

Spiritual Coaching



LEARNING TO FOLLOW JESUS

Additional Resources

Coaching Learning To Follow Jesus

Additional Resources – Guide

Attributes Overview.....Pages 258-260

Attribute One – Learn to Be With JesusPages 261-262

- How To Develop A Schedule (pgs. 216-217)
- Time Analysis Spreadsheet – available by e-mail
- Assurance Of Salvation (pg. 46)
- Authority Of Scripture (pg. 47)
- Assurance Of Guidance (pg. 49)

Attribute Two – Learn to Listen.....Pages 263-264

- Bible Study Process (pgs. 218-220)
- Assurance Of Victory (pg. 71)

Attribute Three – Learn to Heal.....Pages 265-266

- Conflict Resolution Process (pgs. 220-221)
- Grief Recovery Process (pgs. 221-222)
- Twelve Step Recovery Process (pgs. 222-223)
- Divine Healing
- Subjected In Hope

Attribute Four – Learn to InfluencePage 267

- Influence Verses
- Unstoppable Series
 - The Role Of The Holy Spirit Before We Come To Christ
 - The Role Of The Holy Spirit After We Come To Christ
 - Pentecost – The Backstory
 - Unstoppable
 - The Blessing Of Being Filled With The Holy Spirit
 - How To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit
 - Getting Practical About Being Filled With The Holy Spirit
 - A Prayer To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit
 - In Step With The Spirit
 - Holy Spirit Bibliography
- A Lifestyle Of Outreach
- Introverted Evangelism - available by e-mail
- Telling Our Story

Attribute Five – Learn to Love Pages 268-269

- Trust God Assessment (pg. 228)
- Seeking God Assessment (pg. 230)
- Enjoying God’s Acceptance Assessment (pg. 232)
- Partnering with God To Change You Assessment (pg. 234)
- Follow Wear

Attribute Six – Learn to Pray Pages 270-271

- Four Common Lies Chart (pgs. 236-237)
- Learning To Pray Scripture (Assurance Of ... Answered Prayer, Forgiveness & His Strength)
- Fasting
- Fasting Resources
- Spiritual Warfare
 - Introduction
 - Get Ready
 - Purity & Protection
 - Fancy Footwork
 - The Fire Extinguisher
 - The Hopeful Helmet
 - The Sword Of The Spirit
 - Praying In The Spirit
 - Ways To Resist The Devil
 - Theology Of Angels & Demons

Attribute Seven – Learn to Manage Page 272

- Thoughts
- Peace
- Heart
- Financial Reconciliation
- The First Principle
- Principles Of Multiplication
- Reflections About Giving
- Sowing & Reaping
- Greed
- Strapped
- Be Rich
- Give It Up
- Key Money Passages
- Body
- Words
- Empowered To Serve
- Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory
- Myers-Briggs Personality Types
- Myers-Briggs Types At A Glance
- Sacred Pathways Inventory & Descriptions
- Spiritual Gifts Assessment, Key & Descriptions

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Assurance Of Salvation	6
Authority Of Scripture	7
Assurance Of Guidance	8
Assurance Of Victory.....	9
Divine Healing	10
Subjected In Hope.....	19
The Role Of The Holy Spirit Before We Come To Christ	27
The Role Of The Holy Spirit After We Come To Christ.....	32
Pentecost – The Backstory	38
Unstoppable	41
The Blessing Of Being Filled With The Holy Spirit	43
How To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit.....	58
Getting Practical About Being Filled With The Holy Spirit.....	59
A Prayer To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit.....	60
In Step With The Spirit	61
Holy Spirit Bibliography.....	73
A Lifestyle Of Outreach.....	74
Telling Our Story	80
Follow Wear.....	90
Learning To Pray Scripture (Assurance Of Answered Prayer, Forgiveness & His Strength)	92
Fasting	95
Fasting Resources	102
Spiritual Warfare - Introduction.....	104
Get Ready.....	112
Purity & Protection	117
Fancy Footwork	122
The Fire Extinguisher.....	127
The Hopeful Helmet.....	133
The Sword Of The Spirit.....	142
Praying In The Spirit.....	149
Ways To Resist The Devil	157
Theology Of Angels & Demons	163
Thoughts.....	172
Peace	173
Heart.....	175
Financial Reconciliation	178
The First Principle.....	182
Principles Of Multiplication.....	191

Reflections About Giving	193
Sowing & Reaping	195
Greed	196
Strapped	198
Be Rich.....	211
Give It Up.....	221
Key Money Passages	223
Body	231
Words	235
Empowered To Serve.....	237
Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory	239
Myers-Briggs Personality Types.....	241
Myers-Briggs Types At A Glance	243
Sacred Pathways Inventory	247
Sacred Pathways Descriptions	251
Spiritual Gifts Assessment	253
Spiritual Gifts Key	258
Spiritual Gifts Descriptions.....	259

Assurance Of Salvation

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”
(1 John 5:11-12 NIV)

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.”
(1 Peter 3:18 NIV)

“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”
(John 1:12 NIV)

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”
(John 5:24 NIV)

Assurance is based on ...

1. God's Word
2. Remembering When You Were Born Again
3. Changes in Your Life
4. Witness of the Spirit

Authority Of Scripture

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
(2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV)

“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.”
(Psalm 119:18 NIV)

“I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life.”
(Psalm 119:93 NIV)

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”
(Psalm 19:7-8 KJV)

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.”
(Colossians 3:16 NIV)

Assurance Of Guidance

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”
(Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV)

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”
(Psalm 32:8 NIV)

“This is what the Lord says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man,
who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord ...
But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.”
(Jeremiah 17:5,7 NIV)

““For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’
declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
(Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV)

What principle did Jesus use for making decisions?

“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”
(John 6:38 NIV)

What means has God provided for knowing His will?

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”
(Psalm 119:105 NIV)

“What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God,
so that we may understand what God has freely given us.”
(1 Corinthians 2:12 NIV)

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all
without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe
and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed
by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.”
(James 1:5-7 NIV)

Describe a situation in your life in which you are seeking God's guidance.

Assurance Of Victory

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

(1 Cor. 10:13 NIV)

“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.”

(James 1:13, 14 NIV)

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”

(1 John 2:15-16 NASB)

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

(1 Peter 5:8-9 NIV)

“But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.”

(2 Thess. 3:3 NIV)

What are some things you can do to keep temptation from becoming sin?

“How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

(Psalm 119:9, 11 NIV)

“Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world?

Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

(1 John 5:4-5 NIV)

“Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

(Hebrews 4:16 NIV)

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

(James 4:7 NIV)

What is a temptation that frequently seizes you?

Divine Healing

Most of the time when it comes to the issue of healing we have more questions than answers. It is my prayer that we will be able to examine this subject and allow the Lord to provide us with some answers and that we will learn to live by faith when we don't have the answers to every single question. Remember, He is Jehovah Rophe – “The Lord Our Healer.” I want to begin with three thoughts that will help us to maintain a balanced view of Divine Healing ...

- a. Personal experience in NO WAY determines the truth of divine healing.
- b. Human understanding/explanation in NO WAY determines the truth of divine healing.
- c. God's Word ALONE determines the truth of divine healing. Our faith and practice is built on that foundation.

1. One day I will be complete.

²Dear friends, now we are children of God, and we have not yet been shown what we will be in the future. But we know that when Christ comes again, we will be like him, because we will see him as he really is. 1 John 3:2 (NCV)

- a. We were created in a state of perfect health.

⁷And the LORD God formed a man's body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life. And the man became a living person. ⁸Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had created. Genesis 2:7,8 (NLT)

- b. With sin came pain, sickness, and death.

¹⁵The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and care for it. ¹⁶But the LORD God gave him this warning: “You may freely eat any fruit in the garden ¹⁷except fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die.” Genesis 2:15-17 (NLT)

- c. With the pronouncement of the results of sin came the promise of redemption.

¹⁵From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” Genesis 3:15 (NLT)

- d. Even when we are healed in this body, it is imperfect and we still face death.

³⁵Some skeptic is sure to ask, “Show me how resurrection works. Give me a diagram; draw me a picture. What does this ‘resurrection body’ look like?” ³⁶If you look at this question closely, you realize how absurd it is. There are no diagrams for this kind of thing. ³⁷We do have a parallel experience in gardening. You plant a “dead” seed; soon there is a flourishing plant. There is no visual likeness between seed and plant. ³⁸You could never guess what a tomato would look like by looking at a tomato seed.

What we plant in the soil and what grows out of it don't look anything alike. The dead body that we bury in the ground and the resurrection body that comes from it will be dramatically different. ³⁹You will notice that the variety of bodies is stunning. Just as there are different kinds of seeds, there are different kinds of bodies—humans, animals, birds, fish—each unprecedented in its form. ⁴⁰You get a hint at the diversity of resurrection glory by looking at the diversity of bodies not only on earth but in the skies—⁴¹sun, moon, stars—all these varieties of beauty and brightness. And we're only looking at pre-resurrection “seeds”—who can imagine what the resurrection “plants” will be like!

⁴²This image of planting a dead seed and raising a live plant is a mere sketch at best, but perhaps it will help in approaching the mystery of the resurrection body—but only if you keep in mind that when we're raised, we're raised for *good*, alive forever! ⁴³The corpse that's planted is no beauty, but when it's raised, it's glorious. Put in the ground weak, it comes up powerful. ⁴⁴The seed sown is natural; the seed grown is supernatural—same seed, same body, but what a difference from when it goes down in physical mortality to when it is raised up in spiritual immortality!

⁴⁵We follow this sequence in Scripture: The First Adam received life, the Last Adam is a life-giving Spirit. ⁴⁶Physical life comes first, then spiritual—⁴⁷a firm base shaped from the earth, a final completion coming out of heaven. ⁴⁸The First Man was made out of earth, and people since then are earthy; the Second Man was made out of heaven, and people now can be heavenly. ⁴⁹In the same way that we've worked from our earthy origins, let's embrace our heavenly ends. 1 Cor. 15:35-49 (MsgB)

Song: Home Free (Wayne Watson)

2. My wholeness comes at a great expense.

¹Praise the LORD, I tell myself; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. ²Praise the LORD, I tell myself, and never forget the good things he does for me. ³He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. Psalm 103:1-3 (NLT)

¹⁶When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.” Matthew 8:16-17 (NIV)

¹Who has believed our message? To whom will the LORD reveal his saving power? ²My servant grew up in the LORD'S presence like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry and sterile ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. ³He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by. He was despised, and we did not care. ⁴Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down.

And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God for his own sins! ⁵But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! Isaiah 53:1-5 (NLT)

⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

¹Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. ²The soldiers made a crown of long, sharp thorns and put it on his head, and they put a royal purple robe on him. ³“Hail! King of the Jews!” they mocked, and they hit him with their fists . . . So they took Jesus and led him away. ¹⁷Carrying the cross by himself, Jesus went to the place called Skull Hill (in Hebrew, *Golgotha*). ¹⁸There they crucified him. There were two others crucified with him, one on either side, with Jesus between them. John 19:1-3,17-18 (NLT)

³⁰After he took the wine, Jesus said, “It’s done . . . complete.” Bowing his head, he offered up his spirit. John 19:30 (MsgB)

3. I can’t earn a physical healing and there are no formulas to rope God into healing me.

a. Looking on a bronze serpent on a pole.

⁴They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; ⁵they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!” ⁶Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸The LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” ⁹So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived. Numbers 21:4-9 (NIV)

b. Rubbing a lump of figs on the king’s boil.

¹About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: “This is what the LORD says: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness.” ²When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, ³“Remember, O LORD, how I have always tried to be faithful to you and do what is pleasing in your sight.” Then he broke down and wept bitterly. ⁴But before Isaiah had left the middle courtyard, this message came to him from the LORD: ⁵“Go back to Hezekiah, the leader of my people. Tell him, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the LORD. ⁶I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will do this to defend my honor and for the sake of my servant David.’” ⁷Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah’s servants, “Make an ointment from figs and spread it over the boil.” They did this, and Hezekiah recovered! 2 Kings 20:1-7 (NLT)

c. *Touching a leper.*

¹Jesus came down the mountain with the cheers of the crowd still ringing in his ears.

²Then a leper appeared and went to his knees before Jesus, praying, “Master, if you want to, you can heal my body.” ³Jesus reached out and touched him, saying, “I want to. Be clean.” Then and there, all signs of the leprosy were gone. Matthew 8:1-3 (MsgB)

d. *Speaking a word concerning the centurion’s servant.*

⁵As Jesus entered the village of Capernaum, a Roman captain came up in a panic and said, ⁶“Master, my servant is sick. He can’t walk. He’s in terrible pain.” ⁷Jesus said, “I’ll come and heal him.” ⁸“Oh, no,” said the captain. “I don’t want to put you to all that trouble. Just give the order and my servant will be fine. ⁹I’m a man who takes orders and gives orders. I tell one soldier, ‘Go,’ and he goes; to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” ¹⁰Taken aback, Jesus said, “I’ve yet to come across this kind of simple trust in Israel, the very people who are supposed to know all about God and how he works. ¹¹This man is the vanguard of many outsiders who will soon be coming from all directions—streaming in from the east, pouring in from the west, sitting down at God’s kingdom banquet alongside Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ¹²Then those who grew up ‘in the faith’ but had no faith will find themselves out in the cold, outsiders to grace and wondering what happened.” ¹³Then Jesus turned to the captain and said, “Go. What you believed could happen has happened.” At that moment his servant became well. Matthew 8:5-13 (MsgB)

e. *Making mud to place on a man’s eyes.*

¹As he was walking along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²“Master,” his disciples asked him, “why was this man born blind? Was it a result of his own sins or those of his parents?” ³“Neither,” Jesus answered. “But to demonstrate the power of God. ⁴All of us must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent me, for there is little time left before the night falls and all work comes to an end. ⁵But while I am still here in the world, I give it my light.” ⁶Then he spat on the ground and made mud from the spittle and smoothed the mud over the blind man’s eyes, ⁷and told him, “Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam” (the word *Siloam* means “Sent”). So the man went where he was sent and washed and came back seeing! John 9:1-7 (Living)

f. *Spitting in a man’s ear and touching his tongue.*

³²Some people brought to him a man who was deaf and who also had a speech defect. They begged Jesus to lay his hand on him. ³³Jesus took him away from the crowd to be alone with him. He put his fingers into the man’s ears, and after spitting, he touched the man’s tongue. ³⁴Then he looked up to heaven, sighed, and said to the man, “Ephphatha!” which means, “Be opened!” ³⁵At once the man could hear and talk normally. Mark 7:32-35 (GW)

g. Reaching out to touch the garment of Jesus.

²⁴Jesus went with him, the whole crowd tagging along, pushing and jostling him. ²⁵A woman who had suffered a condition of hemorrhaging for twelve years— ²⁶a long succession of physicians had treated her, and treated her badly, taking all her money and leaving her worse off than before— ²⁷had heard about Jesus. She slipped in from behind and touched his robe. ²⁸She was thinking to herself, “If I can put a finger on his robe, I can get well.” ²⁹The moment she did it, the flow of blood dried up. She could feel the change and knew her plague was over and done with. Mark 5:24-29 (MsgB)

h. Casting of Peter’s shadow.

¹⁵As a result of what the apostles were doing, sick people were carried out into the streets and placed on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶And crowds of people came in from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing those who were sick or who had evil spirits in them; and they were all healed. Acts 5:15-16 (TEV)

i. Sending of Paul’s handkerchiefs and aprons.

¹¹And God gave Paul the power to do unusual miracles, ¹²so that even when his handkerchiefs or parts of his clothing were placed upon sick people, they were healed, and any demons within them came out. Acts 19:11-12 (Living)

j. Anointing with oil and praying for the sick.

¹⁴Are you sick? Call the church leaders together to pray and anoint you with oil in the name of the Master. ¹⁵Believing-prayer will heal you, and Jesus will put you on your feet. And if you’ve sinned, you’ll be forgiven—healed inside and out. ¹⁶Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed. The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with. James 5:14-16 (MsgB)

We do not earn God’s healing. It is the direct result of God’s grace and favor on our lives. Methods are God’s choice because He is all-powerful and all knowing. He knows what we need even more than we know what we need. There is no magic formula for healing. That is the purpose of the many methods so that we would learn that no one way is right. The methods change but the source doesn’t. It is a sovereign choice by God Almighty!

4. Every healing serves a purpose in my life.

a. To remind me that His is compassionate.

¹³When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. Matthew 14:13-14 (NIV)

b. *To teach me to give Him all the credit.*

¹Lazarus, who lived in Bethany, the village where Mary and her sister Martha lived, was sick. ²(Mary was the woman who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. Her brother Lazarus was the one who was sick.) ³So the sisters sent a messenger to tell Jesus, “Lord, your close friend is sick.” ⁴When Jesus heard the message, he said, “His sickness won’t result in death. Instead, this sickness will bring glory to God so that the Son of God will receive glory through it.” John 11:1-4 (GW)

c. *To build and stretch my faith.*

²Suddenly, a man with leprosy approached Jesus. He knelt before him, worshipping. “Lord,” the man said, “if you want to, you can make me well again.” Matthew 8:2 (NLT)

d. *To demonstrate that He’s listening to my prayers.*

³²A deaf man with a speech impediment was brought to him, and the people begged Jesus to lay his hands on the man to heal him. ³³Jesus led him to a private place away from the crowd. He put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then, spitting onto his own fingers, he touched the man’s tongue with the spittle. ³⁴And looking up to heaven, he sighed and commanded, “Be opened!” ³⁵Instantly the man could hear perfectly and speak plainly! Mark 7:32-35 (NLT)

e. *To bring others around me to salvation.*

³²While Peter was traveling from place to place, he visited the Lord’s followers who lived in the town of Lydda. ³³There he met a man named Aeneas, who for eight years had been sick in bed and could not move. ³⁴Peter said to Aeneas, “Jesus Christ has healed you! Get up and make up your bed.” Right away he stood up. ³⁵Many people in the towns of Lydda and Sharon saw Aeneas and became followers of the Lord. Acts 9:32-35 (CEV)

f. *To create a dependency upon Him.*

⁷I (Paul) will say this: because these experiences I had were so tremendous, God was afraid I might be puffed up by them; so I was given a physical condition which has been a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to hurt and bother me and prick my pride.

⁸Three different times I begged God to make me well again. ⁹Each time he said, “No. But I am with you; that is all you need. My power shows up best in weak people.” Now I am glad to boast about how weak I am; I am glad to be a living demonstration of Christ’s power, instead of showing off my own power and abilities. ¹⁰Since I know it is all for Christ’s good, I am quite happy about “the thorn,” and about insults and hardships, persecutions and difficulties; for when I am weak, then I am strong--the less I have, the more I depend on him. 2 Cor. 12:7-10 (Living)

²³Don’t drink only water. You (Timothy) ought to drink a little wine for the sake of your stomach because you are sick so often. 1 Tim. 5:23 (NLT)

²⁰Erastus stayed at Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick at Miletus. 2 Tim. 4:20 (NLT)

5. I can be used to help restore others.

¹He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness ... ⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Matthew 10:1-8 (NIV)

¹⁵And then he told them, “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere. ¹⁶Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. ¹⁷These signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak new languages. ¹⁸They will be able to handle snakes with safety, and if they drink anything poisonous, it won’t hurt them. They will be able to place their hands on the sick and heal them.” Mark 16:15-18 (NLT)

6. I should be mindful of the things that can hinder my wholeness.

a. Un-confessed sin

Confession is essential to be in a position to receive a healing from the Lord.

b. Demonic oppression/bondage

¹¹A woman who was possessed by a spirit was there. The spirit had disabled her for 18 years. She was hunched over and couldn’t stand up straight. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her to come to him and said, “Woman, you are free from your disability.” ¹³He placed his hands on her, and she immediately stood up straight and praised God. Luke 13:11-13 (GW)

c. Fear

⁵Trust GOD from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. ⁶Listen for GOD’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track. ⁷Don’t assume that you know it all. Run to GOD! Run from evil! ⁸Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life! Proverbs 3:5-8 (MsgB)

d. Past disappointments that undermine faith (Neither gave up when Jesus came by.)

²⁶She had suffered very much from many doctors and had spent all the money she had, but instead of improving, she was getting worse. Mark 5:26 (NCV)

A woman with hemorrhages for 12 years and had become broke from spending all her money on doctors that hadn’t been able to help.

⁵A man was lying there who had been sick for thirty-eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw the man and knew that he had been sick for such a long time, Jesus asked him, “Do you want to be well?” ⁷The sick man answered, “Sir, there is no one to help me get into the pool when the water starts moving. While I am coming to the water, someone else always gets in before me.” John 5:5-7 (NCV)

e. *Other people*

⁴⁸Many of the people scolded him and told him to be quiet. But he shouted even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Mark 10:48 (TEV)

f. *Inaccurate/Unbiblical Teaching*

¹Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there.

²Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. ³Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” ⁴Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. ⁵He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Mark 3:1-5 (NIV)

¹³Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.” Mark 7:13 (NIV)

God works through medicine as well as direct intervention, and our faith is not so much in medicine per se as in the Creator of medicine.

For those who teach we shouldn't go to physicians ...

²Then Joseph directed the *physicians* in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the *physicians* embalmed him ... Genesis 50:2 (NIV)

¹²In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the *physicians*. 2 Chron. 16:12 (NIV)

²²Are there no healing ointments in Gilead? Isn't there a *doctor* in the house? So why can't something be done to heal and save my dear, dear people? Jeremiah 8:22 (MsgB)

Jesus considered it normal to consult physicians ...

¹²Jesus, overhearing, shot back, “Who needs a *doctor*: the healthy or the sick? Matthew 9:12 (MsgB)

¹³And they cast out many demons and healed many sick people, anointing them with *olive oil*. Mark 6:13 (NLT)

³⁴Kneeling beside him the Samaritan soothed his wounds with *medicine* and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his donkey and walked along beside him till they came to an inn, where he nursed him through the night. Luke 10:34 (Living)

g. *Unbelief*

³“He’s just a carpenter, Mary’s boy, and a brother of James and Joseph, Judas and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.” And they were offended! ⁴Then Jesus told them, “A prophet is honored everywhere except in his hometown and among his relatives and by his own family.” ⁵And because of their unbelief he couldn’t do any mighty miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶And he could hardly accept the fact that they wouldn’t believe in him. Then he went out among the villages, teaching. Mark 6:3-6 (Living)

¹⁹Jesus said [to his disciples], “Oh, what tiny faith you have; how much longer must I be with you until you believe? How much longer must I be patient with you? Bring the boy to me.” Mark 9:19 (Living)

²³“If I can?” Jesus asked. “*Anything* is possible if you have faith.” ²⁴The father instantly replied, “I *do* have faith; oh, help me to have *more!*” Mark 9:23-24 (Living)

Subjected In Hope

John Piper – December 27, 2009

There are two things you do when someone is suffering. The first thing is you hug a lot. You don't talk a lot; you just hug a lot. You're just there.

But if you have lived any length of time and have suffered much or thought much about it, you have to have a place stand when you're hugging. If the ground starts to give way underneath, all the hugging in the world doesn't help. Hugging can get very thin and very shallow and very sentimental and it doesn't work over the long haul only to hug. There has got to be a rock solid, biblical place to stand. And one of the ways the Bible gives that is by putting suffering in a global context.

There's a passage of Scripture that does this ... Romans 8:18-25. The question you should be asking as I read this over you is, "How does the apostle Paul help me suffer well by putting suffering in a global, eternal and universal context?"

We often ask the question, "*If I'm going to suffer, what's the meaning of my suffering right now in this moment? What might it do for me in this moment to help me?*"

I'm stepping back from that question to the much bigger question of, "*Why is it in the world? Why is this history of ours a conveyor belt of corpses?*"

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.¹⁹ The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.²⁰

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

Romans 8:18-25 (NIV)

The verse just preceding this paragraph says to followers of Jesus ...

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

Romans 8:17 (NIV)

In other words, provided we suffer with Him, we will be glorified with Him. So having said that the pathway to your glory beyond this life is suffering, now verses 18-25 tell you that **it's worth it**. The way he shows you it's worth it is by putting it in this creation oriented, global context.

It is so crucial that you have a head and a heart that can embrace this teaching, because you will bail on Christianity in the moment if you don't. Many people lose a child, get cancer, their mom gets killed in a car wreck, they lose their job, their marriage breaks up and they look up and say, *"If that's the way You treat these years of faithfulness, I'm out of here."*

Nobody suffered more than the disciples. Paul lived a lifetime of suffering as did Jesus. To Peter Jesus spoke these words ...

"I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

John 21:18 (NIV)

We'll all bail on being a follower of Christ unless we have a biblical perspective from this paragraph and others that help you come to terms with why this world is the way it is.

Let's walk through the text by pointing out **three ways that Paul puts our suffering in global context and gives meaning to it**. Then we'll walk through it again and look at **six promises** that are given in that global context **so that we won't bail** out on the faith in view of the fact that God is so unbelievably realistic with us in telling us that **it isn't going to get better in this life**.

1. The Whole Creation Groans.

"For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

Romans 8:22 (NLT)

Picture the whole creation groaning.

"... the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay."

Romans 8:21 (NLT)

So for now, till that freedom is coming, the way that he describes creation is slavery or bondage to corruption, decay, breaking down, things going wrong. It's entropy where bodies break, minds break, marriages break, things are corrupt.

"Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse."

Romans 8:20 (NLT)

So you've got corruption, groaning, suffering and futility. Paul is piling up all these words to describe the whole creation. There is no place in this universe where there is not groaning if there were somebody there to groan.

2. The Whole Of History Groans.

It's not just spatially or geographically extensive, but it's the whole history.

“Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.”

Romans 8:18 (NLT)

What is “suffer now” referring to? Notice the temporal references ...

“Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope,
²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in
glorious freedom from death and decay.”

Romans 8:20-21 (NLT)

Past tense ... it happened. This world in suffering, decay, corruption, bondage and groaning happened. There was a point where it happened.

Future tense ... there is a point in the future coming where it won't look like this anymore, there won't be devastation, disease, mental illness, depression or brain tumors anymore. That will be over! There is coming a point where this present time stops.

Now number three is kind of a qualification of number two, because it's not quite all of history. If it had a beginning, then there was something on the other side. We don't know how long that was, where it wasn't this way. Over here it's this horrible, groaning, corrupt, slavery, suffering way, and over there it wasn't. What was that? When did that happen? What went wrong?

3. God Made A Judgment Call.

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly,
but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ...”

Romans 8:20 (NASB)

This is a reference to Genesis 3, where everything came down. It was beautiful, glorious and everything was good. God looks down at His creation and calls it very good. There was no groaning, no futility, no corruption, no suffering. It was very good. And after chapter 3, we have disease, tornadoes, floods, epidemics, sin, wickedness and war.

God did this in HOPE. God didn't just ordain some sort of natural law; He judicially sentenced the world to what it is today. It was a judgment on the world in response to sin.

You have to have a very high view of God's holiness, justice, glory, deservedness and worth and you have to have a very clear view of the outrage and the horror of sin and rebellion to keep this world from looking like an overreaction to Adam and Eve. Most people, if they try to come to terms with the problem of suffering, will say, “That's an overreaction.” Because it just doesn't make any sense if you don't know how great God is. It doesn't make any sense if God isn't the most important reality in the universe.

Until God is that central and that massive for you, God's response to sin makes no sense. It is simply an overreaction. It's like a judge telling a guy who stole a loaf of bread, *"Your head's coming off." And everybody is like, "Whoa, wait a minute. Maybe a fine."*

Paul says God subjected the creation to futility because it was right to do this to the creation that had rebelled against Him. And as painful as it is to admit, we're still rebelling today, aren't we? It's just more sophisticated and more subtle at times. We do it in nice, squeaky clean, suburban forms and then gross, criminal forms, but either way, it is not an overreaction for God to say, *"This world will stay what it is until My Son comes. And it will experience pain, suffering, groaning, corruption, bondage and decay, because that's how serious sin is."*

The ultimate global meaning of all suffering is that sin is ghastly. Every time you look at some horrific suffering, you should think, *"That's how serious sin is."* Our sin is the corporate reality, from Adam and Eve until we're perfected at the last day. Our sin is the corporate reality that is being documented as horrible - all the junk we experience - naturally, systemically and culturally are a dramatic statement from the Judge of the universe saying, *"That's how horrific sin is."*

So instead of getting in God's face with your fist when you suffer, you should be broken by all suffering to say what Jesus said.

"Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.² Jesus answered, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?'³ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.⁴ Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them--do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?'⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

Luke 13:1-5 (NIV)

We want an explanation for the suffering. We don't want to be told we're going to die. But Jesus didn't sugar coat things with them, did He? (**Pause**) The point is that God has put suffering in a global perspective so we have some sense of why the world is the way it is, including our own suffering.

"And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us."

Romans 8:23 (NLT)

Notice all the emphasis Paul puts on "we" and "us". When the gospel comes to us, it comes with spectacularly good news. Your sins are forgiven because of Christ. Righteousness in Christ is provided that you could never live out. By faith alone, you can be justified. By faith alone, you can have eternal life. By faith alone, you can have fellowship with the living God. This is glorious news, and the natural response for us would be to say, *"Yes. And all my suffering is gone in Christ. My curse is lifted. As far as the curse is found, He came to bear my load."*

Verse 23 is there to say, *“No, even we who have the Holy Spirit, even we who are united to Jesus, whose sins are forgiven, who will have eternal life, who are totally justified, who are so loved by God that He works absolutely everything for our good, even we groan waiting for the redemption of this thing, this old, glasses needing, balding, aching thing called the body.”*

The prosperity gospel, the “name it and claim it” folks, they don’t get that “already of the kingdom” doesn’t include everything. Verse 25 says we’ve got to wait with patience.

“But if we look forward to something we don’t yet have,
we must wait patiently and confidently.”

Romans 8:25 (NLT)

That’s the global context that provides this tremendous place to stand where we can go, *“Alright, God’s not out of control. He’s got a plan. He knows what He’s doing. This all has some judicial, just sense about it.”*

Let’s move to the six magnificent promises ...

1. After this present time, we are going to see an all-satisfying beauty.

“I consider that what we suffer at this present time cannot be compared at all with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.”

Romans 8:18 (TEV)

All beautiful, overwhelming, powerful greatness out there and all glory will be revealed to me. Does that make you say, *“Yes! It’s worth it.”*

We all want to see greatness ... mountains, canyons, oceans, epic movies, inspiring music, etc. There’s something in us that wants bigness, that wants greatness, that wants to see it, get drawn into it. The meaning of that is God. This is God’s form written. This is made for God. This longing inside, this aching for greatness, that’s all about the image of God in you. So this text is saying, *“That’s coming, and it’s coming in a way that will absolutely blow you away.”*

“Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

John 17:24 (NASB)

2. After this present time, we are going to be revealed.

For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.”

Romans 8:19 (NLT)

What does that mean? Verse 18 says that the glory is going to be revealed to us. Verse 19 says that we’re going to be revealed. What does that mean? Are we ready to be revealed?

I think it means that we don't look like His children right now. But there will come a day when the little glimpses of love, worship, kindness, patience and gentleness others see in us will be fully developed. Our bodies will no longer be broken.

In the meantime, we don't have the capacities to enjoy right now what we are promised. We enjoy them a little bit, but there is coming a day when all of you broken people who grew up in homes that were totally ill equipped to help you get ready to enjoy beauty, greatness, righteousness or just simply "enjoy" period, that will all be fixed and you will have emotional capacities in you that will send you flying because of what you will see in Christ mainly and reflected from Him in each other. We will be revealed!

3. The ultimate design of the futility that we're in right now is hope.

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly,
but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ...”

Romans 8:20 (NASB)

Whenever you feel overwhelmed by the futility of your job, marriage, children, health, don't let those two words at the end go. We're here in hope. We've been forgiven, accepted, loved, justified, we've been promised eternal life, but right now there's so much futility, so much breaks, goes wrong ... even when you're walking in obedience.

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us,
for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’”

Galatians 3:13 (NIV)

When it says that Christ became a curse for us you might think, “*Well then, the curse is lifted, and we shouldn't die. Because death is what God promised in response to sin, and my sins have been covered by Jesus. So therefore I don't die. So what's with death?*”

My answer to that really good, difficult question is, *My death and my suffering, your death (as a Christian) and your suffering is no longer God's curse. God is no longer punishing, God is no longer in wrath, God is no longer opposed to you. God is 100% for everyone who is in Christ by faith alone, not 99.9% for you and 0.1% mad at you and He'll give you a disease with that 0.1%. That's not the way to think. In Christ Jesus, we are justified, accepted, forgiven and loved so that God never has wrath for us. He never is punitive; He only is purifying. So death and suffering become purifying and a passage on to glory.*

4. All of creation will be freed from the misery it's in.

“... the creation looks forward to the day when it will join
God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.”

Romans 8:21 (NLT)

The creation itself will be freed and brought into your glory. Don't think that because this creation is so big that you were made for it. You weren't. It was made for you.

God will first redeem His children, give them new bodies, emotions, capacities for sensing pleasures a thousand times greater than the biggest sexual pleasure you have ever thought possible, and then He will make the world new in a suitable way to make us belong there. You are His focus. And the creation is going to come into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. What God has in plan for believers is coming, and it's beyond anything you can dream!

5. **The miseries of the universe are not death throws but birth pains.**

“For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”

Romans 8:22 (NLT)

Paul looks out at volcanoes and tsunamis and cancer and tumors and groaning and screaming and pain everywhere, and he says, “*Like a mom in labor.*” **If you're in the hospital and you hear a scream across the hall, it makes a huge difference whether you're in the maternity unit or the oncology unit.** You might say, “*No it doesn't, because pain is pain.*” Well, that's true. In one sense, pain is pain, but every mom and ever dying cancer patient knows pain is not just pain. There's pain that brings life, and there's pain that issues death. And Paul is looking at the whole world and he's saying, “*I'll give you an interpretation of what I see. Birth pains.*”

God is going somewhere with this. God is going to bring a new heaven and a new Earth, and this present suffering is like a woman in labor, and what she's going to give birth to is that. All of your sufferings, including your death, are birth pains. You're going right into life!

6. **God cares about your body.**

Although, it may not feel like it in times of terrible pain.

“And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.”

Romans 8:23 (NLT)

You will NEVER hear me say, ‘*You know, if you had enough faith, you wouldn't be here.*’ You WILL hear me say, ‘*I'm with you in your groaning as long as it takes to help you keep the faith. Trust Jesus and either be healed by His miracle now or enter into the final healing in the age to come. I'm with you. You're groaning, and I'm going to groan with you.*’

So let me close with a few practical words ...

Pray for people's healing. I lean into the sovereignty of God. I believe God rules and governs everything. I don't know how I'd find meaning in the horrors of life if I didn't believe God had purposes in what He was doing. Some people take that to an extreme and say, “*If someone has cancer than that's just that. Que será, será. God is sovereign. Deal with it.*”

Instead, we should gather together, fast, pray and ask God to take it away. That's no compromise of the sovereignty of God. Say, "God, heal him/her!" That's what I'd pray, and I invite you to pray that way. I think there is wisdom in praying for someone to be healed until they tell them to stop (based on 2 Corinthians 12 - "My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in weakness."). Until you hear that from God, don't stop.

Ask God for enough faith. I believe that there's such thing as a gift of faith, just as there's a gift of miracles and a gift of healing. These exist, and some of you may have that gift for another person. Don't badger others with that gift, okay?

Keep your eyes on the cross. I've talked so far about the big global picture of suffering. Whatever else you know about suffering or don't understand about suffering, you know this: God, in Christ, took it on. Didn't He? God, in Christ, suffered more than you will ever suffer.

The meaning of the cross, the meaning of the lashes, the pulling of the beard, the spitting on His face, the spearing in His side, the laughter, the mockery, the meaning of all that was to say ...

"This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses,
for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin."
Hebrews 4:15 (NLT)

So keep your eye square on the redemptive work of Christ for you on the cross because right there sovereignty and suffering meet like nowhere else.

When God undertakes to do a great thing, He breaks people. Do you remember Gideon? He took 10,000 soldiers to go up against the enemy, and God said, "Too many." And He whittled it down to 300. Keep yourself very humble. That's the way God does it. A wounded shepherd is the best shepherd. A wounded shepherd can't be uppity and strut around and start to swagger and go, "I've got this thing under control here. We've got this great church." That's just over. And now that it's over, what an amazing thing God may be pleased to do.

Let's Pray!

The Role Of The Holy Spirit Before We Come To Christ

It has been my experience that as we continue to grow there are a lot of people who are coming into the church and they're very curious about the Holy Spirit. They want to know who He is and what He does.

Even those of us who have been in the Pentecostal experience for a long time may have questions about this third member of the Trinity. Some think that when you come to an A/G church that all we talk about is speaking in tongues. Well, if you've been around RCC very long you know that that is simply not true. There is so much more to the ministry of the Holy Spirit than simply tongue talking!

Most of us are not fully confident in our ability to describe the work and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. For a lot of us the Holy Spirit is a mystery. **(My story – Methodist, Jesus, Salvation & Discipleship)**

By way of introduction I want to make sure that we understand that the Holy Spirit is a person. He is not an "it" but is a person. Just as God the Father is a person and Jesus Christ is a person ... so the Spirit is a person. He is not a lesser God nor is He a part of God. Rather, He is God Himself ... co-equal ... co-eternal ... co-existent!

The Holy Spirit did not just show up in the Book of Acts. He's been there since the beginning ...

“The earth was empty, a formless mass cloaked in darkness.
And the Spirit of God was hovering over its surface.”

Genesis 1:2 (NLT)

Hebrew Word for Spirit - rûah; Phonetic Pronunciation: **roo'-akh** (ruwach); wind; by resemblance breath, i.e. a sensible (or even violent) exhalation; figurative life —Strong's

“I have filled him (*Bezaleel – craftsman designing the Tabernacle*) with the Spirit of God,
with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts ...”

Exodus 31:3 (NIV)

“I will come down and speak with you (*70 Elders*) there,
and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them.
They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone.”

Numbers 11:17 (NIV)

“The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him.”

Judges 3:10 (NIV)

“Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet,
summoning the Abiezrites to follow him.”

Judges 6:34 (NIV)

“The Spirit of the LORD came upon him (*Samson*) in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat. But he told neither his father nor his mother what he had done.”

Judges 14:6 (NIV)

The Holy Spirit was with Saul for a time and then He left Saul and came upon David. The pages of Scripture record in vivid detail how amazing He is. He is in Genesis and He's in Revelation ...

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”

Rev. 22:17 (NIV)

Greek Word for Spirit: pneuma; Phonetic Pronunciation: pnyoo'-mah, breath, breathe, wind, a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze; —Strong's

“But it is actually best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Counselor won't come. If I do go away, he will come because I will send him to you.”

John 16:7 (NLT)

Greek Word for Counselor – paraklētos; Phonetic Pronunciation: par-ak'-lay-tos; comforter, advocate, an intercessor, consoler—Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary

The Holy Spirit is the part of God who is actively working in our lives today. The Father and the Son do things in our lives but they do them through the Holy Spirit. He is God working in our lives today.

Let's explore what the Holy Spirit does in a person's life BEFORE they come to Christ. I believe it is critically important that we understand the ministry and the work of the Holy Spirit during this time in a person's life so that we can partner with Him in reaching our generation.

When we comprehend just how powerful He is prior to a person crossing the line of faith (salvation) it will help us understand how amazingly powerful He is after a person has entered a personal relationship with Christ.

I want us to consider four things the Spirit of God does in our lives to bring us to the point of understanding our need for someone to forgive us and become our leader.

1. The Holy Spirit Shows Me My Sin

“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”

John 16:8 (NASB-U)

Conviction is an awareness of guilt regarding my personal sin. When you are convicted you feel guilty. The Spirit of God brings us to a personal awareness of our own sinfulness.

Only God can make you truly aware of your own guilt. Deep conviction is a work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to God ... it's not an effort to Condemn!

“One of the things I love about the Holy Spirit is that sometimes His conviction is just a gentle grain of sand that settles into our hearts where it scratches and irritates until we finally do something about it.”
(Nancy Ortberg, pg. 48, *Unleashing The Power of Rubber Bands*)

2. The Holy Spirit Helps Me To Repent

Repentance is the desire to turn from sin and to turn to God. It's not enough to simply turn from sin ... that's **reformation** (e.g. alcoholic turns from alcohol but not to God he's only reformed himself.). Peter's report concerning Cornelius ...

“When the others heard this, all their objections were answered and they began praising God. They said, ‘God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of turning from sin and receiving eternal life.’”
Acts 11:18 (NLT)

“Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth ...”
2 Tim. 2:25 (NIV)

Before you and I ever came to God ... He was working on us. He was bringing conviction and shortcomings became obvious to you. He began to put a desire within you to repent. Jesus knew that this was the way it works ...

“For people can't come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them from the dead.”
John 6:44 (NLT)

“It is the Spirit who gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But some of you don't believe me.’ (For Jesus knew from the beginning who didn't believe, and he knew who would betray him.) Then he said, ‘That is what I meant when I said that people can't come to me unless the Father brings them to me.’”
John 6:63-65 (NLT)

If you have committed your life to Christ and are a genuine follower of Him then you have already responded to the Holy Spirit's working in your life!

There is a third way the Spirit of God works in our lives prior to salvation ...

3. The Holy Spirit Opens The Truth To Me

He empowers preaching and His Word to begin to penetrate your mind and your heart so that you begin to soften your heart and your life begins to change.

“And Jesus Christ was revealed as God’s Son by his baptism in water and by shedding his blood on the cross—not by water only, but by water and blood.

And the Spirit also gives us the testimony that this is true.”

1 John 5:6 (NLT)

In other words, when I’m listening to a sermon ... a podcast ... watching a DVD ... or simply reading in the privacy of my home ... the Spirit of God is working to help me understand what the truth is. Let’s look at some examples of this ...

“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”

Acts 2:37 (NIV)

“You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵²Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him-- ⁵³you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it.” ⁵⁴*When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him.* ⁵⁵But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”

Acts 7:51-55 (NIV)

“The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. ²²News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.”

Acts 11:21-24 (NIV)

There is a fourth way the Holy Spirit works in our lives to bring us to God ...

4. The Holy Spirit Changes My Heart

The Holy Spirit is the one who brings about regeneration. When you say that Jesus lives in your heart that is actually the Holy Spirit who lives within you. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father and the Holy Spirit is the one who lives inside of you.

“Life in the Spirit is the exchange of breath.”

(John Wesley)

“Jesus replied, ‘I assure you, unless you are born again, you can never see the Kingdom of God.’ ⁴‘What do you mean?’ exclaimed Nicodemus. ‘How can an old man go back into his mother’s womb and be born again?’ ⁵Jesus replied, ‘The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven.”

John 3:1-6 (NLT)

“But then God our Savior showed us his kindness and love. ⁵He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit. ⁶He generously poured out the Spirit upon us because of what Jesus Christ our Savior did. ⁷He declared us not guilty because of his great kindness. And now we know that we will inherit eternal life.”

Titus 3:4-7 (NLT)

I want us all to understand that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is a lot more than people simply talking in tongues. He is involved in redeeming people’s lives! And that is the whole purpose of why we seek to be filled with the Spirit. It is ultimately so that we might be witnesses to this lost world!

The Holy Spirit is not just about a tingling feeling ... He’s about rescuing souls from eternal separation from God ... and you and I need to be about His business!

“The Spirit transforms human liabilities and transcends human abilities.”

Let’s Pray!

- Convict us of sin.
- Grant us a repentant heart.
- Show us the truths we’ve been missing or avoiding.
- Change us from the inside out.

The Role Of The Holy Spirit After We Come To Christ

Let's focus on how the Spirit of God works in our lives AFTER we cross the line of faith. We're going to look at four ways He works in our lives on an ongoing basis.

“But it is actually best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Counselor won't come. If I do go away, he will come because I will send him to you.”

John 16:7 (NLT)

“But when the Father sends the Counselor as my representative—
and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit—
he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I myself have told you.”

John 14:26 (NLT)

I want us to examine the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives after salvation because I have found it too often the case that after a person comes to Christ they try and live life in their own strength and by their own power and that is not at all what the Bible teaches us we are to do. I believe this happens because we don't know much about the Holy Spirit and we don't avail ourselves of the power that He offers us on a consistent basis.

