**A Profound Mystery**



**Curriculum for Women’s Discipleship**

**From the Book of Ephesians**

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Scriptures used are from multiple translations of the Holy Bible.

See notations after each passage referenced.

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

**The Author**





Mingled among cherished memories, and a few I 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 here is the thing, my husband, 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. Then finally, after many painful trials, Art also met the Lord Jesus. The two of us became one. By God’s grace, and His grace alone, Art and I have now been married for 30 years. The Lord has blessed us with three beautiful children, a son-in-law and a daughter-in-law that God handpicked for our children. But that’s not all, He has given us two of the sweetest granddaughters in the world. I can testify that God is the healer of broken lives. I am humbled and honored to have the joy of sharing with you, not only the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also bits and pieces of my life story as well.

Today my life is all about dressing the bride of Christ by making disciples from my home to the nations. (Matthew28:18-20; Revelation 21:1-2) It’s all about spiritual relationships, so please, 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.

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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 and 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, the Book of Ephesians is a rich reservoir of life transforming truth. Yet, what makes this epistle unique is that it contains the revelation of God’s eternal plans and purposes. So studying Ephesians affords us a rare opportunity to see the big picture of the Bible, not only from Genesis to Revelation, but eternity past, and eternity future!

It also provides an excellent context in which we can learn essential doctrinal truths as well as 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. The hope is that you will discover deep, soul healing truth and cultivate an intimate love relationship with God.

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

**Phase One**

**The Gospel**

**Week #1**

**History of The Church at Ephesus**



**Introduction**

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

Perhaps these concepts of love and marriage seem foreign to you. If this is so, you can be assured that it is by no coincidence that you have picked up this 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.

* Can you think of a place where it seems that evil is rampant? Where and why do you think this is so? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* and *lay people* in His church. In fact, the term “layperson” is not even found in the Bible because no division exists between the secular and the spiritual life in God’s economy.

**Galatians 3:28 (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 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, sometime between A.D. 80-95. In fact, he was arrested while in Ephesus and taken to Patmos, located in the Aegean Sea southwest of Ephesus. This is where he received the Revelation sometime between in A.D. 94-96. Ephesus is the first of the seven churches that the Lord Jesus addressed in Revelation. If you were to take a tour of the ruins of this city, the Basilica of Saint John and the House of Virgin Mary would no doubt be on your “must see” list. At the conclusion of our study, 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. He wrote Ephesians while he was under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16-31). It’s believed that this letter was intended as a circular letter to be hand copied and read to all the saints who were scattered throughout Asia Minor. In fact, half of the books in the New Testament (fifteen of the twenty-seven) are connected in some way to Ephesus. For example, Ephesians was the first of the four prison epistles. The others were to the church at Colossae, Philippi and the personal letter to Philemon - who was part of the church in Colossae. Apparently Philemon was in Ephesus when Paul led him to Christ. The subject of Paul’s letter to this brother was Philemon’s runaway slave Onesimus. In God’s providence, Onesimus met Paul during his time imprisoned in Rome and there Onesimus was born again. He was no longer a slave to sin – he was a new creation, and as such, he needed to be reconciled to Philemon.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**An Emotional Departure**

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

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

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

After Paul’s departure, the saints in Ephesus were left in the capable hands of Timothy, Paul’s primary disciple. In fact, first and second Timothy are the personal letters of encouragement that Paul wrote to his “spiritual son” while Timothy was the pastor of the church of Ephesus. These were written during Paul’s first and last imprisonment in Rome between A.D.62-67. (Throughout this study we will be referencing these letters often.) Continuing the work that Paul had begun, Timothy led this flock for about one and a half years. 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, according to Operation World, the country of Turkey is 96.64% Muslim. Christians represent only 0.21 % of the population.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

***While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus.***

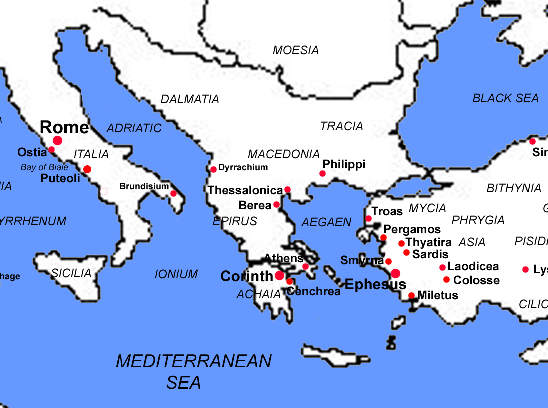
***There he found some disciples. 10 This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks***

***who lived in the providence of Asia heard the word of the Lord.***

## Time Line

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

## Map



**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 lesson one that it was Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, who wrote the letter while he was imprisoned in Rome around A.D. 60. (2 Peter 1:21; Ephesians 1:1) But for whom was the letter intended, and what was their address? The truth contained within these seemingly simple questions might very well change our concept of God, and bring us face-to-face with our own identity. Before we get to know the recipients of this letter, let’s focus our attention on their location. (See the timeline.)

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

**What’s Your Address?**

Do you like to meet people and hear their life stories? Have you ever sat next to a stranger and tried to strike up a conversation? It usually begins something like this: “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.

* Have you lived in different cities, states or countries? If so, list them here: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Are there any unique landmarks or traditions practiced in the areas that you have lived? If so, list them here. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**John 15:5-8 (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 John chapter fifteen, you will find the words “Remain *in Me*” eight times within the first seven verses.

As incredible as it may seem; the abode of the saints (those who are part of the bride of Christ) is *in* the Bridegroom. That means that the saints 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.

* In your experience with your parents or in your own marriage, have you suffered the pain of divorce? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

1. What are the six editorial friends of Rudyard Kipling that are useful in Bible study\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. How often do you read the Bible? Do you set aside time each day to dialogue with God through prayer? Do you use a journal? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

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1. What apostle, other than Paul, lived in Ephesus and recorded the account where Jesus told His disciples to, “Abide in Me?” ­­­­­ ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Why is it impossible to live the Christian life without abiding in a love relationship with Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**The Crux of Our Problem**



**Key Passages**

**Ephesians 2:1-3 (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%.

* From the following verses, when does a person’s heart become sinful? Genesis 8:21; Psalms 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* When was the last time you really contemplated your own mortality? Explain the circumstances. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* Have you ever thought to yourself that only your family was broken, and perhaps everyone else had perfect families?

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* Thinking of your background, do others in your family point you to God or keep you from Him? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What is your spiritual background? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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.***

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

Even though we may try to cover ourselves with the fig leaves of religion and good works, we are either hiding *from* God in our sinful nakedness like Adam and Eve, *or we are* hidden *with* God ***in*** ***Christ*** and clothed in His righteousness. Regardless of our pretense, we are not fooling God. He knows precisely where we are and the dastardly things we have done. And, furthermore, He also knows the unspeakable things that others have done to us. 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.***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**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.***

## 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. According to Matthew 1:21, what did Jesus come to save us from? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. 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) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. What scale do most people use to measure their own “goodness?” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Fill in the blank: Every saint was born into the world a\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
7. Based on these verses Ephesians 2:1-7, what are the two conditions of every living soul?

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1. Adam and Eve used fig leafs to hide their sins. What kind of fig leaves do people hide behind today? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. According to Isaiah 64:6, how God sees our “self-righteousness.” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. 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. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. A.W. Tozer, said, “Jesus did not come into the world to make bad men good. He came to make dead men live!” (www.Revival-Library.com) What did he mean by this statement? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

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

**Week # 2**

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

One more noteworthy narrative took place in Exodus 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 your 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, 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.

* 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. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* With that thought in mind, are there any sins that you continually struggle to overcome?

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* Are you comfortable with confessing your sins to God and other trusted believers? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**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?

* 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. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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**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; Leviticus 4:1-35; 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 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)

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. In fact, even the word excruciating means ex (out of) crux - the cross! This beautifully brings into focus the central turning point to humanities problems. The axis on which all else depends is the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus, His burial and then His subsequent resurrection on the third day. His resurrection from the dead was another picture of our resurrection from spiritual death to life! You see, the darkest day in history, the very epitome of all evil is called “Good Friday.” Three days later, He rose again, defeating sin and death forever!

* According to 1 Peter 1:18-19 and Ephesians 1:7, why did Jesus die? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Why do you think the fact of Jesus resurrection is so important? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

* Genesis 3:7-21, 22:1-14; Exodus 12:21-28; John 1:1-10, 29-34, 19:17-31; Galatians 4:4-5, 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. Take Isaiah 53: and personalize it. “He was pierced for \_\_\_\_... “The punishment that brought \_\_\_\_\_ peace was upon Him.” … “By His stripes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_am healed.”
3. 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. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. 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? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Read Genesis 22:13-14; Mark 10:45; 1 John 2:2, 4:10; Romans 3:25, 5:8-10. From these passages, what is the connection between the required Old Testament blood sacrifices and the cross of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Are there any songs that come to mind that reference the cross or the blood of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. In your family, do you see unhealthy patterns in relationships such as passing blame, manipulation, co-dependency, control, or enabling. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. If you are in Christ and He is holy, how should this change how you look at sin?

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

# Stories 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**

After all we discovered in week 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 week two, 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 and as Irene, my sister in Christ, once said, “If you have a story in you, you must get it out!” That being said, 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 lesson.)

**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!”

* Read the following passages: Genesis 18:27; Job 42:6; Isaiah 6:5; Luke 5:5-8. In each of these stories, someone had an encounter with God. What do all these stories have in common? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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)

* Do you have a “But for the Grace of God….” interruption in your life story? If so, would you be willing to write it here and share it with someone? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**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.

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

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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*. (Revelation 21:1-2) 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, the most heinous of all my sins was my religious self-righteousness. What amazed me the most was that He knew all I had ever done, and yet He loved me. Someone once said, “Grace is God satisfying our souls with His Son so that we are forever ruined for all else!”*

*Thirteen years later, my husband met my Beloved Savior; we had been married for sixteen years at the time. On our 17thwedding anniversary my husband and I renewed our wedding vows. My second wedding dress was handpicked to fit the description of the gown of the bride in Psalms forty- five. It had 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 lesson 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.’”***

* In the above passage, the Lord uses figurative language to describe His relationship with His people. See if you can paraphrase this text and make any personal applications and discuss them with your small group. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* As you read that passage, could you relate to the emotional pain described there? If so, what were the circumstances that come to mind? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**God's Love Is Not Blind**

**Psalms 145:8 (HCSB)**

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

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.

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

**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.***

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

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

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1. Read the following passages 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:

## Think On These Things

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

**Week # 3**

**What Kind of Love is This?**



**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.

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

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.

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 apparently shot some of the other victims in the trauma center. Along with several police officers who came to pay the criminal a visit, was his aunt. I overheard her plead with her nephew. She said: “You need to get down on your knees and thank the good Lord for having mercy on you and sparing your life!” Although he appeared oblivious to the fact that God had spared his life, his aunt knew better. Her words, it seemed, fell on deaf ears and a hardened heart. His calloused response to her pleas, exposed his lack of fear of the Lord and disregard for the mercy that had been shown him.

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

Once he entered their program, they loved Billy to Christ, and discipled 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.

* Do you have someone in your life that seems to be constantly in need of prayer? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Look up each of the following passages and see if you can turn them into intercessory prayers. Then discuss them with your small group. 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

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**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!

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

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.

* Of all the descriptive words in the above Word Search, what meant the most to you personally and why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**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.

* In what ways have you lived as if you are poor, even though you are rich in grace? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What are some ways that you have tried to earn grace? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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.

**Micah 7:18 (ESV)**

***Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.***

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?” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

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1. If so, do you think this person had themselves been the recipient of God’s grace? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## 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.***

# “What Must I Do to Be Saved?”

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**Key Passages**

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

***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 lesson 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. (John 5:24; Romans 11:6; Hebrew 4:7) For Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws them.” (John 6:44) 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?

* Have you ever been hurt by someone who said they were sorry, yet did not repent? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Why are words meaningless when it comes to faith and repentance? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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 lesson 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 for Iris 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 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.

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

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

**John 20:24-30 (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) By this, 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.”

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

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? Because He wants to come in, and although He is the Lord God - the Almighty, He will not force Himself on anyone. And yet 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? Then I would like to admonish you, with the words of Charles H. Spurgeon. He said, *O my dear Hearers, He stands before the door of your heart right now! He is gently knocking, not with a sledge hammer, but with His own pierced hand! … Admit Him at once! If not, it may be that He will never knock again.* If you have heard the Lord’s voice, please my friend, don’t harden your heart! This is ***your invitation*** from the King. What will you do with Jesus? If you have access to the internet, I would like to for you to hear a beautiful song written by Steven Curtis Chapman and Geoffrey Paul More. It’s called “The Invitation.” (You can find this on YouTube.)

