letters that he wrote to her while he was away in the U.S. Navy. For the rest of her days she can hear him declare his love to her until they are united again in heaven. How precious is God’s Word to you? When you love the Lord Jesus, you want to please him and do His will. (John 14:18-31)

Prayer, it has been said, is practicing the presence of God. The motivation of Prayer is communication with God. The result of prayer is an intimate relationship with God. However, the reward of prayer is God himself! If we truly desire to stay connected to God, there are no shortcuts. To cultivate a divine romance with the Lord Jesus, we must attach ourselves to Him through prayer and His word.

Like a diamond, prayer is multifaceted. As we hold it up to the light of God’s Word, we will discover new dimensions of this incredible honor purchased for us by the Lord Jesus Christ. (James 4:6-10; Hebrews 10:19-25)

***John 15:7-10 (NASB)***

***If you abide in ME and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to My Fathers Glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourself to be my disciples. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in my love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love***

**WORD SEARCH: from Strong’s Concordance:**

* **Pray/Prayers**: Greek Strong’s # 4335 pros-euche /4336Proseuchomai; prayer an oratory chapel pray earnestly; prayer. To pray to god, i.e. supplicate; worship: pray earnestly for. To approach; come near; visit; worship; draw near unto. (Eph. 1:6; Luke 11:1-2; 18:1;10; Phil. 1:9; 4:6; James 5:13; 1 Thess. 5:17; Romans 8:26; Colossians 1:9;
* **Pray:** Greek Strong’s #1162 Deesis; petition-prayer; request; supplication (2Tim. 1:3; Phil.1:4; 19; 2 Cor. 8:4)

**Draw near**: pros-Euchmai; to approach; come near; visit; worship; assent to; draw near; go near to. (Hebrew 10:19-22; 11:6)

* **Worship**: Greek Strong’s #4352 Pros-kuneo-(#2965- a dog a hound.) WORSHIP: to kiss like a dog licking his master’s hand; to fawn or crouch; to prostrate oneself in homage do reverence to adore; worship. John 4:20-24
* **Continually**: Greek Pros-Katereo: earnest toward; persevere, constantly diligently; attend assiduously to all the exercise or to a person; to adhere closely to (As a servitor) attend give self continually, continue with; wait on continually. (Acts 6:4)
* **Seek:** Greek Strong’s #2212 Zeteo: to seek; to worship (GOD); desire; enquire; endeavor; require; seek after. (Luke 11:9; 12:31)

**What Happens When We Pray?**

***Isaiah 56:6-7 (NASB)***

***“Also the foreigners who join themselves to the lord, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the lord, to be His servants, everyone who keeps from profaning the Sabbath and holds fast My covenant; Even those I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My alter; For my house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”***

A.W. Tozer said, “Prayer 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, it is humility. Through prayer we humble ourselves before Almighty God and worship Him. In this posture, we’re as close to God, as a saved sinner can get. (James 4:8-10) Because when we pray, we not only come near to God, but He draws near to us. By joining ourselves to the Lord, we call on Him based upon His written Word, and He gives us joy. We *become* a house of prayer. As we cultivate a love relationship with God, then the King will make His earthly kingdom in us. Through prayer God will draw near us, and as the psalmist said in Psalm 73:28, 16:11 (NIV)… “But as for me, it is good to be near God…,” and “You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.” At the right hand of God, the Father is the Lord Jesus. What an outlandish promise. There is joy in the presence of Jesus!

***Psalm 145:18 The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.***

***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?8 And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?***

**John 14:2 (NASB) *In My Father’s house is many (dwelling places); if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you.” John 14:12-15 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. "Whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. If you love me, you will keep My commandments. I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be IN YOU.” John 14:21 “He who has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and disclose Myself to him.” 23 He said “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our (home) with him.”***

The promised presence and power of God is conditional. He does not promise to make His earthly dwelling in people who merely say His word in prayer, but He will make His home in the ones who obey Him. The only pure motivation for obedience is love for God.

* The family that prays together stays together. Ephesians 3:14-21

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

* Romans 8:9-15,26-34; Heb. 7:24-25; 9:22-24; 10:19-25; John 17:1-26)

**Discussion questions: Let’s talk about it.**

1. Do you have a spiritual parent who loves you and has your back in prayer?
2. Did this person bring you with them before the mercy seat of God in prayer?
3. According to the following passage: who teaches others to pray? (Luke 11:1-13)
4. If you were locked up, would your prayers be all about yourself or focused on others?
5. How much of our prayers are focused on people’s eternal souls?
6. In the following passages, who is praying for you? (Heb. 7:25, Rom. 8:34)
7. In the following passage, how does the Lord feel about the prayers of those who refuse to hear His Words? ***Proverbs 28:9 (NIV) If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction, even their prayers are detestable.***
8. In the following passages, whose prayers are heard by God? (1 John 5:12-15; John 15:7-8,16; Heb. 10:19-23; Eph. 2:12-22; Gal. 6:4; Romans 8:9-15)
9. Do you sometimes feel far away from God when you pray?
10. Read the Isaiah 59:1-2. What blocks our prayers?
11. In the following passages what Priority does Jesus place on prayer? (Isaiah 56:6-7; Luke 19:46; Rev. 5:8-9; Matthew 28:18-19)
12. Have you ever experienced God’s presence manifest to you through prayer?
13. Read the following passages and explain this statement: The prayers that originate in Heaven will be heard on earth. (1 Peter. 3:12; Proverbs 15:8, 29; Isaiah 59:1-3; James 5:16-18; Psalm 145:18)

**Think On These Things**

* Did you learn something new?
* What did the Lord say to you from this chapter?
* Rewrite in your own words what the Lord spoke to your heart.
* Is there a new promise to claim as your own?
* Is there a sin to confess or avoid?
* Did you find a command to obey or a passage you could pray?

**Memory Verses**

**2Timothy 1:2-3 (NASB)**

***To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day.***



**Chapter #**

**EYES OF YOUR HEART**

**Key Passage**

### *Ephesians 1:15-18 (NASB)*

### *For this reason, I too having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints,do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance inthe Saints.*

### Introduction

We have already seen the great love and concern the apostle Paul had for the Saints with whom he had invested three years of his life. In Paul’s prison letters, we find the most powerful intercessory prayers we could ever pray on behalf of others. (Colossians 1:7-13) Theses prayers are birthed in heaven, and through them we gain insight; insight that only comes from the Spirit of God, who is our great intercessor. (Romans 8:26-34)

While in Ephesus, Paul wrote the letters to the Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 tells his story of a divine encounter which happened sometime between his conversion and first missionary trip. (Acts 9:30-13:1-3) He received visions and revelations from the Lord that left him with a thorn in his flesh. This affliction, it has been suggested, was an eye problem that led him to seek the medical service of a Greek doctor named Luke. While Luke treated Paul’s physical eyes, Paul opened Luke’s spiritual eyes to the revelation of Jesus Christ. It was the beloved Doctor Luke who wrote the gospel of Luke and recorded the events of Paul’s miraculous conversion in the book of Acts.

Just as we have eyes in our head to see physically, we also have eyes in our hearts to see spiritually. Until we are born again, we don’t have spiritual sight because the eyes of our heart are blinded. (2 Cor. 4:2-6; 1:22; 1 Cor. 2:1-16; 1 John 2:20, 27) We receive spiritual sight at the moment of salvation; but only with the aid of the Holy Spirit, can our spiritual eyes adjust to the light. While we will never fully comprehend all the hidden treasures of Living Word of God –the Lord Jesus, we can grow in grace and knowledge of God through the revelation of the written Word. Growing involves learning and having a teachable heart. Only those whose hearts are receptive to the truth will have spiritual vision.

***John 16:12-15 (NASB)***

***I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. 14He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore, I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.***

**To Know Him**

***Ephesians 1:15-17 (NASB)***

***For this reason, I too having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, 16do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; 17that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.***

Paul’s prayers were specific, purposeful and profound. Without God’s gracious response to the specific request, the Saints would be left in the dark. His priority in this prayer was for the Saints to Know the Lord Jesus Christ. The more we know Him, the more we realize we are merely getting a glimpse of His Glory. I do not believe any of us could take a full revelation of Him. If you have ever gotten even a glimpse of His glory personally through divine revelation, you know it leaves you with an insatiable quest for more. All that we can or will ever know on this earth about the Lord Jesus is revealed within the pages of God’s Holy Word, and the Holy Spirit is the interpreter. All spiritual wisdom, insight and knowledge come from the Living Word of God.

***Colossians 1:9 (NASB)***

***For this reason, also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.***

**WORD SEARCH: From Strong’s Concordance**

* Knowledge Strong’s #1922 epignosis; recognition, i.e. full discernment, acknowledgment: - knowledge. (Eph. 1:17; Colossians 1:9-10; 3:10; Phi. 1:9) #1921 egiginosko, to know upon some mark, i.e. recognize; to become fully acquainted with, to acknowledge; have known - well, perceive. (Matthew 7:14, 1 Cor. 13:12)
* Knowledge Strong’s # 1108/1107 genosis; knowing knowledge, science. / genorizo; to make known, to know-certify, declare, make known, give, and to understand. (Colossians 2:3; Eph. 3:3,5,10,19; 1:9; 6:19,21)
* Knowing #1492 eido; To SEE, by implication to KNOW: - be aware, behold, have knowledge, look on, perceive, see, be sure, tell, understand. (Eph.1:18; 6;8-9; Colossians 3: 24; 4:11; 2 Tim. 3:14; 2 Tim 1:12; Phil. 1:19 ,25; 1 John 5:13-15; Matthew 12:25; John 1:47-50)
* Know #1097 ginosko to know allow be aware of, feel, have, known-ledge, perceive, be resolved, can speak, be sure, and understand. (Phil. 3:10; Eph. 3:19; 5;5)

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

1. Look at the word translated in Ephesians 1:18 as know. Do you see another word that is translated as see?
2. What is the difference in head knowledge and heart knowledge? The difference between the head and the heart is 18 inches. (1Samuel 16:7)
3. Is saving faith in the head, or in the heart? (Romans 10:9-13)
4. Read: 2 Cor. 4:3-6) When God opened the eyes in your heart to see His glory in the Face of Jesus, what was revealed to you? Be specific.
5. Read: Revelation 1:1, 8, 12-19. What was revealed to John?
6. Read: 1 John 1:1-4. What did John see that He proclaimed?
7. In John 17:3 what did Jesus say was eternal life?

***John 17:3 (NASB)***

### *This is eternal life that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

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

* Phi. 1:3-10; 3:7-11; 1 Cor. 2:9-10,16; 1 John 2:20,27; 2 Peter 1-10,18

**“Let There Be LIGHT”**

***Psalm 119:130 (NASB)***

***The unfolding of Your words gives light;***   
***It gives understanding to the simple.***

How important is your sight and your hearing? Like many gifts, we don’t realize how important they are until they are gone or impaired. True? The Word of God gives spiritual sight and spiritual light. All vision begins when God Speaks “Let there be light!” The Lord Jesus is the Word of God and the Light of the world. The nations will walk by His light, but without the Word of God we are utterly in the dark. If you are vision impaired or near sighted, you can begin to understand this concept. What happens when you put on a pair of glasses? When the Holy Spirit puts God’s glasses on the eyes in our heart, we have spiritual illumination through the lens of the Word of God. Until this happens we cannot see from God’s perspective. What does God see when He looks upon this world He so loved? (John 3:16) He sees people who are perishing without a true knowledge of Him. These individuals are all around us, but without God’s sight, we don’t see them perishing. We need to put on His glasses to see what He sees and love what He loves and be moved and mobilized to action!

***Hosea 4:6 (NIV)***

***My people Perish for lack of knowledge.***

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

### Read: 1 Samuel 3: 1, 7, 19-21; Proverbs 29:16-18

### Is the Word of God rare in your life?

### What do you think God meant when He said about his word: “It is your life!” in Deut. 32:46-47. Compare Hebrew 4:12-14; Matthew 4:4; John 6:63

### Can you describe a time when the Holy Spirit opened your eyes of understanding to a passage that you had never understood?

### In John Newton’s great hymn “Amazing Grace” we find the line: “I once was blind, but now I see.” Explain this concept?

### Read Paul’s conversion experience as recorded by Luke and explain the contrast between physical sight and spiritual sight.