*“The ultimate enemy of Pentecost is ‘my best efforts.’”
(Earl Creps)*

“Oh, foolish Galatians! What magician has cast an evil spell on you? For you used to see the meaning of Jesus Christ's death as clearly as though I had shown you a signboard with a picture of Christ dying on the cross. ²Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by keeping the law? Of course not, for the Holy Spirit came upon you only after you believed the message you heard about Christ. ³Have you lost your senses? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?”

Galatians 3:1-3 (NLT)

1. The Holy Spirit Draws Me Close To God

(Intimacy)

He is the vehicle whereby you and I begin to build a relationship with God the Father through Jesus and what He did on Calvary.

“God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go! This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" ¹⁵ ¹⁶God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children.”

Romans 8:14-16 (Msg)

What Paul is saying there is that when you come became a Christian the Spirit made you a part of the Family. Once you come to Christ the Holy Spirit begins to confirm in your spirit that you are a child of the Father.

In the same way the Holy Spirit works that way in our lives. When we begin to follow Christ He draws us into intimacy with God and reassures us that we are sons and daughters of God. He helps us build a relationship and encourages us to turn to God ... our Father!

2. The Holy Spirit Enables Me To Understand Scripture

He makes the Word of God alive to us. Having intimacy with God is a wonderful thing but you must have a two-way conversation to have a healthy relationship. One of the ways that God speaks to us is through His Word. Part of the Holy Spirit's ministry is to open up the Word of God so we can comprehend it.

“But you are not like that, for the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and all of you know the truth. ²⁷But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you all things, and what he teaches is true—it is not a lie. So continue in what he has taught you, and continue to live in Christ.”

1 John 2:20,27 (NLT)

“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. ²⁷As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his *anointing* teaches you about all things and as that *anointing* is real, not counterfeit--just as it has taught you, remain in him.”

1 John 2:20,27 (NIV)

chrisma, *khris'-mah*; an *unguent* or *smearing*, i.e. (figurative) the special *endowment* (“chrism”) of the Holy Spirit :- *anointing*, unction. Literally means “ointment.”

Illustration: Holy Spirit – Like An Ointment

What do you do with an ointment? It's something you rub onto your skin and it's absorbed into the skin. In the same way the Holy Spirit is like an ointment. He's absorbed into your being. He begins to permeate your entire being. He begins to teach you God's Word.

“But we know these things because God has revealed them to us by his Spirit, and his Spirit searches out everything and shows us even God's deep secrets. ¹¹No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. ¹²And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. ¹³When we tell you this, we do not use words of human wisdom. We speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths. ¹⁴But people who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means. ¹⁵We who have the Spirit understand these things, but others can't understand us at all. ¹⁶How could they? For, ‘Who can know what the Lord is thinking? Who can give him counsel?’ But we can understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.”

1 Cor. 2:10-16 (NLT)

What this verse is saying is that a person apart from God cannot understand all that God has for them. It's impossible!

The Holy Spirit not only authored the Bible ... He helps us understand it. Now we need to use sound Biblical interpretation methods but as a general rule you can begin to “get it” with the assistance of God’s Spirit.

“But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. He won't draw attention to himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said.”

John 16:13 (Msg)

“The Friend, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send at my request, will make everything plain to you. He will remind you of all the things I have told you.”

John 14:26 (Msg)

3. The Holy Spirit Focuses My Attention On Jesus

He glorifies Christ in our lives. He helps us to focus on Christ so we can know Him better. How does He do that?

“I will send you the Helper from the Father; he is the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father. When he comes, he will tell about me (*Jesus*).”

John 15:26 (NCV)

“When the Holy Spirit, who is truth, comes, he shall guide you into all truth, for he will not be presenting his own ideas, but will be passing on to you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. ¹⁴He shall praise me and bring me great honor by showing you my glory. ¹⁵All the Father's glory is mine; this is what I mean when I say that he will show you my glory.”

John 16:13-15 (Living)

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his (*Jesus*) likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

2 Cor. 3:18 (NIV)

As we gaze on God and on His glory we become more like Him. This is a part of the work of the Spirit in our lives! He wants you and I to see Jesus because His example and life bring change!

4. The Holy Spirit Guides Me Into God’s Will

He shows us the will of God. It’s not a secret. He doesn’t just give you information ... He produces a pattern and begins to guide you.

“Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.”

Psalms 143:10 (NIV)

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the *Holy Spirit* said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ ³So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

Acts 13:2-3 (NIV)

“Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the *Holy Spirit* from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the *Spirit of Jesus* would not allow them to. ⁸So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. ⁹During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ ¹⁰After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

Acts 16:6-10 (NIV)

5. The Holy Spirit cultivates Christlike character in me.

“... as the Spirit of the Lord works within us,
we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more.”

2 Cor. 3:18 (NLT)

You cannot reproduce the character of Jesus on your own strength. New Year’s resolutions, willpower, and best intentions are not enough. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to make the changes God wants to make in our lives ...

“God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him
and the power to do what pleases him.”

Philip. 2:13 (NLT)

Christlikeness is not produced by imitation, but by inhabitation. We allow Christ to live through us.

“For this is the secret: Christ lives in you ...”

Col. 1:27 (NLT)

How does this happen in real life? Through the choices we make. We choose to do the right thing in situations and then trust God’s Spirit to give us His power, love, faith and wisdom to do it. Since God’s Spirit lives inside of us, these things are always available for the asking.

And it is up to us to cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives. While effort has nothing to do with your salvation, it has much to do with your spiritual growth.

“Let us therefore *make every effort* to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”

Romans 14:19 (NIV)

“*Make every effort* to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

Ephes. 4:3 (NIV)

“*Make every effort* to give yourself to God as the kind of person he will accept.
Be a worker who is not ashamed and who uses the true teaching in the right way.”

2 Tim. 2:15 (NCV)

“Let us, therefore, *make every effort* to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.”

Hebrews 4:11 (NIV)

“*Make every effort* to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

Hebrews 12:14 (NIV)

“For this very reason, *make every effort* to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge.”

2 Peter 1:5 (NIV)

“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, *make every effort* to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”

2 Peter 3:14 (NIV)

Becoming like Christ is a long, slow process of growth. Spiritual maturity is neither instant nor automatic; it is a gradual, progressive development that will take the rest of your life.

“This will continue until we are ... mature, just as Christ is, and we will be completely like him.”

Ephes. 4:13 (CEV)

You and I are a work in progress. Your spiritual transformation in developing the character of Jesus will take the rest of your life. It will only be finished when you enter eternity or when Jesus returns.

Spiritual growth takes intentional commitment. You must want to grow, decide to grow, make an effort to grow and persist in growing. Christlikeness is the result of making Christlike choices and depending on His Spirit to help you fulfill those choices. Once you decide to get serious about becoming like Christ, you must begin to act in new ways. You can be certain that the Holy Spirit will help you with these changes.

“Continue to *work out* your salvation with fear and trembling,
¹³for it is God who *works in* you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

Philip. 2:12-13 (NIV)

This verse shows the two parts of spiritual growth: “work out” and “work in.” The “work out” is your responsibility, and the “work in” is God’s role. Spiritual growth is a collaborative effort between you and the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit works with us, not just in us.

This verse, written to believers, is not about how to be saved, but how to grow. It does not say, “work for” your salvation, because you can’t add anything to what Jesus already did. During a physical “workout,” you exercise to develop your body, not to get a body.

When you “work out” a puzzle, you already have all the pieces – your task is to put them together. Farmers “work” the land, not to get the land, but to develop what they already have. God has given you a new life; now you are responsible to develop it “with fear and trembling.” That means to take your spiritual growth seriously.

“And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His *very own* image in ever increasing splendor *and* from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit.”

2 Cor. 3:18 (Amp)

“And we also thank God ... that when you received the message of God [which you heard] from us, you welcomed it not as the word of [mere] men, but as it truly is, the Word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe [exercising its superhuman power in those who adhere to and trust in and rely on it].”

1 Thes. 2:13 (Amp)

We take spiritual growth seriously around RCC. That’s why we’re dedicated to helping you take the necessary steps to develop disciplines that will help you grow (The Life You’ve Always Wanted), to **find your spiritual gifts and use them (SHAPE)**, to learn to share the love of God the way that is most comfortable for you (Contagious Christianity), and through it all help you to understand that everything in your life is an act of worship before God (Worshipper).

“But God has given us his Spirit. That's why we don't think the same way that the people of this world think.”

1 Cor. 2:12 (CEV)

Let’s Pray!

- Draw us close.
- Give us understanding.
- Show us Jesus!
- Help us submit to Your will.
- Shape us and form us into your character.

Pentecost: The Backstory

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs--we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

Acts 2:1-13 (NIV)

The account of Israel being rescued/released/liberated from slavery ...

“This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.”

Exodus 12:2-3 (NIV)

Passover asks the question ... Can I get a fresh start? Can tomorrow be different? In Passover we see clearly the God of hope.

“Many other people went up with them,
as well as large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds.”

Exodus 12:38 (NIV)

ereb(v) rav – mixed multitude (motley crew, conglomeration, rag tag), all sorts of people were invited into this liberation

As slaves they're weren't free until Pharaoh was eliminated. In Exodus 14 & 15 they travel & celebrate their new-found freedom. After their defining moment they travel for 50 days (Pentecost).

“That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians,
and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore.”

Exodus 14:30 (NIV)

In Exodus 19 ten words are given and they now have an identity, these people are called to show the world what God's saving love looks like.

“In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—
on the very day--they came to the Desert of Sinai.”

Exodus 19:1 (NIV)

“On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, ¹⁹ and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.”

Exodus 19:16-19 (NIV)

Defining Characteristics of this Event ...

1. Thunder (Hebrew – kole (qolot): “and there was voices”)
2. Smoke (fire of God fell)

Sinai was the wilderness – free from any political or national rule

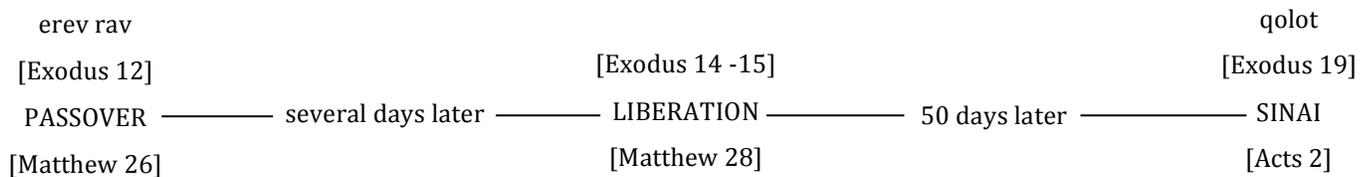
New Testament reality ... Matthew 26 (Passover) & 28 (Resurrection/Feast of Firstfruits)

Feast of Pentecost - voices & fire, Sinai is alive again! Taking God's saving love to the nations!!

The idea of the church is not that new, but yet it's radically different.

In Acts 2 a mixed, global group of people are being empowered. No spectating or simply being inspired; they're in it to the fullest ... Witnesses!

The church is chaordic (chaos & order). We need both. Within chaos is life – wonder & awe.



Do you have this fire, this wind?

Alan Hirsch draws on Rodney Stark for statistical data. In the Roman Empire ...

In the Roman Empire ...

100 A.D. : 25,000 Christians (illegal to be a Christian, no buildings, no scriptures as we know it, hard to join)

320 A.D. : 20,000,000 Christians in the Roman Empire

from 25,000 to 20 million? in 200 years?

When Mao took power: 2 million Christians in China (banished all missionaries/ministers, nationalized all church property, killed all senior leaders, imprisoned the rest, banned all public Christian meetings)

When Mao died: 60 million Christians in China

Some estimate that today: 80 million Christians in China

Notes adapted from Rob Bell's Message: "*They've Had Too Much Wine*" (May 17, 2009)

Unstoppable

I love fire more than I ever have. Fireplace... a real fireplace, chopping. (Axe, logs)

Jesus came to start an unstoppable fire. He said that we would be the light of the world, fire... That's an overwhelming task! We either feel powerless or unmotivated to do anything.

The disciples were overwhelmed by this challenge.

“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 1:4-5 (NIV)

“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.”

Acts 1:8 (NIV)

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶

When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹

Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs--we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." ¹⁴ Then

Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd ...

Acts 2:1-14 (NIV)

What is the focus? Tongues? NO! The Holy Spirit? NO! It's THE NATIONS! Jesus said go to all nations. Who was there? People from all nations. What did they hear? God being glorified in their own language. What are the tongues all about? THE NATIONS! Were they speaking in other languages? No.

They got zapped by the Spirit and that's what came out. This isn't a new thing in the Bible. When the Holy Spirit falls on someone it usually results in something coming out of their mouths. If I pound your finger with a hammer what will happen? You will probably scream. The tongues just happen. Why? It's a reminder of what the Baptism in the Spirit is all about. THE NATIONS!

So what about the nations? They need Jesus! How do we tell them? With the help of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit/Tongues are not a spiritual achievement badge or worship toy.

Pentecostal isn't speaking in tongues! It's reaching the nations! A Pentecostal church isn't a church that just speaks in tongues! It's a church that is bringing the kingdom of Jesus to the nations.

How does the Spirit want us to use this Power? How did Jesus use it?

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed...”

Luke 4:18 (NIV)

“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”

Matthew 10:8 (NIV)

What did Peter and the Apostles do right after they got hit by the Spirit?

They spoke, gave their lives, changed the world! They went OUT! Out of their home, town, city and country.. OUT OF THEIR COMFORT ZONES to LOVE PEOPLE FOR JESUS.

Get out of your comfort zone and get the message of Jesus to the nations. Speak and act in the power of the Holy Spirit. Be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Why should Jesus fill you?

What are you doing with your life that you need that kind of power?

One of the things that I love about a real fireplace is that each log burns differently as they burn altogether. Each fire is unique. A log is consumed and new ones are added. The more logs the more fire... the bigger the burn, the more unstoppable and uncontainable the fire becomes.

The more they tried to beat out the flames of the early church the more unstoppable it became.

Jesus wants us to be an unstoppable fire that burns this world up by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Blessing Of Being Filled With The Holy Spirit

In this final session I want to talk to you about a **gift**. It's a gift that is given to us by God. And I want you to understand something ... **it's for every fully devoted follower of Christ** here today! I want us to focus our attention on the Infilling of the Holy Spirit. It's a gift that will change your life and if this gift is used correctly it will strengthen your life like nothing else can.

I want to walk you through several thoughts that helped me to understand what the infilling of the Holy Spirit is and what it isn't.

Illustration: My Story – Fall 1991; Steven Cissell; Nixa A/G, Paper, Process of Worship, Spirit was in me but had not yet come UPON me

Introductory Comments: Luke's writings vs. Paul's writings; Doctrine from Narrative Texts – All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Infilling of the Holy Spirit – a second work whereby the Spirit of God comes upon you in power and the pattern of Scripture is that you will speak in a language that you do not know. **It is also called ...**

“For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”
Acts 1:5 (NIV)

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”
Acts 2:38 (NIV)

“The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.”
Acts 10:45 (NIV)

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”
Acts 2:4 (NIV)

“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.’”
Acts 1:4 (NIV)

“The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off— for all whom the Lord our God will call.”
Acts 2:39 (NIV)

“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”
Luke 24:49 (NIV)

1. The “Infilling of the Spirit” is a second work of the Spirit in my life.

When you came to Christ the Holy Spirit took up residence inside of you. Every believer has the Spirit of God living inside of them.

“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”

Romans 8:9 (NIV)

In other words, at salvation the Holy Spirit takes up residence in your heart. You become the temple of the Holy Spirit.

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?”

1 Cor. 6:19 (NIV)

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.”

Ephes. 1:13-14 (NIV)

So the first work of the Spirit comes at salvation and at that moment you become a child of God and become a member of God's family.

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³*For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--* whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

1 Cor. 12:12-13 (NIV)

Also at salvation the Holy Spirit begins to produce fruit in your life and it becomes evident when we remain in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

John 15:4-5 (NIV)

But there is a second work of the Spirit called the Infilling of the Spirit or the Baptism of the Holy Spirit whereby God gives you the gift of the Spirit that the book of Acts talks about. A lot of people are confused because they think that when they are saved that that is enough. But I would submit to you that there is something more that God has in store for His children.

The early church understood this. They knew that it was critical not only for people to be saved and indwelt with God's Spirit but they also knew that it was important for believers to have the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

⁵Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. ⁶When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.

⁷With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed.

⁸So there was great joy in that city.”

Acts 8:4-8 (NIV)

“But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”

Acts 8:12 (NIV)

“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 8:14-17 (NIV)

Let's look at it again ...

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

There he found some disciples ²and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. ⁴Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When

Paul placed his hands on them, the *Holy Spirit came on them*, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. ⁷There were about twelve men in all.”

Acts 19:1-7 (NIV)

These passages are a fulfillment of what is promised in Acts 1:8 ...

“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.”

Acts 1:8 (NIV)

Reflection: Am I personally open to receiving the Infilling of the Holy Spirit?

2. The “Infilling of the Spirit” is a gift for everyone including me.

“The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—
for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Acts 2:39 (NIV)

There is absolutely nothing that you and I can do to earn the infilling. It is a gift from God. We try so hard to receive this gift and we get so stressed out about it and we strain and press and push and beg and plead and work ourselves into a frenzy to receive what ... a gift! By its very nature it can't be earned or purchased ... it is a GIFT.

There is a difference between seeking this gift and trying to earn it. Seeking it is simply saying, "God, I'm open to this and I'm ready for it and I'd like to have it and I'm simply asking You for what You've promised me in Your Word."

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Luke 11:9-13 (NIV)

God is happy to have you come to Him! He's not going to slam the door in your face. He wants to give it to you and it's for everyone!

"I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."

Joel 2:28-29 (NIV)

"On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.'"

Acts 1:4 (NIV)

"Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

²²And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

John 20:21-22 (NIV) – *Salvation of the Apostles?*

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

Matthew 3:11 (NIV)

"The first person to preach about the baptism in the Holy Spirit was not a Pentecostal but a baptist!"

(Mark Rutland)

"And this was his message: 'After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'"

Mark 1:7-8 (NIV)

“I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’”

John 1:33 (NIV)

“John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

Luke 3:16 (NIV)

“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Luke 24:49 (NIV)

Reflection: Have I been trying to “earn” this gift from God?

3. When I am filled with Spirit I will speak in a language that I do not know.

“The greatest effect of the divine enduing power of the Holy Spirit is that they communicated truth in the language that people could understand.”

(James Robinson)

Do we want the power to communicate in the very dialect of people so that they can understand what we're talking about? (German, Spanish, French, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Pittsburghese, street people, elite people, down & out, up & out)

It may not be fluent or a lot but that is the record that we have in the book of Acts. It's the pattern of Scripture. **Three** out of five times it clearly says the people spoke in tongues [note that in Scripture, “Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” 2 Cor. 13:1 (NIV)] **No Hands: Acts 2:4; 10:44** **Hands: Acts 8:17; 19:6**

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

Acts 2:4 (NIV)

Pentecost – A Jewish festival held in mid-spring, fifty days after Passover. At this festival Israelites celebrated the wheat harvest. Pentecost was also known as "the Harvest Festival" and has traditionally been called "the Feast of Weeks"; in Hebrew, its name is “Shavuoth.” —Contemporary English Version Dictionary

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.

⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Acts 10:44-46 (NIV) – CORNELIUS

“While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ²and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” ³So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John’s baptism,” they replied. ⁴Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul **placed his hands on them**, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”

Acts 19:1-6 (NIV) – ALREADY COVERED THIS PASSAGE

“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then Peter and John **placed their hands on them**, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money ¹⁹and said, ‘Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’”

Acts 8:14-20 (NIV)

“Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. **Placing his hands** on Saul, he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here— has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’”

Acts 9:17 (NIV)

“I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.”

1 Cor. 14:18 (NIV)

So the book of Acts indicates to us that when believers are given this gift ... the second work of the Spirit that they will know because they will speak in a spiritual language (tongues).

From time to time I have people come and ask me if they can be filled with the Spirit and not speak in tongues or they know someone else who is very spiritual and Spirit-led and they don’t speak in tongues.

My only response to those comments is that we can’t allow experience to dictate to us our theology. I can only speak to what the Word of God tells me ... when the early church was filled with the Holy Spirit ... they spoke in a language they didn’t know and that was the norm. The Bible never tells us it will be any different so I have nothing more to go on.

Reflection: Will I allow personal experience or God’s Word to form my theology?

Moving out of Lukean theology ...

4. The “Infilling of the Spirit” is not the same thing as the Gift of Tongues.

“Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.”

1 Cor. 12:30-31 (NIV)

The answer to the above questions is no. Not everyone has gifts of healing, tongues or interpretation. Look at verses 7-11. These are a sampling of gifts that are given to us by the Holy Spirit and they are for the body of Christ as a whole. Two of the gifts listed are speaking in tongues and the interpretation of those tongues ...

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”

1 Cor. 12:7-11 (NIV)

- a. The Gift of Tongues is for the building up of the Body of Christ. (JRAG/China Student)
- b. The Infilling of the Spirit is for the building up of the individual. (Personal Strength)

Just because a person has been filled with the Spirit does not mean they will be used in the Gift of Tongues in a public setting to encourage or build up the corporate congregation. They are not the same thing ... they're **apples and oranges**.

The Infilling of the Spirit brings a **prayer language & personal strength** ...

“For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit.”

1 Cor. 14:2 (NIV)

“If you praise him in the private language of tongues, God understands you but no one else does, for you are sharing intimacies just between you and him.”

1 Cor. 14:2 (Msg)

“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.”

1 Cor. 14:14 (NIV)

“... the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.”

Romans 8:26-27 (NIV) – Missionary/Thieves/Angels/Prayer

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”

Ephes. 6:18 (NIV)

“But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.”

Jude 1:20 (NIV)

“I’m grateful to God for the gift of praying in tongues that he gives us for praising him, which leads to wonderful intimacies we enjoy with him. I enter into this as much or more than any of you.”

1 Cor. 14:18 (Msg)

Reflection: Have I been confused about the issue of speaking in tongues? Am I afraid of speaking in tongues?

5. The “Infilling of the Spirit” is something I need daily.

“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, *be filled with the Spirit.*”

Ephes. 5:17-18 (NIV)

In the days when Paul wrote Ephesians the pagans would get drunk to take them to a higher state of consciousness whereby they could commune with the gods and figure out what the gods wanted by using drugs and alcohol to reach higher plains.

Verse 18 is a command. It’s an ongoing process. In the Greek it’s “be being kept filled.” In other words, constantly and continually we need to be filled with the Spirit. This gift is meant to be an ongoing process whereby we’re continually renewed day by day.

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

Acts 2:4 (NIV)

“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”

Acts 4:31 (NIV)

These believers had already been filled but they understood the need to be continually filled. It doesn’t matter what happened to you 6 months ago ... or 5 years ago ... or 10 years ago ... it’s something you need today!

6. The “Infilling of the Spirit” is something I am commanded to seek.

I think we come across that the Infilling of the Spirit is optional. That as long as we’re saved we’re okay. Now the fact is that in order to get into Heaven you must simply be saved. In fact, you don’t even have to be baptized in water to get into Heaven.

We teach here at RCC that if you have confessed with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you will go to heaven. You must confess your sin and turn away from it and if you do this you enter a personal relationship with Christ.

But all of that does not negate the fact that we are commanded to be baptized in water following our salvation! If you're not baptized in water then according to God's Word you are living in disobedience. We all understand that being baptized is a command from God.

Being filled with the Spirit is a command! We are to be open to this gift and ready to receive it. It's a present imperative that comes straight from the heart of God!!!

“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.’”

Acts 1:4 (NIV)

The following passage is used to try and refute tongues today ... (Canon closed is NOT perfection)

“Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. ¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. ¹²Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

1 Cor. 13:8-12 (NIV)

Perfection comes when Jesus comes. John backs that up ...

“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

1 John 3:2 (NIV)

When the Holy Spirit comes upon people today there are three different groups of people in the crowd ...

a. Those who are filled.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. **Acts 2:4 (NIV)**

b. Those who question.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs--we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" **Acts 2:5-12 (NIV)**

c. Those who mock.

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."
Acts 2:13 (NIV)

Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (My Personal Fears) ...

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.
³¹ And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."
Matthew 12:30-32 (NIV)

God wants to fill you today and tongues are for today!

7. The "Infilling of the Spirit" is given to me so that I will have power.

"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."
Acts 1:8 (NIV)

This gift is not so that we can feel good or so that God can build a super-elite club or so we can be full of pride. The infilling of the Spirit has nothing to do with your maturity in Christ. It's interesting to note that in I Timothy 3 when it talks about Christian leaders it speaks nowhere of speaking in tongues. Rather, it speaks about **integrity** and **character** because these are the things that mark a believer's maturity. Even brand new believers can receive this gift. This is a gift to help you have power to live a victorious Christian life.

The Infilling of the Spirit brings power to **witness** ...

"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'"
John 20:19 (NIV)

"Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.'"
Acts 2:14 (NIV)

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."
Acts 2:36 (NIV)

"With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.'"
Acts 2:40 (NIV)

“Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. ²⁰For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Acts 4:18-20 (NIV)

“Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

Acts 5:29 (NIV)

“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”

Acts 4:31 (NIV)

“Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. ⁹Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)--Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, ¹⁰but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.”

Acts 6:8-10 (NIV)

The Infilling of the Spirit also brings power to perform miracles (none before chapter 2) ...

“Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.”

Acts 2:43 (NIV)

“Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." ⁷Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. ⁸He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.”

Acts 3:6-8 (NIV)

“The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade.”

Acts 5:12 (NIV)

“Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. ⁶When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. ⁷With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. ⁸So there was great joy in that city.”

Acts 8:5-8 (NIV)

“Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ¹⁰"You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand.”

Acts 13:9-11 (NIV)

The Infilling of the Spirit also brings **spiritual discernment** ...

“Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”

Ephes. 5:15-18 (NIV)

“For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters *mysteries* with his spirit.”

1 Cor. 14:2 (NIV)

A mystery is a former secret that has now been revealed in the N.T. You can go throughout the entire N.T. and see many mysteries that have been revealed to us now.

“If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all *mysteries* and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”

1 Cor. 13:2 (NIV)

When we are filled with the Spirit you will have insight into the will of God. It helps you to know the will of God. **(Meetings, counseling, creative/strategic ideas, seminars, etc.)**

“For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters *mysteries* with **(by – in the margin)** his spirit.”

1 Cor. 14:2 (NIV)

When you are praying in the Spirit God reveals things to you. God opens things to you and ideas begin to pop into your mind or in your heart that He wants to change in your life. He helps you through difficult times or gives you practical steps to take in a situation.

Reflection: Am I prepared to ask Jesus to fill me with the Holy Spirit?

“Baptism can be done to you. Filling can be done to you. But receiving must be done by you.”
(Mark Rutland)

What do I do with this infilling of the Holy Spirit? How do I use this power? How did Jesus use it?

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Luke 4:18-19 (NIV)

“As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”

Matthew 10:7-8 (NIV)

Get out of your comfort zone and get the message of Jesus to the nations. Speak and act in the power of the Holy Spirit. Be baptized in the Holy Spirit. **Why should Jesus fill you? What are you doing with your life that you need that kind of power?**

I want you to notice three things about the prayers of the believers as they prepared to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ...

a. I need to pray as God directs (compliantly).

They did exactly what God told them to do and I need to do the same! They waited for 10 days as they sought the Lord.

“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’”

Acts 1:4-5 (NIV)

“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. ¹³When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.”

Acts 1:12-14 (NIV)

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.”

Acts 2:1 (NIV)

b. I need to be faithful in prayer (constantly).

“They all joined together *constantly* in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.”

Acts 1:14 (NIV)

“They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to *prayer*.”

Acts 2:42 (NIV)

I have seen people come forward and pray and leave the altar with nothing happening and they go home and decide it's not for them. Or they pray once or twice for a day or two and then stop seeking God. I can't explain why some have to wait and others don't. I'm not the baptizer. But I can tell you this ... don't stop praying!

Don't doubt God. He will fill you! Don't spend your time focusing on tongues or on the gift itself ... spend your time focusing on God! Seek Him! Seek His will ... His face ... His presence ... His power ... His anointing ... and I am a firm believer that God will be true to you His children!

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

Matthew 5:6 (NIV)

“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened ... how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Luke 11:9-13 (NIV)

c. I need to pray trusting in God (confidently).

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.”

Acts 2:1 (NIV)

Why would they wait 10 days? Most of us lose our intensity and our focus after 10 minutes. How were they able to seek God for that length of time? I believe it was because they had confidence in the Word of God. They believed that He would do what He said He would do.

Reflection: Am I confident that God wants to fill me? Do I genuinely believe this gift if for me today? Am I willing to seek Him until I am filled?

Have you received since you believed?

(Ephesus; Acts 19:2)

I’m not asking if you’re Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Catholic or A/G. I’m not asking if you attend RCC or some other Pentecostal church. I’m not asking if you like the expressive style of worship. I’m asking, have you been filled with the Holy Spirit since you believed? Has He come upon you?

Let’s Pray!

This is not about overflowing with emotion ... it’s not about some semiconscious state ... it’s not about some supernatural phenomena ... it’s about Who has control of you.

“Many Christian workers say: ‘Oh I have the Spirit, I have had Him for years.’ Yes, so did I for many years, but there came a time when He got me – got me under His hand, submerged in His power till He spoke for Himself, and my whole being was under His control. There is a difference between the experience where we have the Spirit for our pleasure and where He has us for His pleasure.”
(J.W. Welch)

For those who ...

Have been filled with the Spirit but want to be refilled again today.

Have never been filled with the Spirit and want to ask God to fill you with His Spirit.

If you'd like to have myself or someone else gently place our hands on you and join with you in praying for God to fill you with His Holy Spirit I invite you to come to the altar. But keep in mind that on the day of Pentecost, no one laid hands on anyone else. It's Jesus who does the baptizing!

Resource: A Prayer To Be Filled

Don't be passive! God is not going to force the Holy Spirit on you so cooperate with Him. It is fascinating that in Jesus' ministry people often had to reach out and touch His garment to receive the healing power of the Spirit. They could not just passively sit and wait for Him to do something.

Don't be afraid to stretch out your arms toward the Lord, just like a small child does when she's reaching up to her daddy.

When Jesus fills you with the Holy Spirit you will speak in a spiritual language that you do not know. Don't be afraid of it!

The Holy Spirit doesn't come and forcibly begin shaking and moving your tongue. Remember, Acts 2:4 says "They began to speak in tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance." Notice that they, not the Spirit, began to speak. The Holy Spirit does not speak in tongues. You do! He simply provides the syllables.

When we place our hands on you, begin to thank God for this gift. The Spirit will not make you speak. You choose to speak, and as you do, He will provide the syllables.

Pray with faith and authority ... not in a begging manner!

How To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit

1. Are you walking in obedience? Is there known sin in your life? If so, deal with the sin first, especially the area of unforgiveness.
2. To receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit, you must **ask**.

“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Luke 11:11-13

3. You must ask in faith. James 1:6-7 says, “But let him ask in faith with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”
4. When will I receive? Will it be when I speak in other tongues, or will it be the moment I ask? Your answer should be the moment you ask. We believe, then we receive, not the other way around. Those who do not have faith say, “Show me and I will believe” but Jesus says, “I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.” Mark 11:24
5. Acts 2:4 says, And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance.” Notice they spoke with other tongues. It was not the Holy Spirit who spoke in tongues. They had to do it as the Spirit gave them utterance.
6. Areas we must yield:
 - Our lips – if I don’t move my lips, words in any language cannot come forth.
 - Our tongue – if I don’t move my tongue, I cannot speak.
 - Our vocal cords – if I don’t yield my vocal cords to my lungs, then I cannot speak.
 - The Holy Spirit is not going to grab a hold of our lips, tongues, and vocal cords and make them speak. We speak, or yield as He gives the utterance.
7. When you ask for the infilling of the Holy Spirit, you may have a syllable bubbling up, or rolling around in your head. If you speak it in faith, it will be as if you open a dam, and the language will come forth. It is like a spool of thread in your gut, and the beginning of the thread is glimpsed at your tongue, but as you begin to pull (speak), out comes the rest of the thread. Some think that they are going to have the entire language in their mind, then they will speak. No, we speak in faith.
8. You are not seeking tongues. The prayer language is merely the physical evidence. You are seeking an overflowing of the Holy Spirit in your life. Don’t seek the evidence. Seek the Giver!
9. Lastly, you cannot speak French and English at the same time, nor can you speak English and tongues at the same time, so BELIEVE and YIELD!

Summarized from John Bevere, *Drawing Near*

Getting Practical About Being Filled With The Holy Spirit

1. Know that God wants to fill you.
2. The filling of the Holy Spirit is a gift – you don't need to convince God to give it to you. You simply need to receive this empowerment.
3. Go after God with all of your heart.
4. You will sense the Spirit of God coming upon you. As you seek Him, you will experience the presence of God.
5. At this point you must partner with the Spirit – He is not going to take control of you. You must yield to Him, and you must speak out loud.
6. Choose to speak out your prayer language as the Spirit enables you. You must yield your lips, your tongue, and your voice. You must speak out. Many people are waiting for God to take control of their tongues. He doesn't do that. You must speak out in faith.
7. Remember that you cannot speak Spanish and English at the same time.
8. Often times people sense strange new words in their heart or mind as the Spirit comes upon them. You may stammer at first – that's all right – keep speaking. Continue to trust God and more will come.
9. Remember you are not seeking this heavenly prayer language called tongues, you are seeking God Himself, the One who desires to immerse you.
10. The instant the Spirit of God comes upon you, begin to speak out the language of the Spirit. Don't be content to dip your toe in the pool. Get immersed in God!

A Prayer To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit

Dear Lord Jesus,

I thank You and praise You for Your great love and faithfulness to me.
My heart is filled with joy whenever I think of the great gift of salvation You have so freely given to me,
and I humbly glorify You, Lord Jesus, for You have forgiven me all my sins and brought me to the Father.

Now I come in obedience to Your call.
I want to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
I do not come because I am worthy myself, but because You have invited me to come.
Because You have washed me from my sins,
I thank You that You have made the vessel of my life a worthy one to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

I want to be overflowed with Your life,
Your love and Your power, Lord Jesus.

I want to show forth Your grace,
Your words,
Your goodness and
Your gifts to everyone I can.

And so with simple, childlike faith, I ask You, Lord,
Fill me with the Holy Spirit.

I open all of myself to You,
to receive all of Yourself in me.

I love You, Lord, and I lift my voice in praise to You.

I welcome Your might and Your miracles
to be manifested in me
for Your glory
and unto Your praise.

Excerpt taken from Jack Hayford's book,
"The Beauty of Spiritual Language"

In Step With The Spirit

This session is all about keeping *in step with the Holy Spirit*. I am convinced that there are things that we will never experience because we simply do not keep in step with the Spirit of God. Far too often we find ourselves not living in the Spirit or walking in the Spirit.

We're going to conclude our series on the Holy Spirit by looking at three aspects of keeping in step with the Spirit of Jesus.

“For you have been called to live in freedom—not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love. ¹⁴For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.”

Galatians 5:13-15 (NLT)

Paul is saying that you and I have been given the freedom to choose between right and wrong. Those who are lost do not have that choice. They can only go one direction. The wrong direction. Paul tells us that when we become a child of God we have a choice to make. We are to use that choice to “love one another.”

1. My Life Must Be Lived In Step With The Spirit.

“So I tell you: **Live** by following the Spirit.
Then you will not do what your sinful selves want.”
Galatians 5:16 (NCV)

This is a command from the Word of God. It's the baseline for all Christian living. All of our sin problems come from one source ... our sinful nature. It's not a matter of the devil making you do it. You may be tempted to sin by the enemy but ultimately it's your own fallen nature that causes you to sin.

How do I overcome my sinful nature? **The key is this ... we must subdue the sinful nature.**

peripateo, per-ee-pat-eh'-o; to tread all around, i.e. walk at large (especially as proof of ability); figurative to live, deport oneself, follow (as a companion or votary) :- go, be occupied with, walk (about). “Keep on living/walking.”

Paul is saying that if we want to live a victorious Christian life we need to take one step at a time with the Spirit. The Spirit of God lives in you when you commit your life to Christ and begin your faith journey. Because He lives inside of us we need to allow the Holy Spirit to direct us and guide us along the path day by day. Sounds easy enough ... doesn't it?!

How do I foster this walk in the Spirit?

a. By studying the Word of God so that I know the mind of the Spirit.

Spirit of God vs. feelings, emotions & what you think.

b. By communing with God.

Spend time daily with God. Walking implies that you are doing it with regularity and on a continual basis. As you spend time with God the Spirit of God talks to you!

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

John 16:13 (NIV)

There are times when God speaks to us so clearly that we cannot miss what He’s saying to us. We just know that we know that we know.

The majority of the time the Spirit of God talks to us through our conscience or our heart. What happens is that you’re going through something and you feel like the Spirit of God impresses something on your heart. He impresses you to go and pray with somebody or go and talk with someone or to call an individual or go somewhere.

Illustration: Does God Still Speak To People?

A young man had been to Wednesday night Bible Study. The Pastor had shared about listening to God and obeying the Lord's voice. The young man couldn't help but wonder, "Does God still speak to people?" After services he went out with some friends for coffee and pie and they discussed the message. Several different ones talked about how God had led them in different ways. It was about ten o'clock when the young man started driving home. Sitting in his car, he just began to pray, "God, if you still speak to people speak to me. I will listen. I will do my best to obey."

As he drove down the main street of his town, he had the strangest thought, stop and buy a gallon of milk. He shook his head and said out loud, "God is that you?" He didn't get a reply and started on toward home. But again, the thought, buy a gallon of milk. The young man thought about Samuel and how he didn't recognize the voice of God, and how little Samuel ran to Eli. "Okay, God, in case that is you, I will buy the milk." It didn't seem like too hard a test of obedience. He could always use the milk. He stopped and purchased the gallon of milk and started off toward home.

As he passed Seventh street, he again felt the urge, "Turn down that street." This is crazy he thought and drove on past the intersection. Again, he felt that he should turn down seventh street. At the next intersection, he turned back and headed down Seventh. Half jokingly, he said out loud, "Okay, God, I will." He drove several blocks, when suddenly, he felt like he should stop. He pulled over to the curb and looked around. He was in a semi-commercial area of town. It wasn't the best but it wasn't the worst of neighborhoods either. The businesses were closed and most of the houses looked dark like the people were already in bed. Again, he sensed something, "Go and give the milk to the people in the house across the street."

The young man looked at the house. It was dark and it looked like the people were either gone or they were already asleep. He started to open the door and then sat back in the car seat.

"Lord, this is insane. Those people are asleep and if I wake them up, they are going to be mad and I will look stupid." Again, he felt like he should go and give the milk. Finally, he opened the door, "Okay God, if this is you, I will go to the door and I will give them the milk. If you want me to look like a crazy person, okay. I want to be obedient. I guess that will count for something but if they don't answer right away, I am out of here."

He walked across the street and rang the bell. He could hear some noise inside. A man's voice yelled out, "Who is it? What do you want?" Then the door opened before the young man could get away. The man was standing there in his jeans and T-shirt. He looked like he just got out of bed. He had a strange look on his face and he didn't seem too happy to have some stranger standing on his doorstep. "What is it?" The young man thrust out the gallon of milk, "Here, I brought this to you."

The man took the milk and rushed down a hall way speaking loudly in Spanish. Then from down the hall came a woman carrying the milk toward the kitchen. The man was following her holding a baby. The baby was crying. The man had tears streaming down his face. The man began speaking and half crying, "We were just praying. We had some big bills this month and we ran out of money. We didn't have any milk for our baby. I was just praying and asking God to show me how to get some milk." His wife in the kitchen yelled out, "I ask him to send an Angel with some ... Are you an Angel?" The young man reached into his wallet and pulled out all the money he had on him and put in the man's hand. He turned and walked back toward his car and the tears were streaming down his face. He knew that God still answers prayers and that God still speaks to His people. Do You?

Other times we say something we shouldn't have or we do something we shouldn't have done and in that moment we feel His conviction. That is one of the ways He helps us to keep in step with Himself!

Other times we have a fight with our spouse or our children and then we go to pray and it feels like we're a million miles away. That's because the Holy Spirit is pointing out to us where we've blown it.

Now there are times when we have feelings or impressions that are not the Spirit of God at all. Rather they are too much pizza, indigestion or whatever. The maturity of a Christian involves growing in the Lord to the point where you can distinguish between the voice of the enemy ... indigestion ... your own human flesh ... or the voice of God.

How can I tell when the Spirit of God is speaking to me?

1. His voice will be in harmony with the written Word. (99% practical & applicable – everyday life)

“When we tell you this, we do not use words of human wisdom. We speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths.”

1 Cor. 2:13 (NLT)

2. His voice magnifies and exalts Jesus.

“But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. He won't draw attention to himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said. He will honor me; he will take from me and deliver it to you.”

John 16:13-14 (Msg)

3. His voice ushers in peace, not confusion.

“God is not a *God* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

1 Cor. 14:33 (NASB-U)

“The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.”

Romans 8:6 (NIV)

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 14:17 (NIV)

4. His voice urges, motivates and empowers me to do God's Will.

“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

Philip. 2:12-13 (NIV)

Condemnation – attacks you as a person.

Aimed at believer.

Conviction – tells me that He doesn't like what I'm doing.

Aimed at behavior.

5. His voice leads me opposite of my natural inclination.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. ⁹"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV)

6. His voice speaks to me through other believers.

“Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized.”

Acts 9:17-18 (NIV)

7. His voice guides me through visions or dreams.

“Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. ⁸So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. ⁹During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

Acts 16:6-10 (NIV)

8. His voice directs me in corporate settings.

“In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ²While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

Acts 13:1-2 (NIV)

9. His voice instructs me through unusual circumstances.

“About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹²It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. ¹³Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." ¹⁴"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." ¹⁵The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." ¹⁶This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. ¹⁷While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. ¹⁸They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. ¹⁹While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. ²⁰So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." ²¹Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?" ²²The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." ²³Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along.”

Acts 10:9-23 (NIV)

When trying to distinguish the Spirit's voice do not ...

- a. Listen to only what you want to hear.
- b. Listen to something contrary to the Word of God.
- c. Rush into a quick decision.
- d. Move forward when you are down, discouraged, tired or out of God's will in another area.

- e. Move forward when you receive contradictory opinions from mature believers you respect.
- f. Move forward when God doesn't seem to be making the provisions.
- g. Move forward when there is no inner peace and much confusion in your life or relationships.

Reflection: Am I living daily with a sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit? Do I know when the Spirit of God is speaking to me?

2. My Life Will Be Marked By Victory If I Keep In Step With The Spirit.

Just because you decide to walk by the Spirit does not mean it will be easy. In fact, this whole principle is much easier to delineate than it is to actually live out. Because not only is the devil going to fight you ... you've got your flesh to fight as well! Your flesh will resist this control of the Spirit. It's a part of the sinful nature.

“The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict.”

Galatians 5:17 (NLT)

Isn't that the truth? You want to live for God and follow Him. You want to do exactly what God wants you to do but then you find yourself doing the things you know you shouldn't be doing. You find yourself falling into patterns or habits that don't glorify God. That is happening because there is a war going on inside of you.

“The law is good, then. The trouble is not with the law but with me, because I am sold into slavery, with sin as my master. ¹⁵I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience shows that I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷But I can't help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things. ¹⁸I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't. ¹⁹When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. ²⁰But if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing it; the sin within me is doing it. ²¹It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²²I love God's law with all my heart. ²³But there is another law at work within me that is at war with my mind. This law wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. ²⁴Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? ²⁵Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.”

Romans 7:7-25 (NLT)

When you come to Christ you become a new creation. You are redeemed inside. But there is a part of you that is not yet redeemed ... your physical body and your mind. Neither of these areas are yet redeemed and they won't be until you die. Now your mind and your body are the beachhead of sin in your life! That is the operating base for your sin.

Think about it ... the moment you die your mind will quit working and your body will quit functioning your battle with sin will be over!

That day will be wonderful. But for now we still have to fight our wrongful thoughts, words and actions. Those come from the sinful nature. It's a battle over whether you will do what God wants you to do or whether will do what your sinful nature wants you to do. The more you do what the Spirit of God wants you to do the more spiritual you will become.

So the bottom line is this: if you want to become more spiritual then do what the Spirit of God wants you to do. If you want to become more sinful then follow your sinful nature.

“But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer subject to the law.”

Galatians 5:18 (NLT)

Some of the teachers who were coming to the Galatians were telling them that if they lived by the Law it would strengthen them. It was an emphasis on the adherence of the Law to set them free. The fact of the matter is that the Law does not set you free. It only shows you your sin.