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

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

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

1. Define what it means to believe: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What did Paul preach everywhere he went? (Acts 20:17-21) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Read Acts 11:9-24. What was the gift given after they believed, and what did God grant to the Gentiles that lead to life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Read the following passages Acts 11:16-18; 17:30-31; Luke 13:1-5; John 8:24, 58; 12:31-33; Mark 1:15. What was the gospel that Jesus and His disciples preached? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Read 2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 18:32, 33:1-11. What is the stated desire of God in these passages? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. According to all the passages we have studied, can a person have true saving faith without true repentance? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. 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) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you think these two returned to their lives of sin? Why or why not? (Proverbs 28:13) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. When all is said and done, what two things does God want from you and me? Read Luke 8:15-21, 11:27-28; Matthew 7:21-23; Revelation 2:5-7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

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

**Week # 4**

# 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. (1 Timothy 1:1-17; 2 Timothy 1:1-6, 2:1-2)

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

***you workers of works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, 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.

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

**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.

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

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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 him and my pastor at a small radio station. This day just happened to be Frank’s seventh birthday. I was excited to know that his testimony would be broadcast throughout two islands, and for reasons I did not understand at the time, I recorded Frank’s story and felt that something very special was taking place. A few months after we taped his testimony, Frank went home to be with Jesus. And through this recording, Frank preached his own funeral service. In fact, 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 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.***

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

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

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

**Acts 1:8 (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)

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

**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 instruction and do not live by My ordinances,  
if they dishonor My statutes and do not keep My commands,***

***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.***

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

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

**and personal applications.**

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

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

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

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## Think On These Things

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

## Memory Verses

**1 John 5:13-15 (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.***

**Phase Two**

**All Things New!**

**Week # 1**

# New Identity



**Key Passages**

**Ephesians 1:1-5 (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. Did you know that statistics now show that 1 in 6 children will be sexually abused? What that means is that you or several people you know are victims. May the Lord have mercy upon us! Personally, I believe that Satan, seizing the opportunity afforded him, is using the internet to entrap men (as well as women) in the soul destroying addiction to pornography.

* Keeping in mind that Jesus standard of adultery is, looking at someone lustfully, read the following passages and then state just how serious a sin this is to God. Matthew 5:22-28; Mark 7:21; Jeremiah 23:10-37; Revelation 2:18-29; 2 Peter 2:10-15; Galatians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 6:1-10; Hebrew 13:4 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Once, while returning home from a mission trip, I 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.

* If you have personally suffered this way, have you believed the lie that you are some-how blemished for life or that you were “damaged goods?” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Have you ever confided in a trusted friend about why you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* 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 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”
* Perhaps God has planned to use your story to help others find healing in Christ. Would you pray about opening up and sharing with your small group? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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 72:1-12, 107:8-21; Jeremiah 8:20-22; Proverbs 4:20-23; 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?”

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

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

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

**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.***

Spiritual songs are scriptures put to melody, such as a song by Kari Jobe titled “My Beloved.” It is based upon the words king Solomon wrote about his bride. If you are in Christ, then you are His bride. The following passage from Song of Solomon reminds us of how the Lord views us…. We are clean, spotless, pure and holy.

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

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

**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 struggled with any addictions that could have resulted from past wounds? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. If so, have you sought help through counseling or A.A.? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Has God revealed to you any areas in your life that need further growth, healing, deliverance or equipping? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. If so, would you like to address them following from a Biblical perspective? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. 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?
8. How confident are you in the love of God? Do you feel like you must perform or strive to earn His love? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. 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? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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# 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. (You may want to read through the first three chapters of Hosea.) 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. Nevertheless, 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.”***

* In what ways has the Lord redeemed your past? Make a list of everything that comes to mind. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* Has anyone ever paid a debt you owed but could not afford to pay? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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!

* Read the book of Ruth and see how Jesus is foreshadowed as the “Kinsmen Redeemer.” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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 (chapter one) attributes this passage of scripture to one of Solomon’s offspring… His name is the Lord Jesus Christ!

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.***

* Could you relate to any of the women listed in Jesus’ lineage? If so, how has this

lesson given you hope? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* What are your true feelings about God choosing these “kind of women?”\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**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. We are going to 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.*

**DIGGING 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

The Son of God is the unrivaled object of the Father’s affection. 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.” Therefore, we mustn’t forget that the Father’s love and acceptance of us, rests solely upon His love for His Beloved Son. And so, because of this, we are not just accepted by God, but, in Christ, we are highly favored and enormously blessed.

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 feeling insignificant? When you read the Bible, do you think about the people listed as supper humans? Well - they were 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 lessons 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?

**DIGGING 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. 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? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. 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) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Can you think of anyone who needs to hear this truth? Would you prayerfully consider sharing this with them? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. 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 you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer? How did the Lord speak personally to you through this lesson? What action will you take in obedience to God’s voice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Memory Verses**

**1 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.***

**Week # 2**

# 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**

Some have compared the first fourteen verses of the book of Ephesians to the Grand Canyon. Having had the joy of experiencing this wonder only once, I concur with this comparison. But here is the dilemma: The more I study, the more I am convinced that it is simply impossible to reach the bottom of the riches contained within these few verses because every vantage point surpasses the last. It is like standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon, looking out over its vastness, it takes your breath away, leaving you speechless. That is how I feel as I endeavor this daunting task of writing about my God and King…. He is simply indescribable. Thomas Aquinas, the great theologian, summarized man’s attempt to write about God this way, he said, “It feels like straw.” These are my sentiments exactly.

Even if it were possible for finite humans to explain or define God their Creator, that is not the point. Besides that, our goal for this study of the book of Ephesians is not to define or explain God, but to know Him personally and to experience intimacy and fellowship with Him. (2 Corinthians 13:14)

That being said, I could easily skip over this lesson and stick to subjects which are easier to grasp. And yet, compelled by that still small voice reverberating within me, I am reminded that He is the Author, Teacher and Translator of the Bible. It’s a little comforting to know that even Paul felt it necessary to include this prayer in his letter to the saints. He asked, “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 1:17) (NIV) I’m praying this prayer in earnest, not only for each reader who picks up this study, but also for the one who is writing it!

**Three in One**

Although this foundational doctrine is found throughout the Bible, you will not find the word “Trinity” in the Scriptures. God has disclosed Himself in the Bible as three persons who co-exist as One, hence the name Trinity (it means three.) Each person of the Godhead has different, yet unique rolls. And to the degree that we understand each of their roles, will greatly affect our view of God.

Notwithstanding, it’s a difficult concept to grasp, much less explain. It’s not surprising that there has been some confusion surrounding the Trinity. Even though I broach this subject with a little trepidation, we would be amiss to overlook this crucial doctrine. (We will look at this, and other essential doctrines, in detail in another lesson.) There are really three ways to approach this complex subject. We can deny it, ignore it or minimize it. And yet, those who remain in ignorance because they refuse to let the Scriptures inform us will be held as culpable as the ones who erroneously deny the doctrine of the Trinity all together. Therefore, rather than ignoring or minimizing this truth we will simply let the Scripture speak for itself.

* Are you familiar with the Apostles Creed? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Where do we first see the Trinity in the Bible? They are right there in Genesis - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Albeit, they are not so obvious unless you have some knowledge of Hebrew grammar. So I’ll explain.

**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 Genesis one the Hebrew word for God is Elohim, and it’s used here in the plural form - referring to *God the Father and God the Son*. Now the puzzling thing is this, the verb *created* is singular. If you will take a moment to read each of the following passages you will see that there is no doubt that Jesus *is* Creator God. (John 1:1-10; Colossians 1:13-20; Hebrews 1:1-10) So now, in the second verse of the Bible, is the third person of the Trinity - God the Holy Spirit and He is “Hovering over the waters.”

The question that begs to be asked is this: Since the Bible states that God is One, then why is the name Elohim plural? Clearly, God Creator and King 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 it is written: *“*Let *Us* make man in our image,” and then again in Genesis 11:7, “Let Us go down”. One more example is found in Isaiah’s commission where they asked, “Who will go for *Us?”* (Genesis 3:22; Isaiah 6:8) As a side note, in the Great Commission, the Lord Jesus told us to, “Go and make disciples of all nations and to baptize them in the name (not names) of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

**Ephesians 4:4-6 (ESV)**

***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.***

This would be a good place to stop and insert some commentary on the subject from a Biblical scholar. In his message from Ephesians 4:1-6 entitled, The Lowly Walk, (page 131) John MacArthur makes this statement, and I’ll quote:

The basic doctrine of Judaism has always been, “The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!” (Deut. 6:4; see also 4:35; 32:39; Isaiah 45:14; 46:9), and God’s oneness is just as foundational to Christianity (see 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Eph. 4:3-6; James 2:19). Yet the New Testament also reveals the more complete truth that the one God is in three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; John 6:27; 20:28; Acts 5:3-4)

Many learned people have tried to come up with analogies to explain the Trinity. And while these explanations may seem a bit over simplified, here are a few examples: Some say, “The Trinity is like H2O, no matter the form, be it steam, ice or liquid -- it’s still water.” And then there is this analogy, “The Trinity is like the sun - fire - light and heat.” And lastly, there is this example: Just as a man can be a father a son and also a brother, the God and King of the universes can be Father, Son and Spirit, three but One in the same.

* Do you have another analogy to compare the Trinity? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Are you still struggling to grasp all of this? May I suggest that you do some research on your own. One trusted resource that I recommend is www.gotquestions.org. Additionally, there is a simple children’s book by Joanne Marxhausen that may be of benefit to help adults, as well as children, understand this concept. The book is entitled 3 in One: A Picture of God.

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

* Psalms Job 33:4; Isaiah 44:3,24, 45:18, 48:16-18; 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

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

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?***

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.

* What does the name Father mean to you, and how do you feel about God being a Father? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**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. 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! (We will expound on this in greater detail in another lesson.)

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 lesson. 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 lesson, 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, 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 (in Aramaic - Abba.) One day, as she walked along the street, a lady drove up beside her and gave her a little white New Testament. Then she simply drove away. (That’s one way to evangelize!) Maha was curious, 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 whose name is Ellen Humerickhouse. Ellen gave up everything to follow Christ and serve “the least of these” by opening La Limye’ Ministries Children’s Home in Haiti. From Ellen, as well as another ministry in Haiti that we support called One Door Ministries, 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? In case you would like more information on these ministries, here are the links to their websites:

<http://LaLimye.com/> [www.onedoorministries.org](http://www.onedoorministries.org)

**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
* Does God’s love end? Why or why not? (Romans 8:31-39) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* The first time in the Bible the word Love is used in in Genesis 22:2. What is the con-text and why in this significant?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* In your own words, state why you are loved by God the Father. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What are the differences in being born into a family and being adopted? Read Romans 3:9-31. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**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. My father 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.* https://en.wikipedia.org

*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.***

* What is the difference in a man who simply fathers a child and a man who is a real father? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* How does God feel about widows and orphans? Read the following passages and then paraphrase a statement on each. James 1:27; Psalms 68:5-6; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 23:3 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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)

As a fitting conclusion to this lesson, if at all possible, please go to YouTube and listen to this song by Chris Tomlin entitled: “Good Good Father.” I hope this lesson has properly introduced you to God who 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.*

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

1. Why is the role of Father so important? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Can you think of any ways society has diminished and dishonored fathers? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

1. Have you ever been selected to receive an award or honor? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. 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? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. When were we chosen by God the Father? Read John 17:1-6, 23-26. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. 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? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Read Ephesians 1:4-5 (NIV) and fill in the blanks: “In \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ He predestined us to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_as His sons through Jesus Christ.”
6. 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… \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!
7. 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? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. 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? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. 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 you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer? How did the Lord speak personally to you through this lesson? What action will you take in obedience to God’s voice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Memory Verses**

**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.***

**Week # 3**

**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 will discuss in another lesson, 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*?”** That’s not a simple question, but it is one of the most important questions we could ever ask. In this lesson we’ll be answering that question from both a Biblical, as well as a personal perspective.

For this reason, we’ll be taking a different approach to this lesson 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. But 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 lesson, but I promise it will be well worth our time.

Dr. Steven J. Lawson, founder of One Passion Ministries, puts it this way, “Tell me what you think of Christ and I will tell you the state of your worship, the standard of your holiness, and your sacrifice in evangelism and missions. Everything hinges on your vision of Christ.” And so this is our lofty goal… to gain a fresh vision of Christ and behold Him as He truly is 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. 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 (in Greek phone). Yet, of everything I have personally *seen* of the *unseen God*, nothing surpasses the miracle of being an eye witness to the resurrection of the spiritually dead and the replacing of hearts of stone with His heart of love. (This includes my own.) (Mark 4:35-41; Ezekiel 36:22-38)

On these rare but wonderful occasions, I find myself asking the same question that Paul ask of Jesus: “*Who are you Lord*?”

* If someone were to ask you, “Who is Jesus to you,” what would you say? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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. But when He does, you’ll be forced to decide what you will do with Him. Who do you say Jesus is to you personally? 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.

Jesus, at this point, 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 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.***

**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.***

**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 Him-self 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 lessons, 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! Furthermore, 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?

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)

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?

* Explain why God’s justice is so important? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* Why do people get so worked up when justice is not served? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* 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 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**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! (Luke 24:6-7; 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 Bill Gaither wrote in the song by this title, “I can face tomorrow.”