### *Acts 9:1-18 (NASB)*

### *Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” 5And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.” 7The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. 9And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. 10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” 11And the Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, 12and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.” 13But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; 14and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” 15But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.” 17So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized.*

### *Footnotes:*

[*Acts 9:1*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27218) *Later called Paul*

1. [*Acts 9:1*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27218) *Lit threat*
2. [*Acts 9:7*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27224) *Or sound*
3. [*Acts 9:8*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27225) *Lit was seeing*
4. [*Acts 9:12*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27229) *A few early mss do not contain in a vision*
5. [*Acts 9:13*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27230) *Or holy ones*
6. [*Acts 9:15*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27232) *Or vessel*

#### *Cross references:*

1. [*Acts 9:1*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27218) *:* [*Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:9-18*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%209:1-Acts%209:22,%20Acts%2022:3-Acts%2022:16,%20Acts%2026:9-Acts%2026:18&version=NASB)
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3. [*Acts 9:2*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27219) *:* [*Acts 9:14, 21; 22:5; 26:10*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%209:14,%20Acts%209:21,%20Acts%2022:5,%20Acts%2026:10&version=NASB)
4. [*Acts 9:2*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27219) *:* [*Matt 10:17*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt%2010:17&version=NASB)
5. [*Acts 9:2*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27219) *:* [*Gen 14:15; 2 Cor 11:32; Gal 1:17*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen%2014:15,%202Cor%2011:32,%20Gal%201:17&version=NASB)
6. [*Acts 9:2*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27219) *:* [*John 14:6; Acts 18:25f; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014:6,%20Acts%2018:25-Acts%2018:28,%20Acts%2019:9,%20Acts%2019:23,%20Acts%2022:4,%20Acts%2024:14,%20Acts%2024:22&version=NASB)
7. [*Acts 9:3*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27220) *:* [*1 Cor 15:8*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Cor%2015:8&version=NASB)
8. [*Acts 9:4*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27221) *:* [*Acts 22:7; 26:14*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2022:7,%20Acts%2026:14&version=NASB)
9. [*Acts 9:6*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27223) *:* [*Acts 9:16*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%209:16&version=NASB)
10. [*Acts 9:7*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27224) *:* [*Acts 26:14*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2026:14&version=NASB)
11. [*Acts 9:7*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27224) *:* [*John 12:29f; Acts 22:9*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2012:29-John%2012:50,%20Acts%2022:9&version=NASB)
12. [*Acts 9:8*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27225) *:* [*Acts 9:18; 22:11*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%209:18,%20Acts%2022:11&version=NASB)
13. [*Acts 9:8*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27225) *:* [*Gen 14:15; 2 Cor 11:32; Gal 1:17*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen%2014:15,%202Cor%2011:32,%20Gal%201:17&version=NASB)
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16. [*Acts 9:10*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27227) *:* [*Acts 10:3, 17, 19; 11:5; 12:9; 16:9f; 18:9*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2010:3,%20Acts%2010:17,%20Acts%2010:19,%20Acts%2011:5,%20Acts%2012:9,%20Acts%2016:9-Acts%2016:40,%20Acts%2018:9&version=NASB)
17. [*Acts 9:11*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27228) *:* [*Acts 9:30; 11:25; 21:39; 22:3*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%209:30,%20Acts%2011:25,%20Acts%2021:39,%20Acts%2022:3&version=NASB)
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19. [*Acts 9:13*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27230) *:* [*Acts 8:3*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%208:3&version=NASB)
20. [*Acts 9:13*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27230) *:* [*Acts 9:32, 41; 26:10; Rom 1:7; 15:25, 26, 31; 16:2, 15; 1 Cor 1:2*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%209:32,%20Acts%209:41,%20Acts%2026:10,%20Rom%201:7,%20Rom%2015:25-Rom%2015:26,%20Rom%2015:31,%20Rom%2016:2,%20Rom%2016:15,%201Cor%201:2&version=NASB)
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23. [*Acts 9:15*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27232) *:* [*Acts 13:2; Rom 1:1; 9:23; Gal 1:15; Eph 3:7*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2013:2,%20Rom%201:1,%20Rom%209:23,%20Gal%201:15,%20Eph%203:7&version=NASB)
24. [*Acts 9:15*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27232) *:* [*Acts 22:21; 26:17; Rom 1:5; 11:13; 15:16; Gal 1:16; 2:7ff; Eph 3:1, 8; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 4:17*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2022:21,%20Acts%2026:17,%20Rom%201:5,%20Rom%2011:13,%20Rom%2015:16,%20Gal%201:16,%20Gal%202:7-Gal%202:21,%20Eph%203:1,%20Eph%203:8,%201Tim%202:7,%202Tim%204:17&version=NASB)
25. [*Acts 9:15*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27232) *:* [*Acts 25:22f; 26:1, 32; 2 Tim 4:17*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2025:22-Acts%2025:27,%20Acts%2026:1,%20Acts%2026:32,%202Tim%204:17&version=NASB)
26. [*Acts 9:16*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27233) *:* [*Acts 20:23; 21:4, 11, 13; 2 Cor 6:4f; 11:23-27; 1 Thess 3:3*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2020:23,%20Acts%2021:4,%20Acts%2021:11,%20Acts%2021:13,%202Cor%206:4-2Cor%206:18,%202Cor%2011:23-2Cor%2011:27,%201Thess%203:3&version=NASB)
27. [*Acts 9:17*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27234) *:* [*Mark 5:23; Acts 6:6; 9:12*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%205:23,%20Acts%206:6,%20Acts%209:12&version=NASB)
28. [*Acts 9:17*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27234) *:* [*Acts 22:13*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2022:13&version=NASB)
29. [*Acts 9:17*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.1:15-16;Joshua%201:8;Acts%209:1-18&version=NASB#en-NASB-27234) *:* [*Acts 2:4*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202:4&version=NASB)

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

* Hab. 2:1-2; Ps. 19:7-9; Ps. 119:105; 2 Cor. 4:2-6; Mat. 13:10-23; Isaiah 6:1-10, 2 Peter 1:19-21

***Psalm 119:18 (NASB)***

***Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law.***

**The Hope of Our Calling**

***Ephesians 1:18 (NASB)***

***I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory ofHis inheritance in the Saints.***

Brother Herb Hodges is man who truly has spiritual vision. His gift to the body of Christ is a vision of Biblical disciple making. He is being used as an instrument of God to open the spiritual eyes of the Church, to our “great omission” of the Lord ‘s “Great Commission” to make disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:19-20) All over the world people who have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church are being equipped with the tools to obey and follow the Lord in reaching the world. In His Chapter “How Vital is Vision?” Brother Herb states:

“*Human intelligence will always* ***give you your point of view. Only a miracle of illumination will give you God’s point of******view. Therein lies the difference between ‘no Vision,’ without which ‘the people perish,’*** *and ‘vision,’ by means of which the people flourish.”* He gives this formula concerning vision:

*“No vision = total failure; Limited vision = little success; A vision - a plan – action = only a dream; A vision + a plan – action = a haunting dream (guilt); but A vision + a plan + action = a spiritually productive ministry. Note that the test of a person’s vision is in the action that is stimulated by the vision. Without action, both you and your gifts will remain in the category of “potential.” Potential is dormant ability that is never mobilized through vision.*”

***Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)***

***Where there is no vision, the people Perish.***

### This is my paraphrase of Herb Hodges quote: Little Word of God in a life= little light to walk in the darkness of the world; little light = little vision; little vision = little knowledge of God. Without the knowledge of God people perish!

### WORD SEARCH: From Strong’s Concordance

* **Hear** Hebrew: -Strong's #8085- shama: carefully hear, be obedient, obey, understands, can tell, witness. Psalm 78:1-8-Isaiah 59:21
* **Hear** Greek: Strong’s #191- akouo: hear, understand
* **Follow** Greek: Strong’s #190 –akolo: -theo-to follow as a disciple, to reach. (Matthew 4:19)
* **Obey** Greek: Strong’s #5219-hupa-akou:to hear under as a subordinate, to listen attentively, to head, conform to a command or authority, hearken, be obedient, to obey. Romans 6:17, 10:16, Philip. 2:12, 1 Peter 1:22

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

1. What is the first call of every Saint? Mark 3:13-14
2. What will we do if we follow Him? Matthew 4:21-22
3. Why did God choose to reveal Himself to Paul?

***Galatians 1:15-16 (NIV)***

***But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased 16to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood.***

1. Why did God reveal Himself to the apostle John? (1 John1:1-4)
2. Do you know the hope of your calling? (John 10:26-30)
3. Do you have blessed ears and blessed eyes? (Matthew 13:15-17)
4. Why did God give you spiritual sight and hearing? (Luke 8:11-21)
5. Do you see and hear Him calling you to come be part of this glorious plan to receive His inheritance?

***Matthew 13:15-17 (NASB)***

***For the heart of this people has become dull, With their ears they SCARCELY HEAR, And they have closed their eyes, Otherwise they would see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them.’ 16But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. 17For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.***[Matthew 13:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2013:15-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-23555) : [Is 6:10; Ps 119:70; Zech 7:11; Luke 19:42; John 8:43, 44; 2 Tim 4:4; Heb 5:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%206:10,%20Ps%20119:70,%20Zech%207:11,%20Luke%2019:42,%20John%208:43-John%208:44,%202Tim%204:4,%20Heb%205:11&version=NASB)

[Matthew 13:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2013:15-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-23556) : [Matt 13:16-17: *Luke 10:23, 24*; Matt 16:17; John 20:29](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2010:23-Luke%2010:24,%20Matt%2016:17,%20John%2020:29&version=NASB)

1. [Matthew 13:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2013:15-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-23557) : [John 8:56; Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 1:10-12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%208:56,%20Heb%2011:13,%201Pet%201:10-1Pet%201:12&version=NASB)

### *Colossians 2:1-3 (NASB)*

### *For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, 2that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

**Think On These Things**

* Did you learn something new?
* What did the Lord say to you from this Chapter?
* Rewrite in your own words what the Lord spoke to your heart.
* Is there a new promise to claim as your own?
* Is there a sin to confess or avoid?
* Did you find a command to obey or a passage you could pray?

**MEMORY VERSES**

***Ephesians 1:16-18 (NASB)***

***Ido not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the Saints.***

**Chapter #**

**Promised to One Husband**

**Key Passages**

***Ephesians 4:13-15 (ESV)***

***Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.***

**Introduction**

Throughout the Bible, God is portrayed as the Husband of His people. As a matter of fact, this is one of His self-descriptions in the book of Hosea. In the New Testament, the Church is the bride of Christ. It was Paul who unveiled this divine mystery. It’s no wonder he was so passionate in warning the Churches and equipping them to identify false gospels, false teaching and the ones who would propagate them. (Philippians 3:1-3; Acts 20:26-31) After all, as he said to the Corinthians, “I promised you to One Husband – Christ.” The Lord Jesus Christ will one-day return for His Bride, one who is pure in devotion, as well as doctrine. If our doctrine is wrong, it will be reflected in a lack of devotion as well.

Why is this so essential? As we will see in this lesson, an enormous amount of Scriptures, no less than 18 specific passages of the New Testament, are devoted to exposing false teachers who peddle false doctrines. The Church is to be the pillar and foundation of Truth, and yet, the world around us seems to be crumbling under the weight of satanic deception. Even those who have some knowledge of God can easily be led astray. In this age of deception, the church desperately needs to return to the historical foundations of the faith. The focus of this chapter will be on sound doctrine, as well as the common confessions of the Christian faith.

***2 Corinthians 11:2-4 (NASB)***

***For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.***

**Why does Doctrine Matter?**

***1 Timothy 4:15-16 (NIV)***

***Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.***

Being a devout Jew, Paul understood the importance of teaching sound doctrine and how this will affect future generations.Unlike the Corinthians Church, the Church at Ephesus was so rooted in sound doctrine, that this was the only Church in which Paul did not have to address any issue of heresy. To underscore this fact, thirty years later, this church was still holding on to this teaching and is commended by the Lord Jesus for their stand upon the truth. But unfortunately, they had left their first love. (Revelation 2:1-7)

**WORD SEARCH: from Strong’s Concordance**

* **Doctrine**: Greek words are didache/didaskalia in Strong’s #1322, 1319; information, instruction, learning, teaching, doctrine. (Acts 2:42; Titus 1: 9-16; 2:1-10; 1 Timothy 1:3-11; 2 Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 4:12-15; 2 John 9-10)
* **Disciple:** Greek word is matheteuo- a learner; to become a pupil; to disciple; i.e. enroll as scholar; to be a disciple; instruct; teach.

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

* Ephesians 4:11-16, 5:22-32; Isaiah 54:5-10; Acts 2:46; 1 John 2:18-29; Jude; Psalm 78:1-7, 145:1-6; Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2;

A large number of the New Testament epistles were written in response to false doctrines and teachers. And as we have just read, such was the case in the church at Ephesus. In Paul’s departing remarks, he warned the Saints to be on guard because after he left them, “savage wolves” would infiltrate the church. (Acts 20:28-31) When Timothy was the Pastor of the church in Ephesus, Paul begins his letter to his beloved disciple by addressing just such “wolves” as these. Some thirty years later, the risen Lord Himself commended this church for heeding Paul’s and Timothy’s warnings. (Revelation 2:1-2)

**ESSENTIALS BELIEFS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**

To begin with, you should know where we got all of our historical Christian creeds and confessions. They were written by the early church fathers in response to false doctrines and heretics. Along with the inspired writers of the Bible, here is a partial list of important historical Christian apologists: Justin Martyr, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas. These men stood their ground in defense of sound doctrine.