There are a lot of people with a lot of problems and they're trying a lot of professional counselors, treatments, methods, etc. They think they can be delivered from their bondage and addictions but the fact of the matter is that there is no law ... no man ... no philosophy ... no formula ... outside of the Spirit of God ... for delivering people. Anything else will fall short!

The key to drug, alcohol, pornography, food, approval, gambling, sex addictions ... is the Spirit of God. He is the one who sets you free!!!

Reflection: Am I being directed by the Spirit of God or by my sinful nature?

3. My Life Will Reflect Christ's Nature If I Keep In Step With The Spirit.

Notice the contrast that Paul lays out for us in the rest of these verses. He gives us two lists. One is indicative of the results of living according to the sinful nature and the other is what is produced if we live by the Spirit.

“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Galatians 5:19-21 (NIV)

Five Categories ...

- a. Sexual Sin – immorality, impurity & debauchery (arousing sexual desire w/o fulfillment)
- b. Idolatry
- c. Witchcraft – drugs (pharmakeia – medication, pharmacy)

- d. Relationships – hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions factions & envy.
- e. Alcohol – drunkenness & orgies

“It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; ²⁰trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; ²¹the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on. This isn't the first time I have warned you, you know. If you use your freedom this way, you will not inherit God's kingdom.”

Galatians 5:19-21 (Msg)

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”

Col. 3:5 (NIV)

Illustration: Saul & the Amalekites

“Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one the Lord sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the Lord. ²This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. ³Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.”

1 Samuel 15:1-3 (NIV)

“He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. ⁹But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs--everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.”

1 Samuel 15:8-9 (NIV)

After the death of Saul, David returned from defeating the Amalekites ... I happened to be on Mount Gilboa and there was Saul ... he said to me, 'Stand over me and kill me! I am in the throes of death, but I'm still alive.' ¹⁰"So I stood over him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive. ¹³David said to the young man who brought him the report, "Where are you from?" "I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite," he answered.

2 Samuel 1:1-16 (NIV)

We cannot allow sin to be entertained in our lives. We must be ruthless with it. Jesus intimated that in His message known as the Sermon on the Mount (gouge out your eye)

In contrast, beginning in verse 22 Paul lays out for us nine things the Spirit of God produces in our lives ...

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

Galatians 5:22-25 (NIV)

“But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity.

We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, ²³not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way. ²⁴Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good—crucified.”

Galatians 5:22-24 (Msg)

It just so happens that these nine traits are all commanded of believers elsewhere in the New Testament ...

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ²and live a life of **love**, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NIV)

Love – The accurate estimate and the adequate supply of another’s need.

“Be **joyful** in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

Romans 12:12 (NIV)

Joy – A deep sense of peace and fulfillment that comes from knowing that God is in control.

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at **peace** with everyone.”

Romans 12:18 (NIV)

Peace – The sense that God is with you no matter what you’re facing.

“Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and **patience**.”

Colossians 3:12 (NIV)

Patience – The willingness to accept situations without getting all upset.

“Be joyful in hope, **patient** in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

Romans 12:12 (NIV)

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, **brotherly kindness**; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2 Peter 1:5-8 (NIV)

Kindness – A concern about others.

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith **goodness**; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2 Peter 1:5-8 (NIV)

Goodness – When you do something about the concern you have for others.

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove **faithful**.”

1 Cor. 4:2 (NIV)

Faithfulness – Loyalty and trustworthiness.

“Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, **gentleness** and patience.”

Colossians 3:12 (NIV)

Gentleness – Strength under control. Refusing to stand up for your own rights.

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

But do this with **gentleness** and respect.”

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, **self-control**; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2 Peter 1:5-8 (NIV)

Self-Control - Restraining your appetites and passions. Far too often we want deliverance rather than discipline. God works with us and not for us!

These things are commanded of us as believers. But here is the amazing thing I want you to understand ... God never commands us to do something without equipping us to do what He's commanded!

“Let me put this question to you: How did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God's Message to you? ³Are you going to continue this craziness? For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God. If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it? ⁴Did you go through this whole painful learning process for nothing? It is not yet a total loss, but it certainly will be if you keep this up!”

Galatians 3:2-4 (Msg)

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep *in step with the Spirit.*”

Galatians 5:24-25 (NIV)

I want to close this teaching by sharing with you an observation from the life of Jesus. I believe that one of the greatest secrets to the success of Jesus' life here on earth is that He NEVER did anything without HEARING from His heavenly Father FIRST!

“So Jesus explained himself at length. "I'm telling you this straight. The Son can't independently do a thing, only what he sees the Father doing. What the Father does, the Son does. ²⁰The Father loves the Son and includes him in everything he is doing.”

John 5:19-20 (Msg)

“I can't do a solitary thing on my own: I listen, then I decide. You can trust my decision because I'm not out to get my own way but only to carry out orders.”

John 5:30 (Msg)

“I have much to say about you and much to condemn, but I won't. For I say only what I have heard from the one who sent me, and he is true.” ²⁷But they still didn't understand that he was talking to them about his Father. ²⁸So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man on the cross, then you will realize that I am he and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak what the Father taught me.”

John 8:26-28 (NLT)

Reflection: Do I reflect the nature of Jesus? Am I bearing good fruit that demonstrates I'm in step with the Spirit? Am I willing to relinquish the reigns of my life to the Lord so that He can direct my steps?

Some of us are battling with major addictions ... difficulties ... trials ... and problems. Some of you are bound by significant sins. I hope this study has caused faith to rise in your heart. I believe that the Lord wants to set you free. You need deliverance. Does it mean you will never struggle with sin again? NO! But it does mean that there can be victory over sin as it comes your way.

Let's Pray!

For those who need deliverance ... from sexual sins, idolatrous ways, drugs, unhealthy relationships, alcohol, etc.

For those who need help with love, joy, peace patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self-control.

You aren't walking in the Spirit on a daily basis and you want to begin living in the power of the Spirit.

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A Lifestyle Of Outreach

Discussion: Think about a recent secret you were required to keep. How well do you do at keeping secrets? Have you ever told a secret and it came back to haunt you? Has someone told a secret of yours to others? How did that impact you?

You can't keep a secret ...

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations.”
Matthew 24:14 (NIV)

The four Gospel accounts differ in many ways – emphasis, language, which events are included and not included – but they share a common conclusion: after the death and resurrection of Jesus, Jesus sends His disciples into the world with a mission.

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”
Mark 16:15 (NIV)

“... Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high ... you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
Luke 24:49 (NIV) & Acts 1:8 (NIV)

“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”
John 20:21 (NIV)

Notice what the integration of these four versions could look like ...

You can't keep the secret of the kingdom to yourselves. I am now sending you, as the Father sent Me, to communicate the good news of the kingdom of God. Those who receive your message, you should form into learning communities of practicing disciples so they learn to live according to My message, just as you are learning. You should not do this in your own power, but you must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. And you shouldn't stop at the border of your own culture, language, or religion, but you must cross every border and boundary to share with all people everywhere the secret you've learned from Me – the way, the truth, the life you've experienced walking with Me.

The main task that Jesus left us with is to share the Good News (to follow is to fish) ...

“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and **sent them two by two** ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ² He told them, “The **harvest is plentiful**, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³ **Go!** I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and **do not greet anyone on the road.** ⁵ “**When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’** ⁶ **If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.** ⁷ Stay in that house, **eating and drinking whatever they give you**, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. ⁸ “When you enter a town and are **welcomed**, eat what is set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there and **tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’** ¹⁰ **But when you enter a town and are not welcomed**, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.’ ¹² I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.”

Luke 10:1-12 (NIV)

Discussion: Who is the “Person of Peace”? How can we recognize a “Person of Peace”?

A person of peace is one who is prepared to hear the message of the kingdom of God. He or she is ready to receive what God will give you to say at that moment.

Here are some things to keep in mind as we look for the Person of Peace ...

1. Time

“Jesus explained: “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work. ³⁵ Do you think the work of harvesting will not begin until the summer ends four months from now? Look around you! **Vast fields are ripening all around us and are ready now for the harvest.** ³⁶ The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! ³⁷ You know the saying, ‘One person plants and someone else harvests.’ And it’s true. ³⁸ I sent you to harvest where you didn’t plant; others had already done the work, and you will gather the harvest.”

John 4:34-38 (NLT)

There are specific times and places when the harvest is ripe. Not everyone is equally open or ready to receive the Gospel. Sometimes we must be ready to sow. Others times we reap. But our responsibility is to have an awareness of those times when we are to share the Good News.

Reflection: Where is the greatest level of receptivity at this stage of your life and in the places where you spend your time? (Neighbors, coworkers, family, etc.)

2. Team

“Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor.”

Ecclesiastes 4:9 (NLT)

“When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.”

Acts 12:25 (NIV)

“When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.”

Acts 18:5 (NIV)

“He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.”

Acts 19:22 (NIV)

Reflection: Who is on your team? Who can be with you in a social setting where it would be appropriate to share? Who can promise to pray for you consistently as you answer this call? Who can help you discern when the time is right to speak?

3. Target

“³ Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and **do not greet anyone on the road.** ⁵ “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ ⁶ If a **man of peace** is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.”

“Go to the lost sheep of Israel.”

Matthew 10:6 (NIV)

Our target is to be the person of peace. We’re to look for the person who is receptive to us personally, the person for whom it is harvest time right now.

Reflection: Who is your person of peace? _____

4. Task

“⁷ Stay in that house, **eating and drinking whatever they give you,** for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. ⁸ “When you enter a town and are **welcomed,** eat what is set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there and **tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’”**

We are to tell them the Good News! A person of peace will ...

◆ **Welcome you.**

◆ Listen to you.

“He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” Luke 10:16 (NIV)

Okay, so once they're listening to you ... what do you say? What's your story? What's HIStory?

BRIDGE ILLUSTRATION

We're all on a journey.

a. We choose the path that we're on.

¹³"You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose the easy way. ¹⁴But the gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it.

Matthew 7:13-14 (NLT)

Searching
& Seeking

b. The path we're on is all about recovering what has been lost.

²³Because all people have sinned, they have fallen short of God's glory. **Romans 3:23 (GW)**

Question: What is sin?

⁴Everyone who sins breaks God's law, because sin is the same as breaking God's law. ⁵You know that Christ came to take away sins. He isn't sinful, ⁶and people who stay one in their hearts with him won't keep on sinning. If they do keep on sinning, they don't know Christ, and they have never seen him. **1 John 3:4-6 (CEV)**

c. The journey is necessary because we're separated from God.

²³When people sin, they earn what sin pays—death. But God gives us a free gift—life forever in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Romans 6:23 (NCV)**

d. Religion is an attempt to reconnect with God.

Salvation by **Sincerity**

Salvation by **Service**

Salvation by **Subtraction** (e.g. Lent - don't smoke, drink, chew, sex, etc.)

Salvation by **Ritual** (baptism, holidays, communion, liturgy, membership, etc.)

Salvation by **Heritage** (family, born a "Christian")

Salvation by **Comparison** (better than so and so ...)

Religion vs. Relationship

Rules + Regulations – Relationship =
Resentment + Rebellion

e. Jesus said the only way to reconnect with God is to follow Him.

Born Again

⁶Jesus said, "I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me. **John 14:6 (MsgB)**

¹⁸God paid a ransom to save you from the impossible road to heaven which your fathers tried to take, and the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver as you very well know. ¹⁹But he paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. **1 Peter 1:18-19 (Living)**

f. In response to all that God has done in sending Jesus we are asked to **believe** what Jesus said, **repent** and exercise **faith**.

⁹If you declare that Jesus is Lord, and believe that God brought him back to life, you will be saved. ¹⁰By believing you receive God's approval, and by declaring your faith you are saved. **Romans 10:9-10 (GW)**

When we do, we become new people, we have a restored relationship with God, we are ambassadors for Christ, we are sons and daughters, we are co-heirs & saints.

I can be certain that I have connected with God if I confess, believe and trust in Jesus. It's not about my best efforts but by grace through faith alone.

⁸For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it. ⁹ ¹⁰God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do. **Ephes. 2:8-10 (TEV)**

“To Be Told” by Dan Allderman ... *“Everyone has a story. Put another way, everyone’s life is a story. But most people don’t know how to read their life in a way that reveals their story. They miss the deeper meaning in their life, and they have little sense of how God has written their story to reveal Himself and His own story.”*

“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” ¹⁷ The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ **Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”** ²⁰ Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) ²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked, **“Lord, what about him?”** ²² Jesus answered, **“If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”**

John 21:15-22 (NIV)

Four Core Issues ...

1. God is not merely the Creator of our life. He is also the Author of our life, and He writes each person's life to reveal His divine story. Knowing our stories will also help reveal who God is.
2. Our lives are not a series of random scenes. It shows us what He's up to and what He wants us to be about.
3. When I study and understand my life story, I can then join God as a coauthor. God calls me to be a writer of my future.
4. There is a necessity and blessing of telling our stories to others. Since we are called to tell, we are also called to listen to the stories of others.

Your story helps reveal the Greatest Story, the story that God is telling about Himself. God intends for each of us to live for a greater glory, and a greater story than our own.

Finally, back to Luke 10:7, a person of peace will ...

- ◆ **Serve or support you.**

Reflection: How do I recognize the person of peace?

5. Trouble

“¹⁰ **But when you enter a town and are not welcomed**, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.’ ¹² I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.”

“He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me;
but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

Luke 10:16 (NIV)

Reflection: How should I handle spiritual resistance?

Let's Pray!

Lord, please bring into my path today a Person of Peace, and give me the grace and courage to speak Your words to this person. Amen.

Telling Our Story

Your Story Matters

Your story really does matter. Here are three reasons why:

- Your friends will be interested.
- They'll be able to relate to it.
- Your story is hard to **argue with or deny**.

The skeptic may deny your doctrine or attack your church, but he cannot honestly ignore the fact that your life has been changed.

Chuck Swindoll, *Come Before Winter*

How to Organize Your Story

Paul's Story: Three Handles

Handle 1	Handle 2	Handle 3
<p>BC</p> <p>Before</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Christ</p> <p>Acts 26:4-11 “I (did) all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus...” (v. 9)</p>	<p>The Cross</p> <p>Met</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Christ</p> <p>Acts 26: 12-18 “As I was on the road, I saw a light from Heaven...and I heard a voice...” (vv. 13,14)</p>	<p>AD</p> <p>After</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Christ</p> <p>Acts 26: 19-23 “So then...I was not disobedient to the vision from Heaven...” (v.19)</p>
<p>Concluding Question: “Do you believe the prophets?” (v.27)</p>		
<p>Unifying Theme: Paul's intense passion for serving God (first without Christ, then as his follower)</p>		

Develop Your Story

Six Questions

First Handle: BC-Before Christ

1. What was your early spiritual background, and how did it affect you as you grew up—your feelings, attitudes, actions and relationships?

Examples:

- Our family was superstitious. We based our beliefs on things like horoscopes, so I lacked any solid foundation for what to believe.
- My parents taught me there was no God—so we thought we were on our own to figure out what our lives were all about and to decide right from wrong.
- I was from a religion that taught positive things about Jesus, but denied His claims to be God and savior of the world.
- We were a religious family, but all I remember were the rituals and rules—so when I got away to school I rejected the whole thing and went on my own way.
- *If you became a Christian as a young child, you may not have any real BC background to talk about. So you might say something like this: I grew up in a family where the Bible was taught, and can't remember ever not believing in God. So I grew up with sort of a simple belief in him.*

My Story (Question 1):

*Story Tip: Wisdom with **details**.*

2. What caused you to begin to consider following Christ?

Examples:

- A friend at school was a Christian, and she challenged me to look into the evidence for Christianity.
- I reached the point where I'd hit bottom. I knew the only hope for me was God—so I cried out to him for help.
- I got to know this guy who was different—in a positive way—and I finally asked him why. He told me about his relationship with Jesus.

If you came to Christ as a child, you might write something like:

Most of what I saw in my parents, teachers, friends at church reinforced my confidence that what I was hearing about God was true.

My Story (Question 2):

Middle Handle: Met Christ

3. What realization did you come to that finally motivated you to receive Christ?

Examples:

- After a long time of looking for help in the wrong places, I finally reached out to the God I sensed was there, and asked him to come and rescue me.
- My reading and interaction with Christians convinced me that the teachings of the Bible were true, and I just quit resisting.
- After years of spiritual ups and downs, I realized how foolish it was to keep trying to run my own life.

If you came to Christ as a child, you might write something like:

I don't know exactly when it happened, but along the way I understood that Jesus died to pay for my sins. Even though I hadn't led a wildly rebellious life, I certainly knew I'd done things that need forgiving.

My Story (Question 3):

Story Tip: Use of **Scripture (use it if necessary, but don't feel obligated).**

4. Specifically, how did you receive Christ?

Examples:

- I was at a concert where a guy explained that it wasn't enough to believe Jesus died for my sins—we need to ask him to apply that payment to our lives. So I went and prayed with someone afterward, asking Jesus to forgive my sins and lead my life.
- After years of loneliness I learned that God wants to walk with me throughout my life. So I asked him to remove my sins and to become my very best friend.
- It was hard to admit it, but I concluded that Jesus really is the way, the life and the truth—and I asked him to forgive my sins and to begin leading me.

If you came to Christ as a child, you might say something like:

Even though I was quite young, I gradually realized that I had done things that needed God's forgiveness. I began trusting in him, and have been experiencing his forgiveness and leadership now for many years.

My Story (Question 4):

Third Handle: AD—After Christ

These answers should address the problem or situation mentioned in your answer to the first question.

5. How did your life begin to change after you trusted Christ?

Examples:

- It's hard to describe the difference God made in my life. It wasn't just external; it's like my heart was transformed. Overnight my desires began to change.
- I can hardly put into words the release I felt. I knew my sins had been forgiven, and it was a huge weight off my shoulders. For the first time I felt true joy.
- My life isn't perfect. I still do things that I regret. But my overall course has turned from being self-centered, to really caring about God and the people in my life.

If you came to faith as a child, the emphasis in these final questions should be on the difference Christ makes in your life compared to what it might have been without him. This can be determined, more or less, by reflecting on times when you not close to him, by considering areas of weakness, or perhaps by observing the lifestyles of old friends and classmates who did not follow Christ. You might say something like:

Knowing Christ makes a difference every day in my life. I know myself well enough to realize the mess I'd be in if it weren't for God's guidance. And even when I mess up. That's when I'm most thankful for his forgiveness and grace.

My Story (Question 5):

6. What other benefits have you experienced since becoming a Christian? Especially think of ones that would best related to the person/people on your prayer list.

Examples:

- Following God has given me purpose—knowing I’m here for greater reasons than just working, eating, sleeping, and doing it all over again. God wants to use me.
- I used to live with fear and insecurity. While I still worry occasionally, that sense of despair has been replaced with a calm confidence that my life is in God’s hands.
- God has replaced what I used to think of as fun in my life with a kind of joy and happiness that really lasts.
- I’ve always had good friendships, but never with the depth I’ve found in some of our church family. Those people are closer to me than any friend ever was before.

My Story (Question 6):

Concluding Question

It's best to end your story with a concluding question or statement that requires a **response** from the other person.

Circle the following statement or question that seems natural for you, or write your own.

- So that's what happened to me. Can you relate to any of it?
- How about you—what's your spiritual background?
- Were you taught any of this growing up, or maybe I can ask, what do you believe?
- That's my spiritual story. I'd like to hear yours.
- Does it make sense to you?

My Concluding Question:

Unifying Theme

This is the central issue in each of our stories that illustrates the difference it's made to know and follow Christ.

My Unifying Theme:

Follow Wear

Everyone is invited to follow Jesus. Being a sinner doesn't disqualify you. Being a doubter doesn't disqualify you. The goal of following Jesus is a faith that overcomes fear of the future or our current circumstances. It's a faith that gives us peace.

But what do people who follow Jesus look like? What do they wear?

“A new command I give you: **Love** one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
John 13:34-35 (NIV)

“Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV)

COMPASSION – your heart breaks for others, you feel it in your “bowels”, you feel what other people are going through or are experiencing, regardless of what they did or didn't do to get themselves in the situation they're in.

KINDNESS – when you loan your strength to someone else, someone needs something done so you do it for them, you extend yourself on their behalf.

HUMILITY – seeing myself as I really am in relationship to other people and to God, viewing myself accurately ... I'm nothing more than a citizen of humanity just like everyone else, there is an equality among human beings, we are peers!

GENTLENESS – the decision to respond to you in light of your strengths and weaknesses instead of responding to you in my strength, deciding to come to your level of strength or weakness as we interact rather than at my level of strength; I will adjust my strength according to your need. Gentle people don't come into the relationship maintaining a posture of superiority regarding who they are, what they know or what they've done. They're NOT condescending!

PATIENCE – deciding to go the speed of another person, you move at the speed of someone else rather than at your speed.

FORGIVENESS – the action God took which heals our broken relationship with Him. It is by the act of forgiveness that we are reconciled with God and others; it allows us to live beyond the power of the past (sin), into a gracious future relationship with God and others.

LOVE – the accurate estimate and the adequate supply of another's need. It's the commitment of my will to your needs and best interests regardless of the cost.

Chick Flick PG = CHK FLK PG

Compassion
Humility
Kindness

Forgiveness
Love
Kindness (again)

Patience
Goodness

Following Jesus means clothing yourself in patience, gentleness, kindness, compassion, humility, forgiveness, and love. That kind of faith is powerful. It's the kind of faith that makes a difference instead of just making a point. Imagine how that kind of faith would change people's perceptions of the church. Imagine how it would change communities . . . nations . . . the world.

Let's Pray!

1. What's your favorite sports team? To what extremes have you gone to show your support for your team?
2. When you think of the word "Christian" what qualities come to mind? Are they positive or negative? Why?
3. Talk about a time when you encountered a Christian who was more interested in making a point than making a difference. How did that person affect the way you view Jesus?
4. In the message, Andy said, "All religions gravitate toward rule keeping instead of relationship building." Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not?
5. Read Colossians 3:12–14. What are some of the challenges to living the kind of life Jesus calls his followers to live?
6. Think of one person in your life who is difficult to love. What is one thing you can do this week to better love that person? What can this group do to support you?

Resource: "Follow" Series – Part 4, Northpoint, Andy Stanley

Learning To Pray Scripture

“Lord, I want to give thanks for _____ as I remember **him/her** in my *prayers*. I want to ask You to give _____ the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that **he/she** may know You better. I *pray* also that the eyes of **his/her** heart may be enlightened in order that **he/she** may know the hope to which You have called **him/her**. May _____ know the riches of Your glorious inheritance. May **he/she** know Your incomparably great power in every area of **his/her** life for I know that the power You offer is like the working of Your mighty strength. In Jesus’ name, Amen.” (Eph. 1:16-19)

“Lord, I *pray* that out of Your glorious riches You may strengthen _____ with power through Your Spirit in **his/her** inner being, so that You, Jesus, may dwell in **his/her** heart through faith. And I *pray* that _____ may be rooted and established in love. May **he/she** have the power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. May _____ begin to know Your love that surpasses knowledge and may **he/she** be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. In Jesus’ name, Amen.” (Eph. 3:16-19)

“Lord, I *pray* that _____’s love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that **he/she** may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ. May **he/she** be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through You, Jesus, to the glory and praise of God. In Jesus’ name, Amen.” (Phil. 1:9-11)

“Lord, I’m thankful for _____’s faith in You. Thank you for **his/her** love for all the believers both here at RCC and those who around the world. Lord, I ask you to fill **him/her** with the knowledge of Your will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. May **he/she** live a life worthy of You. May _____ please You in every way. May **he/she** bear fruit in every good work. May **he/she** grow in the knowledge of You. May **he/she** be strengthened with all power according to Your glorious might so that **he/she** may have great endurance and patience. May _____ joyfully give thanks to You because you have qualified **him/her** to share in Your inheritance in the kingdom of light. In Jesus’ name, Amen.” (Col. 1:3-4, 9-12)

Assurance of Answered Prayer

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. (John 16:24 NIV)

What does it mean to ask in Jesus' name? (Authority)

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (John 15:7 NIV)

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. (1 John 5:14-15 NIV)

‘Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.’ (Jeremiah 33:3 NIV)

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us ... (Ephesians 3:20 NIV)

How do you think God would respond to a request for something He knew would be bad for you?

What do you think God would do if He knew the answer would be better for you at another time?

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:3 NIV)

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; (Psalm 66:18 NIV)

ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication)

Assurance of Forgiveness

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:8-10 NIV)

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24 NIV)

I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin. (Psalm 38:18 NIV)

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. (Proverbs 28:13 NIV)

You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you. (Psalm 86:5 NIV)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace (Ephesians 1:7 NIV)

But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, (Hebrews 10:12 NIV)

Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." (Hebrews 10:17 NIV)

Assurance of His Strength

I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:13 NIV)

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Cor. 12:9 NIV)

The name of the Lord is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe. (Proverbs 18:10 NLT)

"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. (John 15:5 NIV)

I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (Psalm 18:1-2 NIV)

Fasting

“Am I sad? I eat. Am I happy? I eat. Tired? Eat. Angry, depressed, bored? Eat, eat, eat. Do we have a social occasion? We must eat. My life can parody I Thessalonians 5:16-18 ...

“Be eating always, eat continually, and eat in all circumstances.”

(Ben Patterson, Chapel Dean – Hope College)

“The best of all medicines are resting and fasting.”

(Ben Franklin)

“A fast is better than a bad meal.”

(Irish Proverb)

“Feast, and your halls are crowded; Fast, and the world goes by.”

(Ella Wheeler Wilcox)

“Some have exalted religious fasting beyond all Scripture and reason; and others have utterly disregarded it.”

(John Wesley)

“In my research I could not find a single book published on the subject of Christian fasting from 1861 to 1954, a period of nearly one hundred years.”

(Richard Foster, Celebration Of Discipline, p. 47)

Fasting is the third area – after giving and praying – for which Jesus gives a corrective to the hypocritical religious practices typified by the scribes and Pharisees. Fasting has been practiced for various reasons throughout history. Many ancient pagans believed that demons could enter the body through food. When they felt they were under demonic attack they would fast to prevent more evil spirits from gaining access to their bodies.

Zoroaster, Confucius, and the Yogis of India were committed to fasting – often for long periods of time, in which mystical visions and insights are claimed to be received. Plato, Socrates, Aristotle and even Hippocrates all fasted. In modern western society fasting has become popular for purely physical and cosmetic reasons, and is recommended in some diet programs.

The Bible records no teaching or practice of fasting for practical reasons. Legitimate fasting always had a spiritual purpose and is never presented as having any value in and of itself. The only fast commanded in Scripture is the one connected with the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). On that day all the people were to fast as an act of self-denial. That was a national fast, involving everyone in Israel.

Fasting is unlike giving and prayer because it is NOT commanded by God to us. It is spoken of favorably in both the Old and New Testaments and was practiced by O.T. heroes, N.T. saints, and early church fathers. However, it is shown to be an entirely noncompulsory, voluntary act, not a spiritual duty to be regularly observed. This is exciting because it means that we have freedom in the gospel. Our freedom, however, does not mean license; it means opportunity. Since there are no laws to bind us, we are free to fast on any day, for any length of time, and for any reason we felt led to fast.

“**When** you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.
¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV)

1. The Problem of Fasting

(Pitfalls, can negate its effectiveness)

a) Fasting is assumed - “when”

“Then John's disciples came and asked him, ‘How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?’ ¹⁵ Jesus answered, ‘How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.’”

Matthew 9:14-15 (NIV)

b) Problem of insincerity. (v.16a). *(Exercise in external holiness for show.)*

Two extreme views of eating were held among the Jews of Jesus' day. Many, like the ones mentioned in this passage made an obvious display of fasting. Others believed that, because food is a gift from God, each person would have to give an account to Him on the day of judgment for every good thing he had not eaten. The first group not only was more prevalent but was more self-righteous and proud. Their fasting was not a matter of spiritual conviction but a means of self-gratification.

c) Problem of showmanship (v.16b).

Many Pharisees fasted twice a week, usually on the second and fifth days of the week. They claimed those days were chosen because they were the days Moses made the two separate trips to receive the tablets of law from God on Mount Sinai. But those two days also happened to be the major Jewish market days, when cities and towns were crowded with farmers, merchants, and shoppers. They were, therefore, the two days where public fasting would have the largest audiences.

d) Problem of secrecy (v. 17,18). *(Oil was used for deodorant.)*

Those wanting to call attention to their fasting would wear old clothes, sometimes purposely torn and soiled, dishevel their hair, cover themselves with dirt and ashes, and even use makeup in order to look pale and sickly. Hypocrite comes from a Greek word for the mask used by actors to portray a certain character or mood.

Note: It's not that no one should know about your fast.

2. The Purpose of Fasting

There are several things that occur when you fast. Fasting is not to be used to strong arm God. That's not the way it works. But there are some things that fasting will do for you. **Let's look at seven together ...**

1. Fasting can secure favor with people around you.

“The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD;
he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.”
Proverbs 21:1 (NIV)

“They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.”

⁴ When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and **fasted** and prayed before the God of heaven. ⁵ Then I said: “O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, ⁶ let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. ⁷ We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. ⁸ “Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, ⁹ but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’ ¹⁰ “They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. ¹¹ *O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.*” I was cupbearer to the king.”
Nehemiah 1:3-11 (NIV)

“In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before; ² so the king asked me, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.” I was very much afraid, ³ but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” ⁴ The king said to me, “*What is it you want?*” Then I prayed to the God of heaven, ⁵ and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.”
Nehemiah 2:1-5 (NIV)

Note: Difficult employee, employer, spouse, child, etc.

2. Fasting helps you to ascertain the will of God.

“While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

Acts 13:2-3 (NIV)

“Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.”

Acts 14:23 (NIV)

Note: New job, relationship, direction, geographic relocation, etc.

“At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. ³ I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.”

Daniel 10:2-3 (NIV)

“Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.”

Daniel 10:12 (NIV)

Note: Wisdom, discernment, no need to call all our friends.

3. Fasting brings us to a place of brokenness and humility in our walk with God. (Surrender)

“When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel was leader of Israel at Mizpah.”

1 Samuel 7:6 (NIV)

“David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground.”

2 Samuel 12:16 (NIV)

“So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.”

Daniel 9:3 (NIV)

“Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered, ¹⁴ I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother.”

Psalms 35:13-14 (NIV)

4. Fasting will help you gain a breakthrough with the Lord.

After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to make war on Jehoshaphat. ² Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar" (that is, En Gedi). ³ Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. ⁴ The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him. ⁵ Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard ⁶ and said: "O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. ⁷ O our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? ⁸ They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, ⁹ 'If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.' ¹⁰ "But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. ¹¹ See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. ¹² O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." ¹³ All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD. ¹⁴ Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. ¹⁵ He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. ¹⁶ Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. ¹⁷ You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.'"

2 Chronicles 20:1-17 (NIV)

"There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. ²² I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, "The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him."

²³ So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer."

Ezra 8:21-23 (NIV)

Note: Some of you are in need of protection and God is awaiting your fast.

5. Fasting gives us power and authority in the spirit realm.

“Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. ¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.” ¹⁷ “O unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you?

How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” ¹⁸ Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment. ¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” ²⁰ He replied, “Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” *But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”*

Matthew 17:15-20 (NIV)

Note: Although the phrase “this kind does not go out except prayer and fasting” is not found in the best manuscripts of Matthew, it is a genuine saying of Jesus and is found in Mark's Gospel (9:29), from which an early scribe probably picked it up and added it to Matthew. However, the last two words of the verse, “and fasting,” are not found in the best manuscripts of any Gospel.

6. Fasting prepares us for new seasons of ministry.

- Moses fasted for 40 days before he led the children of Israel & received the law.
- Jesus fasted for 40 days before He began His ministry.
- Paul fasted before his ministry in Acts 9.

7. Fasting gives us a greater awareness of the Lord.

- Bring you to a place of quiet in your heart before the Lord.
- You’re hungry when you fast. That hunger reminds you that you’re seeking God.

“The king of Britain called for a day of solemn *prayer* and **fasting** because of a threatened invasion by the French in 1756. On February 6, John Wesley recorded in his journal, 'The fast day was a glorious day, such as London has scarce seen since the Restoration. Every church in the city was more than full, and a solemn seriousness sat on every face. Surely God heareth prayer, and there will yet be a lengthening of our tranquility.' In a footnote he wrote, 'Humility was turned into national rejoicing for the threatened invasion by the French was averted.’”

Note: Fasting must be accompanied by prayer or it is simply dieting!

3. The Promise of Fasting (v. 18)

“Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins. ²For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. ³'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?' "Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. ⁴Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. ⁵Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? ⁶"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? ⁸Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. ⁹Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, ¹⁰and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. ¹¹The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. ¹²Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. ¹³"If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, ¹⁴then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." The mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Isaiah 58:1-14 (NIV)

“Food is ultimately not about food, but about God. The meaning of hunger – indeed, of all desire – is to point us to God. We shouldn't be too quick to make hunger go away, for it can teach us much about our frailty, need, and emptiness apart from God. A full stomach can be cause for deep gratitude, or as is so often the case, cause for spiritual dullness and laziness. A little hunger never hurt anyone, but its absence will.”

(Bob Patterson)

In the Spring of 1877 the people of a state got word that there was to be a terrible plague of locusts coming. They knew that the locusts would destroy everything in sight and so on April 26, 1877, the Governor called a state-wide **fast**. The entire state began *praying*. Businesses shut down and people sought the Lord. They prayed for a heat wave and it caused all the locusts to hatch. They then prayed for a cold blizzard to come and it did. The storm killed all the newborn locusts! God responds when His people **fast**!

Fasting Resources

FASTING FOR A BREAKTHROUGH

The spiritual practice of fasting is found throughout Scripture. Jesus fasted (Matthew 4:2) and instructed His followers regarding it (Matthew 6:16, Mark 2:20). Biblical fasting is not intended to be a mystical, ascetic exercise to display your piety or improve your status with God, but it is a normal and powerful exercise that God uses for our spiritual formation (Acts 13:2-3, Mark 9:29). We are simply practicing a Biblically taught discipline.

Fasting involves intentional times of prayer, praise and intercession during the day (perhaps minute “prayer breaks”) and focused extended times of prayer (perhaps during the times you would be eating). I encourage you to spend extra time in the Bible to feed your soul during the time you are fasting and intentionally listen to God through your time of worship. Ask the Lord how and what you should fast and then obey Him. In addition, it may be helpful to partner with someone else who will join you in fasting.

I believe that if we take this time for focused prayer and fasting not only will those who fast grow stronger in their walk with God, but our corporate gatherings will be more energized by the Holy Spirit. I am convinced the Holy Spirit is always eager to soften hardened hearts, strengthen those who are weak, and compel us to help others with the love of Jesus. I believe the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) was a response to the diligent focused corporate prayer and fasting taking place prior to that God-ordained event (Acts 1:12-14).

Finally, do not fast food if there are medical or dietary reasons that would prohibit it!

Since prayer and fasting prepares us for discovering God’s purposes and His power, won’t you prayerfully commit to seeking God in prayer and fasting?

FASTING BASICS

Simply stated, Biblical fasting is refraining from food for a spiritual purpose. Biblical fasting takes a lot of discipline and strength—strength which you can only receive from God. Your private discipline will bring you rewards in heaven, says Matthew 6.

When you give God your “first” through fasting and prayer at the beginning of the year, you set the course for the entire year.

Why should I fast?

1. Are you in need of healing or a miracle?
2. Do you need the tender touch of God in your life?
3. Is there a dream inside you that only He can make possible?
4. Are you in need of a fresh encounter?
5. Do you desire a deeper, more intimate and powerful relationship with the Lord?
6. Are you ready to have heightened sensitivity to the desires of God?
7. Do you need to break away from bondages that have been holding you hostage?
8. Is there a friend or loved one that needs Salvation?
9. Do you desire to know God's will for your life?

TYPES OF FASTS

Full Fast - Drink only liquids - you establish the number of days. (Matthew 4:1-2; Matthew 11:18; Luke 4:1,2)

The Daniel Fast - Eat no choice food or delicacies. Drink water and juice. Eat fruits and vegetables. (Daniel 10:2-3)

3-Day Fast - This fast can be a Full Fast, Daniel Fast or give up at least one item of food. (1 Samuel 30:12; Esther 4:16; Acts 9:7-9)

Partial Fast - A partial fast is from 6:00 am to 3:00 pm or from sun up to sundown. Many people select from three types of fasting —a Full Fast, Daniel Fast or give up at least one item of food during a partial fast. (1 Samuel 14:24)

Scripture References for Fasting: Nehemiah 1:4, Daniel 9:3, 20, Joel 2:12, Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 9:14-15, Luke 2:37, Acts 13:2

Corporate Fasting: 1 Samuel 7:5-6, Ezra 8:21-23, Nehemiah 9:1-3, Joel 2:15-16, Jonah 3:5-10

Remember that it is the attitude of a heart sincerely seeking Him to which God responds with a blessing (Isaiah 58, Jeremiah 14:12, 1 Corinthians 8:8). May God greatly bless you as you fast!

QUICK TIPS

How to Begin - Start with a clear goal. Be specific. Why are you *fasting*? Do you need direction, healing, restoration of marriage or have family issues? Are you facing financial difficulties? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Pray and read the Bible.

Preparing Spiritually - Confess your sins to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of weakness. Forgive all who have offended you and ask forgiveness from those you may have offended (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4). Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ and reject the worldly desires that try to hinder you (Romans 12:1-2).

Deciding What to Fast - The type of fasting you choose is up to you. You could go on a full fast for a short time in which you only drink liquids, or you may desire to fast like Daniel who abstained from sweets and meats and drank water only. Remember to replace that time with prayer and Bible study.

Consult your doctor before abstaining from food if you have dietary or physical restrictions.

What to Expect - When you fast your body detoxifies, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. And naturally, you will have hunger pains. Limit your activity and exercise moderately. Take time to rest. Fasting has a positive effect on your spiritual life and can be a catalyst for significant spiritual growth. You are following Jesus' example when you fast. It is also helpful to spend time listening to praise and worship music. Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking God's face.

How to End - Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast. Begin eating foods gradually; eat small portions or snacks.

*Portions Adapted from:
Kingdom Connection at www.jentezenfranklin.org/fasting
& Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough by Elmer Towns*

Spiritual Warfare Introduction

Introduction: How do we withstand the attacks of the enemy? How do we stand firm in our battles?

Text: Ephesians 6:10-14a

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then ..."

Background: In Ephesians Paul presents for us how a Christian is supposed to be and what a Christian is like. We have received: adoption, love, forgiveness, knowledge, understanding, and power. We have been moved out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. We are to walk in humility, unity, light, wisdom, fullness in the spirit. Our relationships within marriage, family and in our jobs are to be different. There is still one thing we must know. We will not accomplish all of these things without a fight. Just because we know the truth, doesn't mean that we will apply it in our lives. The reason we are often stopped and many times we fall is because we are in a fight. We are in a war! Our enemy is bent on destroying us. Don't take that lightly. We must stand firm and learn not to fall.

This passage is the only place in Scripture that goes into as much detail about spiritual warfare. Other verses do mention it however ...

Read: II Corinthians 10:3-5

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Read: James 4:7

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Read: I Peter 5:8,9

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings."

Binding & Loosing

There is NO Biblical precedent for binding and loosing. It is not taught anywhere in God's Word.

Read: Matthew 16:17-19

"Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'"

Read: Matthew 18:18

"I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

The tense of both of these passages is future perfect passive, so a more accurate translation would be ...

"And whatever you bind on earth *will have been* bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth *will have been* loosed in heaven."

What it is talking about there is not that we do something and heaven aligns with our activity. Rather, it is us aligning with heaven. Whether it's in an area of church discipline or if you're talking about raising up the church and the church's authority, Jesus is telling us that what we start to do will have already been ordered in heaven.

In neither one of these passages are we talking about evil spirits. There are no references to demons. Neither of these passages are meant to teach us about spiritual warfare. Also notice that it says "whatever" you bind, not "whoever" you bind. If it were demons or angels that are to be bound or loosed there would be a pronoun there because they are persons. It doesn't have anything to do with spiritual warfare. Rather, it deals with the church's authority.

In chapter 16, Peter is being authorized in advance to build the kingdom of God according to God's plan. In other words, it was like Jesus was saying ...

"Peter, I'm going to build my church through you and Peter I'm going to lead you and guide you and I know that it's going to be scary and I know that it's not going to be easy but just as you spoke by the Spirit you can be sure that as you build My church I'll be leading you so that whatever you permit in the church will already have been permitted in heaven and whatever you forbid in the church will have already been forbidden in heaven. Peter, I'm going to lead you and I'm going to guide you."

In chapter 18 the context is similar. The idea is that when you go into a situation regarding church discipline and you don't want to discipline someone. If someone misbehaves then you are to go to them one-on-one and if there is not repentance then you take one or two others. If there is still no change in behavior then you take the matter to the church. If there is still no repentance then you are to remove them from the church. You are to treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. The fact of the matter is that no one wants to do that.

In the church today we are hesitant to do that. Where is the love in that? The issue is this: Are you going to follow the Scripture or not? If you follow the Scripture and discipline the brother or sister it will open them up to the Spirit's working in their life and bring them back ultimately to restoration. The goal of this passage is not to be punitive but rather to restore. It's no fun and it's scary. But we can know that whatever is done here on earth has already been done in heaven. If you move someone out of the church then you can know that you're lining the church up with what has already been decreed in heaven.

In this next passage Jesus is being accused of doing His works through demon power ...

Read: Matthew 12:29

"Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house."

What Jesus is talking about in this verse is His ministry to the world. He is affirming here that through His ministry and ultimately through His death He will have bound the strong man and we know that it's true because of Colossians 2:15 ...

"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

At Calvary, Jesus bound satan. The beautiful and wonderful news is that at Calvary satan was bound once and for all. At Calvary his power was limited. At Calvary sin's power was broken. So now people in the world are not bound, they are blind. Paul says ...

"The god of this age has *blinded* the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." 2Cor. 4:4

So we can see that there is no directive to bind satan or demons. That doesn't mean that we can't cast a demon out of someone. You can move demons out of people. Clearly Scripture teaches that. But it does not give us the power or the authority or the prescription ever to bind satan or rebuke him. We don't have that directive from the Word of God.

There is not one instance in Scripture where you see the Apostles bind a spirit over a region or geographical area. You never see Jesus bind the spirit of religion in Jerusalem. You never see Him bind the spirit of unbelief in Bethsaida. You never see Paul bind the spirit of idolatry in Ephesus or the spirit of lust in Corinth. The reason they didn't do it was because it does little good. It wasn't something they did. God has not told us not to bind or to rebuke the enemy.

That's the reason Paul didn't give it any attention in this passage of Scripture. If we can bind satan then why don't we do it once and for all?

Read: II Corinthians 12:7,8

"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded *with the Lord* to take it away from me."

We don't know for sure what Paul's thorn was. It is possible it was an individual that was personally persecuting him or perhaps a direct demonic attack. Notice that Paul knew the source. It wasn't trivial to him. In fact, the word thorn there could be better translated a "stake" so that Paul was impaled on it. Notice that Paul knows it was a demon and he was right but he didn't bind satan, he didn't take authority over him. He didn't spend any time talking to satan. Rather, he talked to the one who could do something about it - God! We shouldn't waste our time talking to the enemy when we could be talking to Almighty God!

It's a good thing that we can't bind satan at our will because if we could we would run the risk of getting in the way of what God wants to do in our lives. God is so powerful that He is able to use a rebellious being like satan when he tries to destroy our lives. He uses those times of trial to develop our Christian character. And if we could bind satan then God's work would be frustrated in our lives. See what Paul says, "To keep me from becoming conceited..." Paul was a man whom God had to keep humble. He needed to keep Paul reliant upon Him.

Paul had a great ministry in Thessalonica. He was only there three weeks but during his time there a church was born that was one of the most dynamic churches under his ministry. He was run out of town and had to go to Corinth. The ministry was much harder there and he wanted to return to Thessalonica.

Read: I Thessalonians 2:17,18; 3:10

"But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. For we wanted to come to you — certainly I, Paul, did, again and again — but Satan stopped us ... Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith."

Did Paul try to bind satan? Did he try and rebuke the enemy? No! When Paul had a problem he went straight to God. Why? Because only God can change the situation. Not even Jesus, when attacked by satan, bound him. Rather, He came back at him with "It is written ..." Jesus used a part of the armor that Paul talks about in Ephesians 6 - the Sword of the Spirit (God's Word).