* Why is the fact of Christ’s resurrection so important to believers? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* If you were told today that you had a terminal illness, would you face death with fear or with faith? Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**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, 19:13-16,21:3-6 22:16-21; Hebrew 6:19-20; 2 Timothy 1:10-12

**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!*** 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. For example, as I write this, I am experiencing a health crisis, of sorts. I was recently diagnosed with an autoimmune disease, and now my long blond/gray hair is falling out by the handfuls. According to my doctors, it is caused by stress, hormone imbalance or medicine. In other words -- they don’t know. But Jesus does. It is vanity, but nevertheless, as you might imagine, it is greatly disturbing to me. For one thing, 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). And just today, I saw a young mother who obviously took this verse to heart. Her hair was so long and glorious that she had to move it to sit down! (If you are close to my age, and you remember the singer Crystal Gayle, then you get the picture).

**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.***

Anyway, I’ve been wondering what am I going to do when I lose my cover, and worse yet, my glory!  But then the Lord, ever so gently, reminded me of yet another extraordinary mystery, and this is it: Christ, who lives in me, *is my hope of Glory.* Yes! Jesus is my glory! And furthermore, it has not escaped His attention that my hair is falling out. So, does God really care about my hair? Well, whether you take Jesus’ words in the following passage as hyperbole or not, the principle is the same. Jesus knows us, He cares for us, and He is in control of our lives…he has even numbered the strands of our hair.

**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 collectively make up 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).

**Psalms 68:19 (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.***

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.

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”?***

* Read Ephesians 1:19-23; Laminations 3:22-23; Isaiah 40:25-31, 41:9-10 and make a list of everything that concerns you at the moment. Now, based upon these passages, do you think the Lord Jesus’ power is sufficient to handle your problems? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What current situations in your life seem to be over your head? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Do you feel overwhelmed by these things? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Now, make a list and when you are done, take every situation and find several passages that apply and begin to pray God’s Word over them. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**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, 21:3-6, 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, 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! (Colossians 3:3-4) 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 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! (1 John 3:2-3; Revelation 1:7, 22:4; 1 John 3:2-3; 1 Corinthians 13:12)

**Job 19:23-27 (ESV)**

***Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives,***

***and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed,***

***yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold,***

***and not another. My heart faints within me!***

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, the song “In Christ Alone,” that was written by Donald A. Koch and Andrew Shawn Craig, is one of those songs. It is the gospel, put to music and you will find it on YouTube.

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

1. In C.S. Lewis’ quote, what are the three conclusions he came to about Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. 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? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. If so, who was He declaring Himself to be? Read Hebrews 1:6; Luke 2:9-14. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. 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? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Do those who believe in Jesus worship a different God than the one in the Old Testament? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. In light of everything we have discovered, what in this world is not under the sovereign control and rule of the Lord Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. 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? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. How does Jesus’ position in Heaven relate to our position? (Ephesians 2:5-6) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. 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 you find a new promise to claim as your own? Did you find a command to obey, a sin to confess or avoid? Is there a passage you could turn into a prayer? How did the Lord speak personally to you through this lesson? What action will you take in obedience to God’s voice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Memory Verses**

***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.***

**Week # 4**

**God Within Her**

**Key Passages**

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

***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**

**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.***

Thus far, we have met God the Father - our Daddy. And then we beheld God the Son - our Redeemer. So now we will turn our attention to God the Holy Spirit (also called “Jesus’ other self.”) (Galatians 4:6) I chose the title of this lesson based upon the above passage in Psalms because it encompasses so many of the attributes of the Holy Spirit. Here are just a few. At the moment of new birth, the Holy Spirit floods our thirsty soul with the living water welling up to eternal life. (John 4:4-24) He *is* the river of Living Water. We are baptized in Him and cleaned from within, thus making sinners saints. If you’ll remember, saint and holy are the same Greek word. (Mark 1:8; Matthew 3:1-11)

Love and Joy, the first two fruits of the Spirit, not only makes glad the City of God, but you and I who are filled with Him here on earth. He is Christ within us, the hope of Glory. He’s our Teacher, Comforter and Helper. He speaks to us from His Holy Book to bring life to the written Word of God. He is the One who places a sword (specific verses from scripture) into our mind so that we can withstand the enemy’s attacks. He is our Fortress and Protection. At the break of every new day, He helps us by imparting new mercies, graces, and strength. And by the way, God the Holy Spirit is our advocate and intercessor. He prays for us! (Romans 8:9-27)

And if you think all this is wonderful, then just you wait, we’ve only begun discovering the many facets of the Holy Spirit. We have a lot of ground to cover, and although this may be an exhausting study, it will in no way be an exhaustive study. By the end of this lesson, our aim is to become better acquainted with the One who is so intimately familiar with us. And as we do, we will have ample opportunity to make some real life practical applications and begin to recognize His work in and through our lives.

**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 lovelives in God, and God in them.***

**Where on Earth Does God Dwell?**

**ADD: Ephesians 2:22**

As Jesus approached the end of His time on earth, He had a lot of theology left to impart to His disciples. For example, in John, chapter fourteen, He not only explained the Trinity, but also His eternal plan to continue to work in and through them by the power of the Holy Spirit. And yet, they obviously could not comprehend all that He was telling them until the promised Holy Spirit had been given on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-47; John 7:37-39, 15:28, 16:6)

**John 14:8-24 (ESV)**

***Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him,***

***“Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am***

***in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. “Truly, truly,***

***I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, 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. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved***

***by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” Judas (not Iscariot) said***

***to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?”***

***Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.***

In his devotional book entitled In The Presence of God, Izak De Villiers speaks of the day that the Holy Spirit was given and says, “God through His Spirit, would be with all who believe in Him from then onwards. This Presence comforts us, guides us, delivers us from Evil, makes us aware of the Lord’s guidance. It casts a glow in and around us. It is as if electricity was turned on in eternity. It not only dries our tears but prepares us for battle every day. Use it!”

I’m wondering if you grew up in a church where the Holy Spirit was seldom mentioned. On the other hand, it is possible to hear many sermons about Him and yet not really know or understand His activities in your life. I’m ashamed to admit it, but this was me. Consequently, for years I thought the Holy Spirit was a thing – not a person!

There are those who out of Biblical ignorance or the fear of being labeled too extreme refuse to even broach the subject of the Holy Spirit. To their great loss, they miss the most intimate part of their relationship with the Lord. You see, while He was in the flesh, Jesus was “*God with us*,” but now, for those who have believed in Him, the Holy Spirit is “*God within* us!” (John 1:11-14, 3:5-8; 1 John 3:24, 4:5-8, 5:1) Do you want to get to know Him? There are no short cuts; you must become a good student of the Book He wrote -- the Bible.

**Holy Ghost Writer**

**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.”***

When Paul first arrived in Ephesus, he met twelve disciples there who never had the opportunity to even be introduced to the Holy Spirit. And so he began to teach them, but in reality, someone else what teaching *through* Paul - God the Holy Spirit!

**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.***

The skeptic will say of the Word of God, “It’s just a book written by fallible men.” In part they are correct. However, if anyone will take the time to study 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 40-49 different writers. Doctor Luke, was one who penned two of these books. He called the Words the Holy Spirit had inspired him to write “Living Oracles.” (Acts 7:38; Luke 1:1-4; Hebrews 4:12)

**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.***

What makes the Word of God “Living” is the One who authored, inspired and breathed His life into it -- He is God the Holy Spirit! Have you ever heard of a ghost writer? In this case, we are talking about the *Holy Ghost writer!*

**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.***

If you’ll recall, Paul wrote his two letters to Timothy while Timothy was the pastor of the church at Ephesus. Here, Paul teaches his spiritual son that God the Holy Spirit breathed all Scripture, and Peter adds that the Spirit moved upon the hearts of each writer. And of course, this includes inspiring Paul and Peter to tell us these things. Paul referenced the Holy Spirit fifteen times in his letter to the saints at Ephesus, and furthermore, it is not insignificant that Paul was in Ephesus when he wrote his letters to the saints at Corinth. In these letters, Paul referenced the Holy Spirit approximately 53 times!

Why do I point this out? As any teacher of God’s Word knows, whatever the Holy Spirit is teaching them at the moment, will become like a “Fire in his bones.” At least that is how the prophet Jeremiah described it. (Jeremiah 20:9) In other words, he had to share them. I liken it to the need to “give birth.” Any truth that the Holy Spirit was burning into the heart of the writer was verbally expressed to those closest to them. Therefore, we can be fairly certain that every letter that was written upon the hearts of Paul, Timothy and John during their stay in Ephesus became a sermon that was preached to the saints in Ephesus.

* How many messages do you think you have heard in your lifetime that focus on the Holy Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What difference does it make if the Holy Spirit is an object - like a force, or Him be-ing a person? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* Can you think of any ways it is better to have God within us that even to have God with us? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

* **God breathed or inspired** is the Greek word Theopneustos: *divine breathed in, given by inspiration of God.* As you can see, this word comes from the next word for Spirit. (2 Timothy 3:16)
* **Holy Spirit** is the Greek wordPneuma: *to breathe, to blow, Holy Spirit, Christ’s Spirit, life, Spirit, Mind, and breath*. (John 20:21-22)
* **Holy Spirit i**n Hebrew is Ruwach: *wind; by resemblance breath, exhalation, life, air, anger, blast, breath, courage, mind, spirit, and tempest.*
* **Comforter** is the Greek word Parakletos: *an intercessor, consoler, advocate, comforter.*

**The Acts of the Holy Spirit**

**Ephesians 3:14-16 (ESV)**

***Let’s us consider some of the aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.***

***For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven***

***and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you***

***to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being.***

Some call the Book of Acts “the Acts of the Apostles,” but others call it “the Acts of the Holy Spirit.” So which one is correct? Well, in reality, both are. Here is why. When Jesus left to return to His Father in heaven, the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to write about “All that Jesus *began* to do and to teach.” (Acts 1:1) Acts simply picks up where the four gospels left off. Referencing the work of the Holy Spirit some 58 times, Luke details the *acts* that the Holy Spirit was *doing* in and through the apostles. Robert E. Coleman in his book The Master Plan of Evangelism, said: “Jesus was God in revelation; but the Spirit was God in operation.”

**Joel 2:28-29 (ESV)**

***And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.***

His work may seem anonymous, and for the most part, go unnoticed. But He has been working or *acting* in and through His saints ever since. Are you a saint? If so, then this includes you! He’s still at work “doing and teaching” in and through His body.

* Read all of Acts chapter two and make notes of everything you can find that the Holy Spirit was doing when He entered the believers. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Here are just a *few* of the “actions” of the Holy Spirit.

* Ephesians 2:18 He gives us access to the Father.
* Acts 1:1-2 He wrote, through Luke, the books of Luke and Acts to win, disciple and teach Theophilus. (1 Corinthians 2:4-16; John 16:12-15; 2 Timothy 2:2)
* Acts 1:8 In fulfillment of the Scriptures, He filled every believer and thousands of people were saved from many nations through their witness. (Joel 2:28-32; Luke 24:24-53; Acts 1:12-16, 2:2-47)
* Acts 4:1-31 He gave them the words to say and the ability to speak boldly. (Mark 13:10-11, Luke 12:11; Acts 2:4, 4:1-31, 6:8-10, 7:1-53, 8:1-8, 13:2,15:28, 16:6, 19:1-12, 21:11, 28:25; Ezekiel 11:5; Zechariah 7:11-12)
* Ephesians 3:3-5 He reveals things that only He knows and makes these things known to the church. (Acts 5:1-9, 6:1-7, 7:51-53, Acts 8:29-39, 11:28, 15:28, 16:6, 20:22, 21:4, 1 Peter 1:11, John 14:17; 1 Timothy 4:1-2 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 5:7; Jude 20)
* Acts 7:51-60 He enables the saints to die with grace and forgive those who hurt us. (Philippians 2:13)
* Acts 10:34-48 He convicts us of sin, and leads us to faith in Christ and repentance. Then, at the moment of new birth, He is poured out on all true believers. (Ephesians 1:13-17, 2:22, 4:3-4, 3:5-16; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:1-27; Acts 11:15-24; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Ezekiel 11:18-19, 36:26-27)
* Acts 9:31, 27:1-28 He comforts. (John 14:26; 2 Corinthians 1:2-7) He helps, He heals and He gives liberty over sin. (Luke 4:14-18; 2 Corinthians 3:3; Romans 1:1-27)
* Acts 20:38 He gives love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness and self-control - even in the worst of circumstances. (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 2:1; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:1-25; Acts 4:13-21, 5:26; Matthew 9:8)
* As you look at the list of activities of the Holy Spirit, can you think of some people through whom the Spirit has worked in your life? If so, then will you make a list of His work through these people? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Take a moment and read Galatians 5:16-25. Make a list of what it looks like when we are not filled with the Spirit verses being filled with the Holy Spirit. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Give one recent example that you have observed of someone walking in the flesh and someone who is walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Now list one personal example from your own life. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*“Revival,” said the late Dr.* Stephen Olford, “*is ultimately-CHRIST HIMSELF, seen, felt, heard, living, active, moving in and through, His body on Earth.”* This quote is a perfect summary of what it is like when the Holy Spirit is at work in and among God’s people. But sadly most believers will live and die without ever experiencing this kind of revival. Oh, but what would our homes and gatherings be like if we were totally yielded and filled with Him?