For example, the Apostles creed was written in response to the Gnostics and then the Nicene Creed was a response to Arianism. The same false Gospels and doctrines are alive and thriving in our day as well. (Galatians 1:6-9, 2 Corinthians 11:2-15) The Nicene Creed, drawn up in the fourth century, is emphatic in affirming the Deity of Christ, since it is directed against Arius. The Arians denied that Christ was fully God. The Apostles’ Creed, drawn up in the first or second century, emphasizes the true humanity of Jesus, including the material body. That is the point that the heretics of the time (Gnostics, Marcionites, and later Manicheans) denied. (1 John 4:1-3) The following is a list of the historical and Biblical foundations of our faith.

**Common Confessions**

***1Timothy 3:16 (NASB)***

***By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He, who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.***

1. **The Bible:**

Written over a span of 1000 plus years, the sixty-six books of the Bible were recorded by the Holy Spirit on the hearts of approximately 49 different writers. Each one of these men wrote as they were inspired by God. Throughout the ages God has preserved His Holy Book, and because of this, we can hold in our hands the very ***WORDS*** of ***GOD.***

We believe that the One, True, Eternal God has revealed Himself to humanity through the Holy Scripture. Saint Jerome (c. 347-420), historian, theologian, Doctor of the Church and Bible translator, said, “To be ignorant of the Bible is to be ignorant of Christ.”

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

* John 1:1-18**;** 2 Timothy 2:3-6; 2 Timothy 3:13-4:4; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 1 Corinthians 2:4-16; 2 Corinthians 1:20-21; Hebrews 4:8-12

1. **The Holy Trinity:**

Some may argue that the word trinity is not found in the Bible. In this they are correct. Yet as we have already seen, in previous chapters, God has revealed Himself repeatedly in the Scriptures as Three Persons who co-exist as One. You may find it interesting to know that the original “Saint Nick” was an apologist. As one of the bishops who signed the Nicene Creed, Saint Nicholas stood his ground in opposing Arius, in defense of the doctrine of the Trinity. In addition to his nontrinitarian belief, Arius propagated the lie that our Lord was created, not the Creator. Do you know what false religions today are pushing the same lie as Arius? Because we are fortunate to live in the information age, all these historical facts are readily available to anyone who will do their homework.

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

* Genesis 1:1-27, 11:7; Exodus 20:3-6; Isaiah 6:8, 43:10, 44:6-8, 45:5-22, 46:9, 47:8, 48:16-17; Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19; Luke 9:28-36; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 1:3; John 20:28; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Romans 8:11

1. **The deity of Christ Jesus:**

Paul wrote to Timothy, while Timothy was the pastor of the church at Ephesus, explaining that this truly was a great mystery: God was manifested in the4 flesh! (1 Timothy 3:16) We believe what the scriptures clearly state: The Lord Jesus Christ is the second person of the triune God. He is One with God the Father. He is God incarnate, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary. Because of His virgin birth, in fulfillment of scripture, He is the Son of Man, and yet, He is 100% God. The God who identified Himself in the Old Testament as the great *I AM* is Christ Jesus. (Exodus 3:14; John 8:58)

In his annual Christmas message, Herb Hodges, recites a poem by Johnny Heart, the creator of the “B. C.” comic strip. It goes like this:

“It seems to me that since the ‘Fall’ — without even thinking it odd,

That man has had no trouble at all, believing that he can be God.

How he would do this I cannot conceive, Tho’ he certainly thinks he can;

And yet, he cannot bring himself to believe, That God can become . . . a man.”

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

* Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7, 43:10-14; Acts 10:34-48; Matthew 1:23; Micah 5:2; John 8:24, 58, 10:30-33, 17:24, 20:28; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 2:9; Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 2:2; Romans 9:5-6, 10:9; Hebrews 1:1-13; Revelation 1:7-16; 1 John 4:2-3; 1 Timothy 2:3-6, 3:16

1. **The bodily death, burial and resurrection of Christ Jesus:**

We believe, as was prophesied in the Old Testament, that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again on the third day. This is exactly as He predicted He would.

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

* Hebrews 10:1-10; Isaiah 53; Psalm 22,40:6-7; Luke 24:37-39; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 4: 1-2; 2 John 7; Romans 10:9; Acts 13:33, 17:30-31; 1 Peter 1:18-21; Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Corinthians 15:1-17

1. **The Doctrine of Grace:**

We believe that salvation is by grace alone and through faith in Christ Jesus alone. It is not of works. No one can earn righteousness or reconciliation with a Holy God. **Salvation is a *gift of grace*.**

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

* Ephesians 2:4-10; Titus 3:3-8; Romans 1:17, 3:20-28, 4:1-12, Galatians 2:15-16, 21, 3:15-16, 21, 5:4; John 6:28-29; James 2:14-26; Philippians 2:13, 3:9; Isaiah 64:6

1. **The Lord Jesus substitutionary atonement and justification of sinners:**

We believe the account of the fall and the doctrine of original sin. By birth into the human race, and by nature of our birth, we are in total depravity. Because of our sins, we are dead and separated spiritually from God our Creator. This fact necessitates a spiritual birth.

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

* Ephesians 2:1-14; John 3:1-36; Acts 2:38, 16:31; Romans 3:22-26; 4:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; 1 Peter 1:22-25, 2:24

1. **His Second Coming:**

We believe that God will fulfill every word in the Bible. Therefore, one day, we know not when, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to judge the world in righteousness, and He will ultimately reign over all. (James 4:12; Matthew 10:28, 24:29-51; Luke 21:25-38; John 5:21-23, 27, 9:39) Our hearts cry is: Come Lord Jesus!

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

* Acts 1: 9-11; Philippians 2:9-11; Isaiah 45:23; Mark 16:19; Matthew 16:27; Revelation 1:7-18; Daniel 7:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-13; Psalms 2:1-12

**The Apostles Creed**

“*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one LORD, JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON of GOD, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, TRUE GOD from TRUE GOD, Begotten not made, OF ONE being with the Father. Through Him ALL things were made. For us and for our salvation; He came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in the glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end. WE believed in the Holy SPIRIT, THE LORD, the giver of LIFE, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.”*

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

* Revelation 22:16-20, 2 Peter 3:13-18, 1 Cor. 10:12, 1 John 2:21-27, 5:9-21, 2Peter 1:16-

21

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

1. Do your beliefs line up with the Bible?
2. What are the common confessions or fundamental doctrines of the faith?
3. Are there any of the common confessions that you do not believe?
4. Have you been taught any doctrine that is contrary to the above?
5. Do you believe in the inerrancy of the Bible?
6. If you have questions about whether or not you are a Christian, see the Chapter titled “Assurance of Salvation/ To See is to Know.”
7. Why does correct doctrine matter? Read: (1 Timothy 4:1-16; 6:20-21; 2 Corinthians. 11:1-15)
8. Read the following passages and answer this question: was correct doctrine important to the early church? Why or why not? (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1Thess. 5:21; 1 John 4:1)
9. What are some teachings that you once believed that you now know were untrue?
10. Explain this statement: I will live what I believe even if what I believe is a lie.

**Think On These Things**

* Did you learn something new?
* What did the Lord say to you from this Chapter?
* Rewrite in your own words what the Lord spoke to your heart.
* Is there a new promise to claim as your own?
* Is there a sin to confess or avoid?
* Did you find a command to obey or a passage you could pray?

**Memory Verses**

**Chapter #**

**Cure for the Poison of Bitterness**

***Ephesians 4:26-32 (NIV)***

***“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.***

***Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.***

**Introduction**

Every time I write or teach a Biblical lesson, the Lord will put me to the test to see if I will practice what I preach. And so this is the case for this lesson. I very quickly experienced two situations that forced me to be a doer of this word and not just a hearer or teacher of it!

When was the last time you were really hurt by someone? Do you know what I’m talking about?... This kind of offense replays like a broken record that skips to the part where you heard the words or deeds that cut you like a knife. From that instance on, the battle is on in your mind. If you are brutally honest, this kind of wound leaves you secretly fantasizing about getting even, even if it’s just passive aggression. When this happens, and you indulge your flesh, it will grow roots and these roots will choke the life out of you. If left unchecked, it will move from repression to depression, and finally, expression. The Psalmist graphically depicted what bitterness looks like when it is expressed: *“When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.” Psalms 73:21-22 (NIV)* These words describe a person who is so full of unresolved anger and bitterness, that they act like a wild beast. Actually, they are acting like the devil.

Twice in my life, I have been the target of such a person. In both cases, I quickly learned that I was just one of many, unfortunate people, who came along their path. And, just like the devil, they were looking for someone to devour. As you read this I wonder if a particular person is coming to your mind. If so, then this lesson just might save your life, and I'm not kidding! In this lesson, we’ll grapple with this subject until we find the antidote for this deadly sin.

**The Consequences of Un-forgiveness**

The most self-destructive sins are not abusing drugs or alcohol. Although, some will use them to "self-medicate" in an attempt to mask their real problem. Ironically, this approach does just the opposite. When people are under the influence, it magnifies the ugly that’s in their heart. What’s in the well, as they say, is what comes up in the bucket.

So what is the most harmful sin to a child of God? The worst of all is un-forgiveness that leads to bitterness. It’s like poison to the soul. Furthermore, it never stops with the wounded; it spreads like gangrene until is defiles every relationship in their lives. The root of bitterness is a proud unforgiving heart. Unresolved anger pierces our heart, and it invites God’s discipline. (Psalm 107:10-20) God always has our best interest in mind. He is the Great Physician, and it's His Word that diagnosis our sickness, and it gives the antidote. He desires our holiness as well as our health. Yet, we can't have physical health, without spiritual holiness. We are incapable of healing ourselves of the poison of bitterness and forgiving others, without Christ Jesus. Therefore, no lost person has the ability to forgive anyone else; only Christ Spirit within you can do it.

When a person refuses to forgive those who hurt them, their actions reveal that they have never received the forgiveness of God. You see, you cannot give away what you do not possess. Therefore, forgiveness is not a hard thing to do, it's impossible! Only God in you can do it. Please stop, and read carefully, the definition of the following Greek words found in the Strong's Concordance -and especially, the words bitterness and gall or angry. Do you see the word...poison? Somehow, haven't we always known that bitterness was poison to our souls? And we mustn't forget that our souls live within our body. What effects on, will affect the other.

**WORD SEARCH: from Strong’s Concordance**

* **Bitterness**: Greek Pakria: - acridity, **poison,** bitterness, from #4089 pikros: sharp, piercing, pungent, acrid, and bitter. Acts 8:23; Ephesians 4:31; Hebrews 12:15
* **Gall/angry:** Greek #5521 chole: - greenish hue, gall, bile, **poison** or an anodyne, wormwood. Acts 8:23: Matthew 27:34; John 7:23.
* **Anger:** Greek # 3709-3710 orge: - desire; violent passion; abhorrence; punishment; anger; indignation; vengeance and wrath. Ephesians 4:26; Matthew 5:22; Colossians 3:8
* **Forgive:** Greek #606 apoluo: - to free fully, relieve, release, dismiss, let die, pardon, divorce, forgive, let go, put away, release, set at liberty. (It is only used in Luke 6:27-38)
* **Forgive:** Greek #5483 charizomia: - (it comes from the word grace) to grant as a favor in kindness, pardon, rescue, to deliver, forgive, freely give, grant. Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:13, 3:13
* **Forgive:** Greek #859 #,863aphesis and #863 aphiemi: - freedom, pardon, deliver, forgiveness, liberty, remission, to send forth, cry, forgive, forsake, leave, let alone, remit, suffer, yield up. Romans 4:7; Luke 7:49; Matthew 11:25-26, 18:21, 35; Colossians 1:13-14; Ephesians 1:7

The following passage on *The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant,* is an object lesson that every child of God should not take lightly. As a matter of fact, it should put the pure fear of God within your heart. That is, if you believe the Bible and take God at His word. To say that this story doesn’t end wee for the unforgiving servant, would be a great understatement! What person, in their right mind would want God to turn them over to the demons to be persecuted? If that were not bad enough, they will also have to pay back every penny that they owe. Definition: they will lose everything!

***Matthew 18:21-35 (ESV)***

***Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.***

***“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”***

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

* James 1:21-25, 2:8-13, 5:15-16, 19-20; Proverbs 4:20-27; Isaiah 48:17-19; Psalms 50:7-13; Romans 8:5-17, 12:14-21; Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 4:25-32; Hebrews 10:26-30, 12:2-15; Colossians 2:11-14, 3:8-9, 12-15; Matthew 5:21-22, 38-48, 6:12-15, 18:22-35; Luke 6:27-37, 12:4-5

If the consequences of un-forgiveness, are not enough to persuade you to obey the Lord and forgive, "as you have been forgiven," then I don’t know what could. You see, not only will it poison, it will defile every relationship in your life. As the wise King Solomon said, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." And so the wise person, not only hears what God says, but out of love and reverence will do what He says. (Luke 6: 46-49) Only a fool would do otherwise. At times, I have been a fool, and I've got the scars to prove it. But God, will turn scars into beauty marks when we turn to Him in repentance.