Question: How do we fight? How do we do battle?

There are four things in verses 10-12 that we need to be aware of. They are four aspects to our victory ...

I. The Preparation (v. 10)

We must not fight the battle without being prepared. We can't stand strong without being prepared.

Question: What does it mean to "stand strong"?

"Stand" (*stete*) is a key word in this passage. The equipment enables the soldier to ward off the attacks of the enemy and make a stand against him. *Stete* is a military term for holding on to a position. Before any offensive can be launched, one must first of all maintain his own ground. The word "against" (*pros*) stresses the determined hostility confronting the Christian soldier.

It's standing strong when you gain victory over that temper. It's standing strong when you say no to that sexual temptation. It's standing strong when you're a person of integrity even when it's going to cost you. It's standing strong when you don't give in to bitterness or unforgiveness. It's standing strong when you live a holy life even when the world around you is conforming.

Question: What is the primary principle to spiritual warfare (v. 10)?

Depend on the strength of the Lord. It's not in our own strength. The word "in" is critical. When we are "in Christ" we are strong. No matter what the enemy does to us we are protected if we are in Christ. "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

Read: Revelation 3:8

"I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have *little strength*, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name." (Church at Philadelphia - even little strength is enough vs. satan.)

Read: Ephesians 1:19-23

"That *power* is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

Read: II Corinthians 12:9,10

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my *power* is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's *power* may rest on me ... For when I am weak, then I am *strong*."

II. **The Armor** (v. 11)

Notice that it says, "put on." It's permanent - once for all. You leave it on and you wear it for the rest of your life. Unlike a football uniform, it becomes a part of you. Paul is under house arrest and may have been chained to a Roman soldier and he begins to look at his armor.

Because the warfare in which Christians are engaged is on the scale described in v.12, the command to take advantage of the *panoply* God has provided is reiterated from v.11. The verb, though translated in NIV "put on," is a different one from that in v.11 where *endysasthe*, literally, "be clothed in," is used. Here it is *elabete*, "take up, assume. So when the battle is at its fiercest, the soldiers of Christ will still be able to hold their line even against the most determined attack.

Question: What is the armor and why is it so important?

The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet fitted with readiness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. It's not enough to simply have the power, we need the armor.

III. **The Battle** (v. 12)

The following passage is directly related to a prophecy against the king of Tyre and so some would argue that it has nothing to do with Satan. However, it seems likely that the references to his being a "cherub" and present in "Eden, the garden of God" mean that either the author was applying truths about Satan to the King of Tyre or describing Satan who is represented in this instance by the King of Tyre. In either case it is possible directly or indirectly to learn something of Satan himself.

Read: Ezekiel 28:12-19

“Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “‘You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.’”

Question: Who is the enemy?

Satan ("adversary")

Lucifer (Isa. 14:12-15)

Liar & Father of Lies (Jn. 8:44)

The Enemy (I Peter 5:8)

Abaddon (Apollyon in the Greek; Rev. 9:11)

The Angel of the Abyss (Rev. 9:1)

The Prince of demons (Mt. 12:24)
2:2)

The Ruler of Darkness (Eph. 6:12)

The Evil One (Mt. 13:19)

Beelzebub (Mt. 12:24)

Devil (32 times in N.T.)

Anointed Cherub (Eze. 28)

Accuser of the Brethren (Rev. 12:10)

Serpent & Dragon (Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9, 20:2)

Destroyer

The god of This Age (II Cor. 4:4)

The Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air (Eph.

The Tempter (Mt. 4:3)

Belial (II Cor. 6:15)

Murderer From the Beginning (Jn. 8:44)

Question: Did Jesus believe in a devil?

Yes! He was tempted by him in Matthew 4. He mentioned his working in John 12, 14, and 16. Paul, James and Peter all mentioned him as well.

Question: How many demons are there?

We don't know for sure but according to Revelation 5:11, John "saw and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand." If you multiply that out it is 101 million. According to Revelation 12:4 satan took a third of the angels with him. There may be billions of angels but suffice it to say that satan is leading a large host of demons. According to Ephesians 6:12 there is apparently some kind of demonic army - a hierarchy of spirits?

Question: What does the enemy do?

His desire is to thwart the power, the presence, and the plan of God. He is smart, crafty, and cunning. He deserves our respect. We don't have to be afraid of him but he is a celestial being.

Tempts (Gen. 3; Mt. 4)

Opposed God's Work (Zech. 3)

Hindered The Gospel (II Cor. 2)

Desires To Control All Nations (Rev. 16)

Perverts God's Word (Mt. 4)

Hindered God's Servants (I Thess. 2)

Snares The Wicked (I Tim. 3)

Brought Sin Into The World (I Jn. 5)

Question: What warning do we receive from II Peter 2:10-12 and Jude 9?

"This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, *these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings*; yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish."

"In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and *slander celestial beings*. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals — these are the very things that destroy them."

We would be wise not to run the devil down. To call him a liar and the father of lies is not slander, it is fact. It is a mark of false teachers when they run the devil down or slander celestial beings.

IV. The Victory (v. 13)

Standing firm is the victory! Being able to stand firm is the victory. Putting on the armor and remaining in Christ will allow us to stand firm. The combination of these two things, the power of the Lord plus the armor of God guarantees victory!

Lord's Power + God's Armor = Standing Firm (Victory)

Conclusion:

Are you in a battle this evening?

Are you able to stand tonight?

Do you need God's power in your life?

Next Week: Get Ready

Get Ready

Text: Ephesians 6:10-14a

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then ..."

I. **The Attack** (v. 12)

We are in a struggle. It's a fight to the death. It's a picture of two gladiators. We are in a war with satan and his demonic horde.

Question: When is the "Day of Evil"?

"The day of evil" is neither a particular juncture like approaching death or the last great satanic outbreak at the end of the age nor the whole of the present age (5:16). It is "when things are at their worst" (NEB)-because of "the devil's schemes" (v.11). When the emergency is over for the time being, it will be found that not an inch of territory has been yielded. Christians will "have done everything" (*hapanta katergasameno*), not only in preparing for the conflict but also in pursuing it. The verb has to do with achievements either in war or in the games.

Ways Satan Attacks The Church And Individuals:

1) **By trying to undermine God's credibility and character.**

Satan wants us to doubt God. He wants us to think that God is selfish and that we can't trust Him. He wants us to doubt His Word and His power. He puts questions in our path regarding God's care of us.

Read: Genesis 3:1

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, '*Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?*'"

2) **By making it hard to live the Christian life.**

- Persecution - emotionally, physically, mentally; job, marriage
- Peer Pressure - afraid because they'll lose friends, family, and position.

3) By giving false doctrine.

He will give just enough truth in the lie so that people will believe it. He distracts the church with trivial issues while important ministry is hindered.

4) By trying to hinder your service to Christ.

He wants to stop people from ministering. He wants to stop RCC and you from being effective in reaching people. He wants to keep your life so busy that you don't have time to minister. He wants you to be too tired to minister. He wants to keep you discouraged. Don't get sidetracked!

5) By trying to cause division.

He works hard to create unrest and schisms in the church, families, work place, etc.

6) By getting us to trust our own resources.

In I Chronicles 21:2,7,8 David has Joab count all of his fighting men and in the process sins against God and ultimately the nation paid for it. It was when David began to focus on his resources and the nation's resources that he took his eyes off of relying on God and he began to rely on himself.

As believers we can't depend on the past. Don't fall into the trap of what you've done in the past. Your prayer life will suffer and you'll find yourself sitting around debating doctrine and reminiscing about the good old days in ministry.

7) By causing Christians to be hypocritical.

No matter where you go there will be those who are unsaved pretending to be saved and those who are saved will have some area of their life that is subject to hypocrisy at times.

8) By trying to entice us to disobey God's Word.

There are others but these are eight major areas. We'll talk about more in the weeks to come but for now it's important to see that all of these attacks should be dealt with in the same way. We are not to focus on what the enemy is doing. Rather, we are to concentrate on what WE'RE doing. All that matters is, "Are you ready?" No matter how the enemy comes, we must be ready to stand firm. That's where the victory comes.

II. The Armor (v. 14)

There are six pieces to the armor. Tonight we're going to look at the first piece ...

"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist ..."

First of all, the belt tied tightly around the waist indicated that the soldier was prepared for action. To slacken the belt was to go off duty. The "belt" (*zone*) was not an ornament but served an essential purpose. It gathered in the short tunic and helped keep the breastplate in place when the latter was fitted on. From it hung the scabbard in which the sword was sheathed (v.17).

In Isaiah 11:5 the Messiah is depicted as wearing the belt of righteousness around his waist and faithfulness as the sash around his body. Here truth (*aletheia*) is said to be the soldier's belt. Is it to be interpreted objectively as the truth of the gospel (Eph 1:13; 4:15), or is it what the psalmist describes as "truth in the inward being" (Ps. 51:6)? Something of both elements may be combined, if we regard it as "the truth that is in Jesus" (Eph 4:21) and "the fruit of the light" (5:9). Because the Christian has accepted the truth of revelation and is now indwelt by the risen Lord, who is himself the truth, his life has truth (or reality) as its basis and he displays the consistency of character that springs from it. Certainly *aletheia* in this verse is closely linked with *dikaiosyne* (righteousness) as elsewhere in Ephesians (4:24; 5:9).

Read: Exodus 12:11

"This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover."

The Roman soldier would "gird up his loins" for running or for battle. They would take the ends of their garments and tuck them up under their belt.

III. The Attitude (v. 14)

The main thrust here is the attitude of truthfulness. Put on the belt of truthfulness. The belt of truth does NOT have to do with truth as content like the Word of God is truth. It's not, "satan is full of lies so you'd better have the belt of truth so you can stand against his lies." That is the sword of the Spirit – the Bible. Here it's a different idea. When he says put on your belt of truth what he is talking about is an **attitude of readiness**. It shows an **attitude of commitment**. It means you are **ready** for battle. It means that you are serious about this enterprise.

If the truth were known, most Christians never get the belt of truth on. They're never ready. They just go with the flow and take things as they come. They just hope that when the battle comes they can stand. They are not ready ... they are not serious. They're not ready to do battle. They don't have the proper attitude.

In the words of Luke 8:14, they “are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.” That is why they lose. The reason most Christians lose the battle is that they are not committed to winning.

We can't wait until the enemy is staring us in the face. We mustn't take the fight lightly. We must get ready to win today! We must get ready now! We must prepare for the war tonight! That is the key to victory. You must want to win.

Questions: Is it your passion to be an excellent Christian? Is it the number one priority in your life? Is winning in the Christian life, is growing in your relationship with Christ, is living in a state of readiness the number one passion and priority of your life?

Read: I Corinthians 9:24-27

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

Paul's challenge to us this evening is to run the race like we want to win. We can't be half-hearted about it. A half-hearted commitment is no commitment at all. My prayer for RCC and for you is that we'll be a people and a church that wants to win. Not so that we can stack up our crowns but so we can walk in victory.

Question: What do the “runners” race for (v. 25)?

Have you ever known an Olympic athlete who gave less than 100%? They're up by 4 a.m. and they'll put in 5 hours in the morning and then they'll come in and put in 4 or 5 hours in the evening. They watch their diet and what they eat. They get plenty of rest. They're in training and they're disciplined. They want to win. But they do it to get a crown that will not last. All they'll receive is money or their face on a box of Wheaties. When they die all of their rewards will go back into the box.

Question: What do we Christians race for (v. 25)?

For a crown that will last forever! Paul says he's not going to run at 1/4, 1/2, or even 3/4 speed. No, he says he's going to run at full speed! Can we do no less for the sake of the Gospel?

Question: How often do we compare our race with that of others? Why?

We cannot compare our race with the race of others. If we look at others and compare our walk with theirs or our growth with theirs, we take our eyes off of the course and off of Christ and we'll lose.

Read: Philippians 1:9-11

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.”

Paul is not saying that they didn't have love or knowledge and I'm not saying that you don't have love and knowledge. I'm not saying that you don't want to have these, what I'm trying to get across tonight is that it's got to be your number one priority!

Why is it so important that we grow in our commitment and that we are ready (Phil. 1:10)?

So that we will know how to stand. We'll be able to discern what is pure and blameless.

What is the result (Phil. 1:11)?

We'll be filled with the fruit of righteousness. God will ultimately be honored.

The call, as we go back to Ephesians 6, is that we be ready. It is so important that we understand that we can't figure out what the enemy is doing. You and I can't know exactly what he is doing. And we waste our time trying to figure him out. You don't need *discernment* to know what the enemy is doing. You need *discipline* to make sure you can stand ready for anything. If we are less than 100% committed we may not be ready for his attack.

What matters most to you?

I hope the answer is the things of God. His kingdom. His plans for your life. His agenda for you each and every day. Don't be a Christian who just goes through the motions. Don't be content with where you're at tonight.

Some of you here tonight have experienced one defeat after another. The reason is that you've been going after victory the wrong way. You've got to be ready. You've got to be committed. You've got to have the belt of truthfulness on and get your cloak taken up so that you're ready to walk and you're ready to fight and you're ready to take on whatever comes your way because you've prepared yourself.

How many of you would say that you're not ready for battle tonight?

How many of you would say that your commitment is not what it should be?

How many of you would say that you're not serious about your walk with God?

Ask the Lord tonight to change your heart. Ask Him to help you with your Bible reading, with your prayer life, and with your commitment to Him. He's the one who can change your mind and your heart.

Next Week: Purity & Protection

Purity & Protection

Text: Ephesians 6:10-14a

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then ..."

We learned last week that it's not important whether the enemy attacks from behind, beneath, from above or a frontal assault. The critical thing is that we are ready. We began looking at the armor and last week we talked about the belt of truth. We saw that it is an attitude and mindset of readiness. It's a commitment to be a winner for the Lord Jesus Christ! Tonight, we're going to examine the "Breastplate of Righteousness."

"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place ..."

I. The Picture

No Roman soldier would ever go into battle without his breastplate on. There were three different kinds of breastplates. There were leather breastplates, linen breastplates that either had chain mesh on them or the hooves of animals cut up and sown on them, and then the metal breastplate. This is the picture that Paul paints for us as he is tied up to a Roman soldier in prison.

The "breastplate" (*th6rax*) covered the body from the neck to the thighs. Polybius tells us that it was known as a heart-protector. Usually it was made of bronze but the more affluent officers wore a coat of chain mail. The front piece was strictly the breastplate, but a back piece was commonly worn as well. In Isaiah 59:17 we are told that Yahweh himself put on righteousness like a breastplate (cf. Wis. Sol. 5:18). In this context *dikaiosyne* ("righteousness") stands for uprightness and integrity of character. But this moral rectitude and reputation for fair dealing results directly from the appropriation of Christ's righteousness (see on Eph 5:9). The Christian's protection is not to be sought in any works of his own but only in what Christ has done for him and in him.

II. The Protection

Aside from the head, the most critical area to protect, especially in hand to hand combat, is the area from the neck down to the thighs. This breastplate would protect two primary areas: the heart and the bowels (stomach). To the Jew these two areas symbolically represented to areas.

Question: What did the heart represent to the Jew?

The heart represented a person's mind or thought life. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

Read: Proverbs 27:19

“As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man.”

Read: Mark 7:21-23

“For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean.”

Question: What did the bowels represent to the Jew?

The bowels had to do with the feelings or emotions. When we lose someone or there is stress or worry in our lives we often lose our appetites or we become sick to our stomachs.

Question: In what two areas does satan want to attack us?

We must be aware that satan wants to attack two main areas in our lives. Our minds and our emotions. That is the battle.

Question: In what ways does satan try to attack our thought life?

He wants to fill our minds with perverse thoughts, he wants to try to desensitize us to make us think that sin is not a big deal; he wants us to laugh at sin, he wants us to think that it's not that bad; he causes us to be tolerant, he gets us to hear lyrics that are evil, he wants to cloud your thinking. His goal is to have you interpret your world wrongly. He wants to destroy your conscience and he wants you to violate it so that it will no longer work for you.

Question: In what ways does satan try to attack our emotions?

He wants to confuse your emotions. He wants to get you in situations that your emotions tell you “This feels so good, how can it be wrong?” He wants us to think that improper relationships are okay. He wants us to believe that it's okay to have bitterness, unforgiveness, or anger against others. He wants to give you wrong desires. He wants to discourage you. He wants to depress you and make you feel like you're not worth anything. He wants to overwhelm you with the feeling that you can't make it. He wants you to have a bad attitude. He wants us to live by our feelings rather than by our convictions.

Question: How do we stand against the principalities and powers that desire to destroy us?

We must put on the breastplate of righteousness. Simply put, it means live a righteous life.

Read: Proverbs 2:7

“He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless ...”

Read: Psalm 34:7

“The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.”

Read: Proverbs 10:2

“Ill-gotten treasures are of no value, but righteousness delivers from death.”

Read: Proverbs 20:17

“Food gained by fraud tastes sweet to a man, but he ends up with a mouth full of gravel.”

Read: Proverbs 11:5,6

“The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright delivers them ...”

Read: Proverbs 13:6

“Righteousness guards the man of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner.”

Read: I Timothy 1:18,19

“Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience.”

Read: John 15:10,11

“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*”

Question: Could it be that the enemy is attacking you because you've taken your breastplate of righteousness off?

It matters what you watch on TV; it matters what you read; it matters what you say and how you act. It all contributes to whether you are protected or not. Don't be like a point man in Vietnam who gets into an ambush.

III. The Plea

There is an urgency in Paul's writing. The language he uses ... "be strong, put on, stand firm" all indicate his plea.

Read: Romans 12:1,2

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Read: Ephesians 4:1

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."

Read: I Thessalonians 4:1

"Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more."

Read: I Peter 2:11

"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul."

Question: How do I practically "put on" righteousness? How do I "wear" it?

1) You must evaluate your weaknesses.

- Where is that you fall?
- What area of your life are you weak? (attitude, emotions, bitterness, greed, lust, sensual pleasure)
- What is it that triggers that? (friends, use of time, store you go to, TV, being alone)

Read: Matthew 5:29,30

“If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

2) Enlist the help of others. (accountability, questions)

- Open & Honest

3) Initiate this process by repentance.

- Lord, I’m wicked and I need cleansing. Don’t do it on your own. It won’t work.

Read: I John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”

Conclusion:

Are there things in your life that are not right?

Are there areas in your life tonight where you have uncovered yourself and exposed yourself to the attack of the enemy?

Are you going to listen to the enemy’s voice or the voice of the Holy Spirit?

How many of you need to put the breastplate of righteousness back on?

Next Week: Fancy Footwork

Fancy Footwork

Text: Ephesians 6:10-15

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."

Footwear used to be for protection. Today it is more of a fashion statement. What is the most popular shoe sold today and what is its cost?

- Adidas Response \$79.99
- New Balance 800 Series \$94.99
- Gary Payton Nike \$125.00
- Nike Air Max \$150.00
- Nike Jordan Retro #5 \$150.00

Here is a humorous example from columnist Dave Barry ...

"You want to know what's wrong with America? I'll tell you what's wrong. Too many kinds of sneakers. This problem was driven home to me dramatically when my 10 year old son decided to join the track team. At first I was in favor of this because I was a track man myself at Pleasantview High School where in 1965, and I hope I do not sound too boastful here, I set a NY state record for shortest time on a track team before quitting. So I was glad that my son became interested in this character building sport until he announced he needed new sneakers. This troubled me because he already had new sneakers which cost approximately as much as an assault helicopter but are more technologically advanced. They're the heavily advertised sneaker that have the little air pumps inside. This feature provides an important orthopedic benefit. It allows the manufacturer to jack the price way up. I have done a detailed scientific study of several other parents and my current estimate is that sneakers absorb 83% of the average U.S. family income. This has got to stop! We need Congress to pass a law requiring the sneaker industry to return to the system we had when I was growing up under which there was only one kind of sneaker - namely U.S. Keds which were made from Army Surplus tents and which costs about \$10 or roughly one dollar per pound. This simple act would make our nation strong again. Slow but strong."

Paul tells us in verse 15 that if we're going to live in victory we must put on a spiritual shoe. Tonight I want you to notice two things about this shoe ...

I. The Function Of The Shoe

Once the breastplate had been fitted into position, the soldier put on his strong army boots or *caligae*. Josephus described them as "shoes thickly studded with sharp nails" (War VI.1.8) so as to ensure a good grip. The military successes both of Alexander the Great and of Julius Caesar were due in large measure to their armies' being well shod and thus able to undertake long marches at incredible speed over rough terrain.

In Paul's day the roads were rough, there were thorns and stones in the roads. There was no pavement or carpet like we have today so shoes were critical. They needed them for protection. History tells us that there have been a number of battles and wars lost because the soldiers did not have the proper footwear. Because when the footwear goes it's hard for the soldier to fight. During the Roman times they had a version of our modern-day mine field.

Many times before a battle was fought the enemy had a method where they would take sharp stakes and drive them into the ground. There would be a razor sharp edge sticking out in an attempt to have the soldier's feet punctured so they couldn't fight. To combat this the Roman soldiers wore a heavy soled shoe that was kind of like a boot with leather that came up the back of the leg. It would lace around and the shoe would be very thick. Embedded in the bottom of the sole would be something like a cleat or a metal that would help them to grab onto the surface that they were fighting on. They didn't want to slip or slide in battle.

Paul is telling us that there is a shoe that Christians need to wear that will create stability. That shoe will keep the Christian stable and keep you from falling. That leads me to the second thing I want you to see ...

II. The Foundation For Standing

Verse 15 is not altogether easy to understand. Literally it reads: "and having shod yourselves as to the feet in readiness [*en hetoimasia*] of the gospel of peace." But what is this readiness or preparation? It can mean preparedness, for the term is applied to a ship's tackling.

[Part of the Christian soldier's equipment is his readiness to go out at any moment to announce the Good News to others. As in Ephesians 2:17, the apostle may be recalling Isaiah 52:7 with its reference to the feet of the herald. *Hetoimasia* can also signify a prepared foundation or base, as frequently in the LXX. In that case the sense would be that the gospel of peace with God through which the believer himself has already been reconciled (Eph 2:17) affords him a sure foothold in the campaign in which he is engaged. This second interpretation is more suitable to the context and had been adopted by the NIV in its first edition "with your feet fitted with the gospel of peace as a firm footing."]

Question: What does "fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace" mean?

Evangelism? Preaching? No! **It has to do with standing.** He's referring to it in the tense of fighting the devil. What he is saying is that if our feet are fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace then we will be able to stand the enemy.

Read: Romans 10:15

"And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

Question: What is the "gospel of peace"?

Man is powerless, weak, ungodly, wicked, and evil. We are unable to gain our own salvation apart from Christ. We are God's enemies until we understand the gospel and receive it's message. The Good News to us is that while we were still walking in sin Christ spent His life so we could have peace with God.

Read: Romans 5:6,7,10

"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 man, though for a good man 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 ... For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"

Read: Romans 5:1

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."

We now have peace with God. We're no longer an enemy. Now we have grace and hope and help and favor to us. That's what the Gospel of peace is all about. We were on opposite sides of a great gulf from God and He reached out by way of Calvary and the end result is that God is on our side. A better way to state that may be that **we are on God's side**. So, to have your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace means that you not only have experienced Jesus Christ in your life but that readiness is that you now know one thing about your life - **you know that God is on your side!!!** If you're going to stand against the enemy you need to know that God is on your side. (Look at your neighbor and say ... "God is FOR YOU!!!)

Read: Romans 8:28

"And we know that in all things *God works* for the good of *those who love him*, who have been called according to his purpose."

Read: Romans 8:31,35,37

"What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is *for* us, who can be against us? ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... No, in *all* these things we are *more than conquerors* through him who loved us."

Bully Illustration: Cherry & The Buffalo High School Incident

Read: I Samuel 17:4,8,10-11,20,22,24,32-33,37

⁴A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall ... ⁸Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me ... ¹⁰Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified ... ²⁰Early in the morning David left the flock with a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry ... ²²David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and greeted his brothers ... ²⁴When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear ... ³²David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth" ... ³⁷The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

Question: What did Saul and the Israelites forget?

That God was on their side!

Question: When did faith take place in David's story?

Faith took place when David went down to the stream (v. 40). David's statement in verse 37 is a catalyst to faith. It was an attitude he had. Faith is based upon knowledge in something or someone. Faith follows knowledge. David knew that God was on his side which allowed him to fight Goliath.

It's a progression in Ephesians 6. You're ready to fight and you put on the holy life and you walk in righteousness then you can stand on the confidence that God is for you. He'll provide for and deliver you. It is very hard to stand when you don't have the confidence that you're in line with God.

Read: Psalm 34:1-10

"I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing."

Read: Psalm 37:5

"Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun."

Read: Psalm 54:4

"Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me."

Read: Psalm 55:22

"Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall."

Read: Psalm 56:9

"Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. By this I will know that God is for me."

Read: Psalm 91:1,2,9-11,14

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust" ... If you make the Most High your dwelling — even the LORD, who is my refuge then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways ... "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

The bottom line once again is found in Romans 8:31, "...If God is for us, who can be against us?" So tonight be encouraged that if you're facing a giant of sickness, or a financial crisis, or if you're doubting God ... be strengthened to know that God is on your side!!!! You are not in this battle alone.

I realize that there are some of you here tonight and you've never realized that you weren't on God's side. You've felt a strange emptiness and have had a desire for it to be filled but weren't quite sure what was missing and tonight you understand that it's the Lord that you need in your life. There is no need to fight the battle alone. There is no need for you to go on any longer being an enemy of God. Jesus died for you and wants to have fellowship and leadership of your life and tonight you want to be on God's side. I want to give you an opportunity to do that.

Others of you are here tonight and have forgotten that God is on your side. You've made a commitment to follow the Lord but have been feeling that you're all alone and tonight you realize that He's been with you all along and you want to thank Him for not giving up on you.

Next Week: Shield Of Faith

The Fire Extinguisher

“Over 50 years ago our nation was embroiled in a World War that would ultimately cause millions of people their life. And in an effort to shorten the war and ultimately win the war on August 6, 1945 at 8:15 a.m. a B-29 flew over its target and dropped a bomb that they had called “Little Boy.” Initially, the pilot thought that the bomb was a dud. And then suddenly, a great flash enveloped the Enola Gay and its two backup planes as the bomb blew with an explosive blast of 12,500 tons of TNT. Tail-gunner, Bob Caren, was the only crew member to see the ball of fire and he was soon describing the scene to the others in the plane and he said, “It’s like bubbling molasses down there. The mushroom is spreading out. Fires are spreading out everywhere. It’s like a peek into hell.”

Now I tell that story tonight because just as there was a fireball that ended WWII, just as there was a fire that broke out from that, we’re engaged in a battle with the powers of darkness and while satan doesn’t use an atomic bomb in fighting us, he does use fire. The Bible tells us in Ephesians 6 that he uses fiery darts. He does attack and try to destroy us.

Text: Ephesians 6:10-14a

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. *In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.*"

Notice in verse 16 Paul’s phrase, “In addition to all this ...” The next three pieces of armor that we’ll study are introduced differently. There are some other pieces that we need. If you look at verse 14, the Belt of Truth is already “buckled” and is in place. The Breastplate of Righteousness is also already in place and our feet are already “fitted.”

The idea there is that these three pieces of armor are to be permanent. We’re to wear them all the time. We are always to be ready; we are always to have a righteousness life; we are always to have confidence in God. It’s like a soldier in battle might take off his helmet, set his sword and shield down but he would never take his shoes or breastplate off. When the battle gets hot and he’s ready to go back into battle he’s going to put on his helmet and he’s going to pick up his sword and take up his shield.

We see the same thing in football today. Players will take their helmets off and their mouthguards out but they’re not going to take their shoes or their shoulder pads off. He leaves those things on. God wants you and I to be ready for battle.

I. The Example

During the Roman Empire there were different kinds of shields used in battle. Primarily, there were two kinds used. The first kind was a small round shield kind of like a Frisbee and was curved on the edges. It was strapped to the forearm of the soldier. It was used to protect the soldier from the blows of the enemy in hand-to-hand combat.

This is NOT the kind of shield that Paul is talking about. It was a “*thyreon*.” It was 4 1/2 feet tall and 2 1/2 wide. People back then were much smaller. They were not as tall. *Thyreon* is derived from *thyra* (a door) and refers to the large oblong or oval *scutum* the Roman soldier held in front of him for protection. It consisted of two layers of wood glued together, covered with linen and hide, and bound with iron. Soldiers often fought side by side with a solid wall (*testudo*) of shields. But even a single-handed combatant found himself sufficiently protected. This shield covered most of the soldier’s body. It was made out of a very thick plank. It would be covered with metal or a very thick leather. As the Roman army would advance, soldiers carrying these shields would constitute the front line. Following them would be the hand-to-hand combat units, archers, spear throwers, etc.

The enemy would counter by taking arrows treated with cotton on the end and soaked with pitch and they would shoot them at the advancing troops. The idea was to get the pitch to splatter and land on the soldier’s clothing so that it would catch on fire. These fiery arrows would be all around the soldiers but most of the time they would bounce off of the metal shields. Also, the shields covered in the thick leather would be treated in such a way that when the arrows hit they would be immediately extinguished. After the siege of Dyrachium, Sceva counted no less than 220 darts sticking into his shield.

Only in this instance does Paul indicate the effect of a particular piece of armor. With such a shield the believer can extinguish all the incendiary devices flung by the devil (v.11). Herodotus described how cane darts tipped with tow were dipped in pitch and then ignited. Octavius used such arrows against Antony's fleet at Actium and they were not unknown in OT times. The reference is not, as some have surmised, to poisoned darts producing fever. The Christian's shield effectively counteracts the danger of such diabolical missiles not merely by arresting or deflecting them, but by actually quenching the flames to prevent them from spreading.

II. The Enemy

Remember, it’s not our job to figure out what the enemy is doing and when and where he’s going to attack.

In military strategy one must never underestimate the strength of the enemy. Paul is certainly not guilty of such fatal misjudgment but gives a realistic report of its potential. The "struggle" (literally, "wrestling," *pale*) is not merely against human foes but a war to the death against supernatural forces. "Flesh and blood" is actually "blood and flesh." The words appear in this order only here. Blood is perhaps mentioned first lest flesh be regarded as inherently evil, as those who anticipated the Gnostic heresy taught.

Four aspects of corporate menace are presented here. The particular terms are in themselves morally neutral, though with Paul they invariably indicate sinister influences (Eph 1:21; 3:11).

"Rulers" (*archoi*) are "cosmic powers" (NEB). Until the end of the age these demonic forces, already defeated by Christ on the cross (4:9), exercise a certain limited authority (*exousia*; here in the plural: *exousias*, "authorities") in temporarily opposing the purposes of God. The title *kosmokrator* (power, potentate) occurs frequently in classical and rabbinical literature. It denotes one who aspires to world control. It was attached to savior gods in the ethnic religions and identified with the sun. So Paul may have implied by "powers" (*kosmokratoroi*) that what purported to be a cult of light is in fact the very opposite.

Some see in the expression "the spiritual forces of wickedness" (*ta pneumatika tes ponerias*) the language of contemporary astrology in which the heavenly bodies were regarded as the abode of demons who held human lives in their grip. Pagans had no option but to resign themselves to an unalterable destiny. But Christians can fight against such malign influences.

If "the heavenly realms" (*hoi epouranioi*) are assumed to be the habitat of these evil spirits, they correspond to the "air" of Ephesians 2:2. But there is no evidence to show that *hoi epouranioi* can mean earth's atmosphere and Paul certainly does not use the word like this elsewhere in Ephesians (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:18). There may be a reference here to an inferior heaven as in 2 Enoch. Or again, *hoi epouranioi* could simply denote the unseen world in general, including both good and evil forces.

Question: What are the arrows that the enemy shoots at us?

Selfishness, pride, stubbornness, disappointment, discouragement, frustration, lust, greed, covetousness, gossip, anger, bitterness, jealousy, envy, strife, discord, adultery, lying, hatred, slander, malice, idolatry, materialism, laziness, apathy, busyness, alcohol, cigarettes, addictions. All are designed to plunge us into sin.

III. The Effectiveness

For the Christian this protective shield is faith (*pistis*). Most commentators regard it as faith in action rather than in its objective content. But believing cannot be divorced from what is believed, and no rigid line should be drawn between these two aspects.

The question becomes, "How does faith shield us?" There are basically two primary aspects to this ...

1) *The Shield of Faith causes us to believe God instead of the enemy.*

The essence of faith is believing what God has said. When we lift up the shield of faith what we're saying is "God, I believe You and Your Word and Lord, I'm going to trust You."

Read: Hebrews 11:6

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Satan’s goal is to make us doubt God. He did it in the Garden of Eden to Eve. She quit believing the Word of the Lord and in that moment she disbelieved Him. The devil had the same plan for Jesus in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. He is a liar and the father of lies. He tells us lies like:

“It’s okay ... it won’t hurt anyone.”

“No one will know.”

“You deserve it. You’ve done this and that.”

“If it feels good it must be okay.”

“God just wants you to be happy.”

“Well, there’s no way out.”

“You’ll never make it through this trial or difficult situation.”

“God won’t heal you.”

“You’re wasting your time with religion.”

“God won’t answer your prayers.”

“You’ve got all the time in the world.”

When these lies and desires come our way we have a choice. We can believe God and His Word and lift of the Shield of Faith or we can hunker down and get shot up by the enemy. What will you say?

2) *The Shield of Faith works because God honors those who honor Him.*

When we honor God and believe Him, He begins to work on our behalf.

Read: Psalm 5:11

"... let all who **take refuge** in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you."

Read: Psalm 7:1

"O LORD my God, I **take refuge** in you; save and deliver me from all who pursue me ..."

Read: Psalm 11:1

"In the LORD I **take refuge**. How then can you say to me: “Flee like a bird to your mountain."

Read: Psalm 16:1

"Keep me safe, O God, for in you I **take refuge**."

Read: Psalm 17:7

"Show the wonder of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who **take refuge** in you from their foes."

Read: Psalm 18:2

"The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I **take refuge**. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

Read: Psalm 18:30

"As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who **take refuge** in him."

Read: Psalm 37:40

"The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they **take refuge** in him."

Read: Psalm 64:10

"Let the righteous rejoice in the LORD and **take refuge** in him; let all the upright in heart praise him!"

Read: Psalm 94:22

"But the LORD has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I **take refuge**."

Read: Psalm 118:8

"It is better to **take refuge** in the LORD than to trust in man."

Read: Psalm 118:9

"It is better to **take refuge** in the LORD than to trust in princes."

Read: Psalm 141:8

"But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign LORD; in you I **take refuge** — do not give me over to death."

Read: Proverbs 30:5

"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who **take refuge** in him."

Question: What does it mean to “take refuge” in the Lord?

To take refuge means that your dependence is upon the Lord alone. You allow Him to stand up to enemy for you and let His power flow through you to protect you from the fiery darts of the enemy. Taking refuge is a daily lifestyle issue. You don't take refuge one day and fight the next day on your own.

What is going on in your life tonight?

Are there any lies from the enemy that you've believed?

Read: Psalm 37:25

“I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.”

Read: Psalm 34:4

"I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears."

What are you doing about the attack? Are you doing anything about it?

Our God delivers. Either He does or He doesn't. It's that simple. God is able to deliver you from any trouble you are experiencing. He is able to deliver you from the darkest and deepest pit. It's not something to take for granted. He is able to set your feet on high ground and He is able to help you face your mountain.

Do you want lift the shield of faith and be delivered tonight?

Next Week: The Helmet Of Salvation

The Hopeful Helmet

We all lose hope at different times during our lives. When we lose hope the battle is lost. Dozens of comprehensive studies have established that fact. One study entitled “The Broken Heart Study” researched the mortality rate of 4,500 widowers within six months of their wives deaths. Compared with other men the same age the widowers had a mortality rate 40% higher. Major F.J. Harold Krishner, an army medical officer held captive by the Vietcong for over five years cites an example of death due “hope failure.” He writes this ...

“Among the prisoners in his POW camp was a tough young marine, 24 years old who had already survived two years of prison camp life in relatively good health. Part of the reason for this was the camp commander had promised to release the man if he cooperated. Since this had been done before with others, the marine turned into a model POW and leader of the camp's stock reform group. As time passed, he gradually realized that his captors had lied to him. When the full realization of this took hold he became a zombie. He refused to do all work, rejected all offers of food and encouragement and simply lay on his cot, sucking his thumb. In a matter of weeks he was dead.”

You see, caught in the vice grip of lost hope life became too much for this once tough marine. That is why tonight the piece of armor that we're going to look at is so important. Because it has to do with hope.

Text: Ephesians 6:10-17a

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. *Take the helmet of salvation ...*"

Now if you were with us last week you know that we talked about the fact that there are three pieces of armor that the believer must wear at all times: belt, breastplate, shoes. All are necessary and all are important, but there are three that you and I NEVER take off. We are always to be ready and committed, holy, and confident that God is on our side. Last week we learned that in this battle we must rely on what God has told us rather than on what the enemy wants us to believe. Now that leads us to the fifth piece of armor – the helmet of salvation. I want you to notice three aspects about the helmet ...

I. The Soldier's Helmet

No Roman soldier would go into battle without his helmet. To do that would be foolish. The helmets were made out of leather with metal attached to it or it would be made out of cast metal or cast iron and the basic function of the helmet would be to ward off the blows of the broad sword.

There were a couple of different kinds of swords and the one that is being described in this passage is the broad sword. The idea was that a soldier carrying the broad sword would aim at his opponent's head. This is what happened in the Garden when Peter drew his sword and cut off Malcus' ear (John 18:10). Peter wasn't aiming for his ear. The guy ducked and just missed losing his head.

A Roman soldier would go into battle with his helmet on because there would be guys coming into the battle riding horses and they'd be swinging that broad sword trying to take the guy's head off. The hope was that the helmet, in conjunction with the soldier ducking would cause the sword blade to slide off and spare the soldier's life so he could continue fighting.

II. The Saint's Salvation

The helmet is NOT talking about being saved. Paul is NOT saying to you and I ... "now that you're fighting satan, now that you have the belt, now that you have the breastplate, now that you have the shoes, now that you have the shield, now that you have all of that, what I want you to do is I want you to get saved." That's already happened. Because you're not even in the army unless you're a believer. If you're in the battle it's because you've already come to Christ. He's not saying, "By the way, fifthly you need to get saved." You already got that in Ephesians 2:8,9:

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast."

You're already in the army so he talking about something more than getting saved. Satan does not attack in same way if you're not a believer. He leaves unbelievers to their own devices and allows sin to take its natural course in their lives.

Question: What is the nature of salvation?

In order to understand this we'll need to have a little theology lesson tonight on the nature and meaning of salvation. Salvation is NOT an event, it's a process. Salvation is not something you did at one time – that was repentance and confession. Salvation is something that BEGAN at one time. It is a process of God working in your life.

Three Aspects To Salvation:

1) Past – we were freed from the penalty of sin. (Justification – something that has happened.)

Read: Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

2) Present – we have power over sin. (Sanctification– something that is happening.)

Read: Romans 6:7

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin -- because anyone who has died has been *freed* from sin.”

Read: Ephesians 3:20

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us ...”

Read: Philippians 2:13

“... For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

Read: II Corinthians 3:18

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

Read: Romans 8:26

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”

3) Future – freedom from the presence of sin. (Glorification – something that will happen.)

There is coming a day when we'll be freed from any presence of sin. Revelation talks about a time when sin will no longer exist. There is a day coming when there will be no more death. No more death means no more sin because the wages of sin are death.

The Process: “Whom He justifies, He sanctifies, and He glorifies.”

It's important for us to realize that the helmet of salvation deals with the future aspect of salvation. It's talking about the future and that you and I will be saved! Paul is illustrating for us here how the creation was affected by the presence of sin.

Read: Romans 8:20a, 22-23

“For the creation was subjected to frustration ... We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

Our soul is saved and is being saved but there is coming a day when our body along with our soul will be saved. When the body will be redeemed. When we will be changed. In fact, in that moment we will receive a glorified body that is no longer is subject to the frustration of sin. It is no longer tempted by sin, it is no longer weakened by sin, it is no longer under the domination of sin in any form. That has not yet happened to any of us here tonight. Sin is still at work in our bodies. We are in a constant state of decay. But there is coming a time when our body will be changed!

Read: I Corinthians 15:50-52

“I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

Read: Romans 8:24a

“For in this hope we were saved.”

Let's illustrate it this way to help you put all of this together in your mind ... If someone said to you that the salvation you now have is all that there is and there is no future aspect of salvation, how would you respond?

Read: I Corinthians 15:32

“If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’”

What he's saying there is that “If all I've done it for is what I can get in this life, then maybe it was worth it and maybe it wasn't because certainly not everyone who is a Christian has an easy life.” It all has to do with perspective. Some of us have had easier lives than others. Look at Paul's life:

Read: II Corinthians 11:23-28

“I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.”

We have it easy today in the church. As a whole, we as the body of Christ do not spend too much time talking about Heaven. We don't emphasize the need for an eternal mindset enough. There is much to be said about having a heavenly mindset. What we're talking about here in the context of the Christian's armor is the thought of heaven. Let's look together at the importance of this and why it is so critical to spiritual warfare. We must begin to think about the things of eternity and heaven.

Question: If the salvation we have today was all there was, what would that mean for us?

We'd have to fight our flesh for the rest of eternity. We'd constantly be struggling against the enemy and our own sinful desires. You'd be struggling with your attitude, emotions, and desires. It'd be like running a race without a finish line. A never-ending battle. If we don't have the promise of a future salvation and of heaven then we don't have much. Because the promise of heaven tells me that there will come a day when the battle is over! There's coming a day when this fight as I know it will be over and I'll be through. I'll put down my weapons and the battle will be completed.

Read: Galatians 5:5

“But by faith we *eagerly* await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.”

Read: I Peter 1:3-9

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

Read: I Thessalonians 5:8

“But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Question: What is the helmet of salvation?

It is the confidence in a full and final and complete salvation that is yet to come. It is a confidence that someday the battle will be over.

So what good does all this do us? That leads me to the third thing I want you to see tonight ...

III. Satan's Sword

Why do we need a helmet? Because Satan has a sword. There is an enemy we face that desires to take his broad sword and he desires to cut off our heads with his sword.

Question: What is his sword?

It is *discouragement*. If he can't make you doubt as we learned about last week, he wants to try and discourage you.

Question: How does his sword work?

"You're working your head off. You're giving your all to the church. You've been down there and you've been working with the kids, you've been ushering and greeting, teaching, cleaning, etc. You've been doing all these different things and all of a sudden Satan swings his broad sword and says, "You've been doing all this work and no one gives a rip. No one cares or sees all the hours you've put in or no one ever stops to say thanks for the effort you've made."

"You've been serving God and have been faithful to Him and what does He do for you? You've lost your job ... what a blessing."

"You've been reading your Bible every day but your wife is as cranky as she has ever been. In fact, she's more cranky than before you bought a Bible."

"You've submitted to that husband of yours for years now and you've prayed and prayed for him to get saved and how are things different after all your effort? Where is your God and why hasn't He answered your prayers and your obedience?"

"What is God doing in your life? You've been going to church all this while and look at the neighbors ... look at their kids – they don't have the problems your kids have."

It's easy to become discouraged. We can get tired of the battle. We can become tired of fighting. Paul knew that it is easy to get tired and down and weary ...

Read: Galatians 6:9

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

If we're not careful what happens is that we want to quit. We want to sit down. Especially if you've prayed and it's not coming together like you expected or wanted. You feel like God is being unfair with you.

When satan tries to swing that broad sword of discouragement you and I need to have the helmet of salvation on. We need to have the helmet of the hope that there is a finish line, that we will win, that victory is ours. Because when the broad sword comes crashing down it will glance right off of you. The helmet of salvation keeps you from quitting, from becoming discouraged, from giving up. Why? Because you know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and that there is a prize waiting for you at the end.

Read: II Corinthians 1:8

“We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life.”

Read: II Corinthians 4:8

“We are hard *pressed* on every side, but not crushed; *perplexed*, but not in despair; ⁹ *persecuted*, but not abandoned; *struck down*, but not destroyed. ¹⁰ We always carry around in our body the *death* of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.”

Read: Philippians 4:4

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

Question: How was Paul able to keep going?

Paul, when you get discouraged and your back is bloody, what is it that keeps you going ... Paul, when you feel like you've done so much for God and nobody notices and nobody cares ...