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

* John 3:5-8, 4:22-24, 6:63, 7:37-39; 14:2-26, 16:7-15, 17:17-23; 1 John 5:6-8; Revelation 2:7-29, 3:6-22 19:7-10; Luke 1:4-33, 12:12; Romans 5:5, 8:1-12; Galatians 1:15-16, 2:20, 3:14, 4:19-26; Colossians 1:27; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:10, 3:13-4:4; 1 Peter 3:3-7; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 1 Corinthians 1:26-36, 2:4-16; 4:6-19, 12:1-27; 2 Corinthians 1:20-21, 6:6, 4:4-11; 13:5-14; Titus 3:3-7; James 2:26

**The Holy Spirit Will Teach You All Things**

**John 14:25-26 (NIV)**

***All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit,***

***whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things***

***and will remind you of everything I have said to you.***

Because you have spent all these hours with me working our way through this study, I hope you will not mind if I share a personal example of the work of the Holy Spirit in my life. It’s my desire to be very transparent with you and so, that being said, I have a confession to make. It’s my shameful secret.

When I was in kindergarten, 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 use for His body and Bride are speaking and teaching.

Before I began to write this study, I went to hear Beth Moore with the ladies from my church. The texts she taught from were from Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39. It is the story of the Demonic. For the sake of time I will not share all the things the Lord spoke to me through Beth that day, but let me please share just two. Number one, Beth said, “Where Satan has His way, people have no voice. In their oppression, he says to them, “SHUT UP!”

**Mark 5:18-20 (ESV)**

***As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons***

***begged him that he might be with him. And he did not permit him but said to him,***

***“Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you,***

***and how he has had mercy on you.” And he went away and began to proclaim***

***in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.***

Have you ever had any one tell you, “You talk too much about God and the Bible?” Or “Why don’t you just shut up?” Where do you think that comes from? Satan wants to silence us from glorifying God and telling our story so that others will believe in Him.

Beth ended the conference with these words, “Where Jesus has His way; people go and tell their story!” She said, “Have an outline prepared to narrate your story!” Following the example of the Berrien’s in Acts 17:11, I went home and studied her lesson further. And, as always, the Holy Spirit revealed even more treasure and personal applications. What I discovered within the story of the Demonic was the word ***tell***/***Proclaim***, or in King James, ***Publish***. In Greek the word is Kerusso. Strong’s Concordance gives this definition: To herald, as a public crier, especially, divine truth, i.e. the gospel. The words leapt off the page. God’s phone, the Holy Spirit, was vibrating in my heart, and He was saying, “PUBLISHEVERYWHERE, HOW MUCH GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU!”

* When was the last time you heard the unmistakable voice of the Holy Spirit, giving you clear direction? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**God’s Glory on Display through Weakness**

**2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV**

***But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power***

***is from God and not from us.***

Three times within three years the Lord impressed on my heart His desire for me to publish the truths He has taught me in a book. And as wonderful as it was to have some clear direction for my life, I was petrified. Now why would this terrify me, you may ask? Because this would require *writing*! For reasons that I will explain in the next lesson, written communication is not one of my strong points. In fact, I can’t spell, and my grammar is atrocious! This shameful secret has kept me in bondage to paralyzing fear and shame for most of my adult life. I felt fear that someone would read my writing and know how deficient and inadequate I was, and shame because I am painfully aware that it is true. Please don’t misunderstand what I am trying to communicate. This is an honest evaluation of my writing skills, not my mental capacities.

Now lest you think I am being immodest, let me give you a few examples. One year ago when I started to work on this book, I gave Beverly, a precious lady who had done some editing, a few copies of the lessons. She was joining our disciple group and now works with Jordan’s Lighthouse Prison Ministry. We talked a few days later, and she prefaced her comment with these words, “I don’t mean to hurt your feelings but…your writing is pretty bad.” And, bless her heart, she tried to help me.

But perhaps my written response to a love note I received when I was twelve years old was the coup de grace of embarrassments. If my memory serves me well, I remember thinking, “Now what is it, like or lick”? So I chose the infamous words, “I lick you a lot!” To add insult to injury, my sister Sybil and my cousin Renita got their hands on this note, and they never let me live it down. As I type those words, I am humiliated all over again. And then there was the time that I listed the name of my church on a job application as Lucy *Babtist* Church! I got the job; but how embarrassing is that! As I reminisce about these “exposures” I am reminded that there are numerous accounts in my hall of shame. You’ll understand now why I praise God for Spell Check, for along with the Holy Spirit, these are my best friends when I am writing. I have not reached any literary heights, but the Holy Spirit is teaching me, and as long as I stay close and dependent upon Him, I am learning and growing. So, there it is! The cat is out of the bag…. the world knows my shameful secret! What a relief!

**Philippians 2:13 (NIV)**

***For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.***

When the Lord impressed His desire for me to write, I protested… “Lord of all things, you know this is one thing I do not have the skills to do, as you know full well!” He never told me I could, He just told me to be obedient. I am not alone in this insurmountable task. I have the help of a “**G*host writer…the Holy Ghost!”***  However, He is doing this through my friend Cathy. The *Helper,* as Jesus called Him*,* is not only teaching me how to write through her, He is also editing each page through Cathy! My friendship with her began some twenty years ago when the Holy Spirit was at work in me, *witnessing to her and bringing her to Christ*. How wonderful a plan is that? He is teaching me and writing this study so that other women can be discipled. And furthermore, if any of us are learning from the Word of God as we study, it’s because the Holy Spirit is at work teaching us.

Why do I share all of this? In order to demonstrate to you that it is God the Holy Spirit who is at work in my life. And if He gives you a job to do that is far beyond your capabilities, then you can know for sure, He has already supplied you with a helper and teacher. His name is the Holy Spirit. So when the job is done, He gets all the credit, for it was Him all along who was at work within you!

Herb Hodge’s message entitled “The Hand in the Glove,” is perhaps one of the best illustrations I’ve ever seen, depicting the futility of trying to do anything for God, without being filled with the Spirit of God. I’ve heard him preach this message twice, and based on his testimony, this message was birthed in his heart as he struggled in vain to do the work of God in his own strength. He uses a glove to demonstrate.

Picture with me if you will, a limp glove, trying to move on its own. I will summarize his explanation. We are the lifeless, useless glove. The Holy Spirt, is the hand that must be fully formed within the glove. The mind that tells the hand what to do, is the mind of Christ. When the hand is fully formed inside the glove, it can do anything and everything that the mind tells it to do! It is a clear analogy; don’t you think? (I Corinthians 2:16; Galatians 4:19-20) So, to apply this personally, the Holy Spirit is the hand, I am just an ordinary pencil.

Many years ago, before the Lord saved my husband, I was alone with the Lord one night and I knelt beside my bed and ask the Lord if He would speak to me. I just wanted to hear His voice. And so, I got up in bed and opened my Bible anticipating what He might say. The page opened to Psalms forty-five. Because of the personal and intimate words, the Lord spoke to me that night, it’s one of those passages that I hold very near and dear to my heart. I never quite made the connection between the first verse of this wedding Psalm. And even now, I am under no delusions that these words apply to me, but oh how I desire to be a good student, make my teacher proud… learn to write in such a way that brings glory to my King!

**Psalms 45:1 (NIV)**

***My heart is stirred by a noble theme, as I recite my verses for the King, He has given me the tongue of a skillful writer.***

Read the following passages; describe a time when you had one of each of the following impressions on your mind. 1 Corinthians 2:10-16; Romans 8:5-6, 10-11, 14-16, 26-27

* Our own carnal mind: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

* Someone else’s: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* The Devil: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* The mind of Christ: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

* Has God given you a job to do that you feel you are incapable of doing? If so, what is God telling you about doing it? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**He’s The Seal of Our Inheritance**

**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.***

Now I would like to seize the opportunity to return to the wedding theme of this study. The moment we were born again spiritually; we were sealed by the Holy Spirit. And, as you will see in the following word search, the seal not only marks us as being authentic, it also protects us. (Ephesians 6:13-18) We could think of it as a signet ring that belongs to a King, and it’s used to seal his letters or important documents. The word pledge is the word used in Greek for engagement ring! So now we know that the Holy Spirit signifies that we belong to Jesus, and the seal guarantees that there will be a wedding. This engagement cannot be broken because God keeps His promises. And then lastly, we will look at our inheritance.

**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**

* **Seal** #4972 the Greek word 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** #4973 the Greek word 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)
* **Pledge or Earnest (engagement ring of promise)** #728 the Greek word Arrhabon**:** *a pledge, i.e. part of the purchase -money or property given in advance as security*. (2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:14)
* **Pledge** #6162 from #6148 the Hebrew word Arabown: *to braid, to give security, engage, give pledges, put in surety.*

**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.***

Wow, the Holy Spirit is like our engagement ring! So what is our inheritance? We are about to discover the greatest blessing of all for those who are in Christ. But before we do, we will need to come to grips with a truth about those who are sealed with the Holy Spirit. This is a truth that is hard to fathom, and it is especially so for some who have been raised in certain religious affiliations. May the Holy Spirit illuminate His Words giving us the ability to embrace these realities as our very own. For only then will we be able to appropriate this truth in our lives. For the sake of clarification, in the next three passages you will find 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.***

Did you notice that we are a holy priesthood, a holy nation, and a kingdom of priests? Contemplate with me the deep implications of all of this. We won’t expound on each of these titles for now, but we’ll 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. Most believe that Paul penned the book of Hebrews. If this is so, then clearly, he had the same thing in mind when he wrote of Jesus being our Great High Priest of a New Covenant.

**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.***

Isaiah must have had the same thing in mind as the Holy Spirit inspired him to write about those whom the Lord sets free. He called them priests and ministers of God. And note the exchange that takes place. Instead of shame - we’ll receive a double portion, instead of disgrace - everlasting joy. These are just a few of the fringe benefits of our redemption! But the source of our joy is found in our inheritance!

Add: Ephesians 1:3-9

Remember in a previous lesson, we learned what the name s*aint* means? The Greek word *Hagios* is translated as two different words: saints and holy. The two words 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.

**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.***

Number one, out of all the tribes of Israel, only the tribe of Levi was *chosen* by God to be His priests. Number two, they were to make sacrifices and *pray to God* on behalf of the people. So are we; it’s one of the functions of the Holy Spirt in us. 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 Holies. And number five the ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­Levites had no allotments or inheritance or private ownership of land. “Why might this be,” you may ask. Because for them and for every saint in Christ, *the Lord Jesus is our inheritance* andthe Holy Spirit is our guarantee!

**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

One glorious day, when everything will be conformed to the will of God’s eternal plan, and all things will reach their fulfillment, we will behold the Triune God. The imagery described by John the Revelator in the book of Revelation is reminiscent of Eden before paradise was defiled by sin. You see, Eden was a type, or replica of heaven. And John got to see it. What he saw was the God-Head, Father and Son seated upon the throne, and from them flowing like a magnificent waterfall was the River of Life -- God the Holy Spirit.

The prophet Ezekiel added his vision to that day, and he said that, “Where the river flows everything will live.” Likewise, the Holy Spirit reminds us of the words of Jesus, “The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing, the words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life.” (Ezekiel 47:1-12; John 6:63) 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) Oh don’t you long for that day? But until that day comes, through the study of God’s Holy Word, we get to drink deeply and tap into this healing water that flows within us through God the Holy Spirit.

**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 3:1-16, 4:3-25, John 6:36, 7:37-39; Psalms 1:1-3, 46:4-11; Jeremiah 17:5-14

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

1. If the filling of the Spirit is for a purpose, what are some of the purposes we have found in Acts 1-2? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. When the last time you knew the Holy Spirit was in action in you to fulfill one of the above ministries? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you ever had an event in your life that could only be described as an intervention of God’s protection? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is our inheritance? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Read the following passages and then state what you think it means to be a royal priesthood. 1 Peter 1:23-25; Revelation 1:4-6, 5:9-10 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. How well do you think you understand the role of the Holy Spirit in your life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Are you learning how to listen and cooperate with His leading? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. In the following passages, who was the Holy Spirit teaching and giving orders to? Acts 1-3; Mark 3:13-14; John 14:11-12, 16-23, 26, 15:15, 16:12-13, 17:18, John 20:21-22 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. The Holy Spirit is the guide and interpreter of the Word of God. He expresses spiritual thoughts with spiritual words through what kind of people? (1 Corinthians 2:4-16; John 6:63\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. Acts 1:13-15,24-26 How many disciples were present in this prayer meeting? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

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

**Memory Verses**

**1 Corinthians 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.***

**Week # 5**

**God’s Workmanship**



**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**

Why do I exist? What is my purpose in this world? I suppose many people, regrettably, will live their entire lives searching, yet never finding, the answers to these questions. In 1647 at a church council of English and Scottish theologians and laymen, they came to a consensus that was intended as a unified doctrinal statement of faith. Perhaps you are familiar with the Westminster Shorter Catechism. It begins with this question, “What is the chief end of man?” Here is the answer: Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. John Piper, takes it a step further. He said, “The chief end of man is to glorify God *by* enjoying Him forever.” And he also said, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.” You may be thinking, “How exactly do I glorify God and enjoy Him?” Well, I don’t want to spoil this for you, but I will tell you this as we begin: When you discover the “good work” that God has planned for you, it will satisfy your soul like nothing else and bring Him glory! Aren’t you curious to find out what your “good work” is? In this lesson we will attempt to find the keys that will unlock this mystery and answer these age-old questions.