**The Cost and The Cure**

Imagine, if you will, that you were bit by a snake, and its poisonous venom was moving quickly towards your heart. Now, someone comes along and offers you the antidote, would you not take it? This little analogy is not too farfetched, when you compare it to the story in Numbers 21:1-9. Jesus made reference to this account, in His dialog with Nicodemus. You may want to read this also. It's found in John 3:1-18. What's my point? At the cross of Christ, the cure for the poison of bitterness and un-forgiveness was purchased at a high cost. Jesus gave His life so that He could forgive you, and me. As a matter of fact, that was His last prayer for us as He was dying for our sins. He said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." (Isaiah 53:4-12; Luke 23:34) When we forgive others, we are never more like Christ Jesus. (Hebrew 9:22, 10:17-18; 1 John 1:7-10; Romans 5:6-11)

The cure for the poison of bitterness is repentance for the sin of un-forgiveness. You may balk at that statement, because if you use worldly reasoning, that does not make since. If I'm the one who was wronged, then why do I need to repent? The short answer is, because, God said so, and furthermore, if we don't forgive them, God will not forgive us! (Luke 13:1-5, Matthew 3:8-12) But that is not the only reason to forgive. When we refuse to repent of the sin of un-forgiveness, not only do we invites the Lord's discipline, we open the door to the one who comes to kill, steal and destroy our lives! God’s disciple is always for the purpose to bring us to Godly sorrow and repentance. This is the only way to be at peace with God, and when we are a peace with Him, He will make, even our enemies, be at peace with us.

May I share a personal example with you? The greatest spiritual battle I have ever faced in my life came with the greatest hurt and betrayal. After years of teaching Bible studies on forgiveness, here I was at the crossroads. I finally dropped to my knees and confessed to the Lord that it was impossible. I could not for the ones who hurt me. And then the Lord reminded me of two scriptures. Number one: the passage in Luke 5:21: "Who can forgive sin but God alone?" Number two is Philippians 2:13 and 4:13: "For it is God who works in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure." I can't forgive … but God, who lives in *me* can, and praise His name...I did!

My pastor, David Lawrence, taught us what *forgiveness* *is not. He said, "*Forgiveness is not approval of the offense, excusing the offense, justifying the offense, reconciling with the offender, forgetting the offense, or lastly, pretending we’re not hurt!" Ok, so what is forgiveness? Dr. Chuck Hannaford, is the Godly counselor who helped me weather the worst storm that ever hit my life. This is how he defines forgiveness, he said, “*Forgiveness is an act of my will making use of God’s grace in order to cancel a debt owed me…forgiveness is a choice.”*

***Hebrews 12:14-15 (NASB)***

***“Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the LORD. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness spring up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.”***

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

* Acts 3:19, 2:20; 2 Corinthians 2:11, 7:9-12, 10:3-6, 11:3-16; Hebrew 12:4-17; Revelation 3:19; Proverbs 16:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:13-15; 1 John 3:7-13, 4:14; John 8:44-45; Galatians 4:29; Matthew 7:16-22, 13:36-43

In the Old Testament is found an interesting story that parallels our New Testament cure for bitterness. You can read it in Exodus 15:22-26. The Hebrew word for bitterness is marah: bitter, angry, chafed, discontented, great, and heavy. The cure is a cut down tree that makes the bitter sweet. Now for the comparison. We must remember that a tree was cut down to make a cross. When we mentally visit that tree, and see all our sins, including bitterness, anger and un-forgiveness, hanging upon the One who hung on that tree, how can we not forgive others? Do you remember what they offered to Him to drink as He hung there on that tree? It was a cup of bitterness and gall. He died so that we may be forgiven and then He rose again to give us new life and make our bitterness sweet. (Colossians 2:11-14, 2 Corinthians 4:7-11) Because He loved us so, and we all have been forgiven much, we too should give to others what we have received. (Luke 6:35, 23:34; Acts 7:60)

Many people are sick emotionally, mentally and physically because of bitterness. God desires to heal us, but we must take His medicine if we want to get well. Repentance and forgiveness is the cure. I encourage you to make a list of the ones who have wronged you and the things they did to hurt you. Take your catalog of their sins to the cross and lay it beside your canceled debt. Think about it, can you honestly say there is a comparison to what your sins did to Jesus -, including the sin of un-forgiveness? (Hebrew 12:2-6, Isaiah 53:3-11, 1 Corinthians 13:4 -7) What has it cost you to hold this person in bondage to the debt they owe you? Is it really worth it? If we will humble ourselves before God and forgive, as we have been forgiven, He will heal us! (Exodus 15:23-26; Psalm 107:10-20)

There can be no ***peace of God*** without first ***making peace with God***. Even after we have been saved, we must daily relinquish the right to rule our own lives. We must repent of thoughts that have grieved the Holy Spirit, emotions ruled by our flesh such as: a critical spirit, anger, un-forgiveness, fear, guilt. Sinful words and actions always follow the mind- set on the flesh. Today we can make peace with God through confession and repentance. (1John 1:9-12) This is, “well –pleasing” to the Lord, and we have a promise found in Proverbs 16:7, “that if a man’s ways are pleasing to the LORD; He will make even his enemies be at peace with Him.” (Psalms 34:12-19, 85:10, Proverbs 12:20-21, Hebrew 12:11-15, 1 Peter 3:8-12)

**WORD SEARCH: From Strong’s Concordance:**

* **Peace** in Hebrew: - Shalom: - well, happy, friendly, welfare, health, prosperity, peace, favor, friend, good health, perfect, be at peace, rest, safety, be whole. From this word: shalam: to be safe in mind, body or estate, to cause to make complete, make amends, make good/at peace that is perfect peace, make restitution, restore.
* **Peace** in Greek: - prosperity, one peace, quietness, rest, to set at one again.

**The Prince of Peace**

***Isaiah 9:6-7 NIV***

***“For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, and Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The Zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.”***

The **Peace** of God is to be found in the **Person of Christ**, The **Prince of Peace**. Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7, John 14:27, 16:33, Ephesians 2:14

***John 14:27 HCSB***

***“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Your heart must not be troubled or fearful.”***

**The Way of Peace**

***Luke 1:77-79***

***“To give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, Because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”***

***Luke 2:14***

***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace among men with whom He is pleased.”***

Who (on earth) has **peace**? With whom is God **well pleased**?

***Romans 5:1-2 NIV***

***“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have PEACE with God through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”***

**Peace of God**

***Colossians 3:15***

***“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be Thankful.”***

***Proverbs 14:30 NIV***

***“A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.”***

***Psalm 29:10-11NIV***

***“The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever. The LORD gives strength to His people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.”***

**Peace with God**

***2 Peter 3:13-14***

***“But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in PEACE, spotless and blameless.”***

***Romans 8:6-10 HCSB***

***“For the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind- set of the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit itself to God’s law, for it is unable to do so. Those whose lives are in the flesh are unable to please God. You, however, are not controlled by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.”***

***Colossians 1:19-23 (NASB)***

***“For it was the Father’s good pleasure for ALL the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made PEACE through Him, I say, whether things on earth or in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.”***

***Isaiah 53:5 NIV***

***“But He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us PEACE was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”***

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

1. What are the two Greek words that are defined as poison?
2. Have you ever struggled with forgiveness?
3. Have you ever known someone who was full of rage and bitterness?
4. If so, describe the effects it has had on their lives.
5. Why do we need to repent of un-forgiveness?
6. In the two Old Testament accounts that were used as allegories, make a list of the lessons to be learned from these comparisons.

**Think On These Things**

* Did you learn something new?
* What did the Lord say to you from this Chapter?
* Rewrite in your own words what the Lord spoke to your heart.
* Is there a new promise to claim as your own?
* Is there a sin to confess or avoid?
* Did you find a command to obey or a passage you could pray?

**Memory Verses**

***Exodus 15:26***

***“And He said, “If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, The LORD, am your healer.”***

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**Chapter #**

**Be Imitators of God**

***Ephesians 5:1-20 (ESV)***

***Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.***

***But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says,***

***“Awake, O sleeper,***  
***and arise from the dead,***  
***and Christ will shine on you.”***

***Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,***

**Take off and Put On**

**Ephesians 4:17-25**

**So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.**

**That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**

**Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. “**

**Introduction**

We have now turned a corner in Paul’s letter to Saints in Ephesus. Now we will shift from all that God has done to, the extremely practical, real life lessons.

Have you ever heard of a practical atheist? I’m not talking about a theological atheist, that is another thing all together. What I mean is this: When someone says that they believe in God and that Jesus Christ is their Lord, and yet they live as if He doesn’t exist, then that person is a practical atheist. How our faith plays out in everyday practical life is what matters. Regardless of what we call ourselves, when our cause is to run our own life apart from God, then we are living in rebellion against God. As noted in an earlier chapter, this describes the first twenty-six years of my life, and the first forty years of my husband’s life also.

**Practical**

1 John 1:9,1 John 1:7, Acts 10:15,11:9, John 13:10-11, 15:1-4,16

* First fruits: John 15:2&6, Matthew 3:2-10, Acts 20:26:18-19, Luke 13:3-9, 23-28, 2 Peter 3:9.

***Philippians 2:1-4, 14-16***

***Colossians 3:5-11 (NIV)***

***Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.***

**Submission to Authorities**

***Ephesians 5:21- 27 (ESV)***

***Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.***

# ***Wives and Husbands***

***Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.***

***Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.***

***Ephesians 6:1-9 (NIV)***

***Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”***

***Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.***

***Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.***

***And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.***

**2 Peter 2:6-10; James 3:17**

**Work Ethics**

***Ephesians 4:28***

***Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.***

**Titus 3**

**Chapter #**

**He Cares for You**

**Key Passages**

***Ephesians 5:28-30 (ESV)***

***In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.***

**Introduction**

***Psalms 68:9 (NIV)***

***Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens. Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death.***

As we learned in another chapter, Jesus not only controls it all, but He also owns it all. This includes our bodies, souls and Spirits’. But how do we appropriate this truth to our everyday lives? As simple as it may sound, the one who owns it all, rules over it all and therefore is responsible for the care of it all.

**What Concerns You Today?**

The older one gets the more visits to the doctors and worse yet, the funerals we will attend. Death is the great equalizer. The reality begins to sink in that one day we will breathe our final breath. That day could be sooner than we think.

***Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV)***

***He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.***

When faced with our own mortality, we’re forces us to deal with the fact that we are not the master of our lives, but one day we will meet the one who is. Are you prepared to meet your Maker? He alone has absolute rule over of death and life. Our bodies, as well as our souls, belong to Him, and will one-day return to the dust from whence we came. If we are wise, we’ll take this to heart.

I hope you will not mind a brief personal example. As I write this, I am experiencing a health crisis, of sorts. I was recently diagnosed with an auto immune disease and now my long blond/gray hair is falling out by the handfuls. I know this is vanity, but as you might imagine, it is greatly disturbing me. For after all, in the King James Bible it says, “But, if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering.” (1 Corinthians 11:15) What am I going to do when I lose my cover and worse yet, my glory?!!! Then the Lord reminded me of yet another extraordinary mystery. Christ who lives in me is my hope of Glory. And furthermore, it has not escaped His attention that my hair is falling out. Does God care about my hair? He has counted each bird that falls to the ground and every single strand of my hair.

***Colossians 1:27 (HCSB)***

***God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory***

***Luke 12:4-7 (NIV)***

***“I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”***

The One who is seated at the right hand of God is the Head, and we – the Church is His body. How can we appropriate this truth? If you belong to Him, then everything that concerns you is under His nail scarred feet! No matter what your need is, no matter how big or how small, because of who He is, you can rest secure in His provision. As Paul reminded the saints in Philippi, “For My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19 (NIV)

The Lord Jesus Christ, the one who created this world and holds everything in it together. He has numbered, not only the days of our lives, but also the hairs on our head. We were once separate from him, but now we’re part of His Body - His blood bought Bride. He loves us and daily bears our burdens. (Psalms 68:19). Because of who He is, not even death can separate us from Him and His great love. When, by faith, we believe His Word, even though our circumstances leave us quaking in fear, we have a rope of hope anchored at the right hand of God. He is the Lord Jesus…the beloved Bridegroom.

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

* Luke 12:22-32, 35-40, 8:22-25; 1 Peter 5: 6-11

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

**Think About These Things**

* Did you learn something new?
* What did the Lord say to you from this Chapter?
* Rewrite in your own words what the Lord spoke to your heart.
* Is there a new promise to claim as your own?
* Is there a sin to confess or avoid?
* Did you find a command to obey or a passage you could pray?

**Chapter #**

**A Profound Mystery**

***Ephesians 5:25-33 (ESV)***

***Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.***

* **25-love**
* **26-27word washes, holy ready for the wedding; Virgins Rev. 19;21; Matt. 25**
* **31-33 Mystery of One flesh – Behold the Bridegroom?**

This metaphor, introduced in Ephesians chapter five, is described as *A Profound Mystery*. The marriage relationship between a man and woman is the one earthly relationship that the Lord chose as a picture of the intimacy between Christ Jesus and His Bride-the Church.