Paul when you're sitting in a prison cell and you've risked your life to bring the gospel to people and you've given them eternal life because you preached when no one else would and now they have forgotten you and some of them are calling you a phony and a fraud and they're saying that you're in jail because God has abandoned you ...

Paul, how do you take it? Good question. How do you stay encouraged in the midst of a terrible situation? How do you keep hope when it seems like the odds are so against you that you'd want to lose hope? How does Paul make it in prison when a tough 24 year old marine can't? What's the difference?

Read: II Corinthians 4:16-18

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

Paul was a man who had the helmet of salvation on. He had hope in his heart. He was a man whose eyes were on eternity and it gave him hope to go through absolutely everything in his life and never lose heart. That's the value of the helmet of salvation. The helmet of salvation reminds me that ...

Read: I Corinthians 2:9

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.”

Read: II Timothy 4:7,8

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day -- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

Read: Matthew 19:29

“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”

Read: I Peter 1:3-5

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Read: John 14:1-4

“In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Conclusion:

The helmet of salvation is the thought of eternity with Jesus! The problem with a lot of us is that we get so wrapped up in this world. We get so caught up in time that we forget that God has called us to be strangers and pilgrims and we end up being settlers. Our citizenship is not here. It's in heaven. As we begin to think on heaven we will begin to rise up against the enemy as he swings his broad sword.

Question: Have you forgotten that this life is only temporary?

That heartache that you're facing, that setback that you're facing, that reversal or problem that plagues you tonight is only temporary. Probably even in terms of this life it's temporary.

There was a missionary couple who had given 40 years of their life to the Lord on the field. It had been a very hard life in the heart of Africa. They had given all that they had and because their support waned at times they spent all of their money and they had nothing to retire on. Now after 40 years their bodies spent and their finances gone, their life in the twilight ... they boarded a ship headed back to Europe. As the ship was traveling it took on some other very important guests – the king and queen of England. As this ship steamed toward London, they couldn't help but notice the royal state rooms, the elegant banquets, all of the wealth that was lavished on the king and queen. As they pulled into the harbor there was a band there and there were crowds singing all to welcome the king and queen. And this missionary began to get discouraged. As they were making their way down the gangplank he turned to his wife and said, "It is not fair. Forty years we've given our life to the Lord. Forty years we've sacrificed everything we've had. And now we come home after 40 years and no one is here to greet us. And this king and queen who have done nothing but were born into royalty have a band and a reception and are treated lavishly. It is not fair." His wife grabbed his arm and said, "Honey, listen, we are not home yet."

Tonight we must remember that nothing from this world, except the Word of God and the souls of men, will last. Everything else is temporary. We've got to have a heavenly mindset and all the more as the day of evil approaches. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus and be pilgrims in this land. People who are looking for the city whose architect and builder is God. And when we do that, though outwardly we are wasting away yet inwardly we will be renewed day by day.

Next Week: The Sword Of The Spirit

The Sword Of The Spirit

As we come to Ephesians 6:17b we find that the Bible is the final weapon. This book is the final piece of armor that is given to the Christian. It is an amazing book. This book is infallible (without error; faultless; flawless; without blemish). It is divinely inspired. The men were not writing as they pleased ... it came from God.

Read: Psalm 19:7

"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple."

Read: II Peter 1:20,21

"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Read: Revelation 22:18,19

"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."

Read: II Timothy 3:16,17

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Read: Isaiah 55:11

"... so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

The Bible Provides:

1) Truth - life, death, heaven, hell, time, eternity, wrong, right, society (John 17:17)

"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

2) Growth (I Peter 2:2)

"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation ..."

3) Guidance - it will make you wise and show you the way (Ps. 119:105)

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."

4) Comfort (Rom. 15:4)

"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

5) Power (Heb. 4:12)

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

6) Victory - over the enemy (Eph. 6:17)

"Take the helmet of salvation and *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*"

I want you to notice two things about the sword of the Spirit tonight. First, the description of the sword and then we'll look at the dual. First ...

I. The Description Of The Sword

There were several different kinds of swords and we discussed the broad sword last week in our discussion of the helmet of salvation. The broad sword was approximately 4 feet long and had a large handle. The broad sword was to try and cut off the opponent's head. But there was also a second kind of sword called a *machaira* or short two-edged cut-and-thrust sword wielded by the heavily armed legionary, as distinct from the *rhomphaja* or large Thracian broadsword. The machaira was approximately 12-18 inches long. This is the sword that Paul is referring to in Ephesians 6:17.

It was used in hand to hand combat and most soldiers carried this sword. The soldiers had to know their weapon well. They had to know how to block and be on the defensive as well as thrust and be on the offensive. Anyone could use the broad sword but only skilled soldiers could use the machaira.

Question: Why is it called the "Sword of the Spirit?"

Our sword is a sword that has been given to us by the Holy Spirit. He wanted you and I to have a weapon that would help us to stand firm.

Question: Do you know how to use the sword?

You learn how to use it by studying the Word of God. Systematic study will show you what it will do and how you can use it in the battle of life.

II. The Dual

A) The Defensive Use - "It is written ..." (Precise & specific)

Read: Matthew 4:4,7,10

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matt. 4:4

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Matt. 4:7

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Matt. 4:10

There are two words in the Greek language for our English word "Word." There are two Greek words that can be translated "Word."

1) Logos – broad, general reference; not specific; the general body of Gospel truth.

Read: Mark 2:2

"So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the *word* to them."

Read: Matthew 13:18-23

"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the *word* and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the *word*, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the *word* and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

2) Rhema – specific word; for a specific time and location.

Read: Luke 3:2

"... during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert."

Read: Mark 14:72

"Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: 'Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.' And he broke down and wept."

Note: Ephesians 6:17 is talking about the Rhema word. What Paul is saying is that you don't take the whole big book, what you do is, when you're in a battle with the enemy you take a specific Scripture that applies to your situation and you use it in your battle. The sword of the Spirit is a specific statement of God regarding your situation. Obviously, if you don't know God's Word it will make it much more difficult to fight. It is crucial that we find out what the Scriptures say so that you can know the specifics!

Read: II Timothy 2:15

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

You and I must learn God's truth. It is critically important. It is important and essential to your victory. If you're going to win over the enemy then you must know the Word. You will overcome satan when you know the Word of God.

Read: Revelation 12:11

"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the *word* of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

Now let's turn our attention to the offensive aspect of the Word of God. I don't know about you, but I'm glad that the Scriptures aren't just defensive in nature. I'm thankful for that because I get tired of playing defense all the time. (e.g. basketball, football)

B) The Offensive Use

Question: When is the Word of God offensive?

Every time we share the Gospel with someone. When we preach the Word of God it is offensive. When the Word of God is proclaimed, no matter where it is and no matter with whom you share it, you are hacking your way into the enemy's territory and are taking it back.

Question: How do we make a dent in satan's kingdom?

We use the Word of God! (The following passages indicate to us how Paul took a city ...)

Read: Acts 13:5,32

"When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the *word* of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper ... We *tell* you the good news: What God promised our fathers ..."

Read: Acts 14:1-3,6-10,12,21

"At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went *as usual* into the Jewish synagogue. There they *spoke* so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, *speaking boldly* for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders."

"But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, where they continued to *preach* the good news. In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, 'Stand up on your feet!' At that, the man jumped up and began to walk."

"Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the *chief speaker*. They *preached* the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch ..."

Read: Acts 17:2,3,12-13,16,22

"As his *custom* was, Paul went into the *synagogue*, and on three Sabbath days he *reasoned* with them from the Scriptures, *explaining* and *proving* that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. 'This Jesus I am *proclaiming* to you is the Christ,' he said."

Many of the Jews *believed*, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men. When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was *preaching* the *word* of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. Acts 17:13

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was *greatly distressed* to see that the city was full of idols. Acts 17:16 (What did he do?)

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and *said*: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. Acts 17:22 (He preached the Word!)

Read: Acts 18:8-11

"Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized. One night the **Lord** spoke to Paul in a vision: 'Do not be afraid; keep on *speaking*, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.' So Paul stayed for a year and a half, *teaching* them the *word* of God." (If Jesus came to speak to him personally, it must have been important!)

Question: How do dispel darkness?

Turn on the light. God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path!

Sometimes we can get the idea when we read all of these passages about the apostle Paul that he was a great orator and communicator. We get the idea that he must have really known how to put a sermon together because he had converts left and right. But that's not the case ...

Read: II Corinthians 10:10

"For some say, 'His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.'"

Read: I Corinthians 2:1-5

"When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."

We must remember that the power is not in the gospeler, it's in the gospel. It's not in the messenger, it's in the message. This Word is powerful so it doesn't matter how fluent or eloquent you are. If you'll open the Word to people it will do the work for you. It's an offensive weapon.

Conclusion:

Question: How well do you know the Word of God?

- a) Like the back of your hand
- b) Like your next door neighbor
- c) Like your cousin Fred (once removed)
- d) The what?

Question: How often do you study it?

- a) Daily
- b) Frequently
- c) Occasionally
- d) Rarely
- e) Never

Question: Do you have a reading plan to familiarize yourself with it?

Devotional book, devotional/study Bible, yearly goals, readable version

Read: John 16:13-14

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you."

Read: I John 2:26-27

"I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him."

The late H.B. Barker was a master of illustration and he described three things he saw in his garden one day as he was working. He was looking at his plants and flowers. The first thing he saw was a butterfly. The butterfly would light on one flower and then would spring to another one and then to another one and after a second or two it was gone.

Then he saw a botanist out there in the garden and the botanist spent some time over each flower and he made a few notes. But when he was finished his knowledge was shut away in his notebook and he went on his way.

Finally he saw a bee and that bee was diligently investigating and studying each and every flower down to the last detail. He was actively searching for every piece of food and information he could gather about the territory he was covering. He took his time and didn't rush through the process of becoming intimately ingrained with the flowers.

Now tonight there are butterflies and botanists and bees in this room. The butterflies spend very little time in the Word and move around without ever diving deep into its truth. Butterflies float from this class to that class and from this study to that study and from this seminar to that seminar and maybe even from this church to that church and you can flap your pretty wings and never change.

Or, you can be a botanist who spends more time in the Word but all they have is head knowledge and the Word is never translated into heart knowledge. You have enough notebooks to fill a huge library. You take detailed notes and you're writing all the time but the problem is that it never makes it from your head to your heart to your faith and action.

Finally, there are those who are like the bee and spend time with the Word of God and they read and reread and mark it up and they ingest it and their minds are filled with its wisdom and their life radiates its sweetness. You can mingle with the Word and be full of the strength and energy of this book.

The question tonight is "which one are you?" Are you willing to use it to win the battle?

Next Week: Praying In The Spirit

Praying In The Spirit

Text: Ephesians 6:18

"And *pray* in the *Spirit* on all occasions with all kinds of *prayers* and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on *praying* for all the saints."

Paul says "pray in the Spirit." Now when he mentions that at the end of the list of the armor that is not to say that this is kind of an add-on that you put on after all the other armor. Some would say that Paul is just kind of concluding and he talks about praying. That is not it at all!

A part of our armor, a part of our weaponry, if we're going to do battle with the forces of evil, if we are going to be able to stand in that day when satan attacks you there is something else we must do. In addition to putting on those other pieces of armor, in addition to using the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, we as believers have to be able to pray in the Spirit. It is a powerful thing!

To begin with, I want you to notice that Paul doesn't say "pray on all occasions." He says, "pray in the Spirit ..." He says "pray" in verse 19 and in verse 20.

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

Read: Romans 15:31

" Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there ..."

Read: Colossians 4:2-4

"Devote yourselves to *prayer*, being watchful and thankful. And *pray* for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. *Pray* that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should."

Read: I Thessalonians 5:17,25

"pray continually ... Brothers, pray for us."

There are times when Paul talks about ordinary prayer. But in Ephesians 6:18 he is not just talking about prayer that is Spirit motivated in the sense if you just sense the presence of God so you pray. Paul is talking about a specific kind of prayer. He is talking about praying in the Spirit.

Question: What does "praying in the spirit" mean?

It's probably best to let the apostle Paul answer that question. It is that time when a believer prays in a language other than their own natural/native tongue and they pray to God in that moment. It is more than being in tune with the Spirit of God and praying in English. Praying in the Spirit happens *after* you have been filled with the Holy Spirit.

We find out what he means because he uses the same type of terminology in talking about a specific kind of prayer. He is giving the Corinthians instructions on the use of speaking in tongues in the framework of a public setting and he is saying that if a tongue in a public worship setting catches the attention of everyone then it should be interpreted.

Read: I Corinthians 14:13-15

"For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind."

There is a difference between the Spirit of God coming **inside** of you (salvation) and the Spirit of God coming **upon** you (infilling).

Read: Acts 1:8

"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."

Read: Acts 2:4

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit **enabled** them."

Read: Acts 8:15,16

"When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come **upon** any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus."

Read: Romans 8:9

"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And *if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*"

There is a second work that takes place in the believer's life but we're not going to take time to show you all of that tonight. We do that in Christianity 101 so I'd invite you to attend that class if you're curious about learning more about the Infilling of the Holy Spirit. What concerns me is the mindset that the infilling of the Holy Spirit is optional and not that critical for believers today. You don't have to have it to be saved but every believer needs to be filled with the Spirit.

Without the infilling it is impossible to pray in the Spirit which means when it comes to doing spiritual battle you are handicapped somewhat. Please hear me tonight! I'm not saying you can't do spiritual battle. I am just saying that there is something you can have through the infilling of the Holy Spirit that will help you to stand more effectively and more powerfully against the forces of darkness. It is critical that the Christian be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Tonight what I want you to see is how praying in the Spirit comes into play in our warfare. When the Holy Spirit moves you to pray in a language you don't know, what does that do in our battle with the enemy?

There is a difference between the public gift of speaking tongues and the interpretation of tongues and the private prayer language. The public gift is for the good of the body.

Read: I Corinthians 12:30

"Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?" (No!)

Read: I Corinthians 12:7-11

"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, *to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.* All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines."

I want to talk to you tonight about four things that speaking in tongues will do for you ...

I. Praying In The Spirit Gives You Direct Access To God In A Unique Way

In those moments when we don't know how to pray or what to pray for we can still talk to God using our prayer language. When we're tired and weak and discouraged or too broken to talk to Him in English praying in the Spirit will help us continue to fight. We must not pray only in the Spirit because we could become apathetic and lazy in our prayer life.

Read: I Corinthians 14:2,15

"For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God ... So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind."

Question: How can the Spirit of God praying through us help us?

- 1) He helps us when we are weak.
- 2) He helps us when we don't know how or what to pray for.
- 3) He helps us pray God's Will.

Read: Romans 8:26,27 (Not talking about tongues but rather the Spirit interceding on our behalf.)

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our *weakness*. We do not know *what* we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with *God's will*."

II. Praying In The Spirit Results In Spiritual Discernment

Read: I Corinthians 14:2

"... Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit."

Now when most people think of a mystery they think of some big, unknown secret. Something that is unknowable, something that we can never know. But the word "mystery" is used several times in the New Testament and when it is used it speaks of things not that are unknown but it speaks of things that were previously unknown but have now been revealed to you and I. It's a former secret that now we know.

Mysteries Of The New Testament:

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1) Mystery of <u>Kingdom</u> of God | Matthew 13 |
| 2) Mystery of Israel's Gladness | Romans 11:25 |
| 3) Mystery of the <u>Rapture</u> | I Corinthians 15 |
| 4) Mystery of <u>Lawlessness</u> | II Thessalonians 2:7 |
| 5) Mystery of <u>Jews & Gentiles</u> Becoming One People | Ephesians 3:3-6 |
| 6) Mystery of <u>Christ In You</u> | Colossians 1:26,27 |
| 7) Mystery of <u>God's Will</u> | Ephesians 1:9,10 |
| 8) Mystery of <u>Godliness</u> | I Timothy 3:16 |

Read: I Corinthians 13:2

"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries ..."

He is saying there that we can understand what was previously unknown. Notice that he relates it to a context of prophecy and tongues and functioning in those gifts. He is saying that we can have divine spiritual understanding.

Read: I Corinthians 14:2

"... Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit." (NIV - *by the Spirit*)

What it is saying here is this ... **When we are praying in the Spirit, God reveals things to you and I.** He's not going to reveal things to you outside of His Word and He's not going to give you new revelation so you can write a new book of the Bible. Rather, He's going to give you insight into ...

Situations in your life

Situations in other's lives

Resolution to problems, trials, and difficulties

Conviction regarding an area of your life

Insight into the enemy's attack - where, when, and how he will attack

III. Praying In The Spirit Strengthens The Believer Spiritually

Read: Ephesians 6:10

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."

Read: I Corinthians 14:4

"He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself ..."

It is necessary for us to focus on getting ourselves strong when we have our personal devotional times. That is the key to victory. We have to build ourselves up. It is not selfish to build ourselves up by praying in tongues in private. There is value to praying in the Spirit. Paul knew that - it built him up. Praying in the Spirit strengthens us in our fight.

Read: I Corinthians 14:18

"I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you."

Read: Jude 20

"But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit."

IV. Praying In The Spirit Is Effective Against The Powers Of Darkness

We must put on the armor ...

Belt of Truth

Breastplate of Righteousness

Feet Fitted

Shield of Faith

Helmet of Salvation

Sword of the Spirit

and pray in the Spirit, after you have done EVERYTHING to stand, you will stand firm then!

Praying in the Spirit is a part of the battle. It will strengthen your life and will help you defeat your foe. The Holy Spirit knows where the battle is the fiercest and where our prayers are needed the most. We are doing battle on behalf of ...

Ourselves

Our spouses, children, families, friends, neighbors, coworkers

Church - pastors, leaders, ministries

Missionaries - home and abroad

I believe the following story illustrates perfectly how effective praying in the Spirit is against the enemy ...

Illustration: Evelyn Thompson (The Beauty of Spiritual Language by Jack Hayford)

Evelyn Thompson and her husband were missionaries to the Philippines. They were on a trek one day to reach a new village when they heard about a woman who was completely out of her mind. The villagers had not known what to do with her at all so they built a house on stilts 12 feet high. Evelyn and her husband were taken up to the house with several other people to pray for the woman who was chained to the bamboo floor. She relates the story as follows ...

"As soon as we walked into that room, we realized what was happening, as the Holy Spirit made known to us the demonic nature of the problem with her. As we came in and began to pray for her, the woman began to rant and rave ... I began to pray and as I did, out of my mouth - like a ball of fire from the middle of my stomach - came another language that I had never spoken before in the Spirit; certainly a language that I had never learned, nor had I ever heard it before. But as it came out of my mouth, I saw that there was a change in the expression on the face of the woman we were praying for. I saw that her eyes were listening, and at one I began to understand that I was speaking her language.

As this change came over her, I saw the muscles in her face begin to relax, the trembling stopped, and her hands ceased the wild beating of the air as though she were trying to hit me. She had been writhing almost like a slithering snake, and this too, ceased as well as her constant laughing over her shoulder in a hysterical way. Then a most wonderful thing happened.

I not only could see that she understood me, but suddenly I was enabled to understand what I was saying; I was able to think as well as to speak in a language which I had never learned and never heard before! In the following minutes I explained the story of Jesus Christ, with a perfect awareness of every word I was speaking. I led her to the Lord Jesus Christ with full understanding of that language at that time. She was totally delivered and today she still lives. Now these many years later, she knows the Lord and has raised her children accordingly.

I did not know that language after that one instance. I later heard it spoken by others but could not understand it and I certainly could not speak it. How blessed to be filled with His Holy Spirit and to have faith that He knows His way when we don't. He will lead and guide us!

Question: When should we pray in the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:18)?

Anywhere, anytime, anyplace, all the time and on all occasions!

Conclusion:

It was during the Vietnam War in the late 1960's. Master Sergeant John Mackelhannon knew his friend George was different from most of the other men in his company. Some of the other marines professed Christianity but George lived it. John saw in George a man to be respected and admired and they soon became good friends. To while away the time John sometimes tried to teach George some of his native Navaho language but his friend seemed unable to grasp it.

One day the Vietcong attacked their position and to John's dismay he saw George fall - critically wounded. Rushing over to his friend John encouraged him, "You're going to be all right, save your strength." But George was not all right. Moments later he was gone. However, before he died he summoned enough strength to say a few words to John. He said, "John, you need God."

The sergeant's eyes widened. George's last words spoken by the power of the Holy Spirit were in flawless Navaho. The words haunted John Mackelhannon. Later after being wounded in action he came back to the U.S. to recuperate. As he lay in the hospital he couldn't forget the words, "John, you need God." He determined to find that faith that George knew. At first his search seemed in vain as he tried several churches first in San Francisco and then in Fresno, CA. He failed to find the truth he was searching for.

Then just before leaving Fresno he picked up a phone directory and found the name of Bethel Temple that leaped out of the pages. A phone call to the pastor led him to a Saturday night young people's meeting and he soon found that these youth knew George's God. John unburdened his heart and his new friends explained to him that it was the Holy Spirit that had enabled George to speak to him in the Navaho language even though he had never learned it and the young marine soon put his faith in Jesus Christ.

I believe that there are several different kinds of people here tonight. There are some of you that have been seeking the infilling of the Spirit and it's never happened to you before and you've given up thinking that it must not be for you. Can I encourage you tonight that it is for you. Even in the book of Acts there were some who received immediately and others that had to wait for 10 days in the upper room before they were filled. I can't explain it. I'm not the baptizer but He is and I believe that Jesus is here tonight to fill some of you with the Holy Spirit.

Read: Acts 2:38,39

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call."

There are others of you here tonight and you've been filled in the past but haven't been actively using the gift regularly and you want to be refilled again tonight. The Scriptures admonish us to be continually filled with the Spirit. It's a daily seeking after the Spirit's empowerment for life.

There are still others of you here tonight that don't know what to think about this whole issue of praying in the Spirit and that's understandable. Let me share with you that I was once in the same place where you find yourself tonight. Let me encourage you to consider what we've talked about and begin to search for yourself to see what the Scriptures say.

I want everyone to understand that you're not a second class Christian because you don't pray in the Spirit. In fact, I have wrestled with teaching this lesson because I don't want anyone to feel like you are looked down upon by me or anyone else because you don't speak in tongues. Rather, it is my heart to give you the whole counsel of God and I see this as a tremendous aid in Spiritual Warfare. If all I have done this evening is to get you to think about your need to be filled with the Holy Spirit then I'll consider it a victory because the enemy doesn't want to fight against Spirit-filled believers.

Tonight I'm going to open up this altar and give you an opportunity to respond to the Lord. You will notice that I've included a sample prayer in your notes tonight for you to use as a guide when asking for the filling of the Holy Spirit. It's from Jack Hayford's book, "The Beauty of Spiritual Language."

It's not a magic formula and you don't need to use it but it's there for those who would like to have something to help you. The important thing is the attitude and motives of your heart. Don't seek the gift, seek the giver of the gift. Don't seek tongues, seek the Lord and ask Him to fill you.

We're not going to rush through this time so if you have to go I understand. I just want to make the altar available to those who want to seek the Lord tonight. Won't you consider being filled?

A Prayer For Inviting The Lord To Fill You With The Holy Spirit

Dear Lord Jesus, I thank You and praise You for Your great love and faithfulness to me. My heart is filled with joy whenever I think of the great gift of salvation You have so freely give to me, and I humbly glorify You, Lord Jesus, for You have forgiven me all my sins and brought me to the Father. Now I come in obedience to Your call. I want to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. I do not come because I am worthy myself, but because You have invited me to come. Because You have washed me from my sins, I thank You that You have made the vessel of my life a worthy one to be filled with the Spirit of God. I want to be overflowed with Your life, Your love and Your power, Lord Jesus. I want to show forth Your grace, Your words, Your goodness, and Your gifts to everyone I can. And so with simple, childlike faith, I ask You, Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit. I open all of myself to You, to receive all of Yourself in me. I love You, Lord, and I lift my voice in praise to You. I welcome Your might and Your miracles to be manifested in me for Your glory and unto Your praise.

Next Week: Ways To Resist The Devil

Ways To Resist The Devil

Tonight we're concluding our series on Spiritual Warfare and we're going to examine the subject of resisting the devil and how we do that. Let me begin by saying that I realize that not all of our problems, difficulties, and trials come from satan and his demonic horde. Sometimes those testings come as a result of our sin cursed world. Other times they come from our mistakes or errors in judgment. But at the same time I also acknowledge that there are other occasions when we're under attack.

C.S. Lewis wrote a book called the "Screwtape Letters" and it has a unique twist. In the book the devil is called the "high command," the human beings are the "patients," and God is referred to as "the enemy" What the book is, is a demon (Uncle Screwtape) writing to his nephew (Wormwood) on how to tempt this Christian. In letter #7 he writes this ...

"Our policy for the moment is to conceal ourselves. I do not think you will have much difficulty keeping the patient in the dark. The fact that 'devils' are predominantly comic book figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him of something in red tights and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that he therefore cannot believe in you."

Satan would like us to think that he is a comic figure dressed in red tights and wearing horns and carrying a pitchfork. He would love for us to think that he doesn't exist at all. But the fact of the matter is that he wants to trap you and devour you. He wants to do you in!

Read: I Peter 5:8

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

Tonight I want to give you seven ways to resist the devil. Seven things that will help you keep your faith in tact when it's under attack. Seven things to help you stand firm ...

I. We Resist The Devil By Walking In Repentance

Read: Matthew 4:17

"From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.'"

Repentance has to do with our personal response to anything that you and I might have to deal with. You and I will never come to a trial or difficulty where if we stop and think about it we're made aware of some shortcoming in our life. At that point we're aware of areas where we haven't done what we should have done. Maybe we haven't been praying like we should or reading the Bible like we know we should. (e.g. financial crisis & you didn't tithe)

Sometimes we can feel like we don't have the right approach God. You feel somewhat disqualified and perhaps condemned. Certainly you feel overwhelmed.

I want you to understand something tonight ... even if you are experiencing the discipline of God in your life, and that may or may not be the case, I want you to know that God never brings anything back to our minds to condemn us. He allows those times to come our way so that the Holy Spirit may bring conviction so that we can confess, repent, and have the matter cleared up so we can move forward in the power that is supposed to be characteristic of a child of God.

Repentance allows the power of God to move in our lives. If we're going to resist the devil then we must walk in an attitude of repentance. We keep the channel open between us and God when we keep our account short.

Reflection: Is there an area of your life over which you need to repent?

II. We Resist The Devil By Walking In Forgiveness

The devil has all kinds of methods, schemes, and traps but one of the most frequent is that he likes to trap people in unforgiveness. He wants to trap us in bitterness and conversations of slander.

Read: II Corinthians 2:10,11

"If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven — if there was anything to forgive — I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."

We cannot effectively resist the devil when there is unforgiveness in our hearts. What happens is that there is a two-fold effect. On the one hand they can't resist the devil and on the other hand they can't experience the freedom of God's forgiveness in their own life.

Read: Matthew 6:14,15

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Read: Ephesians 4:26,27

"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."

Some of you here tonight are struggling with unforgiveness and it is causing you to be attacked by the enemy. You've become bitter. I'm not saying you're not justified in your anger, hurt, or disappointment. But I am saying that the Lord does not give us the luxury or the license to harbor unforgiveness in our hearts.

Read: Colossians 3:13

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

Reflection: Is there unforgiveness in your heart?

III. We Resist The Devil Through Praise

Many times we only praise God when things are going well. We're thankful so much of the time when things are quiet and we're feeling blessed. However, praise is not just designed to be reactive. It's meant to be proactive as well! It's something you should do before you pray and before the trials come.

Read: Psalm 149:5-9

"Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds. May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them."

What I think this is saying to us, without getting too mystical, is that through praise the fortresses of the enemy are torn down. Now you know that I'm not one that's big on binding and loosing but at the same time I know that when you and I praise God there are things that happen in the supernatural realm.

Read: Proverbs 12:18

"Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

We all know that the tongue is very powerful. We've all been on the receiving end of slashing and cutting remarks of someone's words. It hurts our hearts. In the same way there is nothing that so affronts the enemy than when you and I praise the Lord. Praise is more than superficial expression and being exuberant. When you and I praise God, it sends the enemy packing in that area of our life. When we walk in a mindset and in an attitude of praise then the enemy is repelled because God inhabits the praises of his people.

Read: Psalm 22:3

"Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel."

Read: Joshua 6:5,10,15-16, 20

When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud **shout**; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in." Josh. 6:5

But Joshua had commanded the people, "Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to **shout**. Then **shout!**" Josh. 6:10

On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the people, "**Shout!** For the LORD has given you the city!" Josh. 6:15-16

When the trumpets sounded, the people **shouted**, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud **shout**, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city. Josh. 6:20

That word "shout" is used 9 times in the Psalms and refers to exuberant praise to the Lord. It has to do with praise. When did the walls come down? The wall came down AFTER the people shouted!

Read: Psalm 47:1

"Clap your hands, all you nations; **shout** to God with cries of joy."

Read: Psalm 66:1

"**Shout** with joy to God, all the earth!"

Read: Psalm 81:1

"Sing for joy to God our strength; **shout** aloud to the God of Jacob!"

Read: Psalm 95:1

"Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us **shout** aloud to the Rock of our salvation."

Read: Psalm 98:4-6

"**Shout** for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn — **shout** for joy before the LORD, the King."

We must resist the devil by shouting out to the Lord. He will give us the victory. That is the way it works. Satan was trying to stop the work that Paul and Silas were doing in Philippi. He had come directly against the apostles and they were in prison as a result. How did they respond? When did the doors open? Praise will help you and I resist the power of the enemy in our life.

Read: Acts 16:25

"About midnight Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns** to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose."

Reflection: Are you maintaining an attitude of praise? (*Praise The Lord!*)

IV. We Resist The Devil By Holding On To The Word Of God

Read: Psalm 149:6

"May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands ..."

It is through the Word of God that you and I are able to stand firm against the enemy. We've seen that in our study of the armor in Ephesians 6.

Read: I Timothy 1:18

"Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience."

How do we hold on to our faith? By holding on to God's Word. It is truth and will guide us into all that God has planned for you and I. It protects us from the enemy's lies and half-truths. How do we dispel darkness? If I turned off the lights tonight and we all sat in darkness we could shout at it, we could bind it and loose it, or we could turn on the lights. The Word of God is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path!

Read: Acts:5:42

"Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."

Read: Acts 8:4

"Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went."

The Word of God is backed by the power of the Holy Spirit and it is the light of Jesus Christ - the Gospel - that bring life into our lives and the lives of those around us.

Reflection: Are you depending on the Word of God?

V. We Resist The Devil By Submitting To God

Read: James 4:7

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Submission means "to take rank under." Before you resist the devil you must submit to God. That word means that we come under the authority of God. We have to decide who is the authority in our life. We can't claim Christianity when it's convenient and then live a sinful lifestyle the rest of the time. Where is your area of weakness (cheating, lying, adultery)? When you and I challenge God's authority in our lives we step out of His protection. If you want to know the protection of God you must live under His authority!

Illustration: Joshua & Living Under My Authority

Reflection: Who is in charge of your life?

VI. We Resist The Devil By Praying In The Spirit

Read: Ephesians 6:10-14a,18

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then ... And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Reflection: Are you actively seeking the Infilling Of The Holy Spirit? Are you actively coming to God in prayer?

VII. We Resist The Devil By Being Alert

Read: I Peter 5:8,9

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith ..."

We need to be alert. I'm not talking about looking for a demon under every bush but we must be ready to the schemes of the devil. We need to be sensitive in our spirits. We need to ask the Lord, "Is this something in my life that the enemy is at work in?" Now is not the time to fall asleep. We must stand firm in our faith and to do that we need to be attentive.

Reflection: Are you aware of the enemy's schemes against you?

I close with this little illustration ... it reminds me of the problem several sheep ranchers had up in the Montana area. They were losing sheep right and left. One lady had lost a sheep or a lamb every week. They were losing large numbers to the coyotes. They were coming in and destroying the flock. They had tried electric fences, odors, traps, and they had even let people come in to try and hunt them down. Yet they were still unable to get rid of the coyotes in an effective manner. Then someone got the idea to put lamas out in the pastures with the sheep. The reason why they did that is because lamas have a longer neck than sheep and they're much more alert. And so when the lama would sense something he was alert to that and he would walk toward it and would deal with it. And the coyotes were such cowards they couldn't handle that and they'd run away. God wants us to be alert. I'm not saying that the devil is a coward. But I am saying that there are certain things that when we do them - it sends him packing. When you submit to God, pray in the Spirit, when you read the Word, when you praise Him, when you walk in forgiveness and repentance and when you're alert in these things - then the enemy flees! My prayer has been for these past ten weeks has been that you would be able to resist the devil and stand firm. I'd like to pray again for you all one last time tonight ... "I need power to resist the enemy."

Next Week: Angels & Demons

Theology Of Angels & Demons

Any time you conduct a study on spiritual warfare the question naturally arises about what part angels and demons play in the battle. So tonight we're going to examine a subject that has received much attention by various authors and theologians throughout the history of the church. Most Christians find themselves, at some time or another, curious about the role of angels and demons in our daily lives. By angels and demons, I mean those spiritual beings which God created higher than man, some of whom have remained obedient to God and carry out His will, and others of whom disobeyed, lost their holy condition, and now oppose and hinder His work.

In an effort to respond to questions there have been sections of the church that have spent more time emphasizing these celestial beings than the Word of God does. I find it interesting that Scripture devotes little space to telling us about celestial beings. I am convinced that there is a reason for such silence. It is not surprising then that we will not spend more than one night on this subject.

Despite the lack of information on celestial beings, the Bible does mention angels nearly 300 times (289 in NIV – not including specific references to Michael, Gabriel, or Lucifer). However, every reference to angels is incidental to some other topic. They are not treated in themselves. God's revelation never aims at informing us regarding the nature of angels. When they are mentioned, it is always in order to inform us further about God, what He does, and how He does it.

Angel – 195 times; 16 O.T. books; 8 N.T. books (Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Judges, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, I & II Chronicles, Job, Psalm, Isaiah, Daniel, Hosea, Zechariah, Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, and Revelation)

Angels – 94 times; 3 O.T. books; 16 N.T. books (Genesis, Job, Psalm, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, I Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, Hebrews, I & II Peter, Jude, Revelation)

Tonight we're going to examine angelology and demonology using a series of questions ...

I. What Are Angels?

“Malak” (Hebrew) – “to dispatch as a deputy”

“Angelos” (Greek) – “a messenger, guardian, or representative”

- a) Ministering Spirits (Hebrews 1:14)
- b) Created by God (Colossians 1:16; Scripture does not explicitly state that angels were created but it is implied – cf. Ps. 148:2,5)
- c) Sexless – they do not marry or reproduce. (Mark 12:25)
- d) Holy (Mark 8:38)
- e) Elect (or chosen) (I Timothy 5:21)

Note: It is assumed that angels do not have physical or material bodies. Physical manifestations recorded in Scripture must be regarded as appearances assumed for the occasion (angelophanies).

II. What Do Angels Do?

In the past, they gave us the law (“... The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.” Gal. 3:19; Acts 7:53; Heb. 2:2). Angels spoke to Philip (Acts 8:26); Cornelius (Acts 10:3-7); Peter (Acts 11:13; 12:7-11); and Paul (Acts 27:23). Today ...

- a) They send messages to us to comfort, guide, guard, and provide for us. (Psalm 91:11,12)

“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”

- b) They minister (or rescue) to believers. (Psalm 34:7)

“The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.”

- c) They continually praise and glorify God. (Job 38:7; Ps. 103:20; 148:2; Rev. 7:11; 8:1-4)

- d) They rejoice at our conversion. (Luke 15:10)

“In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

- e) They carry out God’s judgment. (II Kings 19:35; Exo. 14:19-20; Acts 12:23)

- f) They carry believers to the place of blessedness at their death. (Luke 16:22)

“The time came when the beggar died and the *angels* carried him to Abraham's side.”

III. What Abilities Do Angels Have?

- a) They can change appearance (Gen. 18:2,16,22; 19:1,5,10,12,15,16; Jud. 13:6; Mk. 16:5; Lk. 24:4).

- b) They can travel instantly back and forth from earth to heaven.

- c) They can only be in one place at one time.

- d) They are not bound by our physical laws (Acts 12:7).

“Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. ‘Quick, get up!’ he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.”

e) They are extremely strong (Luke 24:2).

“They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.”

f) They cannot be burned (Daniel 3:25,28). (May have been a theophany?)

“He said, ‘Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.’ ... Then Nebuchadnezzar said, ‘Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants!’”

g) They can destroy entire armies (II Kings 19:35).

“That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning--there were all the dead bodies!”

h) They can be restrained at times (Daniel 10:4-14). (Not much emphasis on this obscure passage.)

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground. A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom *resisted* me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."

i) They have intelligence and will (II Sam. 14:20; Rev. 22:9).

IV. How Many Angels Are There?

The simple answer to this question is “more than you and I will ever need.” However, the Scriptures do give us some ideas as to the immensity of their number.

Read: Deuteronomy 33:2

"The LORD came from Sinai and dawned over them from Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran. He came with *myriads* of holy ones from the south, from his mountain slopes."

Read: Psalm 68:17

"The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands; the Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary."

Read: Matthew 26:53

"Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" (72,000 – 6,000 per Roman legion)

Read: Luke 2:13,14

"Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.'"

Read: Revelation 5:11

"Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders."

Read: II Thessalonians 1:7

"... This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels."

V. What Kinds & Ranks Of Angels Are There?

Rather elaborate schemes have been worked out at times regarding the organization of the angelic hosts. There is very little definite and clear information on this subject. This is not really an area we need to emphasize because the Scriptures don't put much emphasis on it. However, we can glean a few things from various passages. There are some expressions that are thought to refer to angels such as "sons of the Elohim" (Job 1:6; 2:1), "sons of Elim" (Ps. 29:1; 89:6), "watchers" (Dan. 4:13,17,23), "the council" (Ps. 89:7), and "the assembly" (Ps. 89:5). Likewise, the following two passages increase our understanding ...

Read: Colossians 1:16

"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him."

Read: Romans 8:38

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

1) Archangel – Michael (only one-?) (Dan. 10:13; 10:21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7; I Thess. 4:16 does not state his name)

Dan. 10:13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then *Michael*, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.

Dan. 10:20 So he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; ²¹ but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except *Michael*, your prince. ¹ And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.)

Dan. 12:1 "At that time *Michael*, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered.

Jude ⁹ But even the archangel *Michael*, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

REV 12:7 And there was war in heaven. *Michael* and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸ But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹ The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

2) Angels – Gabriel (“God’s Hero”) (Daniel 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19,26)

Dan. 8:16 And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, "*Gabriel*, tell this man the meaning of the vision."

Dan. 9:21 ... while I was still in prayer, *Gabriel*, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice.

LK 1:19 The angel answered, "I am *Gabriel*. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.

LK 1:26 In the sixth month, God sent the angel *Gabriel* to Nazareth, a town in Galilee ...

Note: The seraphim and cherubim present special problems, since no statement is made regarding their relationship to angels in general. The most cautious position is simply to regard them as being among spiritual creatures designated by the general term angel. They may be angels with special functions, or they may be a special type of angel. The fact of the matter is we're not sure.

3) Seraphim – above the throne; have six wings and can fly (Isaiah 6:2,6)

Above him were *seraphs*, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ... Then one of the *seraphs* flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

4) Cherubim (63 times in NIV text) – beside the throne; guarded the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:24; Psalm 99:1; Isaiah 37:16; Ezekiel 10:1-20; 11:22)

Gen. 3:24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden *cherubim* and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Psalms 99:1 The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the *cherubim*, let the earth shake.

Isa. 37:16 "O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the *cherubim*, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

Note: There are no indications of angels appearing in female form. Nor is there explicit reference to them as winged, although Daniel 9:21 and Revelation 14:6 speak of them as flying. Some think the cherubim and seraphim are symbolic creatures of Ezekiel 1:6 (cf. Rev. 4:8). So we cannot say for sure that angels as a whole are winged. At best, it is inferred. As for the rest of this list, we don't know anything about them ...

5) Principalities

6) Authorities

7) Powers

8) Thrones

9) Might

10) Dominion

VI. Do We Have Guardian Angels?

This idea was part of popular Jewish belief at the time of Christ and has carried over in some Christian thinking. Two Biblical texts are cited as evidence of guardian angels. These verses seem to indicate that angels are specially assigned to individuals. However, it should be noted that elsewhere in the Bible we read that not just one, but many angels accompanied, protected, and provided for believers. The reply to Rhoda reflects the Jewish tradition that a guardian angel resembles the person to whom he is assigned. But a report indicating that certain disciples believed in guardian angels does not make it true or authoritative. Some Christians still had mistaken or confused beliefs on various subjects. In the absence of definite didactic material, it must be concluded that there is insufficient evidence for the concept of guardian angels.

Read: Matthew 18:10

“See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.”

Read: Acts 12:15

"You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

VII. What Are Demons and Where Did They Come From?

The Bible has little to say about how evil angels came to have their current moral character, and even less about their origin. We may derive something about their origin by noting what is said about their moral character. There are two closely related passages which inform us regarding the fall of the evil angels ...

Read: II Peter 2:4

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment ...”

Read: Jude 6

“And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.”

The question naturally arises from these verses as to how the evil angels are able to carry on their work even though they are in gloomy dungeons awaiting judgment. It must be concluded that fallen angels have sufficient freedom to carry on their evil activities though cast into their dungeons. (See II Peter 2:10-22 – they are a description of the continued sinful activity of the people who are being kept under punishment. The language is the same there as in verse 4.)

Demons, then, are angels created by God and thus were originally good; but they sinned and thus became evil. Just when this rebellion took place is uncertain, but it must have occurred between the time when God completed the creation and pronounced it all “very good,” and the temptation and fall of man.

VII. What Do Demons Do?

From Scripture we see that they are satan’s subjects that carry out his work in the world. They are involved in ...

- 1) Temptation
- 2) Deception
- 3) Inflicting Disease (not all illness is attributed to possession)
 - Dumbness (Mark 9:17)
 - Deafness (Mark 9:25)
 - Blindness (Matthew 12:22)
 - Convulsions (Mark 1:26; 9:20; Luke 9:39)
 - Paralysis (Acts 8:7)
 - Lameness
- 4) Opposition of Spiritual Progress (Eph. 6:12)

VIII. What Is The Destiny of Demons?

- 1) Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-20:3)
- 2) Lake of Fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:7,10)

IX. What Are The Benefits From A Study on Angels and Demons?

- 1) It is a comfort and an encouragement to realize that there are powerful and numerous unseen agents available to help us in our need.
- 2) The angels’ praise and service of God give us an example of how we are to conduct ourselves now, and what our activity will be in eternity.
- 3) It should sober us to realize that even angels who were close to God succumbed to temptation and fell. This is a reminder to “take heed, lest we fall.”

- 4) Knowledge about demons can help alert us to danger and give us insight into the enemy's schemes.
- 5) We can know that our enemy has definite limits and therefore we can resist him successfully. We know that his ultimate defeat is certain.

Conclusion:

It is absolutely critical that we do not exalt angels or give them worship. Hebrews 1:5-2:9 sets forth for us that Christ is superior to the angels. Although He was made for a little time a little lower than the angels, He is in every way superior to them. They are not in the same class or category with the Deity. They do not act on independent initiative. Although superior to man in many of their abilities and qualities, they are part of the class of created and thus finite beings.