**Matthew 5:13-16 (ESV)**

***You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?***

***It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light***

***a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.***

***In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.***

**God’s Poem**

By now you should know that every time I uncover a new truth in the Word of God, I want to look at it from every single angle. In this lesson we are going to be talking about work: the work of God the Father, the work assigned to Christ the Son and the good work that He has planned for each of us. But before we talk about work, I want to talk about rest and relaxation. (Exodus 34:21) While my family was on vacation at the beach a few years ago, some of us stayed up most the night to watch a rare meteor shower. As the heavens declared the glory of the Lord, we applauded at every streak of light that flashed across the sky. It was spectacular! My son Ethan, an artist like his daddy, said, “Every artist puts a piece of himself into his work.” And what an incredible artist is the Lord our God? The song that seemed most fitting for the moment was the Swedish hymn, How Great Thou Art. It was written from a poem by Reverend Carl Gustav Boberg in 1885.

**Psalms 19:1-5 (NIV)**

***The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.***

***Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.  
They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.  
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.  
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.  It is like a bridegroom***

***coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course.***

A meteor shower was nothing compared to having the great privilege of witnessing the birth of my second grandchild. We all wept with joy as she took her first breath of air, and we marveled at her tiny body knit together by the hands of the Lord Jesus. His beauty and majesty is stamped into the DNA of all that He has made. And every single molecule was planned and purposed for a specific job. Even the angels, also part of creation, were tasked with the job of singing joyfully as God laid the earth’s foundation. (Job 38:1-41) As the Psalmist said, “His works are wonderful.” (Psalms 139:13-16; Colossians 1:15-20; Deuteronomy 32:4) They are wonderful indeed!

* Take a moment and read the account of creation in Genesis chapters one and two, making note of the stated purpose of each thing God spoke into being. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

But of all creation, Adam and Eve were the crowning jewels for only they were made in His image. The Bible says that God *formed*Adam from the dust like a potter forms clay in his hands. But when He created Eve, the Bible says that He *made* her from the rib of Adam.TheHebrew word for made or fashioned is *banah* and the word means: *to build, builder, to make or obtain children*. (Genesis 1:25-2:1-22) Keep in mind that part of God’s plan for Adam and Eve was to be fruitful and multiply. Clearly, that would involve physically bearing children and building a family. However, this command to be fruitful and multiply had much greater significance. As we will discover in this lesson, the “good work” God has planned for every one of His children is akin to being fruitful and multiplying. Only, in our case, it involves bearing spiritual offspring who will multiply and fill the earth with His Name and His fame! (Psalms 115:1-18; 78:1-7)

What do you think of when you hear the word workmanship? For me, the first thing that comes to mind is a product of a skilled craftsman or the work of one’s hands. In our key passage for this lesson, God is the Skilled Craftsman and we are the work of His hands - His masterpiece, or you might even say, we are His poem! Interestingly enough, the English word poem is derived from the Greek word for workmanship - *poiema*.  You see, before the foundation of the world, the Lord wrote out a “good work-order” for each one of His children. In eternity past we were commissioned and skilled for a particular job.  In God’s grand story, each of us is a line in that poem. When the work is complete it will be a magnificent masterpiece reflecting His creativity and glory. While searching for some praise music to worship with, I came across a YouTube video entitled “We are His Masterpiece” the artist name is Eileenypa. The song that she paints to is *“*Paint Your Picture" by Julie Meyer. You can enjoy both of these artists on YouTube.

**Ephesians 3:20-21 (ESV)**

***Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,***

***according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church***

***and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.***

In their daily devotional booklet entitled Daily Spirit Blessings, authors Burk and Sylvia Gunter began with this blessing for day number one:

*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.”

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

* **Workmanship** # 4161 Greek 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)
* **Ordained** #4286 (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)
* **Purposed** # 4282 (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.*
* **Work** # 2041 (Eph. 2:9,10;4:12,5:11; John 4:34, 14:10-12, 17:4; Philippians 1:6: Col. 1:10: Matthew 5:15) Ergon/ergo: *to work, toil, as a n effort or occupation, an act, deed, doing labor work.*
* **Workman** #2040 (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 matter of fact, we get our English word *energize* from the word. READ THESE PASSAGES. Eph.1:19, 3:7, 4:16; Phil.2:13; Col. 1:29; James 5:16
* **Effectual** #1753 -Energiah: efficiency, (“ENERGY”) Operation, strong, effectual, working.
* **Work** #1754 Energeo: to be active, effectual, efficient-do, fervent, be mighty in, show forth, self, work, effectually in.

**Psalms 8:1-9 (ESV)**

***O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory***

***above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens,***

***the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.***

***You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things***

***under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.***

***O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!***

In the above Psalm, worship seemed to overflow from David as he was awestruck with wonder at the handiwork of God. In spite of the fact that we are but dust, and to the dust we will return, God not only thinks about us, but has made plans for us. (Jeremiah 29:11-15) If you will remember, He chose us *in Christ* before the foundations of the world. But that is not all; He has predetermined the exact time and place that we would live. (Acts 17:22-29) And furthermore, He also planned the good work we would do! Now I ask you, “Is God in the details of your life?” You better believe that He is. (Romans 8:28-29)

**Is It Good Work If It’s Not God’s Work?**

**Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)**

***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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.***

It would behoove us before we move forward to take a look at the verse that precedes our key passage where Paul tells the saints that salvation is *not of works,* but of faith. And yet, when Jesus was asked what “works” we must do to have eternal life, He answered, and I will paraphrase: “The only work you must do to be saved is to believe in Me.” Before we can do any “good works,” our *first work* is to believe upon Jesus. But please don’t get these two confused.

**John 6:27-29 (ESV)**

***Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”***

For the purpose of clarification, let’s get this straight; we are saved by grace through faith - it is a gift of God. He does not love us because of *anything* we have done. He loves us because we have believed on the *finished work* that Christ has already done on our behalf. We are not saved *by* our good works, but we are saved *for* good works. Do you see the difference?

* Do you think that sometimes we are working for God in an attempt to earn His love? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Could it also be true that some people stay busy to keep from dealing with life’s prob-lems? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Examine your motives for working for God by asking yourself: “Why do I do what I do?” Be honest, the Lord already knows. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In light of these truths, we continually need to be reminded to keep the main thing - the main thing. What is the main thing God wants from you and I? He wants our worship, and isn’t He worthy of it? Furthermore, worship of God should always proceed trying to work for God. Our first priority must be our relationship with Christ, and this necessitates having a daily quiet time with Him. If we will seek Him first, He has promised that “all these things will be added to us as well.” (Matthew 6:30-33) I can personally testify that He means just what He says. I also know that quite the opposite is true when I don’t seek Him first.

**Luke 10:38-42 (ESV)**

***Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet***

***and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?***

***Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious***

***and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen***

***the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”***

There is a word that Jesus used in a conversation with a grumpy, overworked woman named Martha to point out to her that there was really only one thing she needed to be doing and that her sister Mary was busy doing it. The Greek word Jesus chose was *Chereia,* and it means in essence: requirement, *employment, business, necessary and useful.* (In just a moment we will look at another word that is connected with this word.)So here is the one thing most needed in the life of every saint: To be His disciple we must sit at His feet and learn from His Word - that is the first *business* of every Christian. While Martha was working her fingers to the bone in the kitchen, her sister Mary was taking care of business worshipping at the feet of Jesus. So I suppose you could say our first work each day is to worship. If seeking Him first is not our priority, everything else we do will be vain, empty, fruitless work.

Obviously we cannot just stay at His feet all day long now can we? Surely when we are done there are many other jobs for us to do. So how can we be sure what good works God has chosen for us to do in any given day? As simple as it may sound, we must ask Him, “What would you have me to do today?” And then, through the reading and meditating on His Word He will inform us of what He has planned for us to do that day.

* Read Proverbs 3:5-7, and then fill in the blanks. If I don’t consult with God to get His guidance, my only option is to lean on my own \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I operate in the\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I settle for good and forfeit God’s best.
* A good morning pray is found in Psalms 90:10-17. It’s a prayer of Moses. Beginning with verse ten, see if you can rephrase Moses words into a prayer of your own. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

* Matthew 6:29-33, 28:18-20; John 15:1-16; Acts 13:2-4, 17:22-26; James 1:5, 4:13-15; Psalms 25:12; Proverbs 3:5-6; Jeremiah 10:21-23

**The Business of Every Christian**

**Ephesians 4:1(KJV)**

***Walk worthy of the vocation to which you are called.***

In his message entitled What is a Christian? Herb Hodges says, “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.”

Seldom do you meet a believer who calls themselves a disciple of Christ, but that was what they were called some 273 times in the New Testament. Now compare that to the name Christian, used only three times in the Bible. The first time we see them called Christians was in Acts 11:26. 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 text says, “The disciples were first *called* Christians at Antioch.” This was the name that was given to the disciples by the unbelievers. It was really a name of derision. The word *called* in Greek is *Chrematizo,* and it comes from the word Chreia - translated as needed. This is the definition: *to constitute a firm for business, i.e. bear as a title, be called, reveal and speak*.

Think of it this way, comparatively speaking this Greek word for called is kin to 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 or in some cases one who carried the bags for the passengers on a train or in a hotel. My maiden name is Page; a page is one whose job it is to deliver a message. Both of these occupations are the jobs of a servant. The point is this: No one in Antioch was called a Christians unless they were doing the *work of Christ*. They *earned* the title. Their business was Christ’s business. But what exactly was His occupation?

**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, 4:1-19-32, 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; 1 Corinthians 3:1-16, 12:1-27, 14:3-5; Philippians 4:13

**Jesus’ Work Was Building 12 Men**

**Matthew 28:18-20 (NASB)**

***And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “ALL authority has been given to ME in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.***

By examining the gospel accounts, it becomes obvious that everything Jesus did was planned and purposeful. He was busy doing the work assigned to Him by the Father. We cannot begin to know our purpose and vocation until we understand the work of the Lord Jesus. We were created in Him, by Him and for Him, and His work is our work, and His mission is our mission. What is the work and mission?

Jesus’ plan to reach the entire world is found in the last “work-order” He assigned to His disciples. We call it the Great Commission. Since two thousand years have passed and most of God’s workforce is unemployed in His mission, it is clear that this Great Commission has been woefully misunderstood. Consequently, the Great Commission has become the great–omission. Because this is His last command, let’s reexamine Jesus' parting words, “Go make disciples of all nations.”

There are four commissions found in the New Testament. However, the most strategic is found in Matthew 28:18-20. God’s plan to reach the people from ever nation on earth to the end of time is encapsulated within the Greek word matheteuo. The King James Bible translated the word as “teach all nations.” This word is more accurately translated in newer translations as "make disciples." As you can see, the word teach is found twice in the text, yet the second word is altogether different. This word for teach is the Greek word *didasko,* and here is the definition: to learn or to teach. According to this definition, what are we to do with what we learn? (Psalms 78:1-7)

In the great commission, there are four verbs: go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. Yet only one of these verbs is imperative - the command: "make disciples."  In order to participate in the fulfillment of this command, we must first understand exactly what Jesus meant when He said, “Go make disciples.”

In his book, Tally Ho the Fox! Herb Hodges asks a convicting question:

So what is the difference between the Christianity that produced the Book of Acts and our kind of Christianity? At the risk of over-simplification, it is my measured opinion that the only basic difference between 'their Christianity' and ‘Ours’ is one of strategy. Their strategy showed an apparent disregard for building institutions and majored almost exclusively on building individuals. Their strategy was one of explosion (outward) instead of implosion (inward).

If you have spent any amount of time actively involved in a church, then you most likely know that this is true: twenty percent of the members do all the work, while the other eighty percent half-heartedly bless the rest of us with a weekly visit. Every believer who claims to follow Christ must carefully consider two questions. Number one is “Who was Jesus commanding when He said make disciples?” And number two is "If I am a Christian, does this command apply to me?” If you will examine the scriptures for yourself, and the Word of God will clarify these questions.

**Mark 3:13-19 (ESV)**

***And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot,and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.***

This is how Jesus made disciples. After consulting His Father in prayer, He selected twelve men and called them to be with Him. They were His work! Don’t miss this all important aspect of His strategy: He personally and intentionally spent 9/10ths of His three years of public ministry making disciples out of twelve ordinary, uneducated men. (Acts 4:12-13) This amounted to about 26,000 hours. Jesus *was* interested in numbers. Our English word math comes from the Greek word matheteuo (make disciples). However, mere addition was not His intent, multiplication was. The return on His three-year investment into the twelve resulted in multitudes of souls being reached. Robert Coleman in his book The Master Plan of Evangelism explains Jesus’ Strategy this way:

We should not expect a great number to begin with, nor should we desire it. The best work is always done with a few. Better to give a year or so to one or two people who learn what it means to conquer for Christ than to spend a lifetime with a congregation just keeping the program going. Nor does it matter how small or inauspicious the beginning may be; what counts is that those to whom we do give priority in our life learn to give it away.