In the study book entitled **Life Principles from The Women of The Bible**by Wayne Barber; Eddie Rasnake; and Richard Shepherd, their book ends, interestingly enough, with the Bride of Christ. The last Chapter begins as follows:

“This is a different sort of lesson to find in a study on women of the Bible, but when God defined His relationship with the Church, he depicted her as a woman. He called the Church His bride. What is God saying through this? When we look at Biblical imagery, the pictures from the culture of the Old Testament and from the Jewish world of the first century can be very helpful in understanding the ways and will of God. The imagery of a bridegroom and a bride, of a husband and wife, gives us many pictures that help us understand our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as we look at wedding album to get a clear picture of a bride and groom, we can look at these pictures in scripture to see Christ and His Bride, the Church. Some pictures we will readily recognize. Others may be a surprise, but all that we see will bring us to a new and better understanding of what it means to walk with and follow our Bridegroom.”

The Bible, the greatest love story ever told, ends with King Jesus, ridding in on a white horse to bringing His Bride…the Church with Him to our eternal home. Even so Lord Jesus Come! But every good story has a hero and a villain. In this love story the villain is Satan. He began his sinister work on the first marriage which was performed by God Himself. What is God’s idea for marriage? The family is the foundation of society and the first institution established by God. When this foundation is destroyed, and everyone does what is “right in their own eyes,” there is no hope of any civilized social order.

This was our testimony printed on the program for our second wedding day and the chosen passage was Ephesians 2:14-22.

“On the third day of May, seventeen years ago, we took our vows before God, whom we only knew from afar. Today, we take great joy in sharing with you our vows before the One who is our Father, Lord, Savior and God. How fitting it is that Jesus first miracle was at a wedding on the “third day”. Today you are our witness to another display of His miraculous grace. He, who is our peace, has redeemed our marriage and brought us together as one. The greatest miracle of all is new-birth through Christ Jesus and redemption from sins. Through Him all things are made new! It is our desire to give Him, who alone is worthy, all the praise and honor and glory. Jesus is the reason we are here today. Thank you for making our joy complete with your presence!”

***Ephesians 2:14-22***

***14For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.***

***19Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, 20built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.***

We had royalty in Memphis, Tennessee last weekend. Princes’ William and Harry of Wales came to our humble city for a wedding. Fans and media came from all over the world just to get a glimpse of the future King of the United Kingdom. I am sure anyone who got an invitation to that wedding would not miss a once in a life time opportunity to meet them. Another event took place on the same day, hardly noticed or acknowledged by anyone except Art and me. It was our twenty-eighth wedding anniversary. Over our dinner, Art and I talked about the overwhelming mercy and grace of God that has held us together though horrendous circumstances that would have torn this house asunder- if not for the Lord’s intervention and salvation. We know it is nothing short of a miracle! A wedding is a one - day event, and a great reason to rejoice, but when, by God’s amazing grace, that covenant withstands the test of time we should really celebrate! He does make beautiful things out of the ashes of our lives. Our marriage is a trophy of God’s grace, a pearl, to His glory.

**Forget the Former Things… Do Not Dwell on The Past**

Sometimes it’s helpful to look back just long enough to learn the lessons from the past and to see the faithfulness of God. But it is ***not good*** to live there. Our hope is not in the past; it’s always before us. Today our living hope is near, real, and present. Our hope Is Jesus! (1 Peter 1:3-16, Psalm 39:7, 42:5, Roman 15:13) The Lord gave me the following verses that have helped move me beyond grief (that had led to a sinful self-centered focus) and lifted my head to look up from the ashes to see Him. When my gaze is fixed upon Him, I see hope for the future. He is the health of my countenance and the eternal lifter of my head! (Psalm 42:5-11, 43:5)

***Isaiah 43:18-19***

***Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.***

***Psalm 46:10***

***Listen O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father’s house. The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him for He is your LORD.***

***Philippians 3: 12-14***

***Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.***

**What is God’s Plan for Marriage?**

This may sound strange for someone who owned a bridal business and would write a book called “Pearls for My Wedding Dress,” but I have never thought of myself as a romantic. My mother, on the other hand, an avid reader, keep a ready supply of romance novels. No doubt Mamma found an escape in these books; a place to go and forget about her marriage. My escape was working long hours dressing brides for their wedding day. But all that changed when I was found by the Lord.

In the seven years I owned the bridal business, I had several repeat customers. If we put as much emphasis on who we married as we do the one-day event maybe the divorce rates would not be so high. Even in the Church, divorce is as common among professing believers as in the lost world who don’t know the Lord. “Marriage,” said G.K. Chesterton, “Is an adventure - like going to war.” Now I’m not quite sure if his observation is quite the same as mine. As far as I am concerned, it is war, but not the kind of war, we think it is. We fight as if our mate were the enemy, all the while the real enemy gets the upper hand on our marriage. I’m, talking about the Devil. (We’ll be expounding on this subject in another chapter.)

I am a poster child of what not to do in marriage, but I have learned a few things alone the way. Number one: we cannot give love if we have not received it. Number two: ***Jesus*** ***is*** ***love,*** and we will never know love until we receive Him as Lord and Savior. After I was saved, I had an opportunity to do an interview on our local Christian radio to advertise my bridal business. This was my first time to speak on the radio. My manager and all her single roommates were listening to the interview. She later said I made them cry. I really do not remember speaking about my business at all. I only remember speaking, from-the-heart, making an appeal to Christian women to look for a man who truly loved Jesus. Only a man who had received the Lord Jesus could give her true love. With that being said, no early relationship was meant to fell the God sized void in the human soul. At best, even a wonderful marriage can only be but a shadow of the genuine article… God’s matchless, unfailing love!

In her book, Fiery Darts, Janet Warren Lane has two chapters devoted to this subject. She said,

“We could do nothing better to Prepare us to live life and love others, especially a future spouse successfully, by studying and applying the truths about love from the book written by the author of love! If we could get grounded in understanding true love because we have spent extended time in learning about true love from the source of true love, God, then we would enter relationships as a whole, healthy, and complete individual. We would handle problems we encounter in those relationships from a healthier perspective. Having been taught to recognize genuine love we would avoid relationships that offered anything less.”

Oh how I wish Art and I had known Jesus before we met and married! The only love we had to offer to one another was a false love with strings attached. When the conditions of the attachments were not met, the relationship broke like a weak thread. Unlike this world’s weak strings of so called love, God’s huge heart of love for his people is beautifully described in Hosea eleven.

***Hosea 11:4,8b***

***I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them”. 8b “My heart is chained within me; all my compassion is aroused.***

I gave my daughter Allie, and my daughter-in law- the same advice before they got married: As wonderful as he is, he will never be her Jesus. No one can fill His shoes. And furthermore, they were never meant to. Only Jesus can fill the God shaped void in your life. It was Saint Augustine who said it best. He said, “Thou hast made us for thyself, Oh God, and the hearts of men are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”

This is the best advice I could ever give a single woman who desires to be married. Fall in love with Jesus, and the man who God has chosen for you will be drawn to Christ in you. But, if you find yourself unequally yoked to a man who is not a believer, get to know Jesus intimately, let Him be your husband. Find a spiritual mother who will teach you how to love this man with the unconditional love of Jesus. Know this for sure: you are not an unloved woman who is married if you are the Bride of Christ!

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

* John 1:1-3; Hebrew 1:1-12; Colossians 1:13-20; Isaiah 54:1-17; Proverbs 30:23

**Eternal Love**

British poet, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, said: “Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.” What do you think about Tennyson’s observation? Is it better to have love and then lose it, than to never know love at all?

When my daughter was contemplating whether or not to begin a relationship with her would be husband, Justin, she was really struggling with the decision. I knew she really liked him and he was very much in pursuit to win her heart. So I asked her what was disturbing her most and she said, "I don’t want to enter this relationship if I might get my heart broken.” My answer to her was this: “You will never experience real love and protect your heart from being broken!” Real love involves your mind, emotions, and finally your will. When you stop thinking good thoughts about a person, and you don’t fell love from that person, then all that is left is a choice of the will. So people choose to leave us because they don’t value us; they leave and our hearts are broken. On the other hand, when we love someone, and they hurt- we hurt. And then there is the life–shattering reality that we all must face…we will bury people we love - and our hearts will be shattered into pieces. You cannot love and protect your heart. It is a fact of life. The heavenly Father did not protect His heart from pain when He gave His Precious Son to die to purchase us. This is how He showed His great love for us! And the Lord Jesus did not protect His heart from suffering in His passion on Calvary’s cruel cross. It was love that put Him there! In the words of a song from my youth---“LOVE HURTS!” The wise C.S. Lewis wrote, “If you love deeply, you’re going to get hurt badly. But it’s still worth it.” When love is lost it is devastating, it hurts deeply, and it breaks our heart. But this kind of pain may also be a catalyst to find true love, unfailing love, and eternal love…the kind of love, so perfect, that it puts us back together. When this happens…this sorrow is really a blessing in disguise.

Songs are really, stories or poetry–put to music. They can make us cry, express emotions, or help us to find words to express how we really feel. I’d like to tell you about one such song. A few years ago Allie and I were watching television when we heard Rascal Flatts preform their song, “The Broken Road”. As we listened to the words, I said to Allie. “This song is about Jesus!” For me, this song ***is about Him***! Every-one who broke my heart, was pointing me straight to the one and only true love of my life…Jesus! I ask, as you read these lyrics, think about others who broke your heart; are you still searching for this kind of love?

The Broken Road

I set out on a narrow way many years ago - Hoping I would find true love along the broken road

But I got lost a time or two - Wiped my brow and kept pushing through

I couldn't see how every sign pointed straight to you - That every long lost dream leads me to where you are - Others who broke my heart, they were like northern stars

Pointing me on my way into your loving arms

This much I know is true - That God blessed the broken road- That led me straight to you

Yes, it did

I think about the years I spent just passing through - I'd like to have the time I lost and give it back to you - But you just smile and take my hand - You've been there you understand

It's all part of a grander plan that is coming true

Every long lost dream led me to where you are - And others who broke my heart they were like northern stars - Pointing me on my way into your loving arms - This much I know it's true

That God blessed the broken road -That led me straight to you

Yeah

And now I'm rolling home -Into my lover's arms - This much I know is true -That God blessed the broken road - That led me straight to you - That God blessed the broken road

Ooh, ooh

That led me straight to you

The Lord does not invite us to come, not to a place, nor to a work, although, He has good work planned for each of us to do; but to ***Him-self***! (Ephesians 2:10) The first call is the voice of the Father, “***This is My Beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him.”*** Then we hear the Beloved’s invitation, “***Is anyone thirsty let him come to Me and drink***” …. (John 7:37-38) The Lord Jesus’ words to the repentant sinner on the cross were, “***Today you will be WITH ME***.” (Luke23:43) To the weary and burdened soul His invitation is, “***Come to ME and you will find rest***.” (Matthew 11:26) You see, we ***were*** ***all*** far away from Him without God and without hope in this world, but now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought ***near*** through the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:1-22)

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

**Think About These Things**

* Did you learn something new?
* What did the Lord say to you from this Chapter?
* Rewrite in your own words what the Lord spoke to your heart.
* Is there a new promise to claim as your own?
* Is there a sin to confess or avoid?
* Did you find a command to obey or a passage you could pray?

**Memory Verses**

***Isaiah 54:4-13 (NIV)***

***“Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth    and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood.5For your Maker is your husband—the Lord Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.6The Lord will call you back  
    as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married young, only to be rejected,” says your God.7“For a brief moment I of anger  I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting Kindness  I will have compassion on you,” says the Lord your Redeemer.***

***9“To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. 10Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.11“Afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted,  
    I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with lapis lazuli. 12I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones.13All your children will be taught by the Lord, and great will be their peace.***

**Chapter #**

**WOMAN OF GOD PREPARED FOR BATTLE**

**Key Passage**

***Ephesians 6:10-20 (ESV)***

***Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.***



**Introduction**

We have already established that Ephesus was a hub of idolatry and evil spirits. This fact alone sheds light on the passages we are about to study. What was true of Ephesus, is also true of the church in all ages until Jesus returns for His bride. We can ill afford to stick our heads in the sand and pretend this battle is not real. Because if we do, we are defeated already. So the aim of this lesson is to become better informed and prepared for spiritual battles. I think that you will find this lesson extremely practical in nature, and if you will take these truths to heart, you will be better equipped for the spiritual battle that rages around us.

In his historical and insightful book entitled, Power and Magic, Clinton E. Arnold educates the church of Jesus Christ on spiritual warfare. On page 22 he Said,

“We have thus far characterized Ephesus both as a center for magical practices and as a center for the cult of Artemis for Asia Minor. One may wonder if there was any connection between the two, and if so, what type of relationship the Artemis cult had with the practice of magic. Although it has been claimed that the Ephesian Artemis was not by nature a goddess of magic, she does seem to have had a direct link with the magical practices of the time. She was considered a supremely powerful deity and could therefore exercise her power for the benefit of the devotee in the face of other opposing “powers” and spirits. Her power in this respect is well illustrated in a papyrus containing a magical formula apparently for the purpose of compelling the passion of a woman toward a man. Directly under the text is a crude drawing of the Ephesians Artemis, indicating that she is the power called upon to fulfill the wish (line 4: “take a leaf of lead and with a nail write the figure…”). Artemis plays an important role in Greco-Roman times as a goddess of the underworld.”