Thoughts

“The Lord gave us each a mind, and nothing we do can be hidden from him.”
Psalms 33:15 (CEV)

“I have made up my mind to obey your laws forever, no matter what.”
Psalms 119:112 (CEV)

“An evil mind is deceitful, but gentle thoughts bring happiness.”
Proverbs 12:20 (CEV)

“The mind of a person who has understanding searches for knowledge,
but the mouths of fools feed on stupidity.”
Proverbs 15:14 (GW)

“A twisted mind never finds happiness,
and one with a devious tongue {repeatedly} gets into trouble.”
Proverbs 17:20 (GW)

“My son, listen, be wise, and keep your mind going in the right direction.”
Proverbs 23:19 (GW)

“Peace of mind means a healthy body, but jealousy will rot your bones.”
Proverbs 14:30 (NCV)

“As water reflects your face, so your mind shows what kind of person you are.”
Proverbs 27:19 (NCV)

“Lord, when doubts fill my mind, when my heart is in turmoil,
quiet me and give me renewed hope and cheer.”
Psalms 94:19 (TLB)

“Listen, son of mine, to what I say. Listen carefully. Keep these thoughts ever in mind; let them penetrate deep within your heart, for they will mean real life for you and radiant health. Above all else, guard your affections. For they influence everything else in your life.”
Proverbs 4:20-23 (TLB)

“Train me, God, to walk straight; then I'll follow your true path. Put me together,
one heart and mind; then, undivided, I'll worship in joyful fear.”
Psalms 86:11 (MSG)

“A sound mind makes for a robust body, but runaway emotions corrode the bones.”
Proverbs 14:30 (MSG)

“And now, brothers, as I close this letter, let me say this one more thing: Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about.”
Philip. 4:8 (Living)

Peace

“I give you peace, the kind of peace that only I can give.
It isn't like the peace that this world can give. So don't be worried or afraid.”
John 14:27 (CEV)

“I have told you this, so that you might have peace in your hearts because of me. While you are
in the world, you will have to suffer. But cheer up! I have defeated the world.”
John 16:33 (CEV)

“By faith we have been made acceptable to God. And now,
because of our Lord Jesus Christ, we live at peace with God.”
Romans 5:1 (CEV)

“Even when we were God's enemies, he made peace with us, because his Son died for us.
Yet something even greater than friendship is ours. Now that we are at peace with God,
we will be saved by his Son's life.”
Romans 5:10 (CEV)

“If our minds are ruled by our desires, we will die.
But if our minds are ruled by the Spirit, we will have life and peace.”
Romans 8:6 (CEV)

“God's kingdom isn't about eating and drinking. It is about pleasing God, about living in peace,
and about true happiness. All this comes from the Holy Spirit.”
Romans 14:17 (CEV)

“I pray that God, who gives hope, will bless you with complete happiness and peace because of
your faith. And may the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with hope.”
Romans 15:13 (CEV)

“Always be glad because of the Lord! I will say it again: Be glad. ⁵ Always be gentle with others.
The Lord will soon be here. ⁶ Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything.
With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. ⁷ Then, because you belong to
Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand.
And this peace will control the way you think and feel.”
Philippians 4:4-7 (CEV)

“God loves you and has chosen you as his own special people. So be gentle, kind, humble, meek,
and patient. ¹³ Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has
forgiven you. ¹⁴ Love is more important than anything else. It is what ties everything completely
together. ¹⁵ Each one of you is part of the body of Christ, and you were chosen to live together in
peace. So let the peace that comes from Christ control your thoughts. And be grateful.
¹⁶ Let the message about Christ completely fill your lives, while you use all your wisdom to teach
and instruct each other. With thankful hearts, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.
¹⁷ Whatever you say or do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus,
as you give thanks to God the Father because of him.”
Colossians 3:12-17 (CEV)

“I pray that God, who gives peace, will make you completely holy. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept healthy and faultless until our Lord Jesus Christ returns.”

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (CEV)

“Are any of you wise or sensible? Then show it by living right and by being humble and wise in everything you do. ¹⁴ But if your heart is full of bitter jealousy and selfishness, don't brag or lie to cover up the truth. ¹⁵ That kind of wisdom doesn't come from above. It is earthly and selfish and comes from the devil himself. ¹⁶ Whenever people are jealous or selfish, they cause trouble and do all sorts of cruel things. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from above leads us to be pure, friendly, gentle, sensible, kind, helpful, genuine, and sincere. ¹⁸ When peacemakers plant seeds of peace, they will harvest justice.”

James 3:13-18 (CEV)

“Only God gives inward peace, and I depend on him.”

Psalms 62:5 (CEV)

“I will listen to you, Lord God, because you promise peace to those who are faithful and no longer foolish.”

Psalms 85:8 (CEV)

“You give peace of mind to all who love your Law. Nothing can make them fall.”

Psalms 119:165 (CEV)

Heart

“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”
Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV)

“Keep *and guard your heart* with all vigilance *and* above all that you guard,
for out of it flow the springs of life.”
Proverbs 4:23 (AMP)

“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a **Pharisee** and the other a **tax collector**.¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector.’¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’¹³ “But the **tax collector** stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’¹⁴ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”
Luke 18:9-14 (NIV)

1. Tax Collector = A Self-Indulgent Heart

2. Pharisee = A Self-Righteous Heart

3. A Third Way = A Repentant Heart

“A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit.⁴⁴ A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs never grow on thornbushes, nor grapes on bramble bushes.⁴⁵ A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.”
Luke 6:43-45 (NLT)

“You brood of snakes! How could evil men like you speak what is good and right? For whatever is in your heart determines what you say.³⁵ A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart.³⁶ And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak.³⁷ The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.”
Matthew 12:34-37 (NLT)

What’s your strategy for guarding your heart? (Good Heart vs. Evil Heart)

Integrity as used in the Old Testament is related to the word “blameless” in the New Testament. Integrity is that quality developed in a spirit-filled life which causes one to act, in ALL areas of life, according to God’s ethic.

A person with integrity doesn’t live one way under scrutiny, supervision, or observation, and another way when all backs are turned. When you’re watched, when you’re all alone, without the possibility of being discovered, you must live according to the commands of God, who sees all.

The word “integrity” derives from integer which is a mathematical term. Integer is a whole number as opposed to a fraction. When we walk in integrity we tell the whole truth and not just a fraction or one part of it.

“People with integrity have firm footing, but those who follow crooked paths will slip and fall.”
Proverbs 10:9 (NLT)

“The godly walk with integrity; blessed are their children after them.”
Proverbs 20:7 (NLT)

Three Areas Of Integrity

1. Public Integrity – who you are in the midst of people that know you on a casual basis and develop an opinion of you from a very limited perspective (e.g. work relationships, church relationships, community events).
2. Personal Integrity – who you are in the presence of people who know you on a close basis. These are people that you really feel comfortable with in expressing both positive and negative emotions (family, close friends, roommates).
3. Private Integrity – who you are when you are all alone.

“Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body?
¹⁸ But **the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart**, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. ²⁰ These are what make a man ‘unclean’; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him ‘unclean.’”
Matthew 15:17-20 (NIV)

If there are destructive things in my heart then they are going to make their way into my life and relationships. That means that everything is impacted by my heart.

Guilt says, “*I owe you.*” The guilty person has secrets. Guilty people live with the continual fear someone will find them out and it eats them from the inside out. The guilty person finds it difficult to trust because they are untrustworthy themselves. They assume everyone else has a secret.

The guilty person builds walls, not community. It’s not because they’re an introvert or private. It’s because they are hiding something. They come across as distant and distracted. They often overreact to people who share their weaknesses.

Do you have a secret ... from the past, ongoing right now?

Guilt goes with us everywhere we go. It reminds us, on a consistent basis, that we owe someone and have been in hiding. We lie, cover up and avoid getting close to others in an effort to hide our secrets.

What is it about me that I hope no one will find out? What is the question I hope no one asks? What is the discovery that I'm afraid that if it's made would impact my family and friends?

The antidote to all of this is **CONFESSION**.

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.
The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

James 5:16 (NIV)

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify
us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out
to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”

1 John 1:8-10 (NIV)

How do you assess the well-being of your heart and soul? How do you promote “Glass House Living”?

Questions To Help You Guard Your Heart

1. Are you growing more easily discouraged? If so, why?
2. Are you growing more easily irritated? If so, why?
3. How are you loving God and others more deeply these days?
4. How are you cultivating a more authentic love for God in those who are a part of your group?
5. How have you been a good steward of God's stuff?
6. What have you purposely done to build relationships with those who are spiritually hungry?
7. What have you done to intentionally further your marriage and family relationships?
8. How have you been battling temptations in your thoughts & actions? (lust, greed, pride, jealousy, lies, etc.) What guardrails (margins) do you have in place?
9. Have you been maintaining a balanced diet? What does that look like for you?
10. How have you been exercising? How many times? How long?
11. Have you been getting enough rest?

Financial Reconciliation

When is Enough, Enough? People all around us are **overwhelmed** ... usually this is focused in the area of finances. In this message we're going to look at a guy who was racked with guilt and shame over money ... how he earned it, managed it, abused it and hoarded it. He had a terrible relationship with money. In "short" ... he had had "enough" of the money matters. And in this story we see how Jesus became not only enough for Zacchaeus ... He became MORE than enough!

"Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. ⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your **house** today." ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. ⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." ⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "**Today salvation has come to this house**, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Luke 19:1-10 (NIV)

What drove Zacchaeus to climb the tree? ENUF! Could it be that he had a tortured conscience regarding his **identity**/wealth? Could it be that Zacchaeus was becoming overwhelmed by a sense of self-reproach and was coming to a life-changing moment with Jesus? He needed a power greater than himself to help him get out of the soul-damaging relationship he had with money!

Financial **shame** wrecks people of all walks of life, all levels of income and at all stages of a person's journey. Bankruptcy, repossession of stuff, and huge levels of **embarrassment** rack people and cause deep levels of self-reproach. **Who can relate at some point in your past?**

What happened on the way to the house? What occurred during dinner? Who were the poor people they passed along the way?

Zacchaeus may be the only person in the Bible who experienced two reconciliations with Jesus in one day ... at the same time ... at the same dinner!

1. **Spiritual** Reconciliation ... Morally, sinful patterns & behaviors & broken heart.
2. **Financial** Reconciliation ... total repentance from past financial sin; confesses honestly how he has been on a terrible track that led to deep feelings of guilt and regret.

It looks like he realized how important the poor were to Jesus and became deeply convicted that he should have likewise been concerned about his response to those around him who were in need. He felt the immediate need to make up for a lifetime of hoarding all at once ...

“Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

Luke 19:8 (NIV)

FAR MORE CHRIST FOLLOWERS HAVE SPIRITUAL RECONCILIATION EXPERIENCES WITH JESUS THAN FINANCIAL RECONCILIATION EXPERIENCES.

This seems to be why so many sincere, serious-minded followers of Jesus have such an ongoing, tormented dysfunctional relationship with money. If you’ve been spiritually reconciled to God (which is paramount) ... but have never experienced the financial reconciliation regarding money ... I’d like to submit you’re still one reconciliation away from total peace with God. In other words, if the power of God did not break the power of money in your life or the love of God did not cleanse the shame and guilt in your life about how you’ve handled money then you need to be freed from that by allowing the Holy Spirit to fully reconcile you to God financially. If Jesus is not yet enough, then today is decision time!

WE NEED TO BE MORALLY AND FINANCIALLY RECONCILED TO GOD TO BE FREE FROM SHAME AND GUILT.

What would it be like to be fully, financially reconciled to God? What would it be like to properly handle money in your life? What would it feel like to no longer be overwhelmed by financial matters? What happens internally when Jesus is enough? How does a financial reconciliation to God happen?

It happens much the same way a spiritual transformation occurs. A military guy once asked the Apostle Paul how to be reconciled to God and this was his answer ...

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

Acts 16:31 (NIV)

Believe ... Jesus was God’s Son, Substitutionary Atonement, saving faith/trust in Jesus!

Financial Reconciliation to God is evident when we live as though these statements are true:

1. I Believe That All I Have Has Come My Way By God’s Generosity Toward Me.

Did you get where you are today all on your own? (Loving hand of God)

“Every good and perfect gift is from above ...”

James 1:17 (NIV)

2. I Live Joyfully Within God’s Current Provision For My Life.

“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

Philippians 4:12-13 (NIV)

Someone fully reconciled to God financially joyfully accepts God's current level of provision for their lives. **Are you content with a lot or a little? When God increases someone else's level of provision do you rejoice when you see that or are you filled with jealousy?**

3. I Honor God By Returning The First 10% Of All My Earnings To Him. (His Purposes)

“Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”

Proverbs 3:9-10 (NIV)

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”

Malachi 3:10 (NIV)

4. I Save For Emergencies, Giving Opportunities & My Later Years.

“Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones. Learn from their ways and become wise! ⁷ Though they have no prince or governor or ruler to make them work, ⁸ they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter.”

Proverbs 6:6-8 (NLT)

Don't put your hope in wealth! Jesus is enough ... use wisdom.

Anyone ever encounter a financial “winter”? Tough! Replacement of refrigerator, car, roof, etc.

5. I Listen Each Day For Whispers From God Regarding My Resources.

What makes a faith-filled life so amazing is that you're in a continual two-way conversation with the Lord. You pray, He listens and responds. He speaks, you listen and respond/obey. You listen for His whisper and then follow through on what He says to do or not to do. You sense His presence and He guides you into His will for each day. It's a thing of beauty!

God will take care of you when you have been spiritually & financially reconciled to Him. It's decision time! **IS JESUS ENOUGH? Can you say to the Lord ... YES!!**

- Do you believe that all you have has come your way by the loving hand of God?
- Will you live joyfully within God's current provision for your life?
- Will you honor God by returning the first 10% of all your earnings to Him?
- Will you set aside a portion of all your earnings into a savings account for emergencies, for giving opportunities, and for your later years?
- Will you live each day with an open ear toward heaven, eager to respond to any whisper from God regarding your resources?

Let's Pray!

Spiritual Reconciliation Time ... salvation ... *Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.*

Financial Reconciliation Time ... submission ... *Lord, all that I am and have is Yours!*

Thank you Jesus that You're enough! Thank You for Your work in our lives. We love it when You help us to have breakthroughs that will change destinies, family trees and the future of our eternal souls. Please help us to follow-through on the commitments we've made and trust You for the provisions we need.

Resources: "Simplify – Part 3" by Bill Hybels

The First Principle

To begin with, we're going to head back to the Old Testament to get some context for this matter of trusting God with our finances. **Live like no one else so you can live like no one else!**

“Then the LORD said to Moses,² ‘Dedicate (*consecrate*) to me every firstborn among the Israelites. The first offspring to be born, of both humans and animals, belongs to me.’”
Exodus 13:1-2 (NLT)

“... you must present all firstborn sons and firstborn male animals to the LORD, for they belong to him.¹³ A firstborn donkey may be bought back (*ransomed*) from the LORD by presenting a lamb or young goat in its place. But if you do not buy it back, you must break its neck. However, you must buy back every firstborn son.”
Exodus 13:12-13 (NLT)

[All firstborn male humans (firstborn females were exempted) were to be redeemed (*padah*) or “bought back at a price” (fixed at five shekels per male – Num 18:16; 3:46-47), and donkeys were to be “bought back” by a lamb or kid since donkeys were unclean animals and therefore unfit for sacrifice. To prevent any refusal to follow this command to ransom their animals, the Israelites were to kill them by breaking their necks.]

Let's talk about the principle of the **FIRST** ...

1. The Firstborn Must Be Sacrificed or Redeemed

First Corinthians 10:11 says that the O.T. is an example to us, written for our instruction. So the instruction we see is that the firstborn must be sacrificed or redeemed.

If you had an animal that was considered a clean animal (**lamb**), then you sacrificed the firstborn. If your animal was considered an unclean animal (**donkey**), then you had to sacrifice a clean animal to redeem the unclean animal.

This principle points to Jesus. It's all an example for us. If it's unclean, it has to be redeemed with the sacrifice of the clean. And if it's clean, it has to be sacrificed. We are all born with a sin nature. Jesus was born sinless (clean). He was sacrificed so that we (unclean) could be redeemed!

Jesus came with the desire that we would give our lives to Him. He didn't wait to see if we would straighten up and then come. So the Father gives His Son before anyone believes in Him (while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!). Jesus (the Son) was God's (the Father) tithe! **He gave Jesus as the sacrifice, FIRST.** This is a principle all through Scripture.

We gather together on the first day of the week and when you begin your week with God, the rest is blessed. When you begin your day with God the rest is blessed. When you give the first portion of your finances to God, the rest is blessed. **That's this principle ... the firstborn must be sacrificed or redeemed.**

2. The Firstfruits Must Be Offered

“The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.”
Exodus 23:19 (NKJV)

“**Honor** the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; ¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.”

Proverbs 3:9-10 (NKJV)

God said that when an animal has a baby, whatever it is, they were to sacrifice the first one. Now that takes faith! He didn't say, 'Wait until the animal has ten offspring and then give me the tenth one.' He said, '*Give me the first one and the rest will be blessed*'.

This is something about tithing that many people never understood ... it's 10% so that every person can give. It's a percentage that levels the playing field. And it's the first 10%. It's very important for us to understand that. It takes faith to give the first 10% and then pay the bills, not pay the bills and see if you have enough left over for God.

You need to understand something about God, **God will always be first**. God is first, whether you put Him first or not. This is all about the preeminence of God, He's above all, before all, higher than all, first of all. A great example of this when Israel began to enter the Promised Land.

“Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel. ¹⁹ Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the LORD and must be brought into his treasury.”

Joshua 6:18-19 (NLT)

Why did God say this? Jericho was the first city. Here's what God was saying, '*Give Me the first and the rest are blessed*'. He didn't say, 'Conquer ten cities and then give me one. As soon as they disobeyed, the second city, Ai, was not blessed. They had to get that right before they could conquer the rest of the promised land.

Let's go further back for a moment. Remember Adam & Eve's children? Why did God accept Abel's offering, but He didn't accept Cain's? You cannot understand this unless you understand the principal of firstborn and firstfruits. Remember, the firstborn and the firstfruits you give to God.

“When it was time for the harvest (*process of time*), Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. ⁴ Abel also brought a gift—the best of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, ⁵ but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.”

Genesis 4:3-5 (NLT)

In essence it's saying that Cain gave what he wanted when he wanted. How many of us still do that today? We say, *I give when I feel led*. That's like saying *I love my wife when I feel led*.

God couldn't accept Cain's offering. There are some things God CAN'T do – outside of His character. Examples: God can't change (immutability) because if He could change He could get better and He can't get better because He's best. God can't think ... the way we think (omniscience) – He knows everything all at the same time; nothing has ever occurred to God; He's never said, *You know what I just thought of?* ☺ God can never be second either (preeminence). If He plays a round of golf His score will be 18! ☺

3. The Tithe Must Be First

(Who has a \$100 bill?)

“One tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain from the fields or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD and must be set apart to him as holy.”
Leviticus 27:30 (NLT)

The word ‘holy’ it means set apart, it means designated for another purpose. The tithe is set apart, its holy, it belongs to God. This is the same language as firstborn and firstfruits ... it’s the Lord’s! People say, “*Well, tithing was under the Law, and I’m not under the Law as a Christian, I’m under grace so I don’t tithe.*”

“The purpose of the tithe is to teach you to always put God first in your lives.”
Deuteronomy 14:23 TLB

Tithing was way before the Law. Jacob tithed 400 years before the Law. Abraham tithed between 400-500 years before the Law. Before the Law they gave 10%.

If you go all the way back to Cain and Abel you’ll see it and even in the Garden God said; ‘You can eat from any tree except that one, that one is mine’. He was putting stewardship into His people. The tithe was not only before the Law, it was after the Law.

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites!
For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens,
but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith.
You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.”
Matthew 23:23 (NLT)

If the One who saved me said you ought to, that’s enough! But if we’re throwing out the Law ... what about honoring our parents, murder, adultery, etc. If you say you’re under grace then be advised, grace goes FARTHER than the Law! ☺ The early church followed this too ...

“Now regarding your question about the money being collected for God’s people in Jerusalem. You should follow the same procedure I gave to the churches in Galatia. ² On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned. Don’t wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once.”
1 Corinthians 16:1-2 (NLT)

What releases the blessing on our finances is not the amount, but the order. It’s the FIRST 10%. Every time you get paid you take a test. (**Ten \$1 bills; online giving**) The test is whom are you going to honor for your income? And you honor the first person you give to.

Let’s turn our attention to the last book of the OT – Malachi. Hundreds of years prior to this prophet coming on the scene, God had told His people that whenever it was time for them to bring a lamb to the temple as a worship offering, they should walk through their herds and find the very best lamb – the blue ribbon lamb – the one that would bring the most money at the marketplace if they were going to sell the lamb. “*Make an excellent worship offering when you make one,*” was God’s request. That’s the standard.

Part of the reason why God wanted them to bring their best lamb was because hundreds of years later He would send Jesus into the world as His Lamb that would take away the sins of the world, God knew He was going to give His best Lamb. So all the way back in the Old Testament sacrificial system, He was predicting that. But then came Malachi's day ...

“When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn't that wrong? And isn't it wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to your governor, and see how pleased he is!” says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. ⁹“Go ahead, beg God to be merciful to you!

But when you bring that kind of offering, why should he show you any favor at all?” asks the LORD of Heaven's Armies. ¹⁰“How I wish one of you would shut the Temple doors so that these worthless sacrifices could not be offered! I am not pleased with you,” says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, “and I will not accept your offerings. ¹¹ But my name is honored by people of other nations from morning till night. All around the world they offer sweet incense and pure offerings in honor of my name. For my name is great among the nations,” says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.”

Malachi 1:8-11 (NLT)

Sacrifice time comes, they begrudgingly walk around in their herds looking for the worthless lamb and they put it on the altar and say, “*There's Your worship offering, God. Hope You like it.*”

Malachi, sent by God to talk to the people about this, says, “*Hey people, God doesn't like it. He really doesn't. He doesn't like it at all.*” In fact, the whole deal offends Him to the point where Malachi says in this text, “*Better you bring no lamb at all, than you bring a blemished one.*”

MANY PEOPLE LIVE OUT THEIR SPIRITUALITY TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO DO THE BAREST MINIMUM FOR GOD WITHOUT INCURRING HIS DISPLEASURE.

Many people live by simply giving God leftovers—leftover time, leftover energy, leftover talent, leftover money and leftover love. **In what areas are you giving God your left-overs?**

Let's examine God's divine pattern of excellence ...

1. Creation of Heavens & Earth - Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls or the Great Barrier Reef
2. Creation of People – bodies, minds, spirits & souls – marvelously complex creatures
3. Mercy, Patience, Guidance, Protection & Provision – when human beings rebel against Him. He keeps loving and working with them century after century, millennium after millennium.
4. Jesus – set the eternal standards for excellence in teaching, wisdom, integrity, love, death, resurrection & ascension.
5. Holy Spirit – each of His followers could become carriers of His power and His presence.
6. Church – to express His love to a love-starved world throughout the generations, and give His followers a family of faith to belong to and a mission to commit their lives to.
7. Eternity – for all of us who put our faith and trust in Jesus.

How should we respond to the excellent activities of God? What kind of worship offering do you bring to an excellent God? What kind of lamb am I bringing to God these days?

Malachi calls us to make an unconditional, carte blanche commitment to God because of His unconditional, carte blanche commitment to us – my best for His best, His best for my best.

“God, I formally take the limits and the conditions off my commitment to You. I’ll do Your bidding, whatever it is. I’ll obey Your will and Your ways. I’ll go where You ask me to go. I’ll say ‘yes’ to the promptings of Your Spirit as I understand them. I’ll live out this unconditional commitment even if it costs me everything.”

God wants you to wrestle with how you can take your best talents and your best abilities and the best energies of your life, and figure out how to invest them in ways that further His purposes in this world.

Here’s the standard: your best commitment, affection and the best contributions of your skills and talents – for the One who’s never given less than His best for you every day of your life. And that will go on all the way through eternity – the best for the best. Someday, you’re going to stand in front of the Best and your eyes are going to behold God and His glory and Jesus in His splendor. And you will be so glad that you gave the prized lamb of your commitment, your affection, your skills and talents to God every day of your life. Don’t give Him a blemished lamb!

“Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! “But you ask, ‘What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?’ “You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me.⁹ You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me.¹⁰ **Bring** all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! **Try it! Put me to the test!**¹¹ Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.¹² “Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.”

Malachi 3:8-12 (NLT)

Hundreds of years prior to Malachi’s writing this text, God had spelled out for people how they ought to handle their money excellently. God says, “*Here’s the guidelines: Earn money ethically–no schemes, no corruptions, no back door deals, no gray. Earn money; you can earn a lot of it if you want, that’s great.*”

Earn money ethically; spend money wisely, not foolishly or carelessly; avoid destructive debt; save money consistently for your future; give money to the poor generously. And as a part of the overall financial money management practices that God lays out, He says, “*And I’m establishing the practice of tithing.*” The Hebrew word that’s translated as tithe is the word *maaser* ... it literally means a tenth (10%).

The idea behind the practice was that God's people would take 10% of whatever increase they experienced in their work-a-day world, and they would bring it to their worship place as a symbol of their gratefulness to God for His giving them material blessings, and then for the secondary and practical purpose of supporting the ministry of their worship center.

For a long time, people carried out God's guidelines just as God had outlined them. People did their money management in an excellent way. And everybody won during that time in the history of God's people. I mean, the people themselves won because their finances stayed under control. They stayed out of financial difficulties, didn't go into debt, they had savings, they gave to the poor, they brought the full tithe.

God won because He was honored and given thanks for His graciousness. Temple ministries were adequately resourced. Everybody won. But then comes Malachi's day when the standard of financial excellence had fallen and fallen hard. In spite of being taught since the time of their youth about how to honor God with their resources, one by one, men and women began to make unwise and dishonoring financial decisions. They just started making up their own rules.

And if you can believe it, in Malachi's day people decided to make up for their financial foolishness by reducing their tithes and offerings that were supposed to be going to God, and in some cases, not giving them at all.

Malachi says, "Every time you bring less than the full ten percent of your earnings to God, you're ripping off the One who gave His very, very best for you." This is the one place that God says, you can prove that I exist. He says try tithing. He says just give Me 10% and watch what I'll do in return. Take God at His word. Take a step of faith. Accept the challenge. And if you are not tithing, start tithing as God has commanded us to do.

Now, of course, with all these promises in the Bible, there are premises. And God says, "*You do this and I'll do this.*" And in this verse, He said, "*You give and I'll give to you.*" Now, of course, we always say, "*okay, God, you go first. You bless me and then I'll give to you.*" God says, "*no, no, no. That doesn't require any faith. You prime the pump. You go first.*" Why? Because that requires faith. And what God is most pleased with is our faith.

How do you look at a blood-stained cross and an empty tomb? How do you look at a rock solid promise of a home in heaven forever and ever and ever and then quibble over giving 10% of the earnings that God Himself has made it possible for you to make in the first place?

Malachi would say, "*Don't raise your hands in worship to God saying, 'I give Him my everything,' while you're robbing Him of the barest minimum of what He asks you to do in His name.*" And sooner or later, you have to come to an intensely personal decision about these matters. You've got to do a heart check. This is not fundamentally about money. This is about how you feel about the One who gave His life for you.

God never uses the word **GIVE** when He talks about tithing. You want to know why? Because you can't give what doesn't belong to you. **He uses the word BRING**. Bring the tithe into the storehouse. *I don't want what belongs to God in my house; I want to take it to His house.*

Guilt Free Zone ... Tithing requires faith! W/O faith it's impossible to please God. (% Givers!)

Struggling To Fully Have Faith (Trust) Christ Follower
100%



Faith-Filled (Fully Trusts) Christ Follower
90%



C = the place of blessing and the favor of God.

Both have an interesting perspective on the other. They both think the other is “crazy.” **Which crazy do you want to be?** ☺ My life is a B-C Story! I want that for you! (Automatic/Online Givers)

Note: Charity vs. Tithing ... Tithing is undesignated. You come and you lay it at the feet of God and say, *God, however YOU want this spent*. Whenever I *designate* the giving, it's not tithing.

When you tithe, it provides for God's work in and through His church, the church for which Jesus died. God loves His church and when you tithe the church moves forward and through Jesus the local church is the hope of the world.

RCC's Use Of God's Resources: I'm thankful and proud of how we're leveraging what you return to God through the tithe.

Invest in the Next Generation ...

Create Sacred Spaces ...

Reach beyond our walls ...

You tithe, we manage wisely, and the local church makes a huge difference. If people would tithe and we could manage it wisely we wouldn't need the government to help people who are in need because the church would already be there doing what we were called to do. Unapologetically, I tell you beyond a shadow of a doubt that the tithe provides for the work of God through His church!

I would argue there are few if any more tangible measurements of where you actually can see that you put God first. Show me your bank statement and I can see if you put God first. But this has implications in every area of life ... marriage, parenting, weekly worship, daily devotions in the morning, etc. Many of us need to reprioritize our lives completely around God!

It takes faith to give first. If God gives me \$100 and I give Him \$10 first, it takes faith to believe He'll stretch the other \$90. If I give Him what's left over and what's last and whenever I feel like it, that doesn't take faith. And without faith Scripture says, it's impossible to please God.

The tithe is for beginning givers, yes we honor God with that ... but we also give offerings, offer justice ... extend mercy ... take care of widows, orphans and those in need! Jesus makes it more than just 10% ... it's everything; your whole life, all of you, you make everything you have available to the Kingdom of God for His service.

Tithing also builds my faith in God. If we sat down and had coffee and you said; *"I don't have a lot of faith in God right now."* A fair question for me to ask is, *"Are you a tither?"* And chances are you're going to say, *"No,"* because tithing actually builds our faith in God.

This is beyond a financial blessing and God is not a cosmic slot machine. As we trust God in this area we can see marital relationships deepen, parent/child relationships strengthened, families serving the Lord together ... even miracles of healing, restoration and bondages broken.

I tell you I can see the tithers, I can pick you out when I'm talking about this because you're nodding and smiling because you've seen the faithfulness of God. You have your own stories of how He has come through for you and you have seen His goodness. Somehow, miraculously with the presence of God you've discovered that 90% with the blessings of God goes further than 100% without the blessings of God.

Why do we tithe? It's an act of worship. He gave to us, we faithfully worship Him. We don't serve money, we're not going to be in bondage to money, we serve God. It's a tangible way of putting Him first, *"God I worship You with this"*.

Let's return one final time to Exodus 13 ...

“And in the future, your children will ask you, ‘What does all this mean?’ Then you will tell them, ‘With the power of his mighty hand, the LORD brought us out of Egypt, the place of our slavery. ¹⁵ Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, so the LORD killed all the firstborn males throughout the land of Egypt, both people and animals. That is why I now sacrifice all the firstborn males to the LORD—except that the firstborn sons are always bought back.’”
Exodus 13:14-15 (NLT)

Illustration: Teaching Joshua & Jenna to tithe using the Burkett bank; check giving records for those who want to date our kids; why would I let them date a THIEF?!

Let's Pray!

“When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.”
Luke 12:48 (NLT)

Are you giving God your first and best? Why or why not?

Share a time when your faith grew as a result of your giving. What did you learn about God from your experience?

How can tithing be a form of accountability for you?

What are some of the barriers you've faced or are facing that keep you from tithing?

What are some of the things God is doing through RCC that you are most excited about?

Why do you think Malachi 3 is the only place in the Bible where God asks us to test Him?

What is the connection between our hearts and our giving?

Resources: “Multiply” series by Robert Morris, Gateway Church, TX; Lifechurch.tv; “Be Rich” series by Andy Stanley; “Living Excellent Lives” series by Bill Hybels & “Strapped” series by Craig Groeschel

Principles Of Multiplication

Now let's turn our attention to two principles of multiplication we find in the familiar story of the five loaves and two fish. (Not rocket science but we overlook them.)

“Late in the afternoon the twelve disciples came to him and said, “Send the crowds away to the nearby villages and farms, so they can find food and lodging for the night. There is nothing to eat here in this remote place.”¹³ But Jesus said, “You feed them.” “But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered. “Or are you expecting us to go and buy enough food for this whole crowd?”¹⁴ For there were about 5,000 men there. Jesus replied, “Tell them to sit down in groups of about fifty each.”¹⁵ So the people all sat down.¹⁶ Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread and fish to the disciples so they could distribute it to the people.¹⁷ They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers!”

Luke 9:12-17 (NLT)

You have to catch this; the miracle did not happen in the Master's hands, it happened in the disciple's hands.

1. The gift has to be blessed before it can multiply.

What if they had taken the fish and the loaves and given them away without Jesus' blessing? They never would have multiplied. The reason they multiplied was because Jesus blessed them.

[In acts of blessing, the lesser is blessed by the greater.⁸ Or look at it this way: We pay our tithes to priests who die, but Abraham paid tithes to a priest who, the Scripture says, “lives.”⁹ Ultimately you could even say that since Levi descended from Abraham, who paid tithes to Melchizedek,¹⁰ when we pay tithes to the priestly tribe of Levi they end up with Melchizedek (Jesus).]
Hebrews 7:1-10 (MSG)

Hebrews alludes to the truth that when we tithe Jesus receives our tithe and blesses them. With the blessing of Jesus on it, it can multiply, but without the blessing of Jesus it can never multiply.

2. The gift has to be given away before it can multiply.

What if the disciples took the bread and the fish to Jesus and He blessed it and then they ate it? It never would have multiplied. They had to give it away. **There are people who tithe and bring the first to God, but they don't give over and above the tithe (sacrificially).** In essence they're eating what's blessed. It's blessed because they brought the first to God, but they don't give over and above, so it never multiplies.

Many people want their finances to multiply, but they won't bring the first to God, but they will give here and there (**spontaneously**). Their finances will never multiply, because it's not blessed.

Other people bring the first to God (**strategically**) but they don't give over and above and their finances will never multiply because it doesn't multiply until you give over and above.

Remember what God asked Solomon in his dream ...

“The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵ At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the *night* in a dream, and God said, ‘Ask for whatever you want me to give you.’”

1 Kings 3:4-5 (NIV)

What happened that day to precipitate this? Solomon demonstrated the generosity within his heart. It was tradition for the king to sacrifice one bull but Solomon sacrificed 1,000 bulls!

God only says to extravagant givers, “Ask anything you want!” He would never say that to a selfish person, because He can’t trust selfish people.

***Application:* Give something away this week to someone you know in need. It doesn’t matter if your gift is big, medium or small. Your gift could be money, a possession or both. Pray and ask God to show you what He wants you to give and who He wants you to give it to. Don’t let this be a one-time act. Commit to making giving a regular part of your life.**

Let’s Pray!

Resources: “Multiply” series by Robert Morris, Gateway Church, TX; Lifechurch.tv; “Be Rich” series by Andy Stanley & “Strapped” series by Craig Groeschel

Reflections About Giving

In the Bible, the word “believe” is used 272 times. The word “pray” is used 371 times. The word “love” is used even more, 714 times, but the word “give” is used 2,161 times. Why do you think that that’s so?

Now let’s examine three truths about giving from Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth ...

1. Your heart matters when you give. (Willingly, Joyfully & Intentionally)

“For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.
2 Cor. 8:12 (NIV)

Paul is saying the amount isn’t important. What’s important is your attitude when you give. Reward for giving is based on the willingness, not on the wealth. It’s based on how you give, not how much you give. God doesn’t look at the amount you give. He looks at the amount left over.

He looks at how much – He is evaluating your generosity not in light of how much you give, but how much you gave in light of how much He gave to you. That’s the comparison. So give willingly.

“Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. ⁷ You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” ⁸ And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.”
2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (NLT)

The heart matters. Hilarious giving! Give and give and give and give, until you love it.

If you ever feel pressured to give, don’t do it. Because you don’t get any credit for it anyway. If you are giving reluctantly and you are giving under pressure, don’t give. He wants you to give willingly.

“But generous people plan to do what is generous, and they stand firm in their generosity.”
Isaiah 32:8 (NLT)

2. You cannot out-give God.

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written: “He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” ¹⁰ Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.”
2 Corinthians 9:8-10 (NIV)

What seeds do you have to give? You have time, gifts, talents, abilities, your heart, words, your things, financial resources. He’s given you seeds.

When you sow generously, you will reap generously and He will increase the store of your seed. You will have more seed to give and He will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness – He is going to make you more like Himself. He’s going to enlarge the harvest of your righteousness and you’re going to become more like God who is a giver! When you give beyond the tithe it’s like compounding interest – it’s compounding joy, peace, fulfillment and influence!

3. People will thank God because of what you give.

“You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.”
2 Corinthians 9:11 (NIV)

People around the world will thank GOD because of your generosity. He gets glory! Every time a person’s life is changed, it’s because someone has sowed seeds into good soil and there are generations that will be different because someone has been faithful.

Parenthetically (outside of letter to Corinth) ... God invites you to give thankfully.

“How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me?”
Psalm 116:12 (NIV)

You will never be able to repay God for all He’s done for you. If He never did one more thing for you, He’s already done so much for you today that you ought to give just out of gratitude the rest of your life.

“Give away your life; you’ll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity.”
Luke 6:38 (MsgB)

“Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.”
1 Chron. 29:14 (NIV)

Let’s Pray!

Resources: “Multiply” series by Robert Morris, Gateway Church, TX; Lifechurch.tv; “Be Rich” series by Andy Stanley & “Strapped” series by Craig Groeschel

Sowing & Reaping

Let's turn our attention to a the principle of sowing and reaping ...

WHAT YOU KEEP IS ALL YOU HAVE. WHAT YOU GIVE, GOD MULTIPLIES.

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Luke 6:38 (NIV)

If you keep something, that's all you're ever going to have. But if you take what you have and you give it you turn it into seed and plant it in good soil God can multiply it.

Say it with me ... *“What I keep is all I have, what I give God multiplies.”*

Jesus is talking to an agrarian society and they made their living off of crops. Whenever there was a harvest of wheat, the land owners would hire laborers to carry baskets full of wheat across huge fields. They would take their basket and fill it $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ full because it would be very heavy. But at the end of the day/week, a generous landowner would often pay the people in wheat. He would say, *“This last basket is yours to take home.”*

How do you think they would fill the last basket? On the last day, they would take their basket, they would press it down, they would fill it up. And Jesus was saying that's how God gives to you when you give to others. (Distortions: Prosperity Gospel & Poverty Gospel)

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”

Galatians 6:7 (NIV)

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,
and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”

2 Corinthians 9:6 (NIV)

Four truths about sowing and reaping ...

- We reap what we sow.
- We reap where we sow.
- We reap after we sow.
- We reap more than we sow.

We reap *later and greater*. This principle isn't fair, just, balanced, even or 1-to-1. It can be leveraged: it can work for you or against you! For some this is discouraging but for those who allow this principle time to work in your life it's a tremendous blessing.

Let's Pray!

Resources: “Multiply” series by Robert Morris, Gateway Church, TX; Lifechurch.tv; “Be Rich” series by Andy Stanley & “Strapped” series by Craig Groeschel

Greed

In this session let's consider one of the greatest enemies of our heart ... GREED. The central principle we'll focus on is this ...

REALLOCATING ASSETS RELOCATES YOUR HEART

It's almost impossible to see in our own lives. In fact, it can be couched in terms of being a good steward, *I'm a Saver*.

With the hope of winning a record jackpot of \$640 million, Americans spent an estimated \$1.5 billion on tickets in a multistate lottery in early 2012. The odds of winning were a staggering 1 in 176 million, but people stood in lines at grocery stores, gas stations, and cafes to buy a chance to become rich.

Something inside us makes us think more money will solve our problems and improve our lives. **Greed is ...**

THE ASSUMPTION THAT EVERYTHING I HAVE IS FOR MY CONSUMPTION.

Greed is really not a financial issue. It's a heart issue at the core. You may not be able to see it but others see it in your life. Look at Jesus' warning ...

“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed;
a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”
Luke 12:15 (NIV)

There is a kind of greed where your life equals the acquisition, hoarding and storing up of possessions. We fall prey to the idea that life equals more and more and more stuff. We are consumed by the idea that upgrading to the next bigger and better is where it's at. (ENUF) This impacts people around you because they feel like stuff is more important to you than they are. God calls this – GREED! And it's not a financial problem.

How different are our attitudes when it comes to matters of spending versus giving? Jesus teaches us how to get our hearts in shape as it relates to the matter of generosity & greed ...

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.
²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
Matthew 6:19-21 (NIV)

This isn't saying it's wrong to save for college or a “rainy day”. He's not saying we need to liquidate everything and live homeless on the streets. Later He will advocate for responsible living. He's addressing those of us who are hoarders and are consumed by acquisition.

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven is code for ... give stuff away ... liquidate ... reallocate some of your possessions to others ...

“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Luke 12:33-34 (NIV)

What Jesus is saying is this: ***“If you want to know where your heart is then follow the money trail. Look through your bank account and see where your heart really is.”***

Where is your heart today? It’s wherever your treasure is. If it’s in a boat or a house or your business or your clothes or your children or your family or your career, wherever your treasure is, that’s where your heart is. You see, every time I give to God, it moves me a little bit closer to Him. It not only makes me like Him, because God is a giver, it moves me closer to Him. It draws me closer because that’s where my treasure is.

THE WAY YOU STRIP YOUR HEART OF GREED IS TO MAKE SOME DECISIONS AND FOLLOW THROUGH ON THEM IN THE AREA OF GENEROSITY.

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are **GOOD**, your whole body will be full of light.

²³ But if your eyes are **BAD**, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! ²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and Money.”

Matthew 6:22-24 (NIV)

Jesus is using a word play ... just as your eyes direct your body, you have the potential to use your treasure to direct your heart. Because your heart follows your treasure. Your heart doesn’t just have to be an indicator of where you are. It can also be an indication of where you’re going to be!

Good: it’s the only time in the N.T. this Greek word appears. Outside Biblical literature it’s translated as “generous”. Essentially He’s saying, *“If your eyes are generous then your whole body will be full of light.”*

Then He refers to **“bad”** eyes and it’s the same word He uses in Matthew 20:15 (parable of the workers in the vineyard) where it’s translated as “envious.” **Are you (your eyes) generous or envious?**

“Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money?

Or are you **envious** because I am generous?”

Matthew 20:15 (NIV)

THE WAY YOU BREAK THE POWER OF GREED IS THROUGH PRIORITIZED, PERCENTAGE, PROGRESSIVE GIVING.

Before I fund my kingdom, I fund His kingdom! As my income increases, my % increases.

Let’s Pray!

Resource: Enemies of the Heart by Andy Stanley

Strapped

*“Money is fun if you’ve got some.”
(Dave Ramsey)*

How many have done something stupid with money? Everyone else is lying! Today we’re going to start with a foundation and talk about the heart and money.

“The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”
Proverbs 22:7

Servant: *‘ebed* (eh’-bed); a servant, a slave, in bondage.

- Love to get married, can’t afford it.
- Love to start a family—have more children, one at home.
- Little larger house, rented whole life.
- Hate my job—would love to do something different.
- Help someone in need, Mission Trip, Offerings

We’re strapped, we’re in bondage.

- Average household debt in the U.S. is now 136% of the household income. (U.S. Government)
- For those carrying a balance, the average credit card debt is \$14,517. Shoes, golf clubs, lattes, and DVDs.
- The average 21-year-old owes \$12,000. By 28, they owe \$78,000.
- The average number of U.S. households living paycheck to paycheck is 55%. Lose job—can’t make rent or house.

That means if our church is average, over a half of you, if you lost your job or didn’t get paid you couldn’t pay the house payment, the rent payment, or the car payment. You are in big, big trouble and over 50% of the people in our country are living that way today. It’s no wonder there’s so much tension!

STRAPPED is normal: house payments, car payments, student loan payments, credit card payments, sleepless nights, marriage tension, worrying all the above.

I believe with all of my heart if you’re a follower of Jesus we are not called to be normal, we are called to be different; we are not like this world. You don’t have to settle for normal, it’s when everyone else is strapped and giving you advice, “Well you’re always going to have a car payment!” If you believe that you always will, but there is a better way and we want to look at what God’s Word says.

Money is one of the most visible measurements of the condition of your heart. It’s one of the best outward measurements of your inward spiritual condition.

Scripture: 2/3 parables dealt with \$ & possessions; Gospels: 1 of 10 verses deal directly with money; 2,300 verses in the Bible ... 5 times as many as prayer and faith.

The Temptation of Money & Things ...

WE ARE TEMPTED TO SERVE MONEY.

“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”

Matthew 6:24

Isn't it interesting of all the things Jesus could have said, you can't serve God and power, popularity, yourself, sexual desires, etc. ... He said “money”. Why? I'm guessing because He knew that for many people money and things would be the number one competitor for our hearts.

If you've ever bought something you didn't need ... you've served money. If you've hoarded and not given ... you've served money. If you've fought to move up the corporate ladder at the expense of your family ... you've served money.

WE ARE TEMPTED TO LOVE MONEY.

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

1 Timothy 6:10

Money is not the root of all evil. Money is neutral, you can use it for good or you can use it for evil. It's the **love** of money that's wrong. Poor people don't think they love money because they don't have much of it. But they can be obsessed with having more. Why? Because they love money.

A lot of people would say, “*Rich people obviously love money!*” That's not always true; there are a lot of rich people that they're just rich because they're good at what they do. And they don't love money they've got money, they use money, they leverage money, but money doesn't have them. They've got it but they don't love it.