Because, as Herb Hodges has often said, “You cannot be what you do not see” and, “Discipling is caught, more than taught.” To put it another way, if they cannot see it lived out, 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.

* Of the four verbs in the Great commission, which one is the command? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* In another chapter we saw the definition of the word follow. What does it mean, and what will we be doing if we are following Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

* John 1:19-40, 3:22, 5:36, 14:1-15, 17:4-26; Mark 3:13-19, 6:7-12, 9:2; Matthew 17:1; Luke 9:28

**Work that Satisfies**

**John 4:31-34 (NIV)**

***Meanwhile 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.***

The above passage is very precious to me. The Lord used this Scripture some 18 years ago to confirm the specific calling on my life to the ministry of His Word to women. Although it took some time for the Lord to teach me what disciple making is all about.

In the narrative of Jesus’ encounter with the Woman at the Well, there is an important lesson for Jesus’ disciples (including those who are living today.) In the lesson on our website titled, The Well Who Came to the Woman, we learned that Jesus and His disciples had walked seventy-five miles, and they were weary, thirsty and hungry. The disciples went to Samaria to get bread to fill their bellies. Jesus, on the other hand, went there to get something far more valuable, the spiritually empty woman. After He had found her, she immediately went to work, left her water bucket and led the men of Samaria to Jesus. When the others believed in Him also, they declared Him to be, “The Savior of the world!”

Now, let’s hone in on the second part of the story that we can apply to our lives. 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! What Jesus taught me is this: His *food was* to do the *will of His Father and finish his work.*

**Song of Songs 2:4 (NIV)**

***Let him lead me to the banquet hall, and let his banner over me be love.***

Eric Liddell, the gold medalist in the 1924 Paris Olympics and the author of The Disciplines of the Christian Life said, “I believe that God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast, and when I run, I feel His pleasure.” Now this was a man who understood what is meant by doing what you were created to do and enjoying God forever.

What is the work of God that satisfied the Lord Jesus? It was the *work of fishing for men and women and making disciples*! We wouldn’t know this unless we study 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?” Well-no: that is the model prayer. The Lord’s Prayer is recorded in John, chapter 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.***

In one of his many messages, Herb Hodges brought to my attention one statement in the Lord’s prayer that is key to understanding the work Jesus was sent to do. In John 17:4, Jesus said to the Father, “*I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.”* This word “finished” in Greek is *Teleiotes*. He used the same word here as well as John 4:34. It should look familiar because it is kin to the word spoken from the cross when Jesus said, “It is *finished!”* In Greek the word is *Telos.* He was speaking there about the finished work of our redemption. So, what was the “work” had Jesus finished before He went to the cross? In this detailed prayer, the main subject of the conversation Jesus had with the Father was His disciples. *The work He had finished was the making or building of His disciples*!

**Three “Good Works” of a Woman**

Surely, it was a woman who came up with the old adage, “Man may work from dust till dawn, but a woman’s work is never done.” Can I get a witness? Most of us are bombarded on a daily basis with work that must be done. What makes matters worse is that other people have their own ideas of what work we should do. And if you are a people pleaser, you will allow others to dictate your schedule so that you are so busy doing g*ood* t*hings that* there is no time to do *God’s things*. This is especially true for those of us who have a reputation as being a "work-horse." It’s been said that, “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 - busyness is. The question we need to ask ourselves is this: “If what I am busy doing is *not the work God has planned for me, then* is it really *good*?” Even good work can be sinful if it’s not God’s work for me. What is more, it’s possible that I could be doing work that God planned for someone else to do!

Part of the problem for most of us is that we are addicted to our cell phones, and we are at the bidding-call of anyone and everyone. Granted, some of these calls are truly urgent. For instance, in the last month I have received three urgent phone calls, one was that my daughter had a miscarriage and needed me to take care of her other two children. Then there was the call that my brother was in the emergency room in critical condition, and this was followed by the call that my mother was having a heart attack.

At the end of the day it really all boils down to this: Biblically speaking, there are three categories of “good works” that every saint in Christ can be certain is their personal responsibility. And they are: work up- *worship God first*, work within- *our own families* and lastly, work out- *fish for men and women in the world and make disciples of all nations!*

* **Work up**

As we have already discussed, God desires an intimate relationship with His Bride. It is all about worship. And it is the reason that He has set you free from the bondage of sin. This relationship is cultivated by having a daily time at His feet and knowing Him better through His Word. It’s this simple, worship should always precede work! Without seeking Him first, not only do we not know what works we should do, but we will lack the strength to do them. Too many of us are running around trying to serve others in our own strength, and we end up burnt-out. How can we exhibit all the fruits of the Spirit such as love, joy, peace, and patience unless we are being filled with the Spirit? These fruits will validate the message of Christ we wish to proclaim. Besides all of this, without this time alone with God, trying to work within and without are moot points! (John 15:5-7; Gal.5:16-26; 1 Cor. 13:1-7)

* **Work within**

The majority of our time and energy needs to be invested into the precious lives of those whom God has entrusted to our care. It’s our job! For example, if we are married, this relationship should trump all others. And if God has blessed you with children, whether they be physical or spiritual, after your husband, they are your primary work. David Lawrence, my pastor, once said, “Everybody wants to change the world, but no one wants to change diapers. But the world is changed one diaper at a time.” Naturally, our work within will change in each season of life. For instance, 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 model for them what it looks like to live for others. We should see them as an extension of our ministry to Christ. As Jesus said in Matthew 25:40, “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.” If you are single, try to find a godly woman to disciple you. Ideally, all of us will have someone in our life - like a Paul - who will pour into us. And then we need a person into whom we can reinvest God’s truth just as Paul did for Timothy.

Roy (Soup) Campbell is a disciple maker, and His 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.” Before we move to our last work, let’s not 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: Read the following passages and make note of the insights and personal applications.**

* Titus 2:1-14; Ephesians 5:22-24; Philippians 1:6; Colossians 1:10, 3:12-24; 1 Timothy 2:9-15, 5:3-16, 6:18; 2 Timothy 3:10; 1 Corinthians 7:1-40; 1 Peter 5:7; Proverbs 16:3; Ecclesiastes 2:17-26; 9:7-10
* **Work out**

If we are a true follower of Christ, we will be busy doing the same work that He did. And what was that work? He was fishing for men and making disciples. I would like to add a side note, and it just so happens to tie this lesson together from beginning to end. Go back to Psalms 19 at the beginning of this lesson. (It’s the one about the heavens declaring the glory of the Lord.) Well this passage is also quoted in the New Testament in Romans chapter 10. Only this time, the passage is attributed to those who go all over the world preaching the good news! (Romans 10:9-21) To quote another Psalm, “Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to Your name give glory.” (Psalm 115:1a) (NASB)

If you are not sure about what this entails, then take a look back over the section titled *Jesus’ Work Was the Building of 12 Men*. For the sake of clarification, fishing for men and making disciples is *a lifestyle, 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.* If you cannot let a few other women see how you walk with God in all areas of your life, they will not know how to follow you. Not only do they need to hear the truth, they need to learn by your example how to live the truth. This requires transparency and accountability. It is an investment of your life. But remember this: *If it is not a spiritual relationship, then it is not discipleship!* And you can’t have a spiritual relationship with out the Word of God! (John 6:63) It is the instrument that prepares us for good works! (2 Timothy 3:17) With that being said, I can testify to the fact that in this process, you will grow in your personal relationship with Christ, and your life will be blessed more than you can ever imagine.

Finally, as we conclude working our way through this very long lesson, let’s remember where we started. “What is the purpose for my life?” and “What is the chief end of man (or woman)?” Answer: To glorify God by enjoying Him forever!

By working within the three priority areas (up…within…and out,) we will bring glory to God, and in turn, find that His work truly does bring satisfaction to our soul. For when we are doing His work, in His power, the load becomes much lighter. As Jesus said, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30) What makes it light is that you are yoked up with the Lord Jesus as His co-worker. He is not obligated to disburse His power in our lives to do whatever we want. His power is given to energize *His* *Work*. One day our works will be tested, and the only works that will survive the Judgment Seat of Christ is the “good works” God ordained for each of us before the foundation of the earth.

**Colossians 1:26-29 (NASB)**

***that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,to whom God willed to make known what is the riches***

***of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.***

***We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom,***

***so that we may present every man complete in Christ.For this purpose, also I labor,***

***striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.***

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

* Matthew 4:19, 19:18-19, 22:36-40; 1 Corinthians 3:5-15; 2 Corinthians 5:13-6:2; Romans 10:19-20; John 15:26-27; Acts 1:8

**Colossians 3:23-24 (ESV)**

***Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.***

**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. Think in terms of what you are currently busy working at. What jobs are essential, and what are the non-essentials? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Make a list of your personal areas of work. Who are the people that fall into these cate-gories? Prioritize that list. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Now make a list of the things you do on a daily basis. Will you ask the Lord if you are do-ing *His work,* or is it *your work*? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Do these activities fit in the practical plan for your life at this moment? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Do these things hurt or hinder your priority relationships, including neglecting the Lord as your “first love”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you feel stressed or drained physically when you do this work? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. When you are busy at this task, do you feel energized and at peace with God and others? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. Describe a time when you found that two are better than one in getting a job done. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12) How does this apply to making disciples? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
11. If I continue directing my own paths, then one day all my work will be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the judgment seat of Christ. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
12. What is the chief end of man? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
13. Explain how our work brings glory to God. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

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

**Phase Three**

**Welcome to The Family**

**Week # 1**

***One Nation in Christ***

**Key Passages**

**Ephesians 2:11-22 (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.***

***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.***

**Introduction**

I will never forget the time our youth pastor taught from the above 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 does it mean to be circumcised?” At first, all the color drained from my face, and then I turned several shades of red as I stammered my way through that conversation. (Colossians 2:6-15; Romans 2:28-29) But, you’ll be happy to know, this lesson is not about circumcision per se. In actuality, it’s about a circumcision that changes the human heart, ushers in peace on earth and racial reconciliation and then results in the growth and building up of God’s household. You may be thinking, “How in the world is she going to pull all of that together?” Well, with the help of the Holy Spirt, all things are possible!

But for the sake of illustration, I hope you will forgive me for taking the liberty of using our key passage out of context for just a moment to make a personal application. Then, in bite sized chunks, we will try to synthesize chapters two, three and four of the book of Ephesians. And in doing so, we’ll uncover just one of the divine mysteries found within the treasure chest of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

**Broken Together**

Peace…. We so often use the word, but do we have even the slightest notion of its 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?” We find these words engraved on tomb stones, “rest in peace.” Yet in reality, the only ones who die and *rest in peace* are those who are *in Christ* because, as we just read, *He is Peace*! In a world that seems to be in perpetual conflict, it seems that peace is nowhere to be found. But, in our heart of hearts, wouldn’t you agree that peace is something that none of us can live very long without?

Now it’s one thing when the walls of hostility exist between nations, but it’s altogether different when the walls of hostility become the four walls in which you live. Our homes should be havens of rest -- a place to escape a harsh and cruel world, not battlefields. Yet when there is hostility among the ones who live with you, the war can escalate to the point of domestic violence. Thankfully, I have not known this extreme, but I have worked with women who have, and they all have scars, be they emotional, physical or both. They don’t always survive. The day after I wrote much of this lesson, I got the tragic news that a disciple and sister in Christ, who lives in Nicaragua, was killed by her husband. Dorcas, who is vital part of our ministry, was discipling her. It is heartbreaking! Yet this woman truly is at rest and peace with Jesus. Some of you know quite well what I am talking about. If so, I plead with you, seek help before it’s too late. This is the number for Focus on the Family where you can find some help 1-800-232-6459. This is the only counsel I have to offer you. However, I think you will find both wisdom and encouragement from the following passages.

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

* Hebrews 12:1-3; John 8:12, 31-36, 10:1-10; 1Corinthians 1-17; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:12-14; Galatians 4:28-29; 1 Peter 1:15-16

When Art and I got married, we were equally yoked. Both of us were separated from God and one another because of our sins. Consequently, it was not the happily ever after we had hoped for. But then again, it seldom is for lost people. For us, I guess it was as good as it was ever going to get without the peace and love of Jesus to bind us together. Then, two years later when the Lord in His grace saved me, things went from bad to worse, and the dividing walls of hostility came up in our marriage. Because now I was yoked to the Lord Jesus, but 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, steal and destroy. Light and dark don’t mix. And this went on for thirteen years as I prayed for my husband’s salvation.