**The Power of God in Christ**

Have you ever experienced, heart pounding, life threatening, crippling fear? Have you ever felt powerless? The majority of the time, our fears are unfounded. But, even though these fears may not have validity, they can cause us to spiral down into a crippling pit of anxiety. Do you know people who are held captive by fear? Have you been a victim yourself? Until we are placed *in* *Christ,* we can easily become a slave to fear. Where does a *spirit of fear* come from? The Bible assures us that it doesn’t come from God.

However, when we have a holy reverence and fear of God - we need not fear anyone else. You see; perfect love cast out fear, because perfect love is a person...God incarnate... Jesus Christ. (1 John 4:18) Yet, without a proper understanding of Jesus true identity, then you will not have a leg of faith to stand on when you feel powerless. A small view of God, leads to a world view skewed by fear, confusion and instability.

Now where does faith come from? Paul told the Romans that it comes from hearing the Word of God. So get ready to listen up, because we’re about to hear a lot of faith strengthening passages of Scripture. And, if we will hide it in our hearts, our lives will be empowered with enough faith to carry us through any fearful episode that we may face.

***Romans 8:15 (ESV)***

***For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”***

**The Battle is Close to Home**

As the day draws near when Jesus returns for His Bride, the battles is escalating. Satan is very busy working his plan to destroy holy matrimony between one man and one woman. Why would marriage be a target for Satan? Because he knows that marriage represents the union between Christ and His bride - the church. Although Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail against the church, He knew that the home would be a fierce battle ground. Paul addresses this cosmic battle in Ephesians 6:10-18. The apostle Peter also warned that the devil is on the prowl, looking for someone to devour! (1 Peter 5:8-9)

For the last 20 years I have been in women’s ministry, and have heard the stories of one woman after another who have endured unspeakable horror, and abuse in their own homes. The secret place of a mother’s womb has become the death chamber of 55 million babies in the United States since 1962 to the innumerable homes where domestic violence begins with sexual abuse, we see that no place is safe from the one who comes to still, kill and destroy.

Before the four hundred years of silence, the Old Testament ends with this warning: “***See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.” (Malachi 4:5-6)*** Speaking through the prophet Malachi, the Lord gives us great insight into His purpose in establishing the family and how he feels about marriage.

***Malachi 2:13-16 (NIV)***

***Another thing you do: You flood the Lord’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer looks with favor on your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, “Why?” It is because the Lord is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. And what does the one God seek? He seeks Godly offspring. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth.“The man who hates and divorces his wife,” says the Lord, the God of Israel, “does violence to the one he should protect,” says the Lord Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful.***

Surely the Heavenly Father greaves as He looks upon His broken humanity. I wonder how much we resemble the world in the days before the flood.

Until we are placed *in Christ*, we are like defenseless sheep against the schemes of the evil-one. How have you personally been affected by Satan’s distortion of God’s plan for marriage and family? As the product of a broken home, my life has been greatly affected. My husband Art and I began our marriage separated from God who holds everything together. Therefore, we know from personal experience, that without Him everything comes apart. Most of us don’t even realize the diabolical plans that are being devised by Satan to destroy our homes and families.

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

* 1 Timothy 1:18, 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:1-4, 4:7-8; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

**Unprepared for Spiritual Battle**

***2 Timothy 2:1-4 (NASB)***

***You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.***

Have you ever heard the old hymn, “Onward Christian Soldier”? If so, have you ever considered what a Christian soldier is fighting against? Timothy was the pastor of the church of Ephesus when Paul, his spiritual parent and disciple maker, wrote 1 Timothy and 2Timothy. In these two personal letters, Paul repeatedly admonished his dear son to *fight the good fight of the faith*. It was here that we are introduced the concept that a Christian is a soldier in Christ’s army.

To be sure, precious few of us who have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, have been equipped with the armor to defend ourselves. I most certainly wasn’t. The world in which live is not a *playground*; it’s a *battle ground*. And yet, as a child in the faith, I had no idea of the battles I would face, and furthermore, I was clueless about how to use the weapons of God.

Consequently, I’ve learned these lessons the hard way mostly through defeat. Yet thankfully, in the last few years the Lord has graciously brought into my life, several strong godly women. One of these women is Janet Warren Lane. In her book, Fiery Darts: Satan’s Weapons of Choice, she says:

Satan has at his disposal a vast arsenal of weapons with which to wage war against God’s people.  While it is obvious he often draws upon weapons such as war, evil rulers, persecution, discrimination, poverty, adultery, murder, and broken homes, to highlight only a few, there is one weapon that is so subtle many Christians fail to recognize it as a weapon at all! This weapon is negative thinking or what I have come to call fiery darts, a weapon seemingly insignificant yet incredibly dangerous. (Page 5 Fiery Darts)

Finally, now in my fifties, I’m learning about the tactics of the enemy and beginning to win more battles than I am loosing. I’m so thankful!

Sadly, when new believers are not discipled their faith could be shipwrecked when the enemy begins to assault their lives. I have a question for you. Are babies and children aware of the dangers that surround them? Of course they are not! Would you leave a defenseless child outside in a storm to defend them-selves? We would call this child abuse. A person who is an infant in their faith does not even know he has an enemy, much less, that he has the Sword of the Spirit-the Word of God- to defend himself. Can you imagine how our perfect Heavenly Father must feel about the neglect of His children? Without a doubt, He feels the same way you and I would if someone was neglecting our own children. Who will love and care for God’s babies? Disciple makers, that who. Make no mistake about it, we will be held accountable at the judgment seat of Christ for the spiritual neglect of the babies in our sphere of influence.

***1 Corinthians 15:57-58 (NIV)***

***But thanks are to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.***

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

* 1 Corinthians 3:9-14; 2 Corinthian 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:17; Matthew 4:1-11; 1 John 2:14

**The Enemy and His Tactics**

***1 Peter 5:8-9(NIV)***

***Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.***

When we were still in the kingdom of darkness, we were defenseless against the schemes of the evil one. But now that we have been rescued from his clutches, the devil has staged an all-out war against us. Yet most of us are not even aware of who he is and the methods he uses.

Dr. David Jeremiah admonishes believers to be equipped for battle. He said, “*The goal of every Christian should be to learn the identity, plans and purposes of the devil and to stand firm against him*!” I don’t disagree with Doctor Jeremiah, but I would add that equally, if not more importantly, we need to know the power of God in Christ, and then, as well-equipped soldiers, we can take our stand and win the daily battles.

***Psalm 138:7-8 (KJV)***

***“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will revive me; You will stretch fourth your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand will save me. The LORD will perfect that which concerns me; your loving kindness, O LORD, is everlasting; do not forsake the works of your hands.”***

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

* Col. 1:9-13; Acts 17:11; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 5:6-11; Deut. 1:29-31; 3:22; Psalms 97:9-10

**WORD SEARCH: from Strong’s Concordance:**

* **Devil** #1228 Greek word Diabolos: *false accuser, Satan, and slanderer*. (1Peter5:8, Acts 13:10, Heb. 2:4; Rev. 12:9; 20:10)
* **Schemes/Devices** #3540 Greek word Noema: *thoughts, perception, purpose, intelligence*. (2Cor.2:11)
* **Schemes/wiles** #3180 Greek word Methodeia: *trickery, to lie in wait*. (Eph. 6:11)

**Identify His Methods**

***2 Corinthians 2:10-1, 14 (NASB)***

***But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes. 14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.***

These are some of the methods that the enemy uses against us: temptations of flesh, offense, sinful anger, un-forgiveness, disputes, insecurities, fear, ignorance or deceptions, pride, distractions, confusion, delusions and discouragement. In the previous list, can you identify the methods the enemy has used on you?

***2 Corinthians 11:3-5 (NIV)***

***But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.***

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

* 1 Corinthians 7:2-5, Matthew 4:1-4, 7:7-14; James 1:19-25; **Ephesians 4:25-27;** James 4:1-11**;** 2 Corinthians 2: 10-11, 14-17, 11:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:3-4

**Identify His Messengers**

***1 John 3:7-13***

***Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. 9No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. 10This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.11For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. 12Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brothers were righteous. 13Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.***

***1 John 4:4-7 (NIV)***

***You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 5They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. 6We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.***

Although people are sometimes used as the devil’s instruments, we are not fighting people! We overcome evil with Good! (Luke 6:27-36; Romans 12:14-21; Matthew 5:43-44) Pastor David Lawrence tells us what *forgiveness* is *not*: 1. approval of the offense, 2. excusing the offense, 3. justifying the offense, 4. reconciling with the offender, 5. forgetting the offense, 6. pretending we’re not hurt! What is forgiveness? Dr. Chuck Hannaford defines it, “*Forgiveness is an act of my will making use of God’s grace in order to cancel a debt owed me…forgiveness is a choice.”*

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

* Acts 20:20; 2 Corinthians 2:11, 10:3-6, 11:3-16; 1 John 3:7-13, 4:14; John 8:44-45; Galatians 4:29; Matthew 7:16-22, 13:36-43

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

* Acts 17:11; 2 Peter 3:14-18; 2 Corinthians 4:2-6; Deuteronomy 4:2-6; Prov. 30:5-6; Revelations 22:18-20[**2 Corinthians 2:13**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+2%3A11-14&version=NIV#en-NIV-28838) **:** [**2Co 7:6, 13; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18; Gal 2:1, 3; Tit 1:4**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Cor%207:6,%202Cor%207:13,%202Cor%208:6,%202Cor%208:16,%202Cor%208:23,%202Cor%2012:18,%20Gal%202:1,%20Gal%202:3,%20Titus%201:4&version=NIV)[**2 Corinthians 2:13**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+2%3A11-14&version=NIV#en-NIV-28838) **:** [**S Ac 16:9**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2016:9&version=NIV)[**2 Corinthians 2:14**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+2%3A11-14&version=NIV#en-NIV-28839) **:** [**Ro 6:17; 7:25; 1Co 15:57; 2Co 9:15**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom%206:17,%20Rom%207:25,%201Cor%2015:57,%202Cor%209:15&version=NIV)[**2 Corinthians 2:14**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+2%3A11-14&version=NIV#en-NIV-28839) **: Eze 20:41; Eph 5:2; Php 4:18**[**2 Corinthians 2:14**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+2%3A11-14&version=NIV#en-NIV-28839) **:** [**S 2Co 8:7**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Cor%208:7&version=NIV)

**Defensive Armor**

***Romans 13:11-14 (NIV)***

***And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh]***

***Ephesians 6:13-17a (NASB)***

***Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousnessand having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.And take the helmet of salvation.***

* **Verse 14 Truth like a belt!** The breastplate of Righteousness helps us do what is right when the enemy comes against us. This is imparted righteousness.

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

* John 14:6; 17:17; Revelation 19:7-9)
* **Verse 15 Feet ready with the Gospel of Peace.** We must be at peace with God, reconciled to Him through repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. Then, if our ways are pleasing to the Lord, our commander, then He will make our enemy be at peace with us. ***Do you have beautiful feet? Who prepared you with the gospel?***

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

* Romans 1:1-10, 8:5-11, 10:15-18; John 17:9-21; 2Timothy 2: 1-4; Proverbs 16:7;2 Cor. 5:18-20
* **Verse 16 Shield of faith. Who is teaching you the Word of God?**

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

* Romans 10:17; John 6:63; Romans 8:11 1 Tim. 6:12
* **Verse 18 Helmet of salvation** guards your mind-the battlefield. Where is your mind set? (Romans 8:5-11) **Arrows are thoughts, false perceptions, and speculations**. He will attack you with the following: past-Justification (1 Cor. 6:9-11), present-sanctification (2 Cor. 5:17; John 17:17; Ephesians 4:22-24), and future-glorification. He is already defeated, for we are in Christ!

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

* Romans 5:1-11, 8:1-39, 12:1-2; Colossians 2:10-15

**Offensive Weapons of the Spirit**

***2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NASB)***

***For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.***

***2 Corinthians 6:7b (NIV)***

***with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left.***

***Ephesians 6:17b-20 (NASB)***

***The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.***

**Word of God**

***John 6:63 (NASB)***

***It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.***

We must use the very same strategy as Jesus to combat our enemy. (Matthew 4:1-4) The Sword of the Spirit is the use of ***very*** ***specific scriptures***; truths that combat the lies. (See the **WORD SEARCH: from Strong’s Concordance** below, to define the difference in the **two** words translated in Greek for ***Word*** of God.) In this spiritual battle, we must use spiritual weapons. (Ephesians 5:1-18) To be filled with the Spirit, we must be yielded to the Spirit and under His control. However, if we turn from hearing God’s Word, He will turn his face away from us when we pray.