Many people misinterpret what money is supposed to do, money is neutral; it's how you use it that matters. People think, “*If I just had more money that would solve all my problems.*” And they'll say, “*If I had more money I wouldn't have to work so much.*”

The reality is, generally speaking when people get more money they tend to work more; they get more responsibility, higher paying jobs, more stress, more things to manage, and the reality is, generally speaking more money means more work.

“*If I had more money I wouldn't have to be in debt*” ... if you're in debt when you don't have much ... chances are when you have more money you'll have more debt!

“If I had more money I’d be more generous” ... studies show that the more money people make the smaller percentage of their income that they give.

Money isn’t good, money isn’t bad, it’s what you do with it. Money is a magnifier; it makes you more of what you already are. Jerk. Rich jerk. Generous. Incredibly generous!

Do you love money? Christians know the Scriptural answer is supposed to be “NO!”

“Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.”
Ecclesiastes 5:10

Many are under money’s power and don’t even know it. The issue isn’t how much we make, it’s how much we spend. We are life-styling ourselves into bondage, we are spending more than we make into bondage. And so we start to think, “All I need is more money!” No!

If we are spending more than we make that’s a lifestyle problem, which is a real indication of a spiritual problem, that we are trying to find meaning in the things of this world. And the reality is, most of us don’t need more money what we need is more Jesus!

When we’ve got Him we’ve got the wisdom to do what’s right with the money that God provided. It’s my prayer that those of you that are in bondage would call it what it is and say,

“I’m strapped, I’m in bondage, I’m in debt, I’m a slave, I’m a servant and I don’t want to be that way anymore. Everybody else is that way, all of my friends ... But I’m sick of it, I’m sick of fighting about money, I’m sick of worrying about money, I’m sick of not being able to do what I feel like God’s calling me to do because I don’t have enough money. I’m sick of not being able to help people because I don’t have enough money!”

My prayer is that we’ll step out of the normal mold and say, *“I want to honor God with my money.”*

Are you tired of being STRAPPED? Do you hate being under power of money?

A Godly Perspective on Money ...

**WE DON’T SERVE MONEY—WE SERVE GOD.
MONEY SERVES US AS WE SERVE GOD.**

How can money serve us?

Money buys us time. If we have money we can trade money for time. If you’re out of debt you might hire a house cleaner and buy you 4 or 6 or 8 hours a week while you bless someone else with income and you’ve got time to spend with your kids or to serve in the community or to serve at your church; you just bought yourself time.

Money gives you options ... where to live, what job to pursue, vacations, etc.

Money allows you to bless others ... where do You want me to be a blessing today God?

- Create Sacred Spaces, Invest in the Next Generation, Reach Beyond Our Walls, sponsor a child, take a missions trip, etc.

I want to take you on a journey through this series that I believe can change your life. If you're strapped you get unstrapped. If you're already debt-free, you start living even a more radical life of generosity.

What if you got there? No more financial debt ever again? You're debt-free!

Let no debt remain outstanding except the continual debt to love...

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another...”
Romans 13:8

The one debt you can never repay, the sin debt that God paid for you through the blood of His Son Jesus who shed His blood and died so you could live free?

Imagine it, what could you do? No car payment ever again, no credit card payment ever again, no student loan payment ever again. What if you were so crazy you had no house payment ever again?

What if you could devote the rest of your life to sharing the love of Jesus generously with everyone around you because you don't serve money, you serve God. Money serves you as you serve God.

It's possible if you work hard, if you're wise, if you're faithful with a little bit, guess what? God will trust you with more. It's my prayer that God would trust you with a lot more and you'd use it for His namesake to make a difference in this world.

If someone was to look at your checkbook, what could they tell about you based on the way you spend your money?

In what ways have you been tempted to love and serve money?

What steps can you take to ensure you are serving God and not money?

Let's Pray!

What are some things you've said no to in order to avoid debt? What things might you need to say no to?

What was the most "questionable" thing you've ever purchased on credit? What did you learn from your experience?

Describe a time when you struggled with self-control. How did it affect you and what did you do to address it?

What's your vision for your financial life? What might be standing in the way of you accomplishing your vision?

Old Rule: If you didn't have the money to buy something you wanted you weren't allowed to buy it.

Before Great Depression: 2% homes had a mortgage against them, 40 years later: 2% of homes did not have a mortgage against them and that's how quickly things changed!

What's happened is that there has been an entitled mindset in generation after generation – *"I deserve the same lifestyle as my parents! I want to have the same home and drive the same car and take the same vacations because I deserve it and I deserve it now!"*

What we have is a generation of pretenders. We've got the stuff, but we've also got the debt. We don't really own the stuff and what we are is strapped.

"One man **pretends to be rich**, yet has **nothing ...**"
Proverbs 13:7

There are three groups of people: the "haves", the "have not's", and the "have not paid for what they got"; they are the pretenders, in debt and in bondage.

Three essential values for us to become unstrapped and debt-free ...

1. EMBRACE THE VALUE OF SELF-CONTROL.

"Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control."
Proverbs 25:28

If you do not have financial self-control, you are like a city without walls, you are defenseless to attacks, you are vulnerable to debt and beyond, you have no defense against the ploys of the evil one financially. With no self-control you will end up in trouble.

Women & Spending – nickel and dime it over time, hair, nails, shoes, belts, etc.

Men & Spending – all at once ... time share, boat, truck, electronics, etc.

I'm not saying don't enjoy life, just wait until you get out of debt to first! Learn to say "NO" for a little while so you can say yes for the rest of your lives.

2. EMBRACE THE VALUE OF SACRIFICE.

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,
who for the joy set before him endured the cross ...”

Hebrews 12:2

What was the joy? The joy of pleasing God and knowing that you and I would have access to God through His sacrifice. For the joy set before Jesus, what did He do? He made the sacrifice, the brutal sacrifice for something He wanted even more, the joy set before Him.

Sacrifice is giving up something you love for something you love even more.

- Give up cable television for a debt free Xmas.
- Stay in a small house—one of you can stay home with kids.
- College: 2 roommates so you can graduate w/no student loans.
- Give up eating lunch out for \$112k over a lifetime.

The problem in our culture today is we're asking the wrong questions. People are asking when we go to buy something, “*How much down, how much a month?*” Instead of, “*How much is the real cost, how much is this going to cost me over the months and months of payments?*”

- Those carrying a credit card balance average: \$14,517 (trip to Disney & a home theater)
- If you pay \$217.93 per month on \$14,517 at 18%, it will take 40 years to pay off debt (totaling \$104,606.40).

That's one expensive trip to Disney isn't it? That's expensive, that's what the real cost is. That's what's happening to you.

- If you invest \$14,517 at 12% for 40 years = \$1,350,820.94.
- If you invest \$14,517 and add \$217.93 per month at 12% over 40 years = 3,597,615.75

How much of a difference do you think you could make in this world if you had money like that? How much of a difference do you think if you'd break out of the mold, and instead of doing something like everyone else does, you be weird and you'd have some sacrifice and some self-control.

3. EMBRACING THE VALUE OF PLANNING.

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?”

Luke 14:28

Don't you want to first see if you have enough money before you go and try to buy it?

“The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.”
Proverbs 21:5

You can wander into debt, but you can't wander out, you've got to get a plan.

Resource: Financial Peace University (Dave Ramsey)

THE FIRST TWO BABY STEPS

1. Save **\$1,000** For Emergencies.

Things are going to break, you're going to get a ball through your window, your refrigerator is going to break down, your car's going to get a flat tire, and your kid is going to stick a marble up his nose and you're going to have to go to the emergency room to try to get that thing out okay.

How are you going to get a thousand dollars? I don't know, but you're going to get it. You're going to sell some stuff; e-bay and Craig's list are now your best friends. Sell everything until the kids are nervous! You may get a second job, you may clip coupons, etc.

2. Do The Debt Snowball.

This is the absolute best and fastest way to get unstrapped and to free yourself from the bondage of debt. What I'm about to cover with you is one of the most important things that you could ever learn about your personal finances. Are you ready? Let's do it!

Debt	Total Owed	Min. Payment	New Payment
Lowes 18%	\$450	\$50	50 + 200 = 250
Target 18%	\$650	\$30	30 + 250 = 280
Parents 0%	\$1600	\$200	200 + 280 = 480
Visa 18%	\$1800	\$30	30 + 480 = 510
Car 10%	\$7000	\$400	400 + 510 = 910
School 6%	\$9000	\$200	200 + 910 = 1110

This is an imaginary list of our debts, what we owe to others.

- 1st Column: people or businesses we owe.
- 2nd Column: the amount that's owed to each one.
- 3rd Column: the minimum payment.

Find an extra \$200 a month – take a second job delivering pizzas, eliminate cable, mobile data plan, take lunch, make coffee, etc.

Payoff paying minimum payments = 120 months.

Debt snowball payoff = 21 months. (Difference of 99 months)

Additional \$1,110 invested at 8% for 99 months = \$153,992.30.

I pray that you get a little bit excited about the possibility of not living a life strapped, that you can do this with the help of God. As you're faithful to God you can do this, but you've got to get a little crazy, you've got to get a little weird, you've got to get focused, you've got to get a plan, you've got to have a sacrificial attitude, you cannot live like everyone else. The more passion that you get about this the faster it can be done and the more good decisions you're able to make.

Don't sell out and live in bondage and in debt and unable to do what you want to do as the debt piles up over the years. I pray God speaks to you because I can't convince you, but if God can convince you it can be totally transforming.

Managing money is one of the most spiritual things that we do, it's one of the most visible outward evidences of where our heart is spiritually and what we do with what God trusts us with matters. If you're faithful with a little God will trust you with much.

Sacrifice, self-control and planning, and you can make a huge difference.

What do you think your life could look like one day with no credit card payments, no car payments, no student loan payments?

What do you think you could do for the glory of God if you broke free from this world's broken system and live for a while like no one else so one day you could give like no one else, all for the glory of the One who gave His Son Jesus just for you?

It can be done; have hope, don't give up, fight like crazy and watch as God delivers you from the bondage of debt.

How has your life been affected by debt? Which of the three Biblical values to acting your wage do you struggle with most and need to focus on improving? If you are struggling with debt, what immediate steps do you need to take to address it?

APPLICATION: Complete the debt snowball worksheet.

Let's Pray!

Do you consider yourself to be more of a spender or a saver? Explain.

Share a time in your life when you learned about the importance of planning for the future.

What are some of the obstacles you've encountered that hinder your ability to invest for the future?

How are you investing for the future? What steps might you need to take to improve the way you invest?

What long-term goals do you have for your financial life? How are you progressing in accomplishing these goals?

Today I want to talk to you about saving money and investing money. There are really basically two types of people. There are those who tend to like to save and there are those who maybe have the spiritual gift of spending; spenders and savers. **(Joshua vs. Jenna)**

“Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.”
Proverbs 6:6-8

“In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil,
but a foolish man devours all he has.”
Proverbs 21:20

Modern translation: *he lives paycheck to paycheck; he eats everything that comes in.*

I don't want to make anybody feel bad that shouldn't feel bad (Single moms making minimum wage fighting like crazy and just the fact that you're paying your bills is miraculous!).

The reality is, if 55% or more of Americans live paycheck to paycheck, that's a lot of people that are foolish eating up all that they have and not saving anything. So, let's talk about saving. What will we save for?

1. Emergencies – plumbing breaks, car repairs, etc.
2. Purchases – couch, suit, kitchen table, car, etc.
3. Future – college, teeth, retirement, etc.

The problem is many people are not doing this because they don't know how to **prioritize** their dollars. There are needs and there are wants; people are buying what they want and don't have enough money for what they need. Each month we have a certain amount of money to live off of and we're going to give a priority to each dollar that comes in. **How do we prioritize our dollars?**

Illustration: \$100 cash in 10's ...

Payday	\$100
• Tithe –	- \$ 10
• Expenses –	- \$ 70
• Emergency Fund –	- \$ 20

Embraced sacrifice & self-control –
cut expenses by \$20

Good news: you've been tithing and God blessed you. You got to babysit this month and you got an extra \$10 for babysitting. You also sold something on eBay and you got \$20.00. So we tithe from our income, this goes to God and that gives us an extra \$29.00 to put towards our emergency fund and guess what? Before long, it's payday again and the cycle continues.

Not only did you get \$100 for your normal job, but an extra \$10 again for babysitting and your rich uncle died and left you \$20 totaling \$130 this month. The priority, the first 10% goes to God through the tithe, and then we put the next \$70.00 toward our expenses and we've got \$47 to go toward our emergency fund. In no time at all you'll have your **\$1,000 emergency fund** and you've accomplished the first priority. Congratulations!

After the emergency fund we tackle debt ... debt snowball. Here's how it works: payday ... tithe ... expenses ... everything left – DEBT! Don't give up, hang in there, watch for the blessings of God and put it all toward your debt, you will become debt-free (except for the house).

Celebrate! NOT with a shopping trip to Neiman Marcus, YES ... go to a movie, buy popcorn & over-priced candy, why? Because you are now debt-free and the priorities change once again.

Next Priority: Invest or build wealth. You've been faithful to God with the tithe and God has blessed you with a raise. Your new income is now \$130 a month. Congratulations!

The first 10% goes to God in the tithe. **Then the priorities actually rotate.** We give to God first and then second we invest for our future.

How do we invest? We take 15% of our income and put it into a pre-taxed retirement account. That's about \$20, then we pay our expenses.

What do we do with our money left over? We can give an offering, we can give to someone whose in need, we can help feed hungry children, we can invest more, and you can even get your nails or buy that iPad!

If we're faithful with what God gives us He will trust us with more. We're going to give up something we love for something we love even more. We're going to say no for a little while so we can say yes for the rest of our lives. And if we'll live like no one else, one day we can give like no one else, because if we're faithful with a little God will trust us with a lot.



Debt Free - Pay Off your Debt With Debt Snowball Method
By Mobile Innovations LLC

Let's talk about investing ...

TWO WAYS TO MAKE MONEY

- **PEOPLE MAKING MONEY.**

“... If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”
2 Thessalonians 3:10

Single ladies; don't just marry a guy with potential, marry a guy with a job, okay! If you don't work you don't eat, you've got to work and you can make some money.

There is a second way to make money that a lot of people don't realize: your money can actually make money as well.

- **MONEY MAKING MONEY.**

And Jesus told a parable that illustrates this beautifully in Matthew 25. He said that a master gave five talents to one guy and two talents to another and one guy to a third. And the third guy went and buried the talent and got nothing. But the guy with five talents Scripture says ...

“The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more.”
Matthew 25:16

The good news is money works 365 days a year, money works when you sleep.

RULES OF INVESTING

1. **Don't Invest In Things You Don't Understand.**

“By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.”
Proverbs 24:3-4

Be very, very careful that you get good advice. Learn from somebody who is a great investor. Find someone who is a mentor. Sometimes the best investment that you make is the one that you don't make if you don't understand.

2. **Don't Put All Your Eggs In One Basket.**

Grandma will teach you that and so will the Bible.

“Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.”
Ecclesiastes 11:2

Don't put all of your money into one thing because if that one thing falls apart and there's disaster there then you are in a lot of trouble.

*“Investing is a lot like manure, if you put it all in one place it starts to stink;
but if you spread it out it makes things grow.”
(Dave Ramsey)*

3. Don't Try To Get Rich Quick.

Have any of you ever been trapped by an investment that you thought was a sure thing that you didn't really understand?

“People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.”
1 Timothy 6:9

Sometimes the best way to double your money is to take your money, fold it over and put it in your pocket and walk away and not try to get rich quick.

Don't sprint your way into greed and destruction and trouble. We are way better off not to be sprinters as investors, but literally to be marathon investors; that we just want to be consistent and we want to be faithful and we want to be consistent and we want to be faithful and we want to be consistent and we want to be faithful.

“... he who gathers money little by little makes it grow.”
Proverbs 13:11

MONEY + TIME + CONSISTENCY = WEALTH.

Little by little by little .. tithe, pay the expenses, pay off all the debt. We're not in bondage to money, we're not going to be strapped; the borrower is a servant to the lender, we're not going to be like that. Invest long term, 15% into retirement, pay a little bit here, buy some mutual funds, buy a little piece of little rental property; whatever it is, faithfulness, consistency; over time.

How many of you could save \$5 a day? (Example: a little money over time with consistency):

If you invested \$5 a day at 12% interest, because we're talking over a long period of time:

5 years	\$12,250
10 years	\$34,505
20 years	\$148,388
30 years	\$524,244
40 years	\$1,764,716
50 years	\$5,858,750

Those of you who are young should be dancing because you can do it at this age! Once you get older it's not as easy. If you start now, money plus consistency plus time, you can do, how much could you do with money like that?

If a 30-year old makes \$48,000 a year, never gets a raise but saves 15% of his income into a 401(k), that's \$600 a month, invest it at 12%; by the age of 70, this guy will have \$7,058,863!

How many of you would like to be a great investor?

Invest in money ... people ... marriage ... children ... parents ... church ... etc.

What's your vision for your financial life? How are you investing for the future? What steps might you need to take to improve the way you invest? Whose life do you need to invest in? What steps will you take to invest in them?

Let's Pray!

Father I pray today that Your Spirit would speak to us. This pushes a lot of us. Work in a way that only You can do.

I pray for wisdom in financial management and God I pray for Your supernatural tangible blessings to be real. I ask for financial blessings for those who are faithful, that You would honor their act of worship according to Your Word and that when they see Your faithfulness it would build their faith even more.

God, I pray for financial blessings that they would be able to go well beyond the tithe, but offerings and be able to use money to help people in need. Lord, bless them so that they could leverage what You give them to make a difference all over this world for Your glory.

Resource: "Strapped" (A Godly Perspective On Money, Act Your Wage, The Buck Starts Here, Putting God First) series by Craig Groeschel

Be Rich

What do we do when we reach the point that we are “RICH”?

Rich Person Problems: Bad cell phone coverage, your child’s teacher didn’t call you back, limited vacation time, computer crashes, slow internet, expensive child care, satellite TV repairman was late, \$8 hot dogs at the ballgame, costs more to fill up the gas tank, airport security lines and rising healthcare costs, etc. “I have a rich person problem ...”

Rich people upgrade ... it’s when you have something that works & you go and get a new one & then you have 2 of something. Trading a car in ... kitchen that is fully furnished & entirely redo kitchen ... go to a mall, get in line @ Apple store & text friends that they’re getting the newest iPhone ... stand in front of their full closet and say, “I don’t have ___!” and the truth is they have work clothes, workout clothes, after-work clothes and work-in-the-yard clothes. I’ve heard of rich women who actually have 11 pairs of shoes and what do they do? ... houses for cars ... garbage disposal eats so well they could feed a small village ☺

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to **be rich** in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.”

1 Timothy 6:17–18 (NIV)

The more Americans make, they less they give. (In terms of % giving). The median income in the USA is \$50,000 and people in this range give 6%. By the time you get to \$200,000 it’s 4%. The higher you go the lower the percentage is even though the dollar amount may be higher. And Jesus said that what matters most is the percentage.

Greek & Roman cultures gave with the understanding of **Liberalitas ... giving to please the recipient with the hopes that the recipient would return the favor.**

The Roman Emperors would throw coins out into the crowds in exchange for loyalty. This was not charity. They lived, and we often live, in a culture of “*you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.*” Consequently, those who had the most often received the most.

Jesus’ kingdom was totally counter-cultural! He taught us to lend and give without expecting anything in return. We need to give richly to others because our Heavenly Father has been so rich and good to us. He is gracious to the wicked and ungrateful.

“And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ lend to ‘sinners,’ expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

Luke 6:34-36 (NIV)

1. Do good for those who can’t or won’t do anything good for you.

Caritas: Charity ... Giving to relieve physical or financial distress without expecting anything in return.

When the plagues came to pagan lands in the first century history tells us that the Christians did not fear death, while all the pagan priests fled into the hills. When the plagues ended, Christianity spread and the pagans converted, not because of theology, but because the Christians were generous in times of need.

Illustration: St. Pachomius; 20 years old; lived in Thebes, Egypt. Romans conscripted him against his will. While he was in prison there was a famine and in captivity they began to starve. Every day people came to help them and he asked who the people were who were helping them and found out they were Christians. After his time in the Roman legion he sought out the Christians and became an early church leader in his region.

Constantine made Christianity legal (along with all other religions in the region) in 313 AD in Milan. Twenty-five years later Emperor Julian tried to convert the Roman Empire back to paganism, but this failed because of generosity: Emperor Julian, *“The impious Galileans support not only their poor, but ours as well...”* (Emperor Julian, *The Rise of Christianity*, Rodney Stark)

2. Wealth has side effects.

Rich people live in denial. They won't admit they're rich.

Tall people admit they're tall. Short people admit they're short. Athletic people admit they're athletic. Artsy people will tell you they're artsy. Introverts, extroverts, etc.

Gallop took a survey and they asked Americans what they thought you had to make per year to be considered “rich.” Rich = \$150,000. If you asked those who make that amount if they were rich and they said “no.”

Surveyed people who made \$35-40,000 per year what rich is ... \$75,000. If you asked those who make that amount if they were rich and they said “no.”

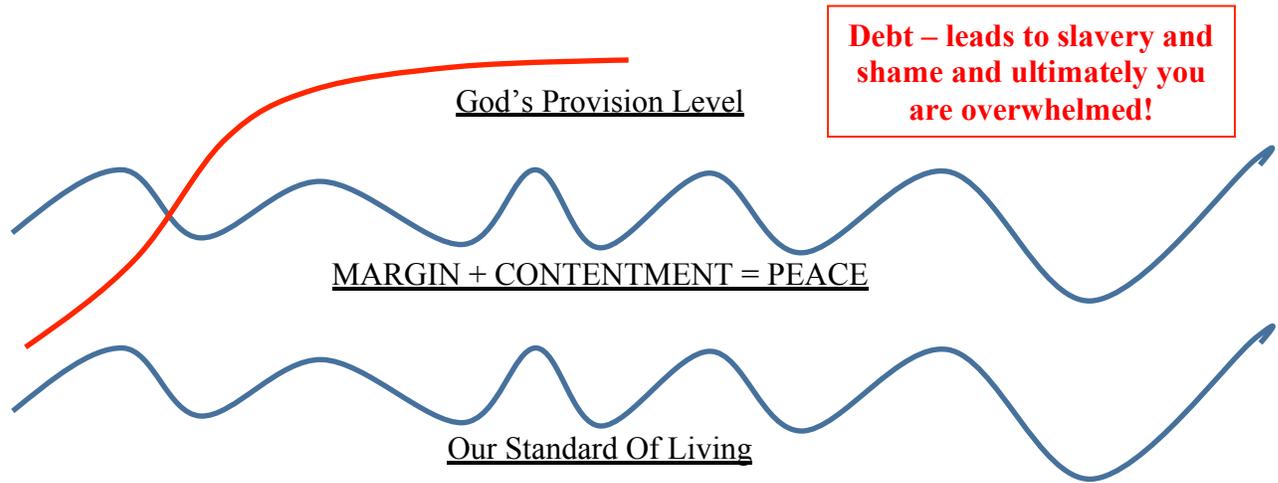
Money Magazine ... “How much money would you need to have in liquid assets to feel like you were rich?” Rich = \$5 million

Nobody's rich, but everybody knows somebody who is. No matter how much you have, there's always someone who has more.

Rich people are plagued by discontentment.

The accumulation of stuff is like an appetite. And appetites are never fully/finally satisfied. When you feed an appetite it grows. When you starve an appetite it shrinks. Rich people get more stuff.

THE ROOT OF DEBT: WANTING MORE THAN GOD'S CURRENT PROVISION FOR YOUR LIFE AND ARRANGING ANOTHER WAY OF GETTING IT FOR YOURSELF.



THE MORE A PERSON HAS, THE MORE HE OR SHE WANTS.

God wants so much more for you than this mess! This cycle of insanity has to END!!

“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

Philippians 4:12-13 (NIV)

Someone fully reconciled to God financially joyfully accepts God’s current level of provision for their lives. **Are you content with a lot or a little? When God increases someone else’s level of provision do you rejoice when you see that or are you filled with jealousy?**

What is your life like when you’re debt free? The sun shines brighter ... the air is fresher ... your conscience is cleaner ... sex is better! ☺

If you’re rich, you’re at risk. **How do we avoid the pitfalls of wealth?**

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to **be rich** in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.”

1 Timothy 6:17–18 (NIV)

Do you know any arrogant rich people? A saying we have in our culture ... “He’s worth a ton of money, but you’d never know it.” That’s rare because most of the time you know a rich person because they show it ... if they’ve become conceited.

What Paul is saying is that when you get the bonus or receive the raise something begins to happen to your hope. You don't see it coming and you're not entirely aware of it. It's not really a specific decision that you make but what happens is that your **hope begins to migrate** ... toward the accumulation of wealth. So he challenges us not to allow our hope to be put into our finances.

“The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it a wall too high to scale.”
Proverbs 18:11 (NIV)

When you begin to head in this direction your hopes are all wrapped up in the accumulation of stuff and that's a slippery slope you don't want to go down. **Are you imagining that you can save your way to safety?**

How much money would you need to secure your future against all imaginable eventualities?

Answer: More than you currently have. Because as you begin to increase in wealth and your hope migrates you find yourself asking, **“But what if?” (Pause)**

Why is it that people who are poor are a lot more generous in terms of %? Because they haven't put their hope in their wealth! Poor people know that there is no point in trying to save their way into security. So they are more open-handed when asked to give or loan things to others. But

3. When wealth become your hope, you feel compelled to hoard.

There will never be enough. You think you'll be generous but you'll constantly be plagued by the “what if” question. You think you're building an unscalable wall so you won't actually be generous from the heart. You'll be hampered by all the “what if” contingencies.

As you become more wealthy your hands begin to close and you become a terrible rich person. Some of us don't consider ourselves rich yet but our hearts have already started to migrate. It just happens.

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God ...”
1 Timothy 6:17 (NIV)

What is the chief competitor with your heavenly Father? It's your money. Jesus hardly ever mentions heaven and hell but He constantly talks about money! The chief competitor for your heart is your money!

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:19-21 (NIV)

Wealth becomes a substitute for God ...

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Matthew 6:24 (NIV)

“Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. ⁹ Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”

Proverbs 30:8-9 (NIV)

Which of these statements creates more anxiety in you ...

There is no God.

You have no money.

How does it change if you hear those statements in the hospital and you don’t have long to live?

If your hope is going to be in God at the end when you have no control over what happens next, why not go ahead and put your hope in God in the middle (when you have no control over what happens next)?

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment”

1 Timothy 6:17 (NIV)

In other words, it’s okay to enjoy our stuff. But again, where is your hope? Why would you put your hope in the provision when you can put your hope in the Provider?! Why hope in riches when you can hope in the one who richly provides?

I WILL NOT PUT MY HOPE IN RICHES, BUT IN HIM WHO RICHLY PROVIDES.

Don’t be arrogant. Be grateful. Don’t lean on your wealth. Lean on the One who gave you your wealth. That way, you can have peace in your heart as well as money in the bank.

When was the richest you ever felt? I feel the richest when I have **MARGIN**. When I have money in the bank and no obligations to spend it on this or that. The moral of the story is ... if you want to feel rich, get a job and move back in with your parents. ☺

How do I keep my hope from migrating?

“Command them to do (*not be; that’s a given*) good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.”

1 Timothy 6:18 (NIV)

Be a radical do gooder ... be a good doer! But this hard for us. The more money we have the more opportunities we have. The more money we have, the more discretionary time we have. We have more options so we tend to spend our time and our money on ourselves. There is nothing wrong with enjoying our stuff, having hobbies and having fun.

Here is the warning Paul gives rich people ... as your wealth increase and your opportunities increase that eat up your time and you'll have more discretionary time because of your wealth ... your inclination will NOT be to use that discretionary time to do things for others. Rather, it will be to spend that time and those resources on yourself. Isn't it true that whenever you have extra of anything you have a tendency to waste it?

Most of us only have to work 5 days a week to get 7 days' worth of food and shelter. Did you know that is NOT the case in most places in the world? We take this for granted. There are some of you who think that you're owed two days off a week. Unreal!

That means that if you work 60 hours a week and sleep 8 hours a day you have 52 hours a week to do WHATEVER you want to do! I know you're busy. We're all busy. So what's the point? (**PAUSE**) Those of us who have extra have EXTRA responsibility. So Paul says ...

“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds,
and to be generous and willing to share.”
1 Timothy 6:18 (NIV)

This goes against the grain and the assumption that everything I have and all the time I've got are for my consumption!

“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds,
and to be generous and willing to share.”
1 Timothy 6:18 (NIV)

Isn't the assumption that these things would be true of rich people? Absolutely not! In fact, we've already said that those who are rich give less in terms of % than those who are poor.

Rich people give larger sums, but smaller percentages. The issue according to Jesus is NOT the amount of dollars. The issue is the percentage! Do you think the Creator of the universe would ever be impressed by the number of dollars a person gave away? God is not moved by the number of zeros tacked on to a number. **God is interested and impressed by the percentage.**

“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.⁴² But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins (*equivalent of 1/128 of a denarius – a day's wage; about 6 minutes worth of work time*), worth only a few cents.⁴³ Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.⁴⁴ They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.’”
Mark 12:41-44 (NIV)

She was richer toward God than all the others! This is a game changer! This is why poor people out-give rich people. In the kingdom of heaven ... it's all about percentage giving! Jesus and Paul would want us to hear this today and apply it now ...

Rich people should give larger sums and higher percentages. Most people don't think in terms of percentages. The only time that comes around is when it's tax time. The truth is, you're living on a percentage of your income ... and I'll bet that the vast majority of you don't know what it is.

Premarital counseling couples ... CHOOSE a percentage and live on it! Stick with it.

You'll have MARGIN! You'll have peace ... and you will FEEL rich. But when you spend all your money you feel PRESSURE. You need to know what percentage you're living on ... saving ... and giving away. Why? (**PAUSE**) Because Jesus said, *I evaluate more and less based on the ratio of income to giving to saving to spending.*

Americans don't tend to give strategically like this. They give spontaneously. Don't impress yourself by the dollars you give. That's not what the Savior considers a win.

4. The only way to ensure that your hope does not migrate to the accumulation of wealth is to pre-decide what percentage of your income you're going to live on save and give away.

If you want to be prepared to manage more money ... to be good at being rich ... and have margin, you have pre-decide.

APPLICATION: Pre-decide first what you're going to GIVE AWAY and where you're going to DO GOOD! That way you don't give leftovers and you don't succumb to feeling generous when in fact you're not generous.

Spontaneous giving and serving are great. But it's only in the strategic giving and serving that we are truly able to experience the blessing of being generous.

If you accept this challenge and pre-decide first here's what's going to happen: **when you begin to give first you begin to save better and you spend less. You also begin to see what a demon debt is to you!** Because debt keeps you from giving your time and money to what your heart is turned to and that makes you made because debt gets in the way.

Should I wait until I'm out of debt to start giving? NO!! Because giving redirects your heart. And when your heart is right everything you do financially begins to get aligned.

Let's wrap this up by looking at the underlying reason why Christians have been so generous throughout the ages. It's this idea that allows followers of Jesus to be radical givers and selflessly contribute to the needs of others on an individual, regional and global scale.

Jesus continually talked about money not because He was greedy or needed it. Rather, He had a front row seat in eternity to the principle that we're going to talk about today and knew its power and significance. Paul caught it from the teachings of Jesus and he alludes to it in verse 19 ...

“Command those who are rich in this present world ...”
1 Timothy 6:17 (NIV)

What other “world” might there be? Is there something beyond this life?

“In this way (*by doing good and being willing to share*) they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”
1 Timothy 6:19 (NIV)

What Paul is saying is that when we give treasure away we lay up treasure for ourselves. That's counterintuitive. We think that when we give away our money and time for the good of others that we'll have less. NO!

The coming age points us in the direction of something that Jesus talked about all the time. There is more to this life than this life. This life is just a test or an indicator. In this life we have tools, resources and opportunities. How we use the tools and opportunities in this life determine not WHERE we go when we die but WHAT it will be like when we get there!

Paul tells Timothy to teach rich people who have extra opportunity to do good in such a way that it will impact their status and standing in the life and the age to come. *Rich people ... there is way more at stake than what you see around you. You have a unique opportunity ... don't miss it!*

Jesus would constantly connect money to eternity. His teachings on money can be summed ...

5. If you will view your wealth through the lens of eternity you will lose your grip on it and it will lose its grip on you!

“And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.
¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’¹⁸ “Then he said,
‘This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones,
and there I will store my surplus grain.’
Luke 12:16-18 (NIV)

His assumption (and ours too – everything I have is for my consumption; hoarding) ... Save it now to consume it later.

¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years.
Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”
Luke 12:19 (NIV)

If Jesus had stopped the story there it would be a great lesson on saving and preparing for retirement. And those are wise things to do that we're encouraged in Scripture to do.

Jesus' audience would have been totally captivated by this story with their mindset that those who were rich, smart, and healthy were blessed by God and those who were not had either done something wrong or were just cursed by God. But He doesn't stop there ...

²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’”
Luke 12:20 (NIV)

6. There is no correlation between the amount of our wealth and the amount of our time.

In the story it becomes clear that the opportunities for this made up rich man are over. What the answer to the question that God asks the man? Who will get what you have ... someone else ... but NOT because he'd been generous ... but because he was dead!

7. We don't get credit for what we leave. We get credit for what we give.

Why is that? (**PAUSE**) Because we all leave the same amount ... ALL!

²¹ “This is how it will be (*total loss*) with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”
Luke 12:21 (NIV)

Total Loss: death and the opportunity to do something with what he had before he died. **Are you set up or are you setting yourself up for total loss?**

Rich toward God ... this was a different idea than what the pagan religions taught. They would be rich toward their gods by bringing animal sacrifices and leaving them with the priests at the temples in hopes of procuring favor. But Christianity taught that in order to be rich toward God He wanted His people to do good and be generous to the people He had created. So Jesus taught ...

“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
Luke 12:33–34 (NIV)

This wasn't my idea, it was Jesus'. So take it up with Him. ☺ Viewing wealth through the lens of eternity loosens our grip on it and its grip on us. Back to our final verse ...

“In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”
1 Timothy 6:19 (NIV)

What's your plan to be “Rich Toward God?”

8. Without a giving plan our natural tendency is to be a 3s Giver.

SPONTANEOUSLY, SPORADICALLY AND SPARINGLY.

If you give this way (3S Giver) you miss an opportunity to be rich toward God. In addition, without a giving plan your heart will migrate toward selfishness, hoarding, and greed. But ...

9. With a giving plan we move toward being a 3p Giver.

PRIORITY, PERCENTAGE, PROGRESSIVE

You give first ... you pre-decide a percentage ... and you progressively give more over time. This is what frees up massive generosity in our lives! **What I want for you is that God would have your heart!**

Let's Pray!

Thank God for the blessings He has given you as a result of you returning the tithe. Tell God your struggles with tithing/giving. Ask Him to help you be more diligent with tithing and managing your finances. Commit to God that you will give to Him the first fruits of your labor. Commit to making the changes necessary to make that happen. (Spontaneous, Strategic & Sacrificial) Ask God to help you impact those around you in a positive way for generations to come as a result of your tithing. Ask God to show you what He wants you to give and who He wants you to give it to. Commit to carrying out your act of giving.

Resources: "Multiply" series by Robert Morris, Gateway Church, TX; Lifechurch.tv; "Be Rich" series by Andy Stanley & "Strapped" series by Craig Groeschel

Give It Up

Hard Sayings of Jesus ...

1. If your house were on fire, what three items would you try to save?

¹⁶ Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” ¹⁷ “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.” ¹⁸ “Which ones?” the man inquired. Jesus replied, “‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, ¹⁹ honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’” ²⁰ “All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?” ²¹ Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Matthew 19:16-22 (NIV)

2. If Jesus were to address you where it hurts, what would be His hot topic?

¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good--except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’” ²⁰ “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” ²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²² At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Mark 10:17-22 (NIV)

3. Have you ever had to choose between material comforts and Christ’s love?

¹⁸ A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁹ “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good--except God alone. ²⁰ You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’” ²¹ “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said. ²² When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²³ When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. **Luke 18:18-23 (NIV)**

4. What have you given up to follow Jesus?

Matthew introduces the central figure as “a man” and later says he was “young” (v. 20). Mark says nothing about his age but provides more details of the initial meeting: it was “as Jesus started on his way” that a man “ran up” to him and “fell on his knees before him.” He is identified by all three evangelists as rich, by Matthew (v. 20) as young, and by Luke (18:18) as a ruler—asks Jesus what he must do to inherit “eternal life” (19:16).

A majority of modern scholars hold that Matthew has transformed the exchange because, at his later time of writing, the church can no longer live with the suggestion that Jesus himself is not sinless.

Many Jews believed that a specific act of goodness could win eternal life; and this young man, assuming this opinion is correct, seeks Jesus’ view as to what that act might be.

Jesus lists the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and fifth commandments of Exodus 20 in that order. He omits “do not defraud” (Mark 10:19, apparently an application of the eighth and ninth) and adds “love your neighbor as yourself”. The man’s impulsive reply on a certain understanding of the law; but the man’s further words, “What do I still lack?” show his uncertainty and lack of assurance of ever being good enough for salvation, as well as his notion that certain “good works” are over and above the law. Wealth he enjoyed, while suffering barrenness of soul.

What the word “perfection” suggests here is what it commonly means in the OT: undivided loyalty and full-hearted obedience. This young man could not face that. He was willing to discipline himself to observe all the outward stipulations and even perform supererogatory works; but because of his wealth, he had a divided heart. His money was competing with God; and what Jesus everywhere demands as a condition for eternal life is absolute, radical discipleship. This entails the surrender of *self*.

The man who ran up to Jesus is not identified by Mark (Luke calls him a ruler [Lk 18:18], meaning he was probably a member of some official council or court). Matthew says he was “young” (Mt 19:20). He fell on his knees before Jesus and addressed him by the revered title of “good teacher,” thus expressing his high regard for Jesus.

Jesus is saying, “Before you address me with such a title, you had better think soberly about what the implications are, and especially what they are for you.”

Jesus answered by giving the man a condensed summary of the second table of the law. The prohibition of fraud is found only in Mark and seems to be a substitute for the commandment against coveting, fraud being a manifestation of coveting. It was a firm Jewish belief, based on OT teaching, that the man who kept the law would live. So Jesus began there.

It must be emphasized, however, that there is no indication that in this incident Jesus’ prescription for the young man was meant to be binding on all Christians. What Jesus does tell us is that we must not be attached to material things. Jesus’ promise “you will have treasure in heaven” refers to eternal life; and since that is a gift of God and cannot be earned, no saving merit must be attached to the action of giving all to the poor. Notice the intimate eyewitness details. When he heard the word of Jesus, the young man’s “face fell.”

Key Money Passages

Take steps to gain a Godly perspective on money by reading/reflecting on these passages.

“The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”

Proverbs 22:7 (NIV)

“The wise have wealth and luxury, but fools spend whatever they get.”

Proverbs 21:20 (NLT)

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²² “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! ²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”

Matthew 6:19-24 (NIV)

“All slaves should show full respect for their masters so they will not bring shame on the name of God and his teaching. ² If the masters are believers, that is no excuse for being disrespectful. Those slaves should work all the harder because their efforts are helping other believers who are well loved. Teach these things, Timothy, and encourage everyone to obey them. ³ Some people may contradict our teaching, but these are the wholesome teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. These teachings promote a godly life. ⁴ Anyone who teaches something different is arrogant and lacks understanding. Such a person has an unhealthy desire to quibble over the meaning of words. This stirs up arguments ending in jealousy, division, slander, and evil suspicions. ⁵ These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy. ⁶ Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. ⁷ After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can’t take anything with us when we leave it. ⁸ So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. ⁹ But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.”

1 Timothy 6:1-10 (NLT)

“Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God’s law. ⁹ For the commandments say, “You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.” These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment:

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God’s law.”

Romans 13:8-10 (NLT)

“Don’t be surprised if you see a poor person being oppressed by the powerful and if justice is being miscarried throughout the land. For every official is under orders from higher up, and matters of justice get lost in red tape and bureaucracy.⁹ Even the king milks the land for his own profit!¹⁰ Those who love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness!¹¹ The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what good is wealth—except perhaps to watch it slip through your fingers!¹² People who work hard sleep well, whether they eat little or much. But the rich seldom get a good night’s sleep.¹³ There is another serious problem I have seen under the sun. Hoarding riches harms the saver.¹⁴ Money is put into risky investments that turn sour, and everything is lost. In the end, there is nothing left to pass on to one’s children.¹⁵ We all come to the end of our lives as naked and empty-handed as on the day we were born. We can’t take our riches with us.¹⁶ And this, too, is a very serious problem. People leave this world no better off than when they came. All their hard work is for nothing—like working for the wind.¹⁷ Throughout their lives, they live under a cloud—frustrated, discouraged, and angry.¹⁸ Even so, I have noticed one thing, at least, that is good. It is good for people to eat, drink, and enjoy their work under the sun during the short life God has given them, and to accept their lot in life.¹⁹ And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life—this is indeed a gift from God.²⁰ God keeps such people so busy enjoying life that they take no time to brood over the past.”

Ecclesiastes 5:8-20 (NLT)

“Jesus told this story to his disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a manager handling his affairs. One day a report came that the manager was wasting his employer’s money.² So the employer called him in and said, ‘What’s this I hear about you? Get your report in order, because you are going to be fired.’³ “The manager thought to himself, ‘Now what? My boss has fired me. I don’t have the strength to dig ditches, and I’m too proud to beg.’⁴ Ah, I know how to ensure that I’ll have plenty of friends who will give me a home when I am fired.’⁵ “So he invited each person who owed money to his employer to come and discuss the situation. He asked the first one, ‘How much do you owe him?’⁶ The man replied, ‘I owe him 800 gallons of olive oil.’ So the manager told him, ‘Take the bill and quickly change it to 400 gallons.’⁷ “And how much do you owe my employer?’ he asked the next man. ‘I owe him 1,000 bushels of wheat,’ was the reply. ‘Here,’ the manager said, ‘take the bill and change it to 800 bushels.’⁸ “The rich man had to admire the dishonest rascal for being so shrewd. And it is true that the children of this world are more shrewd in dealing with the world around them than are the children of the light.⁹ Here’s the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your earthly possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home.¹⁰ “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities.¹¹ And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?¹² And if you are not faithful with other people’s things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?¹³ “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”¹⁴ The Pharisees, who dearly loved their money, heard all this and scoffed at him.¹⁵ Then he said to them, “You like to appear righteous in public, but God knows your hearts. What this world honors is detestable in the sight of God.”

Luke 16:1-15 (NLT)

Take steps to act your wage and stay out of debt by reading/reflecting on these passages.

“Some who are poor pretend to be rich; others who are rich pretend to be poor.”
Proverbs 13:7 (NLT)

“It’s not good to eat too much honey, and it’s not good to seek honors for yourself.
A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.”
Proverbs 25:27-28 (NLT)

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ²We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne. ³
Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people;
then you won’t become weary and give up.”
Hebrews 12:1-3 (NLT)

“A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, ²⁶“If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple. ²⁸“But don’t begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? ²⁹ Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. ³⁰ They would say, ‘There’s the person who started that building and couldn’t afford to finish it!’ ³¹“Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? ³² And if he can’t, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away. ³³ So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own. ³⁴“Salt is good for seasoning. But if it loses its flavor, how do you make it salty again? ³⁵ Flavorless salt is good neither for the soil nor for the manure pile. It is thrown away. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!”
Luke 14:25-35 (NLT)

“Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty.”
Proverbs 21:5 (NLT)

“Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter,
like a bird from the snare of the fowler.”
Proverbs 6:5 (NIV)

“The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”
Proverbs 22:7 (NIV)

Take steps to invest in your financial future and in the lives of others by reading/reflecting on these passages.

“Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones. Learn from their ways and become wise!

⁷ Though they have no prince or governor or ruler to make them work,

⁸ they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter.”

Proverbs 6:6-8 (NLT)

“The wise have wealth and luxury, but fools spend whatever they get.”

Proverbs 21:20 (NLT)

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. ¹⁵ He gave

five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip. ¹⁶ “The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. ¹⁷ The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. ¹⁸ But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master’s money. ¹⁹ “After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. ²⁰ The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, ‘Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.’

²¹ “The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’ ²² “The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.’

²³ “The master said, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’ ²⁴ “Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn’t plant and gathering crops you didn’t cultivate. ²⁵ I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.’