Then, when he was forty years old, Art bowed his knees to the Prince of Peace, and through repentance and surrender he was born again. At that point, we had been married for about 16 years. As we suffered through the consequences of these years of sin, we had a lot of brokenness that only the Lord could heal. So about a year and a half later, at the suggestion of a counselor, we renewed our wedding vows. It was our seventeenth wedding anniversary. The passage we choose for our wedding program was Ephesians 2:14-18, and this is what was written on our program:

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 2:14-18 (ESV)**

***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.***

If you knew our whole story, you might understand just how applicable, these verses are to us. There is a new song by Casting Crowns that poignantly describes our marriage union. In fact, we could have written these lyrics. It is titled *Broken* *Together*. Not only did the Lord break us together, but He is building us together, and in Him…we are held together. We really are a miracle.

* Can you give a few examples of what it means to be unequally yoked. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* How do you use the word “peace” in your everyday life, and what does it means to you? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Do you need some peace? Then this exercise may be the single most important part of this lesson. You will find much personal application if you will read the following passages and then list everything you discover about peace. But remember, it will require you becoming a doer of the Word and not just a hearer of the Word! Ephesians 6:15; Colossians 1:20, 3:15; Hebrews 12:11-14; 1 Peter 3:11-14; John 16:33, 14:27; Psalms 29:1-11, 34:14, 85:10, 119:165, Proverbs 14:30, 16:7, 17:1; Isaiah 26:3, 32:17; 48:18-22; 53:5; 57:2-21; Micah 5:5; Romans 5:1; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 2 Corinthians 13:11\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Pride and Prejudice**

**Ephesians 3:1-22 (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. 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.***

***For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven***

***and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell***

***in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,***

***and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask***

***or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church***

***and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.***

So now that we have talked about peace on the home front, let’s broaden the scope a little and talk about another area of peace and reconciliation available to those who are part of God’s family.

Prejudice comes in many shapes and sizes: the intellectuals versus the uneducated, the haves versus the have nots, blacks versus whites, one tribe or ethnic group versus another. But in Bible times, the great dividing wall of hostility was between the Jews and all other races – the Gentiles. Yes, it is true that the Jews are God’s chosen people, and Jesus came to this world through their blood-line. However, if you’ll remember from a previous lesson, there were several other ethnic groups included in His family lineage.

When you think about Paul, or Saul as he was known in his “B.C.” days, his bragging rights included his physical circumcision that marked him as a Jew, his education and his expertize as an Old Testament scholar, and a proud one at that. He was also a bigot. But God has a sense of humor, and He delights in humbling the proud. Nowhere is this more evident than in Paul’s life. After the Lord circumcised his heart, his life was turned upside down. Then, armed with the gospel of peace, Paul became an evangelist to the Gentiles. Of course, this included the pagans in the city of Ephesus.

* Read Paul’s testimony in Philippians 3:1-13; make a list of the things he was proud of. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Colossians 3:11-15 (ESV)**

***Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,***

***to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.***

Reading through the narratives found in the gospels and observing how Jesus interacted with people, it becomes clear that He was not a respecter of men, or even certain ethnic groups. He loved everyone, and the goal of our salvation is that we become just like Him. (Romans 5:1-11, 8:28-29) Repeatedly, Jesus demonstrated racial reconciliation before His disciples, although it took them a while to catch on. Luke, the only Gentile writer of the Bible, recorded Jesus’ last words before returning to heaven. (Acts 1:8) He said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you *will be* My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the World.” His commission to them (and us) was total world impact. As the passage below indicates, His intent all along was to include people from every nation in His family.

**John 10:14-16 (ESV)**

***I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,***

***just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life***

***for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also,***

***and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.***

Perhaps the clearest lesson Jesus taught on racial reconciliation, is seen when Jesus and His disciples went to Samaria. (John 4:3-26) While the disciples went there to get food, Jesus, as noted in the last lesson, had a completely different agenda. You see, the Jews and the Samaritans had a long history of animosity. The Jews had intermarried with Gentiles, and so Samaritans were a mixed race.

Imagine the disciples shock when they found Jesus alone with a Samaritan woman at the well. It was considered taboo, even scandalous, for Jesus to speak to her because Samaritans were considered to be “unclean.” Furthermore, to keep from becoming *unclean*, a devout Jew would normally walk seventy miles out of the way to stay out of Samaria! And yet, Jesus purposely went to there to find her and change both her identity and her destiny. But that is not all. This despised woman from this despised place had the great honor of being the first person to whom Jesus revealed His true identity as the Christ…the long awaited Savior of the world. Maybe the disciples were a bit jealous of her receiving this honor.

As I was preparing to write this lesson, my pastor was preaching through the book of Luke, and we were studying chapter nine. I always take notes so that I can spend some time digesting all that the Lord wants to teach me through this godly shepherd. The Lord is so good this way. What my pastor pointed out to us from these passages is how prideful and arrogant the disciples where towards “outsiders,” this included the Gentiles. (Luke 9:46-56)

Even after all they had heard and saw, they still didn’t get it. For instance, in Luke nine, when the Samaritans, whom they hated anyway, refused Jesus, it was James and His brother John (nicknamed The Sons of Thunder) who were only too happy to retaliate. They ask the Lord if He wanted them to add lightning to their repertoire of thunder and annihilate the Samaritans.

Based on the fact that it was John who told us this story of the Woman at the Well, I think it is safe to say the Lord had taken the “thunder” of hatred out of John and replaced it with love. After all, it was John who wrote more about God’s love for the world than any other gospel writer. Moreover, when John was much older and wiser, he received the Revelation. What the Lord Jesus showed him was one big, beautiful, multi-racial family, with no divisions, schisms or isms what so ever. Reconciliation is just one of the many benefits that come as a result of God flooding our hearts with His love and peace.

**Revelation 7:9-10 (ESV)**

***After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!***

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

* Luke 8:1-4, 9:28-56; John 4:3-42, 10:16, 11:50-51, 13:1-35, 17:11-23; 1 John 4:7-21, 5:1-2; Acts 13:46-48, 26:1-23; Isaiah 49:6, 56:3-8; Psalms 98:2

**Red and Yellow, Black and White**

**Romans 12:5 (ESV)**

***So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.***

The branches of God’s family tree include all people groups. He purchased us and grafted us in to His family through the Tree of Life. (The one cut down to make a cross.) The peace treaty that binds us together was signed in His blood. We are not just one nation under God. We are One holy nation *in God*. (1 Peter 2:5-9; Isaiah 56:3-8) So, there you have it…the divine mystery. It’s no longer hidden, except to those who are so blinded by sin that they refuse to see.

**Revelation 5:9-10 (ESV)**

***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.”***

I grew up in Memphis, Tennessee during a time when the United States, especially the southern part, was divided by racism. As ridiculous as it seems now to my generation, people built walls of segregation in order to keep others in -- or keep them out. How could anyone think God would approve of this?

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 was in the second grade at the time, and he remembers the National Guard tanks coming down his street under the guise of “keeping the peace.” 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 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 grades in a private church school where, instead of being taught, I worked on packets and then when outside to play. This void in the formative years of my education was coupled by the fact that I did not wear the glasses that were prescribed to me in the first grade. I was twenty-four years old when I realized how blind I had been, and I’ve been wearing glasses ever since. Any educator knows how important and foundational these years are to a child’s education. And so now you know the root cause of my “shameful secret.” To be brutally honest, my own insecurities became a justification for a sinful prejudice against those who were well educated. As I said before, sin comes in many shapes and sizes.

Without sugarcoating it, and if we are honest, we will call racism what it really is– it is sin. It’s, ugly, vile, Spirit quenching sin, and God hates it! And sure, it is found in all levels of society, but it ought not be accepted or condoned within the body of Christ. It’s a little hypocritical to think of the segregated churches in the south teaching songs in Sunday school about God’s love for the world and then living as if they don’t believe it. Take for example, this song: “Jesus loves the little children.” It goes like this: “Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world.” The song was inspired by Matthew 19:14 and was written to the tune of a Civil War song. Ironic isn’t it?

I love hearing my granddaughters sing this song. They are only two and three years-old, but my prayer for them is that the profound theology found in that song will be imbedded deep within their hearts. And I know it will because their parents and grandparents have been changed by the “gospel of peace,” as Paul called it, and this gospel makes us color blind. And thankfully, this is one sin that we have not handed down to our children.

With all that being said, this only magnifies the beauty of the gospel. In Christ, the walls that divide us are obliterated. Although we come from many different cultures, and we don’t speak the same language, we are all washed in the blood of Jesus, and His love transcends all our differences. And, as we learned in the lesson entitled “Signs of Life,” love is the one tangible mark that identifies us as a child of God.

Now, can you think of anything the world has to offer that can change animosity and hatred into love and peace? If there were such a thing, how much do you think people would pay to have it? It would be priceless -- would it not? The only real hope for peace on earth and good will toward mankind is to be reconciled to God through Jesus…. For He Himself is our Peace. When we are at peace with God in Christ, this ushers in the possibility of peace, healing and reconciliation with others. Oh, how this world could use some healing! Besides that, isn’t our ministry one of reconciliation? (2 Corinthians 5:17-20)

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

* John 4:3-42, 11:50-52, 17:11; Luke 18:9-14; Acts 10:34-48, 22:21; Romans 2:11, 5:1-11, 10:9-16, 11:1-36; Ephesians 3:1,13, 6:19-20; Colossians 1:25-27; Hebrews 3:6; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 Peter 2:5-16; Isaiah 28:16

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

* **Nation** Strong’s #1484 The Greek word Ethnos: - *a race, i.e. a tribe; specifically, a foreign (non-Jewish) one, Gentile, nation, people.* (See Acts 2:5, 10:35; 1 Peter 2:9-11; Revelation 5:8-9, 7:9; Matthew 28:19)
* **Family** Strong’s # 3965 The Greek word Patria:- *paternal descent i.e. a group of families or a whole race (nation) family, kindred, linage.* (This is the only time this word is used for family in Ephesians 3:15.)
* **House** Strong’s # 3609 The Greek word Oikeios: - *domestic, i.e. a relative, adherent: - those of his own household.* (Eph. 2:19)
* **House** Strong’s #1004 The Hebrew word Bayith: - *a house, especially Family: - court, daughter, home born, inside, palace, steward+ tablet, temple within.* (Psalms 45)
* **Church** Strong’s # 1577 The Greek word Ekklesia: - *a calling out of, community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both, assembly, church.* (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; 1 Timothy 3:5-16; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 22:16)

**Built Together**

Note, if you will, that both the Hebrew and Greek words for *house* beautifully describe the church. But the Hebrew word for house is even more descriptive. It means, in part, a family (like a royal court) a door, or a steward. But the most interesting descriptions for house are these: *a palace*, a *temple and a daughter.* The two Greek words for house or household both imply not only a dwelling or residence, but also a family. This makes sense because when we think of home, don’t we think of the people we love? Our family *is* our home. Curiously enough, as we’ve already mentioned, the word family is used just once in the New Testament, and it is right there in Ephesians 3:14.

**Ephesians 3:14-15 (ESV)**

***For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father,***

***from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.***

What’s in a name? Well, just as each name of God reveals something about His character and nature, so do the specific names given to His family. For instance, we are called Saints, Disciples, Christians, the Elect, the Chosen, the House of God, the Temple of God, The Building and Dwelling of God, the Body of Christ, Living Stones, A Kingdom, A Holy Priesthood, and the Bride of Christ. But when we finally arrive at our eternal home in heaven, we’ll be called the Wife of the Lamb.

Recently, while reading through the Chronological Bible, I came to the account of the building of Solomon’s temple and I found three things that are fitting comparisons to the building of God’s house. Number one was how specific and meticulous the instructions were that God gave for its construction. Number two was that non-Jews took part in the building of it, and number three was that this temple was to be a place for *His Name*. (1 Kings 5:1-8 and 1 Chronicles) Now I don’t want to stretch the interpretation too far, but here is the point I am trying to make. As we are about to see, every individual, from every race and people group who are part of God’s family, needs to be equipped in the work of the ministry to *build God’s family*. No one is excluded!

Now, with all this information, let’s paint a Biblical family portrait. The house the Lord is building, through local communities of believers, is a family. This family is functional because the love of Christ not only binds us together, it will keep us together forever. God’s family is made up of people from every nation. Although some are already home in heaven. The gates of hell will not prevail against it. It will still be standing when the storms of this life are over because the foundation on which it is built is the Lord Jesus Christ -- the Rock of Ages. Randy Alcorn so aptly put it in his book The Treasure Principle (page 48).

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.

**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; Philippians 3:20-21

**Hebrews 2:10-13 (NIV)**

***In 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. Both 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.***

***He 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.”***

* Generally speaking, our upbringing will shape the way we treat other people. Where you raised in a family that brought you up to love all people or one that fostered bigotry? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Be honest, is there a certain people group you tend to look down on or stay away from? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* If so, what is the reason that you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Do you welcome people from other cultures into your home? If so, list them here and how you came about developing these relationships. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Galatians 3:26-28 (ESV)**

***For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.***

**He Gave Gifts to His Family**

**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.***

Finally, in this last section, we have come to a turning point in the book of Ephesians. The first three chapters primarily addressed doctrine, but the last three are all about how to apply these truths to our everyday lives. So, thus far in this lesson we have learned that we are part of one big global family. This family is sometimes called the body, the bride of Christ, or the church, but whatever name you choose, the important thing is that we understand we are *one* in Christ.