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

* Proverbs 15:8-29, 28:9; Isaiah 1:15, 59:1-3, 49:24-26, 54:13-17; Micah 3:4; 1 Peter 3:12; John 15:7-8

For example, once my family had a real battle on our hands when we came in contact with a woman who was obviously possessed with the devil. (She was chasing her own children around with a butcher knife.) My husband and I both had our guard down and we began to argue about what should be done about this situation. We both were unaware that, through un-forgiveness and going to bed angry at one another, we left an open door for the devil. That was all he needed to come into our home and when he did, a man connected with the demonic woman began to all and threaten to kill my youngest son. (Luke 6:27-36; Romans 12:14-21; Matthew 5:43-44) We were tricked into thinking the other was the enemy all the while the devil was gaining ground. That is until we came to our senses and begin to humble ourselves in prayer and go to the Word of God for direction and correction. (Eph. 4:17-32; James 1:19-25; Matthew 6:16-22)

To take back surrendered ground, requires confession and repentance. When we see our sin in the mirror of God’s Word, we need agree with God and come clean. (James 4:6-10; 1 John 1:9) The devil, loves to do his work in the dark. Yet when we confess our sins to others, we are shedding light on the work of the Devil.

To stand, you must first bow to Jesus in humble submission to His Lordship. Satan can only take the ground we give to him when we have failed to obey God’s Word! Some of us are living defeated lives because we have surrendered ground to the adversary by failing to bow to the authority of God. (2 Timothy 2:22-26; Luke 6:43-48)

**WORD SEARCH: from Strong’s Concordance**

* **WORD- Greek-Logos:** The divine expression –i.e. Christ-communication-utterance-mouth used in the following passages: John 1; 1-14 and 1 Peter 1: 23, Hebrew 4:12, John 8:31, 14:23, 1 John 1:1, Rev. 19:13
* **WORD- Greek- Rhema**: an utterance a specific a matter or topic command –Word. See this used in the following verses: **Matthew** **4**:**1**-**6**; Romans 10:8, 17; 1 Peter 1:26; Ephesians1:13; 5:26 & 6:1; Hebrews 1:3, 11:3; John3:34, 6:63 & 68; John 15:7; 1:25.
* **PRAY- Greek PROS-EUCHE or Prayer-PROS-EUCHOMAI**: Worship-oratory chapel-pray earnestly - pray to God i.e. supplicate, worship.
* **Worship- Greek is PROS-KUNEO**: to kiss like a dog licking his master’s hand-to fawn or crouch-to prostrate oneself in homage - do reverence to adore - WORSHIP. (John 4:20-24)
* **Continually-Greek PROS-KARTEREO:** earnest toward-persevere, constantly diligent-attend assiduously to all the exercises or to a person - to adhere closely to (as a servitor) attend give self continually, continue with - wait on continually. (Acts 6:4) KJV

**The Power of Prayer**

***James 4:3-10 (NIV)***

***When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in u.But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”7Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.***

There's a direct correlation to my humbling myself in prayer and my awareness of His presence in the midst of spiritual battle.

“Prayer is the greatest power on earth if it is practiced in the true fear of the LORD.”--- A. W. Tozer. When we pray, we not only come near to God, but He comes near to us!

***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?”***

The Lord Jesus prayed for us and taught us to pray for deliverance from the evil one. (John 17:13-21) The prayers that start in heaven will be powerful on earth!

***Psalms 145:18 (NIV)***

***“The LORD is Near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in TRUTH.”***

God’s Word is truth! Whose prayers are powerful? ***James 5:13-16 (NIV)Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.***

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

* Romans 8:26-27; 31-39; 1Peter3:8-12; Proverbs 28:9; 15:8, 29; Isaiah 59:1-3

***Psalms 27:1-3 (ESV)***

***The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes,  
it is they who stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.***

In his book, Power and Magic, Clinton E. Arnold gives a through historical background of the concept of power as described in the book of Ephesus. On pages 38 and 39 he said:

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written to western Asia Minor with the likelihood of Ephesus as one, or perhaps the first destinations point. Ephesus functioned as a strategic center for Asia Minor- commercially, economically, in communications, and not least of all, in terms of its religious influence. In this respect, Ephesus served as the center for the worship of Artemis and the widespread practice of magic. An understanding of the worship and cult of Artemis and the practice of Hellenistic magic may therefore be quite important to an understanding of the background of the converts to whom Ephesians was written. The worshipers of Artemis extolled their goddess as supreme in power, a “cosmic” power that was believed to be superior to that of any other deity, astrological fate, and evil spirits. Artemis was closely linked with Hekate as a goddess of the underworld. For this reason, she could be called upon for protection from pernicious “powers.” She could also be invoked to raise the dead, heal the sick, and protect the city.

He went on to say, “A knowledge of Hellenistic magic may very well be the most important background for understanding why the author highlights the power of God and the “powers” of evil in Ephesians. This background may also help to explain the motivation for the lengthy admonition to prepare for engaging in “spiritual warfare” and the particular emphases in the way the teaching on power is expressed in the epistle.”

**WORD SEARCH: FROM STRONG’S CONCORDANCE**

* **Power:** Strong’s # 1411 in Greek is Dunamis: force, miraculous power, a miracle itself, ability, abundance, power, strength, violence, mighty, wonderful work. (Ephesians 1:19A; 3:7, 3:30; 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 1:3; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:5; Matthew 24:30; 26:18)
* **Power**: Strong’s # 2904 in Greek is Kratos: vigor (great) dominion, mighty, power, strength. (Eph. 1:19B; Colossians 1:11; 1 Tim. 6:16; Rev. 5:13)
* **Power**: Strong’s # 1849 in Greek is Exousia: capacity, competency, privilege, freedom, right, strength, mastery, delegated influence; authority, jurisdiction, liberty, power. (Eph. 1:21; 2:2; Matt. 28:18; John 1:12; Rev. 18:1; Jude 25; Colossians 2:10)

In the following verses, you can see that power and belief are closely connected. Could it be that the all surpassing power is unleashed only when we believe the Word of God?

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

* + - * Mark 4:39, 9:23; Matthew 19:26; Luke 8:22-25, 9:37-43, 17:6, 18:18; James 1:5-8

Colossians 1:9-23; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 3:18-22; 2 Cor. 12:9-10; 13:4-6; 1 Cor. 1:18-25

With all the worship of false gods and evil deities in Asia Minor, no wonder they lived in fear. Prior to receiving salvation, these evil spirits ruled and dominated their lives. The powers of the kingdom of darkness is all they knew.

This explains why Paul put so much emphasizing on the power of God in Christ. Evidently, after all the teaching and preaching they had received, they still needed to be reminded that God was in control. Because sometime later, when Timothy was the pastor of the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote these words of encouragement to him: *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but* of power, *and* *of* *love*, *and* *of* *a* *sound* *mind*. (2 Timothy 1:7, KJV) Although, the power of God had certainly, dispelled and overcome the kingdom of darkness, believers still lived in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation as sheep among the wolves. And so it is with us. But the good news is that, while we may be outnumbered, we will not be overcome…the gates of hell will not prevail against us… not now, not ever! “Now that, as my pastor would say, would be a great place to say AMEN!

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

* Romans 5:5-6, 8:15, 31-37; Luke 12:4-7, 24:49; Acts 19:11-20; 2 Corinthians 5:11; Psalms 27:1; 1 John 4:1-4; Philippians 2:15; Matthew 10:16; Matthew 16-17-19

It seems fitting to conclude this lesson the last line of the song “In Christ Alone.” (Read it at the end of chapter 13.) The final line attest to this truth it says: “No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hands, till He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I stand.”

***Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV)***

***Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.***

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

1. In the above passages, what is under the Lord Jesus’ power and authority?
2. Have you ever lived under the oppression of crippling fear?
3. If so, can you identify the root cause of this fear?
4. Read: Hebrews 2:12-18. In this passage, what did Jesus do to free us from the fear of death?
5. Read: Hebrew 1:1-3, what specifically does the Word of His power do?
6. Review the following list and see if you can identify the methods the enemy has used on you? His methods are: temptations of flesh, offense, sinful anger, un-forgiveness, disputes, insecurities, fear, ignorance or deceptions, pride, distractions, confusion, delusions and discouragement.
7. Think about times of defeat. What weapons or armor were missing?
8. Who prepared you for this daily battle?
9. Is this person missing in your walk of faith?
10. Have you been taught to pray?
11. Read: Luke 11:1-3 and Matthew 6:16-22. Who teaches others to pray?
12. Are you preparing someone else to stand?
13. For a more in-depth study on this subject, we recommend the book, **Fiery Darts**, by Janet Lane. You can find her link on our resource page.

**Think About These Things**

* Did you learn something new?
* What did the Lord say to you from this Chapter?
* Rewrite in your own words what the Lord spoke to your heart.
* Is there a new promise to claim as your own?
* Is there a sin to confess or avoid?
* Did you find a command to obey or a passage you could pray?

**Memory Verses**

***Romans 8:35-39 (NIV)***

***35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”37No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

**Cross references:**

**Chapter # 30?**

**Prone to Wander**

**Gospel Advance and Benediction**

**Key Passages**

***Ephesians 6:21-24 (ESV)***

*So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.*

***Revelation 2:1-7 (NIV)***

***To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:***

***These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.***

***Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.***

Continuing with the history of the church at Ephesus, as we have already seen, these saints embraced sound doctrine, and that a good thing. But Paul closed his letter to the church at Ephesus with this reminder; doctrine means nothing if we don’t love the God that these doctrines point to.

***Ephesians 6:24 (NASB)***

***Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an incorruptible love.***

We have just read the last words that Paul penned to these believers. How quickly we tend to forget, because only thirty years or so later, their love for Jesus had eroded into nothing more than religious activities. Could it be that you can relate to those in this church?

They held onto these doctrines but they walked away from Jesus…. What a sad statement. Equally as tragic, is the fact that they were the recipients, and *the stewards* of perhaps more truth than any other church.

Believers have been united to Christ as His very own bride! We’ll expound on this in-depth in future chapters. However, for now let’s try to grasp the all-important take away from their example.

We can know all the true doctrines of the faith, take a stand against evil men, do good deeds, persevere under trials, explain deep truths of God, and yet it is all for naught if we let our love for Jesus grow cold. It occurs to me that it is easier to hold on to religious rituals than it is to walk in a love relationship with the Lord.

# *Jeremiah 2:2, 32 (NIV)*

***2“Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: “This is what the Lord says:***

***“‘I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me***  
***and followed me through the wilderness, through a land not sown. 32***

***32Does a young woman forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments?***  
***Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number.***

Even those who have walked in close intimate fellowship with Him are prone to wander. An old hymn written in the 1700, by a man named Robert Roberson ends with a truth the saints, throughout the ages, would like to ignore, we are prone to leave the God we love. The song is “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”. The third stanza is as follows: “O to grace how great a debtor, daily I’m constrained to be! Let thy goodness like a fetter, bind my wondering heart to thee: prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; here’s my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above. Amen”. The writer of those words describes what I know of my own sinful heart. I, too, leave my first love. After twenty- five years of walking with Him and seeing His gracious acts on my behalf, at times I still drift away from intimacy with the Lord. What baffles me even more is just how frighteningly short are the steps from walking in intimacy with the Lover of my soul, to drifting away from Him into indifference or worse yet, blatant sin! Thankfully, God’s love and faithfulness toward us is not contingent upon our love and faithfulness to Him.

***2 Timothy 2:13 (NIV)***

***If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.***

This quote by G.K. Chesterton sums up what is too often missing in the life of the church: “Let your religion be less of a theory and more of a love affair.” Eventually the Saint left their first love. The building that was once the meeting place of the Saints in Ephesus is now a house of worship for another pagan god named Mohammad. Today the lamp that once burned brightly in Ephesus is extinguished. Their love for Jesus died!

The following is a quote from Mike Bickle the director of the international House of Prayer of Kansas City, Mo.

*“God designed us in His image to be lovers of God! The capacity to feel deeply and love passionately is truly one of the great expressions of being created in God’s image. Of course, this capacity can be dangerous and destructive if not stewarded properly. But the capacity to burn with deep desire in the heart is what separates us from the rest of Creation. Ultimately, the Great commission will be fulfilled by people lovesick for God and thus overflowing with compassion for other people. Lovers are more effective than mere workers. When workers become lovers, they throw away the obligatory checklist. They no longer need it. There lovesick hearts provide a higher and more trustworthy rule to live and work by. When we extravagantly obey God out of a fascinated, exhilarated heart, we come into the position of the bride in Song of Songs who pursues her Bridegroom out of “LOVESICKNESS.”* (Song of Songs 2:5, 5:8)

As the Lover of our souls, the Lord Jesus bids us to come, not to a place, not to a work, but to ***Himself***. His design and desire is a relationship, and He is not one bit pleased with our empty religious activities. Furthermore, our work for Jesus will be worthless if we do not love Jesus. Work is the overflow of worship. Only through abiding in an intimacy with Christ will we find our deepest desires met. And then we will know the glorious purpose He has for our life, plans made for us before the foundation of the earth. This prayer by A.W. Tozer is fitting for everyone whose heart desire is to return to their first love.

A prayer by A.W. Tozer:

“O God, I have tasted thy goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more.

I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, the Triune God, I want to want thee; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still. Show me thy Glory, I pray thee, that I may know thee indeed. Begin, in mercy, a new work of love within me. Say to my soul, “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.” Then give me grace to rise and follow thee up from this lowland where I have wandered so long.”

Before we can begin to experience this kind of relationship with God, we must first be reconciled to Him. In the next Chapter we will learn the problem of humanity and discover where we are in relationship to God.

**DIGGING DEEPER: Read the following passages and make note of any insights and persona you find.**

* Deuteronomy 6:1-7; Eph.6:23-24; John 15:7-17; 1 Cor. 3:5-17, 13:2; Isaiah 29:13; Jeremiah 2:1-13; Revelation 2:1-5

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

1. Have you ever experienced a time when you walked in intimacy with God?
2. If you’re not presently experiencing this kind of relationship with Him, what happened that extinguished the love?
3. What do people *do* when they are first “In love”?
4. Would you describe yourself as ***growing*** in adoration for the Lord Jesus?
5. Do you find yourself talking more about Jesus than to Jesus? (Isaiah 56:6-7)
6. Have you ever been taught how to have a quiet time with the Lord? (Luke 10:39-42)
7. What makes the bride of Christ beautiful to her Bridegroom? (Song of Solomon 4:10)

**Think On These Things**

* Did you learn something new?
* What did the Lord say to you from this Chapter?
* Rewrite in your own words what the Lord spoke to your heart.
* Is there a new promise to claim as your own?
* Is there a sin to confess or avoid?
* Did you find a command to obey or a passage you could pray?

**Memory Verses**

***1 John 4:19 (NIV)***

***We love because he first loved us.***

**Chapter #**

**BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM**

**Key Passage**

***Ephesians 1:10 (NASB)***

***With a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him.***

**Introduction**

For over the seven years, that I owned the bridal gallery, most weekends I stood with the bride, and usually her Father, behind as set of doors, as we waited for the cue of a special song: like, The ***Wedding march, or Here Comes the Bride***. As the doors opened, I would fluff her train and it would float like a cloud to the ground, usually strewn with rose pedals placed there by the flower girl and ring barrier. As she would begin her walk down the aisle, every eye in the room was focused on her, especially the bridegroom. But from my position, in the back of the church, my attention shifted from the bride to the groom. Sometimes, he became so overcome with joy at the sight of his beloved that it would bring him to tears. It was his face, beholding his beautiful bride, which moved me the most. For instance, just recently at my son’s wedding, when everyone stood and turned to see my beautiful daughter-in law Jessica walk down the aisle, I looked at my son and saw tears of joy rolling down his face.

However, in the days when the Lord Jesus walked this earth, it was the bridegroom, not the bride, who was the center of attention.

For two thousand plus years, He has been preparing a place for us in His Father’s house. (John 14:1-3) But one glorious day the Father will say to King Jesus, “Son, go get your Bride, it’s time for the wedding.” Now let’s imagine Handel’s *Messiah* is the melody that’s playing as the pearly gates swing open. Everything and everyone else fades to the peripheral, the veil will be removed and we will see the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, in all His glory. Just the thought of that day makes my heart beat with anticipation. For when that day comes, all things in heaven and on earth will be summed up and filled up in Him**.** When all is said and done… every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that***Jesus Christ is Lord****!* “And the Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” (Rev. 22:17)

***Psalms 45:1-12 (NIV)***

***My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king;***  
***my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.2You are the most excellent of men***  
***and your lips have been anointed with grace, since God has blessed you forever. 3Gird your sword on your side, you mighty one;    clothe yourself with splendor and majesty.4In your majesty ride forth victoriously***  
***in the cause of truth, humility and justice; let your right hand achieve awesome deeds.5Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king’s enemies; let the nations fall beneath your feet.6Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.***  
***7You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.8All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; from palaces adorned with ivory the music of the strings makes you glad.9Daughters of kings are among your honored women; at your right hand is the royal bride in gold of Ophir.10Listen, daughter, and pay careful attention: Forget your people and your father’s house. 11Let the king be enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your Lord.12The city of Tyre will come with a gift, people of wealth will seek your favor.***

[*Psalm 45:1*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14599) *Or possibly Lilies*

1. [*Psalm 45:1*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14599) *Possibly Contemplative, or Didactic, or Skillful Psalm*
2. [*Psalm 45:1*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14599) *Lit is astir*
3. [*Psalm 45:1*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14599) *Lit am saying*
4. [*Psalm 45:1*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14599) *Lit works*
5. [*Psalm 45:1*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14599) *Probably refers to Solomon as a type of Christ*
6. [*Psalm 45:2*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14600) *Or through*
7. [*Psalm 45:3*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14601) *Or warrior*
8. [*Psalm 45:4*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14602) *Or fearful*

***Cross references:***

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2. [*Psalm 45:2*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14600) *:* [*Luke 4:22*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204:22&version=NASB)
3. [*Psalm 45:2*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14600) *:* [*Ps 21:6*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2021:6&version=NASB)
4. [*Psalm 45:3*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14601) *:* [*Heb 4:12; Rev 1:16*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Heb%204:12,%20Rev%201:16&version=NASB)
5. [*Psalm 45:3*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14601) *:* [*Is 9:6*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa%209:6&version=NASB)
6. [*Psalm 45:4*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14602) *:* [*Zeph 2:3*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zeph%202:3&version=NASB)
7. [*Psalm 45:4*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14602) *:* [*Ps 21:8*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2021:8&version=NASB)
8. [*Psalm 45:5*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14603) *:* [*Ps 18:14; 120:4; Is 5:28; 7:13*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2018:14,%20Ps%20120:4,%20Isa%205:28,%20Isa%207:13&version=NASB)
9. [*Psalm 45:5*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14603) *:* [*Ps 92:9*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2092:9&version=NASB)
10. [*Psalm 45:5*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14603) *:* [*2 Sam 18:14*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Sam%2018:14&version=NASB)
11. [*Psalm 45:6*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14604) *:* [*Ps 93:2; Heb 1:8, 9*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2093:2,%20Heb%201:8-Heb%201:9&version=NASB)
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13. [*Psalm 45:7*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14605) *:* [*Ps 11:7; 33:5*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2011:7,%20Ps%2033:5&version=NASB)
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17. [*Psalm 45:9*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14607) *:* [*Song 6:8*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Song%206:8&version=NASB)
18. [*Psalm 45:9*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14607) *:* [*1 Kin 2:19*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Kgs%202:19&version=NASB)
19. [*Psalm 45:9*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14607) *:* [*1 Kin 9:28; Is 13:12*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Kgs%209:28,%20Isa%2013:12&version=NASB)
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25. [*Psalm 45:13*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14611) *:* [*Ex 39:2, 3*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exod%2039:2-Exod%2039:3&version=NASB)
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28. [*Psalm 45:14*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14612) *:* [*Ps 45:9*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2045:9&version=NASB)
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30. [*Psalm 45:17*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalms%2045:1-17&version=NASB#en-NASB-14615) *:* [*Ps 138:4*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%20138:4&version=NASB)

There is an old hymn written by Charles W. Fry in 1881 titled: The Lily of the Valley. The writer finds his lyrics, in part; from Song of Solomon 5:9 “My ***Beloved is dazzling and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand”.*** The songs refrain is,“He is the Lilly of the Valley, the Bright and Morning, Star; He’s the fairest of ten thousand to my soul.” Another hymn of praise, written by Charles Wesley, states the frustration of his soul as he tries to describe the object of his affections. Wesley’s song begins with: “O, for A Thousand Tongues to sing... My great Redeemer’s praise, the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of His grace!” Is Jesus the fairest of ten thousand to your soul? Is He the indescribable object of your affections, or is He just a “foot note” added to the end of your to-do list?

Try as we might, it is just not possible to communicate how great He is. Even the apostle John ended his gospel with these words: “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.” (John 21:24-25) There are simply not enough words, in any language, to describe Him. Yet if we could write a thousand songs or placed ten thousand mighty men beside Him, none would compare to the *LORD JESUS*.

If we could write a thousand songs, or placed ten thousand mighty men beside Him, none would compare to the ***LORD JESUS.*** Oh for the ability to grasp that we, the Bride of Christ, have been placed in God… eternally! What an incomprehensible honor! Nothing in this world can compare to the matchless, magnificent, unfailing love of God be found in Christ Jesus our Lord. There are simply not enough adjectives in any language to describe Him. We cannot sing His praises enough, nor thank Him enough or ever possibly love Him enough!

I only pray, that I have magnified Him, make much of Him, and helped you in some way to know Him better. I plead with you, don’t keep these riches to yourself find someone to share the wealth with!

The ultimate goal of obedience to the Great Commission is to spread the knowledge of Him, so that His name and fame would be known to the ends of the earth, till His kingdom comes.

***Revelation 5:6-14 (ESV)***

***And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying,***

***“Worthy are you to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God  
from every tribe and language and people and nation,  
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,  
and they shall reign on the earth.”***

***Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice,***

***“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might  
and honor and glory and blessing!”***

***And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,***

***“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb  
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”***

***And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.***

***In a loud voice they were saying: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” 13Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”***

**A Happy Ending**

In his message, “A Complete Christmas”, Herb Hodges said: “With Jesus, the rest of the story is the best of the story.” And so we will end with the best part of the story. As we rap-up our study of Ephesians, let’s return to the story of its history. According to tradition, Saint John the Apostle spent his last years in Ephesus. Belief is, he died and was buried there around AD 98. Again, this brings to light the significance of the church at Ephesus. Most of the historical information we have on John was recorded and passed along through John’s disciple Polycarp, and his disciple Irenaeus - an important early church father.

It was during Johns residency in Ephesus that he wrote the gospel of John and his three other epistles. As the “Disciple Whom Jesus Loved,” it’s not surprising that the love of God was the central theme of his writing. (John 3:16, 21-24; 1, 2, 3 John)

I would like to point out that Paul and saint John had at least two significant things in common. In addition to the fact that they both personally ministered to the saints at Ephesus, they received revelation and interpretation of several divine mysteries. These mysteries had only been alluded to in the writings of the Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah and Hosea. (Isaiah 54:5-17; Hosea 2:14-23, 3:15) Paul and John were the recipients of the divine mystery that the Church is the blood bought Bride of Christ. Let’s not forget that both Paul and John were flesh and blood men, just like us. However, they both record for us the Revelation of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

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

* Acts 8:1-7; 1 Corinthians 4:1-3; 2 Corinthians 1-6; John 1:14-18, 2:1-11; 1 John 1:1-4, 4:2; 2 John 7; Revelation 1:1-20, 19:11-18

John was the youngest of the disciples. He was there when Jesus performed His first miraculous sign - the changing of water into wine at the Wedding in Cana.

And it must have made an indelible impression on him. Because he testifies that this was the hour He first believed. John said, “He thus revealed His glory, and His disciples put their faith in Him.” John saw Jesus glory on another occasion. He, his brother James and Peter were on the top of a mountain alone with Jesus when suddenly Jesus face shone with the glory of God and He was transfigured before their very eyes. “*Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.”* (Matthew 17:1-2) (NASB)

Many years later, John was eighty years old when he was imprisoned on an island in Greece. The Lord Jesus visited His beloved disciple. Once again, John saw the glory of God in Jesus. His face, said John, was “shinning like the sun.” It was almost too much for John to bear. John’s aged eyes were about to see the final vision of Christ Jesus in all of His glory. And John wrote what heard and saw:

***Revelation 1:17-19 (NASB)***

***When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.19Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.***

The Holy Spirit took, the Beloved Disciple, by the heart and showed Him the final chapter of God’s Book. I wonder if John was thinking to him-self, the same thing the servants said at the wedding in Cana, when his spiritual eyes first received sight, “***You have saved the best for last!***” I picture John as he took out his scroll and began, with the trembling hands of a skillful writer, he recorded for us the vision of The Bridegroom…the Lamb of God who took away our sins…The Lord-God-Almighty…King-of-Kings…and Lord-of-Lords.

***Revelation 21:1-12 (NIV)***

***Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”***

***5He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”***

***6He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. 8But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”***

***9One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” 10And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. 11It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.***

**The King Is Coming**

# Our God and King will come, in all His majesty, riding on a white horse, and His Bride will see Him as He is, face to face in all His glory. (Rev. 19:7-16) I personally believe that when the trumpet sounds, and He comes to get his Bride in the clouds, the words we will hear are the words King Solomon spoke to his bride in Song of Solomon.

# *Song of Solomon 2:8-10 (NIV)*

***Listen! My beloved!  
    Look! Here he comes,  
leaping across the mountains,  
    bounding over the hills.  
9My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.  
    Look! There he stands behind our wall,  
gazing through the windows,  
    peering through the lattice.  
10My beloved spoke and said to me,  
    “Arise, my darling,  
    my beautiful one, come with me.***

Just the thought of it makes the heart beat faster with anticipation. I imagine Handel’s Messiah is the melody we hear as the Pearly gates swing open and we are ushered into the presence of the Bridegroom-the King of Glory!

For the Bride of Christ, the author of our story has already written the last line…And they lived forever and ever… Happily-Ever-After!

**Think About These Things**

* Did you learn something new?
* What did the Lord say to you from this Chapter?
* Rewrite in your own words what the Lord spoke to your heart.
* Is there a new promise to claim as your own?
* Is there a sin to confess or avoid?
* Did you find a command to obey or a passage you could pray?

**Memory Verses**

# *Revelation 22:16-17 (NIV)*

***I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.***