But the real issue at hand is this: we cannot overestimate the importance of being part of the church. In order to participate in the body, we must be part of a local community of believers. For within these communities there is to be an orderly administration of authority, accountability and submission to one another. This is evident by numerous passages such as the entire book of Titus; Ephesians 5:18-21 and 1 Timothy chapters two and three, just to name a few. Otherwise there is no communion of the Spirit or accountability to the rest of the body of Christ.

**Romans 12:4-9 (HCSB)**

***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.***

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 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.

**Speaking Gifts and Serving Gifts**

**1 Corinthians 12:4-14 (HCSB)**

***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 will.For as the body is one and has many parts, and all***

***the parts of that body, though many, are one body -- so also is Christ. For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, weather slave or free—***

***and we are all made to drink of one Spirit. So the body is not one part but many.***

Imagine 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, and they had long since passed away. 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, it never crossed their minds to open the gift. If they only knew the wealth it contained, more than enough to meet their needs. In fact, it was so plentiful, that it could bless her family for generations to come. But, regrettably, she never knew that she had such a valuable 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 in the story, we could live our entire Christian lives 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!*

Now, I hate to disappoint you, but we will not be looking at each individual gift. However, for those of you who are curious, here are just a couple of resources that offer tests you can take to discover your spiritual gifts.

* http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/files/lwcf\_mycs\_030526\_spiritual\_gifts\_survey.pdf
* [www.spiritualgiftstest.com](http://www.spiritualgiftstest.com)

To summarize, spiritual gifts are not for you. In fact, they are given to you to serve the body of Christ; but to do this takes humility. And “Humility,” someone has said, “is not thinking less of yourself, it’s not thinking of yourself at all!” In our lesson titled “Who are Your Yous?” we talk about the self-centered lifestyle or Satan’s lifestyle. 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 this kind of life.

**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 an inside *out* lifestyle. What do we mean? A person who lives inside out realizes that everything they have belongs to the Lord. And because of this, everything in our life, time, energy, wisdom, and resources are used for the growth and benefit of *others*. This kind of lifestyle explodes the gospel all over the world.

Having said that, even though the gifts are for others, as you begin to see others being built up through your gifts, you will find that being used as Jesus’ vessel to meet the needs of others will bring you great joy. Chuck Swindoll, paraphrasing a quote by Mark Twain, said: “The two most important days in the life of a child of God are one - the day we are born again, and two is the day we discover why.” It is through our discipling relationships that we learn what our gifts are and what to do with them. But whatever your gifts are, if they are not being used in a Spirit of love, then these gifts become useless! (Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7)

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

* 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

**1 Peter 4:8-11 (NKJV)**

***And above all things have fervent love one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.***

***Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift,***

***minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as the ability***

***which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ,***

***to whom belongs the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.***

In his commentary on 1 Peter 4:10 from John Macarthur’s Study Bible, he 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.*

Before we move on, let’s clear up some misconceptions. Consider the following questions. Number one, do you believe that there a division between the secular life and the spiritual life? More importantly, does the Bible make this distinction? And number two, is there such thing as a layperson, and furthermore, are there some people who are more gifted and important in the church than the rest? Can God use all of us to do the work of ministry to His church or only just a few? Notice I did not say *in* the church, but *to* the church. There is a difference. In actuality, the church is not a building or organization; it is a living organism. You were added to God’s family so that you could bear much fruit. But it is just not going to happen if you are disconnected from His church -- local communities of faith. (In next week’s lesson, we will take a closer look at how this works.)

In his message entitled, *The Comma that Caused a Disciple-making Coma in Christians!* Rev. Wade Trimmer gives a thought provoking explanation. He says:

No, I am not trying to be cute with my play on the words “comma” and “coma.” The stark reality is the translator’s insertion of the commas in Ephesians 4:12, have literally resulted in the majority of Christians going into a spiritual coma as far as doing ministry is concerned.

Our English word, “coma” is derived from the Greek word “koma,” mean-ing deep sleep. Medically this is a state of extreme unresponsiveness to outward stimuli. Spiritually, it’s an unresponsiveness to Jesus’ assignment based primarily upon being taught that they were only members of the church whose responsibility was to help those called to the ministry.

What prompted the King James translators to insert these three commas in this sentence?  It was not because the Greek text mandated commas here. The original Greek text did not use any punctuation marks. They did so, based upon the truth that the Church as a whole had been functioning for 1700 years on a misunderstanding of who was responsible for doing the work of the ministry.

Taking the implications of Ephesians 4:7 into our interpretation, i.e.  that every believer is gifted and contributes to the building up of the body, then the five gifted persons — apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers — are given the task of equipping every member of the church to do the work of ministry or service. (The word translated ministry is the word most often used for serving and service.)

The three commas created two classes of persons in the church, the clergy and the laity, the minister and the members. It divided life into the sacred and the secular. Institutional church work on Sunday was considered sacred and laymen’s work during the week was labeled secular. It created two callings a higher verses a lower calling, or a sacred verses a secular calling.

We know from the book of Acts and the history of the first 200 years of the church that it was growing and multiplying exponentially. Then something happened. As is always the case, Satan had a strategy to counteract any advance in the Kingdom of God. The plan was set in motion when Constantine, the first Roman Emperor *to profess* Christianity, began a massive building program. He erected church buildings on the site of every important location in Christendom. What looked like a very noble cause became an instrument in the hands of the evil one to stop the multiplication. The tragic effect of this was that all of the believers stopped going everywhere to “tell a person.” Now they came into these extravagant buildings to sit and “hear a person” (priests and only well-educated speakers.) They were told, in essence, you are not important or smart or powerful enough to be used of God. So, they stopped making disciples. The workforce was no longer being equipped to “go and tell a person.” And so they were “benched” or “pewed,” if you will. In other words, the majority of people who made up the church were put out of co-mission.

However, if you were to ask most Christians what the Great Commission is, they would most likely say evangelism. But is that what Jesus told us to do? Well not exactly. He did not say, “Some of you go evangelize the nations.”  He did not say, “Some of you go make converts.” He did *not s*ay: “Go and build buildings.” He said, “Go and turn people into disciples.” It was never His intent that just a few in the body of Christ would enter His labor force while everyone else sat on their hands and watched them work! But, if we are honest, isn’t that what we have done? Furthermore, is it really realistic to think a handful of foreign missionaries can make disciples of all nations? Every believer from every ethnic group must be equipped and mobilized with the strategy of Jesus.

However, let’s take a moment to talk about evangelism. When we evangelize we add converts. But when we make disciples, we multiply. Now, you can evangelize, but this does not mean you have obeyed the Great Commission. And yet, you will never be a true disciple maker without evangelizing *with* your disciples. (Acts 14:21, 28) He did not say make *a* disciple. He said, “Go” (present participle) meaning, as you go, where ever you go in your everyday life… make disciples of *all* nations. You do this with someone. And furthermore, we have not made disciples unless the ones we disciple reproduce.

This is how it works. Hypothetically speaking, let’s say that you could win one person to the Lord every day for 16 years; that equals 5846 souls. But, if you were to disciple only two people per year, and they do the same, in 16 years you could impact 65,536 souls. Impressive isn’t it? But how many people have this kind of impact? It is time for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ to leave the building with the good news and build “the Church” by making disciples who will reproduce! Kingdom building is people building; there is no other plan -- this is the mission!

To wrap up this week’s lesson, I would like to end with 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.*

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

1. How can selfishness and pride hinder peace and reconciliation? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Now it is your turn. In the following list of passages, we see two categories of gifts - speaking and serving. As you read through this list, see if you can determine what verses are talking about serving gifts and which ones are speaking gifts, and list them below. Ephesians 2:10, 20-21, 4:11-16, 25, 5:18-25, 11:18-20; 1 Corinthians 2:1-15, 3:1-16, 4:14-19, 12:4-18, 14:1-5,19; 2 Corinthians 3:2-9, 4:7; Philippians 2:13-25, 3:3, 4:13-19; 1 Peter 4:11; Colossians 1:9-11, 16, 27-29; Romans 3:2; Acts 7:38; James 2:14-22

Speaking gifts: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Serving gifts: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Discuss with your group situations where you have personally been affected by discri-mination or prejudice. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. In what ways can you foster unity and fellowship within the body of Christ, outside of your comfort zone? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Looking back over the many quotes in this lesson, which one was the most informative and meaningful to you and why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

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

**Memory Passages**

**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.***

**Week #2**

**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 twenty-four-hour a day access to 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 someone who heralds the good news - like 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!

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

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 do you share the gospel with them so 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. And 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.

* What do you think Jesus meant by “Casting your pearls before swine?” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* If you understand, can you give an example of this? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Throughout the Bible, there is a great emphasis placed on the necessity of hearing what God says. In Hebrew the word is S*hama,* and it has special significance to the Jewish people. A prayer known as *Shama Israel* begins with these words, “***Hear, O Israel***” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41). The word Shama means to ***listen or to hear obediently,*** and it’s also translated as obey. But the most important aspect of the word was this: they were to listen carefully and transfer exactly what they heard to the next generation (Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalms 78:1-8, 145:4-13).

In his commentary on the Treasure Hidden in the Field and The Pearl of Great Worth, from John MacArthur’s Study Bible he said 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. If you test his exegesis next to the Word of God, you certainly see where he’s coming from. In passages such as Matthew chapter 13 and Isaiah 6, it’s clear who has “spiritual ears” and who doesn’t. Jesus’ disciples heard and understood His parables. Their martyrdom for His name sake attests to the face that Christ was their treasure. They esteemed Him of such great worth, they forsook all, even unto death, to share Him with others. (Matthew 12:46-50

* The word “witness in Greek is martus (martyrs or - blood witnesses.) How does this re-late to Jesus words in Luke 9:22-26? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Just as each one of the four gospels examine the accounts of Jesus from their own point of view, God continues to supply the church with gifted teachers for the same purpose. Proper Biblical exegesis requires comparing one passage to another, thus allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture.

So let’s look at the Treasure and The Pearl of Great Worth from Matthew Henry’s commentary. From his perspective, he sees Jesus as the Pearl of Great Worth and the 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!

Repentance has been defined as, “Turning away from sin and when you do, finding Jesus- the one who pursues lost sinners.” Kiki Carson, a beautiful addition to our disciple group, tells us of how the Lord sought her as she was an exchange student in Marico, of all places! Kiki so fittingly describes the Lord seeking her. She said, “He was pursuing me like a Bridegroom pursues His bride.” Don’t you just love that? If you are in Christ, He did the same for you.

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. Might you be that one? As you might already know, sometimes, 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.

* What kind of circumstances did the Lord bring into your life as He wooed you to Himself? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**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 lesson). 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, the 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.

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

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

And finally, here are some questions for personal reflection:

* Is Jesus 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? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Do you feel a little more equipped to share the gospel now? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

## Think On These Things

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

**Memory 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.”***

**Week # 3**

**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 number 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 Nicodemus - 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 English Standard Version).

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 lesson nine.) After all, we have learned thus far in the book of Ephesians, we hardly have an excuse, do we? Of course, we are 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...Of course, most churches insist on bringing new members through some kind of a confirmation 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 (1964).

**We Can’t Grow Without Nourishment**

**1 Timothy 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 spiritual 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).

* What effects will it have on a Christian’s life when they only have limited exposure to the Word of God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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 lesson 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; John 1:1-4; 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 haywire!” 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**

**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 daycare and returned to find them wet, unfed 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. Frederick Douglass said it best, “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men” (2016). Many who are born again into the body of Christ have already had a lifetime 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” (2001). 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” (1964).

**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.

* Can you give a few examples of what happens when you follow someone who is lost? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* If you are a single parent or alone in the faith, what examples can you find in Lois and Eunice to help you raise your children? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Proverbs 6:20-23 (NIV)**

***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 aging 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. Before I became a grandmother, God brought a 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 my home so that I could 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 lived in another part of the state and was undergoing radiation and chemo for stage four cancer. Shortly after Teagan was born, Jamie’s mother 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 bringing 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 newborn 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 newborn baby, both needed someone to mother and father them.

Don’t 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 righteous man is the one who lives for the next generation” (1959). 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? See Ephesians 4:16. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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 at-tained, who are the people around you that you could disciple? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Think On These Things

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

**Memory Verses**

**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.***

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**Phase Four**

**Imitators of God**

**Week # 1**

**Ephesians 1:15-18, 3:14-21**

**I Remember You in My Prayers**

**Week # 2**

**Ephesians 4:17-32, 5:1-12, 6:1-7**

**Imitators of God**

**Week # 3**

**Ephesians 6:10-18**

**A Woman of God Prepared for Battle**

**Week # 4**

**Ephesians 4:14; 2 Corinthians 11:2-4**

**Promised to One Husband**

**Phase Five**

**Wedding Preparation**

**Week # 1**

**Ephesians 5:28-33**

**A Profound Mystery\**

**Week # 2**

**Ephesians 6:21-24; Revelation 2:1-7**

**Prone to Wander**

**Week # 3**

**Revelation 19-22**

**The Best for Last**