²⁶ “But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn’t plant and gathered crops I didn’t cultivate, ²⁷ why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’ ²⁸ “Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this

servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. ²⁹ To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. ³⁰ Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Matthew 25:14-30 (NLT)

“A house is built by wisdom and becomes strong through good sense.

Through knowledge its rooms are filled with all sorts of precious riches and valuables.”

Proverbs 24:3-4 (NLT)

⁴¹ Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt.” ⁴² Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³ Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, “Kneel down!” So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt. ⁴⁴ And Pharaoh said to him, “I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval.” ⁴⁵ Then Pharaoh gave Joseph a new Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah. He also gave him a wife, whose name was Asenath. She was the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On.

So Joseph took charge of the entire land of Egypt. ⁴⁶ He was thirty years old when he began serving in the court of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And when Joseph left Pharaoh’s presence, he inspected the entire land of Egypt. ⁴⁷ As predicted, for seven years the land produced bumper crops. ⁴⁸ During those years, Joseph gathered all the crops grown in Egypt and stored the grain from the surrounding fields in the cities. ⁴⁹ He piled up huge amounts of grain like sand on the seashore. Finally, he stopped keeping records because there was too much to measure. ⁵⁰ During this time, before the first of the famine years, two sons were born to Joseph and his wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. ⁵¹ Joseph named his older son Manasseh, for he said, “God has made me forget all my troubles and everyone in my father’s family.” ⁵² Joseph named his second son Ephraim, for he said, “God has made me fruitful in this land of my grief.” ⁵³ At last the seven years of bumper crops throughout the land of Egypt came to an end. ⁵⁴ Then the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had predicted. The famine also struck all the surrounding countries, but throughout Egypt there was plenty of food. ⁵⁵ Eventually, however, the famine spread throughout the land of Egypt as well. And when the people cried out to Pharaoh for food, he told them, “Go to Joseph, and do whatever he tells you.” ⁵⁶ So with severe famine everywhere, Joseph opened up the storehouses and distributed grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷ And people from all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.

Genesis 41:41-57 (NLT)

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, we give you this command in the name of our Lord Jesus

Christ: Stay away from all believers who live idle lives and don’t follow the tradition they received from us. ⁷ For you know that you ought to imitate us. We were not idle when we were with you. ⁸ We never accepted food from anyone without paying for it. We worked hard day and night so we would not be a burden to any of you. ⁹ We certainly had the right to ask you to feed us, but we wanted to give you an example to follow. ¹⁰ Even while we were with you, we gave you this command: “Those unwilling to work will not get to eat.” ¹¹ Yet we hear that some of you are living idle lives, refusing to work and meddling in other people’s business.

¹² We command such people and urge them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and work to earn their own living. ¹³ As for the rest of you, dear brothers and sisters, never get tired of doing good.”

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 (NLT)

“Some people may contradict our teaching, but these are the wholesome teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. These teachings promote a godly life. ⁴ Anyone who teaches something different is arrogant and lacks understanding. Such a person has an unhealthy desire to quibble over the meaning of words. This stirs up arguments ending in jealousy, division, slander, and evil suspicions. ⁵ These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy. ⁶ Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. ⁷ After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can’t take anything with us when we leave it. ⁸ So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. ⁹ But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.”

1 Timothy 6:3-10 (NLT)

“I am the LORD, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed. ⁷ Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned my decrees and failed to obey them. Now return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. “But you ask, ‘How can we return when we have never gone away?’” ⁸ “Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! “But you ask, ‘What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?’ “You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. ⁹ You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. ¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! ¹¹ Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. ¹² “Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.”

Malachi 3:6-12 (NLT)

“One tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain from the fields or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD and must be set apart to him as holy. ³¹ If you want to buy back the LORD’s tenth of the grain or fruit, you must pay its value, plus 20 percent. ³² Count off every tenth animal from your herds and flocks and set them apart for the LORD as holy. ³³ You may not pick and choose between good and bad animals, and you may not substitute one for another. But if you do exchange one animal for another, then both the original animal and its substitute will be considered holy and cannot be bought back.”

Leviticus 27:30-33 (NLT)

“Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce. Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine.”

Proverbs 3:9-10 (NLT)

“You must set aside a tithe of your crops—one-tenth of all the crops you harvest each year.²³ Bring this tithe to the designated place of worship—the place the LORD your God chooses for his name to be honored—and eat it there in his presence. This applies to your tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil, and the firstborn males of your flocks and herds. Doing this will teach you always to fear the LORD your God.²⁴ “Now when the LORD your God blesses you with a good harvest, the place of worship he chooses for his name to be honored might be too far for you to bring the tithe.²⁵ If so, you may sell the tithe portion of your crops and herds, put the money in a pouch, and go to the place the LORD your God has chosen.²⁶ When you arrive, you may use the money to buy any kind of food you want—cattle, sheep, goats, wine, or other alcoholic drink. Then feast there in the presence of the LORD your God and celebrate with your household.²⁷ And do not neglect the Levites in your town, for they will receive no allotment of land among you.²⁸ “At the end of every third year, bring the entire tithe of that year’s harvest and store it in the nearest town.²⁹ Give it to the Levites, who will receive no allotment of land among you, as well as to the foreigners living among you, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, so they can eat and be satisfied. Then the LORD your God will bless you in all your work.

Deuteronomy 14:22-29 (NLT)

“Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop.⁷ You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.”⁸ And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.⁹ As the Scriptures say, “They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.”¹⁰ For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.¹¹ Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.¹² So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God.¹³ As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ.¹⁴ And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you.¹⁵ Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!”

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 (NLT)

“While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich people dropping their gifts in the collection box.² Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two small coins.³ “I tell you the truth,” Jesus said, “this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them.⁴ For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has.”

Luke 21:1-4 (NLT)

“About this time war broke out in the region. King Amraphel of Babylonia, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Kedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim² fought against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (also called Zoar).³ This second group of kings joined forces in Siddim Valley (that is, the valley of the Dead Sea).⁴ For twelve years they had been subject to King Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him.⁵ One year later Kedorlaomer and his allies arrived and defeated the Rephaites at Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzites at Ham, the Emites at Shaveh-kiriathaim,⁶ and the Horites at Mount Seir, as far as El-paran at the edge of the wilderness.⁷ Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (now called Kadesh) and conquered all the territory of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites living in Hazazon-tamar.⁸ Then the rebel kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (also called Zoar) prepared for battle in the valley of the Dead Sea.⁹ They fought against King Kedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Babylonia, and King Arioch of Ellasar—four kings against five.¹⁰ As it happened, the valley of the Dead Sea was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains.¹¹ The victorious invaders then plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and headed for home, taking with them all the spoils of war and the food supplies.¹² They also captured Lot—Abram’s nephew who lived in Sodom—and carried off everything he owned.¹³ But one of Lot’s men escaped and reported everything to Abram the Hebrew, who was living near the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram’s allies.¹⁴ When Abram heard that his nephew Lot had been captured, he mobilized the 318 trained men who had been born into his household. Then he pursued Kedorlaomer’s army until he caught up with them at Dan.¹⁵ There he divided his men and attacked during the night. Kedorlaomer’s army fled, but Abram chased them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.¹⁶ Abram recovered all the goods that had been taken, and he brought back his nephew Lot with his possessions and all the women and other captives.¹⁷ After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley).¹⁸ And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought Abram some bread and wine.¹⁹ Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing: “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you.” Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.²¹ The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered.”²² Abram replied to the king of Sodom, “I solemnly swear to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth,²³ that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, ‘I am the one who made Abram rich.’²⁴ I will accept only what my young warriors have already eaten, and I request that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre.”

Genesis 14:1-24 (NLT)

Body

Direction, not intention, determines destination. You win or lose by the path you choose. It is not where you are that is the issue; it is where you are headed.

There is often a disconnect between where we want to end up and the path we choose.

“The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.”

Proverbs 27:12 (NIV)

*“Lord, help me to see trouble coming long before it gets here,
and give me the wisdom to know what to do and the courage to do it.”*

Choosing the right path begins with submission, not information. Submission to the One who knows where each path leads, as well as where it doesn't lead. Submission to the One who knows what's best for you better than you know what's best for you.

What gets our **ATTENTION** determines our direction and, ultimately, our destination.

To find the path that will take you where you want to go, you must break the cycle of self-deception.

1. Am I Being Completely Honest With Myself?

Questions to help keep your heart in check ... Why am I doing this, really? ... If someone in my circumstances came to me for advice, what course of action would I recommend?

2. What Story Do I Want To Tell?

Two questions to apply to every option that comes your way ...

- a. Does this option violate God's law? (Has God already spoken on this matter?)
- b. Does this option violate a principle (cause-and-effect relationship)? (What outcome am I expecting from this decision?)

God's will for your life will always line up with His law, His principles, and His wisdom.

3. Is There A Tension That Needs My Attention?

When you're making a decision and one of the options raises a little bit of that tension, PAUSE and allow it to get as big as possible before you make the decision.

4. What Would Be Most Honoring To God?

***“In light of my past experiences, my current circumstances,
and my future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing for ME to do?”***

In light of my past experiences, my current responsibilities, and my future hopes and dreams what is the wisest way to spend my time?

“Man's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed.”

Job 14:5 (NIV)

You can overspend, overeat, and overachieve, but you can't “over-live.” The Psalmist adds this:

“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

Psalms 90:12 (NIV)

PRINCIPLES REGARDING TIME ...

1. There is a cumulative value in investing small amounts of time in certain activities over a long period.

Exercise is probably the best example. Experts tell us that there is tremendous value in exercising 3-5 times per week. Here is the challenge: at the end of your first week, will you be able to tell a difference? Probably not. You are not going to drop 10 lbs. from a little exercise in one week. However, if you do this for a year, you are going to see a lot of change. You're going to feel better, healthier and be in better shape.

2. Neglect has a cumulative effect as well.

You can neglect your health for a day, but if you neglect it for years and years it has a cumulative effect physically, relationally, spiritually, emotionally and financially.

Here is why this so dangerous. You cannot go back and make up for lost time. Why? Because it is lost. It is gone. I cannot go back and re-live it. It is gradual and cumulative and we often don't realize the effect that it has on us. It takes a heart attack for us to change our eating habits. It often takes something extreme to get our attention. Long term neglect can kill you.

3. There are rarely immediate consequences for neglecting single installments of time in any particular arena of life.

This is why it's so easy for us to miss our exercise routine. Because when we get off our routine or our diet for one day it's not that big of a deal. When we look at that one moment, that one snack, that one meal, and evaluate that one installment of time we'll easily arrive at, “*This really isn't all that important.*” Nothing comes apart. There are usually no huge consequences. This is how we talk ourselves out of things all the time. *It's just once, it's no big deal.*

4. There is no cumulative value in the urgent things we allow to interfere with what's most important to us.

If you don't exercise over the course of a year what have you done instead? Slept in, stayed up later, read the newspaper, breakfast with friends, piddled around in the house, etc. When you stack up all the stuff you did instead of exercising and you add it all up it all adds up to zero.

5. In the critical arenas of life, you cannot make up for lost time.

At school you can pull an all-nighter and make up for a lack of studying along the way. In the critical areas of life there are no all-nighters. You cannot cram for a healthy body!

The key areas of life require small deposits all along the way. In light of these truths about the way we manage time ... here is what the Lord says as it relates to the issue of time ...

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

Ephesians 5:15-17 (NASB)

The phrase making the *most of your time* literally means redeeming the time. In the Greek it's an accounting term. Paul was saying, “*Get the full value out of your time – squeeze all the good you can out of every moment of your life.*” In other words, *get as much out of your time as you can because misappropriated time is a misappropriated life. Get maximum value from your life.*

Why does Paul tell us to make the most of our time (redeem the time)? Because the days are evil. In other words, don't miss out on your today's. You only get to spend today once.

We do not live in a morally, ethically neutral environment and because of this our values are constantly being challenge. **If we are not very careful, we will allow the current of culture to draw us into a lifestyle where our time is carelessly used rather than strategically invested.**

Reflection: What do you need to stop doing? What do you need to do more consistently? What do you need to start doing on a daily basis?

“Don't procrastinate— there's no time to lose.”

Proverbs 6:4 (MSG)

“If you live wisely, you will live a long time; wisdom will add years to your life.”

Proverbs 9:11 (NCV)

“Whoever gathers in the summer is a wise son. Whoever sleeps at harvest time brings shame.”

Proverbs 10:5 (GW)

“The fear of the Lord lengthens {the number of} days,
but the years of wicked people are shortened.”

Proverbs 10:27 (GW)

“Spend time with the wise and you will become wise, but the friends of fools will suffer.”

Proverbs 13:20 (NCV)

“If you are lazy and sleep your time away, you will starve.”

Proverbs 19:15 (CEV)

Let's Pray!

“Give us today our daily bread” teaches us that we can ask God to meet our basic needs. When our lives are lined up with his values, we can ask for fuel to do it. I had to come to grips with the fact that I wasn't eating my daily bread. I was eating today's and part of tomorrow's. As a result, I gained weight gradually for years.

When I pray for the Lord to give me my daily bread, I realize that means I need to eat within the range of my daily needs. Make your consumption of food a matter of prayer. Learn about portion control. The Lord will help me. Eating is not about me, how I feel, how much I like or dislike something. It is about having energy and strength to fulfill God's purpose for my life. When our hearts are aligned with God's heart, we can ask the Lord for food to help us.

Take a moment right now and ask God to give you the food you need today to do his will for your life. How are you with food?

Words

Words are the vehicle through which we communicate our thoughts. The tongue is the driver. As such, it takes us to our destiny.

“Lips that lie are disgusting to the Lord, but honest people are his delight.”
Proverbs 12:22 (GW)

“If you want a happy, good life, keep control of your tongue,
and guard your lips from telling lies.”
1 Peter 3:10 (TLB)

“Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, *and* from a deceitful tongue.”
Psalms 120:2 (KJV)

“I always speak the truth and refuse to tell a lie. ⁸ Every word I speak is honest,
not one is misleading or deceptive.”
Proverbs 8:7-8 (CEV)

“Do you see a man hasty in his words? *There is* more hope for a fool than for him.”
Proverbs 29:20 (NKJV)

“It's stupid and embarrassing to give an answer before you listen.”
Proverbs 18:13 (CEV)

“Don't shoot off your mouth, or speak before you think. Don't be too quick to tell God what you think he wants to hear. God's in charge, not you—the less you speak, the better.”
Ecclesiastes 5:2 (MSG)

“Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen,
slow to speak, and slow to get angry.”
James 1:19 (NLT)

“Any fool can start arguments; the honorable thing is to stay out of them.”
Proverbs 20:3 (TEV)

“Starting a quarrel is like opening a floodgate, so stop before a dispute breaks out.”
Proverbs 17:14 (NLT)

“Self-control means controlling the tongue! A quick retort can ruin everything.”
Proverbs 13:3 (TLB)

“Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you.”
Ephesians 4:29 (TEV)

“So speak encouraging words to one another.
Build up hope so you'll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind.”
1 Thessalonians 5:11 (MSG)

“A gentle answer will calm a person's anger, but an unkind answer will cause more anger. ² Wise people use knowledge when they speak, but fools pour out foolishness.”
Proverbs 15:1-2 (NCV)

“Everything you say should be kind and well thought out
so that you know how to answer everyone.”
Colossians 4:6 (GW)

“Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will bless you for it.”
1 Peter 3:9 (NLT)

“Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut.”
Proverbs 10:19 (NLT)

The Power Of Words

A careless word may kindle strife;
A cruel word may wreck a life.
A bitter word may hate instill;
A brutal word may smite and kill.
A gracious word may smooth the way;
A joyous word may light the day.
A timely word may lessen stress;
A loving word may heal and bless.

“The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,
but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.”
Proverbs 10:11 (NIV)

Empowered To Serve

THE JOB OF A PRIEST

Before the coming of Christ, the Holy Spirit operated through a select group of people called priests. Aaron, the brother of Moses, served as the first priest and his sons carried on the priesthood.

Old Testament priests mediated affairs between God and the people. To do anything religiously--pray, give a worship offering, confess their sins--the average person couldn't go directly to God; he or she had to go through a priest.

But Jesus' life and death turned the Old Testament religious system inside out. On what we now call the Day of Pentecost, when the first Christ-followers gathered in "the upper room," they heard the sound of a sudden rushing wind. Then tongues of fire landed on everyone's head. These tongues represented the coming of the Holy Spirit in full measure to the church. And the tongues sat not on the heads of a select few, but on *everybody's* head.

From that moment on, instead of a few, select priests filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit to act as go-betweens with God, suddenly every one of Jesus' followers became a priest.

This means that today we have direct access to God. We don't have to call a priest or a pastor every time we want to worship, pray, or confess our sins to God.

It also means that we become priests to one another. And what does a faithful priest do for his people? Prays for them. Encourages them. Watches them. Confronts them. Grieves with those who grieve. Rejoices with those who rejoice. As a result, the people feel loved, nurtured, secure, and blessed.

Imagine a community in which every member takes his or her priesthood as seriously as did the priests of the Old Testament. A community like that would turn the world upside down!

According to Ephesians 4:11-12, God has uniquely equipped some of these priestly servants to train others how to serve: "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, *to prepare God's people for works of service*, so that the body of Christ may be built up."

Instead of the Old Testament temple system, **we have congregations full of priests**, with a few teachers, leaders, and pastors among the priesthood who are called to equip those priests for ministry. In most modern church settings, the "equipping servants" would be paid pastors and staff members. Those equipped to carry out the good works of ministry would be the "volunteers."

THE TRAIN JUMPS THE TRACKS

It's hard to define exactly how or when the church train jumped tracks, but jump it did. Although the early church started out with this beautiful concept of the priesthood of all believers--with every member an active minister and good works carried forth in all directions--during the last couple of centuries, most churches have retreated to the Old Testament model. Here's how it often plays out:

A group of a hundred people get together, decide to form a congregation, and "hire a minister." That's the terminology they use: hire a minister. Then they say to their new minister, "Okay, this is what we want you to do: Preach. Teach. Marry. Bury. Make hospital calls. Visit members. Counsel the confused. Evangelize the community. Raise money. Print the bulletins. Do announcements. Pray for the sick. Then, come year end, we'll get out our report cards and determine whether you have met our expectations. If you have, we'll sign you up for another year. If not, we'll hire someone else."

If the hired minister energetically throws himself into his multitude of tasks and the church starts to grow, the congregation might hire an associate pastor, an administrative pastor, or a youth pastor to take care of the programs and people beyond the senior minister's reach. But again, the congregation pays "the clergy" to do ministry.

So the church ends up with a few overworked professionals, paid by the tithes and offerings of the congregation to fulfill the whole gamut of priestly functions, while everybody else remains passive observers, their gifts and talents atrophying from disuse.

This is the most widely practiced ministry paradigm in existence today--and it doesn't have a shred of biblical support. Tragically, this approach has left many contemporary churches in shambles: weak, unorganized, and powerless. And unfortunately, it's a tough mindset to change.

Howard Snyder says in *Liberating the Church* that most church members "expect doctors to treat us, not to train us to treat others. We expect lawyers to give us expert advice, not to admit us to the secret fraternity of those who understand how the legal system works. Likewise, we want pastors to serve us, not to "build and train us" to serve others.

It must break God's heart when people come to church with a consumer mindset, content to eat and run. "Serve me," they say. "Teach me. Pray for me. Fix my kids. Counsel my spouse. And if you don't do all of this up to my standards, I'll go down the street and see if another church will pay better attention to me." **It's impossible to build a God-honoring church with a congregation full of consumers.**

Neither can you build a God-honoring church without teachers, leaders, and pastors committed to equipping. When those called to equip think of themselves as the only worthy "doers of ministry," when they peer down from their perch in the pulpit at their congregations, convinced that the Holy Spirit could not possibly work through the people seated in front of them, they are directly disobeying their calling and mandate from God.

LIFT THE VISION

If we are going to be a biblically functioning community and maximize the potential of our church, we need volunteers. When those who are called to equip really do equip, and when volunteers show up to be equipped, trained, empowered, and entrusted to do the work of the ministry ...

- The equippers win each time they see God greatly use the volunteers they have recruited, loved, trained, and empowered.
- The volunteers win, because they get the thrill of moving from the spectator's seat to the playing field. They become instruments of healing, hope, and transformation in the hands of God.
- The surrounding community wins as it receives the service of a loving, unified, multi-gifted force for good.
- And of course, the Architect of the whole plan wins because God has the pleasure of seeing his children carry forward his grand purpose of fixing this broken world.

Will you Jump In?

Myers-Briggs Inventory

Which is your most natural energy orientation?

Every person has two faces. One is directed towards the **OUTER** world of activities, excitements, people, and things. The other is directed inward to the **INNER** world of thoughts, interests, ideas, and imagination.

While these are two different but complementary sides of our nature, most people have an innate preference towards **energy** from either the OUTER or the INNER world. Thus one of their faces, either the **Extraverted** (E) or **Introverted** (I), takes the lead in their personality development and plays a more **dominant role** in their behavior.

Extraverted Characteristics

- Act first, think/reflect later
- Feel deprived when cutoff from interaction with the outside world
- Usually open to and motivated by outside world of people and things
- Enjoy wide variety and change in people relationships

Introverted Characteristics

- Think/reflect first, then Act
- Regularly require an amount of "private time" to recharge batteries
- Motivated internally, mind is sometimes so active it is "closed" to outside world
- Prefer one-to-one communication and relationships

▶ Choose which best fits:



Extraversion (E)



Introversion (I)

Which way of Perceiving or understanding is most "automatic" or natural?

The **Sensing** (S) side of our brain notices the sights, sounds, smells and all the sensory details of the **PRESENT**. It categorizes, organizes, records and stores the specifics from the here and now. It is **REALITY** based, dealing with "what is." It also provides the specific details of memory & recollections from **PAST** events.

The **Intuitive** (N) side of our brain seeks to understand, interpret and form **OVERALL** patterns of all the information that is collected and records these patterns and relationships. It speculates on **POSSIBILITIES**, including looking into and forecasting the **FUTURE**. It is imaginative and conceptual.

While both kinds of perceiving are necessary and used by all people, each of us instinctively tends to favor one over the other.

Sensing Characteristics

- Mentally live in the Now, attending to present opportunities
- Using common sense and creating practical solutions is automatic-instinctual
- Memory recall is rich in detail of facts and past events
- Best improvise from past experience
- Like clear and concrete information; dislike guessing when facts are "fuzzy"

Intuitive Characteristics

- Mentally live in the Future, attending to future possibilities
- Using imagination and creating/inventing new possibilities is automatic-instinctual
- Memory recall emphasizes patterns, contexts, and connections
- Best improvise from theoretical understanding
- Comfortable with ambiguous, fuzzy data and with guessing its meaning.

▶ Choose which best fits:



Sensing (S)



iNtuition (N)

Which way of forming Judgments and making choices is most natural?

The **Thinking** (T) side of our brain analyzes information in a **DETACHED**, objective fashion. It operates from factual principles, deduces and forms conclusions systematically. It is our logical nature.

The **Feeling** (F) side of our brain forms conclusions in an **ATTACHED** and somewhat global manner, based on likes/dislikes, impact on others, and human and aesthetic values. It is our subjective nature.

While everyone uses both means of forming conclusions, each person has a natural bias towards one over the other so that when they give us conflicting directions - one side is the natural trump card or tiebreaker.

Thinking Characteristics

- Instinctively search for facts and logic in a decision situation.
- Naturally notices tasks and work to be accomplished.
- Easily able to provide an objective and critical analysis.
- Accept conflict as a natural, normal part of relationships with people.

Feeling Characteristics

- Instinctively employ personal feelings and impact on people in decision situations
- Naturally sensitive to people needs and reactions.
- Naturally seek consensus and popular opinions.
- Unsettled by conflict; have almost a toxic reaction to disharmony.

▶ Choose which best fits:



Thinking (T)



Feeling (F)

What is your "action orientation" towards the outside world?

All people use both **judging** (thinking and feeling) and **perceiving** (sensing and intuition) processes to store information, organize our thoughts, make decisions, take actions and manage our lives. Yet **one** of these processes (Judging **or** Perceiving) tends to **take the lead** in our relationship with the **outside world** . . . while the other governs our inner world.

A **Judging** (J) style approaches the outside world **WITH A PLAN** and is oriented towards organizing one's surroundings, being prepared, making decisions and reaching closure and completion.

A **Perceiving** (P) style takes the outside world **AS IT COMES** and is adopting and adapting, flexible, open-ended and receptive to new opportunities and changing game plans.

Judging Characteristics

- Plan many of the details in advance before moving into action.
- Focus on task-related action; complete meaningful segments before moving on.
- Work best and avoid stress when able to keep ahead of deadlines.
- Naturally use targets, dates and standard routines to manage life.

Perceiving Characteristics

- Comfortable moving into action without a plan; plan on-the-go.
- Like to multitask, have variety, mix work and play.
- Naturally tolerant of time pressure; work best close to the deadlines.
- Instinctively avoid commitments which interfere with flexibility, freedom and variety

▶ Choose which best fits:



Judging (J)



Perceiving (P)

Myers-Briggs Personality Types

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, ¹⁶ your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

Psalm 139:13-16 (NIV)

- Our personality is from God.
 - * God created each individual
 - * Everyone is fearfully and wonderfully made.

Extroverts (E)

1. Get their batteries charged by being with people
2. Constantly pulled to the outer world
3. Think out loud
4. Ask, "How can I affect this?"
5. *Summarize what you hear them saying.*

E vs. I = Energy

Introverts (I)

1. Get their batteries charged by being alone
2. Try to understand the world before experiencing it
3. Listen more than they talk
4. Prefer small groups and one-on-one
5. Ask, "How does this affect me?"
6. *Give them space to share.*

Sensors (S)

1. Trust what is certain and concrete
2. Like new ideas only if they have practical applications
3. Value realism and common sense
4. Like to use and hone established skills
5. Give detailed descriptions
6. Are oriented to the present
7. *Show them how following Jesus is practical.*

Intuitives (N)

S vs. N = Where do you prefer to live?

1. Trust inspiration and inference
2. Like new ideas and concepts for their own sake
3. Value imagination and innovation
4. Like to learn new skills; get bored easily
5. Tend to be general and figurative
6. Are oriented to the future
7. Present information through leaps, in a round-about manner
8. *Let them dream.*

Thinkers (T)

1. Apply impersonal analysis to problems
2. Value logic, justice, fairness; one standard for all
3. Naturally see flaws and tend to be critical
4. May be seen as heartless, insensitive, uncaring
5. More important to be truthful than tactful
6. Believe feelings are valid only if they are logical
7. Motivated by a desire for achievement and accomplishment
8. *Emphasize how discipleship makes sense.*

Feelers (F)

T vs. F = How you make decisions.

1. Consider effect of actions on others
2. Value empathy and harmony
3. See the exception to the rule
4. Like to please others; show appreciation easily
5. May be over-emotional and illogical
6. Important to be tactful as well as truthful
7. Believe any feeling is valid, whether it makes sense or not
8. Motivated by a desire to be appreciated
9. *Encourage them.*

Judging (J)

1. Are happiest after decisions have been made
2. Work first, play later
3. Set goals and work toward achieving them on time
4. Prefer knowing what they are getting into
5. Product-oriented (completing task, bottom line)
6. Derive satisfaction from finishing projects
7. See time as finite; take deadlines seriously
8. *Be on time. Set deadlines.*

Perceivers (P)

J vs. P = How you do time.

1. Are happiest leaving their options open
2. Play now, finish the job later
3. Change goals based on new information
4. Like adopting new situations
5. Process-oriented
6. Receive satisfaction from starting projects
7. See time as a renewable resource and deadlines as elastic
8. *Appreciate their flexibility. Keep moving ahead.*

Myers-Briggs Types At A Glance

By Charles Martin, Ph.D.

ISTJ

For ISTJs the dominant quality in their lives is an abiding sense of responsibility for doing what needs to be done in the here-and-now. Their realism, organizing abilities, and command of the facts lead to their completing tasks thoroughly and with great attention to detail. Logical pragmatists at heart, ISTJs make decisions based on their experience and with an eye to efficiency in all things. ISTJs are intensely committed to people and to the organizations of which they are a part; they take their work seriously and believe others should do so as well.

ISFJ

For ISFJs the dominant quality in their lives is an abiding respect and sense of personal responsibility for doing what needs to be done in the here-and-now. Actions that are of practical help to others are of particular importance to ISFJs. Their realism, organizing abilities, and command of the facts lead to their thorough attention in completing tasks. ISFJs bring an aura of quiet warmth, caring, and dependability to all that they do; they take their work seriously and believe others should do so as well.

INFJ

For INFJs the dominant quality in their lives is their attention to the inner world of possibilities, ideas, and symbols. Knowing by way of insight is paramount for INFJs, and they often manifest a deep concern for people and relationships as well. INFJs often have deep interests in creative expression as well as issues of spirituality and human development. While the energy and attention of INFJs are naturally drawn to the inner world of ideas and insights, what people often first encounter with INFJs is their drive for closure and for the application of their ideas to people's concerns.

INTJ

For INTJs the dominant force in their lives is their attention to the inner world of possibilities, symbols, abstractions, images, and thoughts. Insight in conjunction with logical analysis is the essence of their approach to the world; they think systemically. Ideas are the substance of life for INTJs and they have a driving need to understand, to know, and to demonstrate competence in their areas of interest. INTJs inherently trust their insights, and with their task-orientation will work intensely to make their visions into realities.

ISTP

For ISTPs the driving force in their lives is to understand how things and phenomena in the real world work so they can make the best and most effective use of them. ISTPs are logical and realistic people, and they are natural troubleshooters. When not actively solving a problem, ISTPs are quiet and analytical observers of their environment, and they naturally look for the underlying sense to any facts they have gathered. ISTPs do often pursue variety and even excitement in their hands-on experiences. Although they do have a spontaneous, even playful side, what people often first encounter with them is their detached pragmatism.

ISFP

For ISFPs the dominant quality in their lives is a deep-felt caring for living things, combined with a quietly playful and sometimes adventurous approach to life and all its experiences. ISFPs typically show their caring in very practical ways, since they often prefer action to words. Their warmth and concern are generally not expressed openly, and what people often first encounter with ISFPs is their quiet adaptability, realism, and "free spirit" spontaneity.

INFP

For INFPs the dominant quality in their lives is a deep-felt caring and idealism about people. They experience this intense caring most often in their relationships with others, but they may also experience it around ideas, projects, or any involvement they see as important. INFPs are often skilled communicators, and they are naturally drawn to ideas that embody a concern for human potential. INFPs live in the inner world of values and ideals, but what people often first encounter with the INFP in the outer world is their adaptability and concern for possibilities.

INTP

For INTPs the driving force in their lives is to understand whatever phenomenon is the focus of their attention. They want to make sense of the world -- as a concept -- and they often enjoy opportunities to be creative. INTPs are logical, analytical, and detached in their approach to the world; they naturally question and critique ideas and events as they strive for understanding. INTPs usually have little need to control the outer world, or to bring order to it, and they often appear very flexible and adaptable in their lifestyle.

ESTP

For ESTPs the dominant quality in their lives is their enthusiastic attention to the outer world of hands-on and real-life experiences. ESTPs are excited by continuous involvement in new activities and in the pursuit of new challenges. ESTPs tend to be logical and analytical in their approach to life, and they have an acute sense of how objects, events, and people in the world work. ESTPs are typically energetic and adaptable realists, who prefer to experience and accept life rather than to judge or organize it.

ESFP

For ESFPs the dominant quality in their lives is their enthusiastic attention to the outer world of hands-on and real-life experiences. ESFPs are excited by continuous involvement in new activities and new relationships. ESFPs also have a deep concern for people, and they show their caring in warm and pragmatic gestures of helping. ESFPs are typically energetic and adaptable realists, who prefer to experience and accept life rather than to judge or organize it.

ENFP

For ENFPs the dominant quality in their lives is their attention to the outer world of possibilities; they are excited by continuous involvement in anything new, whether it be new ideas, new people, or new activities. Though ENFPs thrive on what is possible and what is new, they also experience a deep concern for people as well. Thus, they are especially interested in possibilities for people. ENFPs are typically energetic, enthusiastic people who lead spontaneous and adaptable lives.

ENTP

For ENTPs the driving quality in their lives is their attention to the outer world of possibilities; they are excited by continuous involvement in anything new, whether it be new ideas, new people, or new activities. They look for patterns and meaning in the world, and they often have a deep need to analyze, to understand, and to know the nature of things. ENTPs are typically energetic, enthusiastic people who lead spontaneous and adaptable lives.

ESTJ

For ESTJs the driving force in their lives is their need to analyze and bring into logical order the outer world of events, people, and things. ESTJs like to organize anything that comes into their domain, and they will work energetically to complete tasks so they can quickly move from one to the next. Sensing orients their thinking to current facts and realities, and thus gives their thinking a pragmatic quality. ESTJs take their responsibilities seriously and believe others should do so as well.

ESFJ

For ESFJs the dominant quality in their lives is an active and intense caring about people and a strong desire to bring harmony into their relationships. ESFJs bring an aura of warmth to all that they do, and they naturally move into action to help others, to organize the world around them, and to get things done. Sensing orients their feeling to current facts and realities, and thus gives their feeling a hands-on pragmatic quality. ESFJs take their work seriously and believe others should as well.

ENFJ

For ENFJs the dominant quality in their lives is an active and intense caring about people and a strong desire to bring harmony into their relationships. ENFJs are openly expressive and empathic people who bring an aura of warmth to all that they do. Intuition orients their feeling to the new and to the possible, thus ENFJs often enjoy working to manifest a humanitarian vision, or helping others develop their potential. ENFJs naturally and conscientiously move into action to care for others, to organize the world around them, and to get things done.

ENTJ

For ENTJs the driving force in their lives is their need to analyze and bring into logical order the outer world of events, people, and things. ENTJs are natural leaders who build conceptual models that serve as plans for strategic action. Intuition orients their thinking to the future, and gives their thinking an abstract quality. ENTJs will actively pursue and direct others in the pursuit of goals they have set, and they prefer a world that is structured and organized.

For more information visit: <http://www.personalitypathways.com/>

Sacred Pathways Inventory

Rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 5. 1 being the least true and 5 being the most true.

1. I feel closest to God when I'm surrounded by what he has made - the mountains, the forests, or the sea.
2. I enjoy attending a "high church" service with incense and formal Communion or Eucharist.
3. The words tradition and history are very appealing to me.
4. Taking an overnight retreat by myself at a monastery where I could spend large amounts of time alone in a small room, or praying to God and studying his Word, are activities I would enjoy.
5. I would like to awaken the church from its apathy.
6. I feel closest to God when I see him in the needy, the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned. I feel God's presence most strongly when I am sitting quietly beside the bed of someone who is lonely or ill or taking a meal to someone in need. You can count on me to offer a ride or volunteer for helping activities.
7. God is an exciting God, and we should be excited about worshiping him. I don't understand how some Christians can say they love God, and then act like they're going to a funeral whenever they walk into church.
8. The words lover, intimacy, and heart are very appealing to me.
9. I feel close to God when I participate in several hours of uninterrupted study time - reading God's Word or good Christian books and then perhaps having an opportunity to teach (or participate in a discussion with) a small group.
10. I feel cut off if I have to spend too much time indoors just listening to speakers or singing songs. Nothing helps me connect with God better than being outside.
11. I'd have a difficult time worshiping in a church building that is plain and lacks a sense of awe or majesty. I have a difficult time worshiping through second-rate Christian art or music.
12. Participating in a formal liturgy or prayer-book service, developing symbols that I could place in my car, home, or office, and developing a Christian calendar for our family to follow are activities that I would enjoy.
13. I would really enjoy spending time on a night watch, taking a short vow of silence, simplifying my life.
14. I connect with God best when I'm cooperating with him in standing up for his justice: writing letters to government officials and newspaper editors, picketing at an abortion clinic, urging people to vote, or becoming familiar with current issues.
15. I grow weary of Christians who spend their time singing songs while a sick neighbor goes without a hot meal or a family in need doesn't get help fixing their car.
16. The words celebration and joy are very appealing to me.
17. I really enjoy having thirty minutes of uninterrupted time a day to sit in quiet prayer and enjoy his presence.
18. I spend more money on books than music tapes.

19. I would prefer to worship God by spending an hour beside a small brook than by participating in a group service.
20. The words sensuous, colorful, and aromatic are very appealing to me.
21. I would really enjoy developing a personal rule (or ritual) of prayer.
22. I feel closest to God when I am alone and there is nothing to distract me from focusing on his presence.
23. I get very frustrated if I see apathetic Christians who don't become active. I want to drop everything else I'm doing and help the church overcome its apathy.
24. The words service and compassion are very appealing to me.
25. I would enjoy attending a workshop on learning to worship through dance or attending several worship sessions with contemporary music. I expect that God is going to move in some unexpected way.
26. When I think of God, I think of love, friendship, and adoration more than anything else.
27. I connect with God best when I learn something new about him that I didn't understand before. My mind needs to be stimulated. It's very important to me that I know exactly what I believe.
28. If I could escape to a garden to pray on a cold day, walk through a park on a warm day, and take a trip by myself to the mountains on another day, I would be very happy.
29. I would really enjoy using drawing, exercise or art to improve my prayer life.
30. I feel closest to God when I'm participating in a familiar form of worship that has memories dating back to my childhood. Rituals and traditions move me more than anything else.
31. I would describe my faith as more "internal" than "external."
32. The words courageous, confrontation and social activism are very appealing to me.
33. I sense God's power when I am counseling a friend who has lost a job, preparing meals for or fixing the car of a family in need, or spending a week at an orphanage in Mexico.
34. I spend more money on music and worship tapes than books.
35. I would rather be alone with God, contemplating who he is, than participating in a formal liturgy or being distracted by a walk outside.
36. I get frustrated when the church focuses too much on feelings and spiritual experience. Of far more importance is the need to understand the Christian faith and have proper doctrine.
37. Seeing God's beauty in nature is more moving to me than understanding new concepts, participating in a formal religious service, or participating in social causes.
38. I feel closest to God when I'm in an environment that allows my senses to come alive - when I can see, smell, hear, and almost taste his majesty.
39. Individualism within the church is a real danger. Christianity is a corporate faith, and most of our worship should have a corporate expression.
40. The words silence, solitude, and discipline are very appealing to me.

41. Activities like confronting a social evil, attending a meeting to challenge the new curriculum before the local school board, and volunteering on a political campaign are important to me.
42. I would rather nurse someone to health or help someone repair their house than teach an adult Sunday school class, go on a prayer and fasting retreat, or take a lonely walk in the woods.
43. I connect with God best when my heart is sent soaring and I feel like I want to burst, worship God all day long, and shout out his name. Celebrating God and his love is my favorite form of worship.
44. The most difficult times in my faith are when I can't feel God's presence within me.
45. The words concepts and truth are very appealing to me.

FINAL RESULTS

Naturalist:

Naturalists Draw near to God through nature.

Caregiver:

Caregivers draw near to God through caring for and serving others.

Sensate:

Sensates draw near to God through the senses.

Enthusiast:

Enthusiasts draw near to God through celebration and mystery.

Traditionalist:

Traditionalists draw near to God through ritual and symbol.

Contemplative:

Contemplatives draw near to God through personal adoration and heartfelt devotion.

Ascetics:

Ascetics draw near to God through solitude and simplicity.

Intellectual:

Intellectuals draw near to God through their minds.

Activists:

Activists draw near to God through bringing about social change.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.
	19.	20.	21.	22.	23.	24.	25.	26.	27.
	28.	29.	30.	31.	32.	33.	34.	35.	36.
	37.	38.	39.	40.	41.	42.	43.	44.	45.
Totals									
	Naturalist	Sensate	Traditionalist	Ascetics	Activists	Caregiver	Enthusiast	Contemplative	Intellectual

Sacred Pathways Descriptions

1. Naturalists: Loving God Out of Doors

Naturalists would prefer to leave any building, however beautiful or austere, to pray to God beside a river. Leave the books behind, forget the demonstrations—just let them take a walk through the woods, mountains, or open meadows. These Christians believe that nature clearly proclaims “God is!” They may learn more from watching an ant colony or looking at a peaceful lake than from reading a book or listening to a sermon, though they may find fulfilling thoughts from the parables of Christ, which are based on nature, or the Psalms. Naturalists are related to contemplatives, except that they are moved by creation in addition to the inner world. When they are out of doors, their heart soars to worship God. Naturalists learn to seek God by surrounding themselves with all that he has made.

2. Sensates: Loving God with the Senses

Sensate Christians want to be lost in the awe, beauty, and splendor of God. They are drawn particularly to the liturgical, the majestic, the grand. When these Christians worship, they want to be filled with sights, sounds, and smells that overwhelm them. Incense, intricate architecture, classical music, and formal language send their hearts soaring. Whereas some Christians might find such a sensuous onslaught distracting, these Christians delight in it. The five senses are God’s most effective inroad to their hearts. Anything that touches the senses can be a powerful arbiter of worship for sensate Christians.

3. Traditionalists: Loving God Through Ritual and Symbol

Traditionalists are fed by what are often termed the historic dimensions of faith: rituals, symbols, sacraments, and sacrifice. These Christians tend to have a disciplined life of faith. Some may be seen by others as legalists, defining their faith largely by matters of conduct. Frequently they enjoy regular attendance at church services, tithing, keeping the Sabbath, and so on. Traditionalists have a need for ritual and structure. The contemplatives’ unstructured “prayer of the quiet” would be confusing and fairly unfulfilling to them.

4. Ascetics: Loving God in Solitude and Simplicity

Ascetics want nothing more than to be left alone in prayer. Take away the liturgy, the trappings of religion, the noise of the outside world. Let there be nothing to distract them—no pictures, no loud music—and leave them alone to pray in silence and simplicity. Ascetics live a fundamentally internal existence. Even when they are part of a group of people, they might seem to be isolated from the others. Frequently introspective, sometimes to a fault, they are uncomfortable in any environment that keeps them from “listening to the quiet.”

5. Activists: Loving God Through Confrontation

Activists serve a God of justice, and their favorite Scripture is often the account of Jesus cleansing the temple. They define *worship* as standing against evil and calling sinners to repentance. These Christians often view the church as a place to recharge their batteries so they can go back into the world to wage war against injustice. Activists may adopt either social or evangelistic causes, but they find their home in the rough-and-tumble world of confrontation. They are energized more by interaction with others, even in conflict, than by being alone or in small groups.

6. Caregivers: Loving God by Loving Others

Caregivers serve God by serving others. They often claim to see Christ in the poor and needy, and their faith is built up by interacting with other people. Such Christians may find the devotional lives of contemplatives and enthusiasts as selfish. Whereas caring for others might wear many of us down, this recharges a caregiver's batteries.

7. Enthusiasts: Loving God with Mystery and Celebration

Excitement and mystery in worship is the spiritual lifeblood of enthusiasts. As Sensates want to be surrounded by beauty and intellectuals want to be grappling with concepts, enthusiasts are inspired by joyful celebration. These Christians are cheerleaders for God and the Christian life. Let them clap their hands, shout "Amen!" and dance in their excitement, that's all they ask. If their hearts aren't moved, if they don't experience God's power, something is missing. They don't want to just know concepts, but to experience them, to feel them, and to be moved by them.

8. Contemplatives: Loving God Through Adoration

Contemplatives refer to God as their lover, and images of a loving Father and Bridegroom predominate their view of God. Their favorite Bible passages might be taken from the Song of Songs as they enter the "divine romance." The focus is not necessarily on serving God, doing his will, accomplishing great things in his name, or even obeying God. Rather, these Christians seek to love God with the purest, deepest, and brightest love imaginable.

9. Intellectuals: Loving God with the Mind

Intellectuals might be skeptics or committed believers, but in either case they are likely to be studying (and, in some instances, arguing either for or against) doctrines like Calvinism, infant baptism, ordination of women, and predestination. These Christians live in the world of concepts. Some intellectuals, influenced by a personality type that may be shy or withdrawn, might avoid intellectual confrontation but still be "fed" primarily by intellectual activity. "Faith" is something to be understood as much as experienced. They may feel closest to God when they first understand something new about him.

One of the ways to determine your dominant spiritual temperament is to list those Christians whom you most admire and seek to emulate. How would you describe each one? If you consistently find yourself picking leaders of a particular spiritual temperament, You may share that makeup.

Spiritual Gifts Assessment

DIRECTIONS

Name: _____

1. Respond to each statement on the *Spiritual Gifts Assessment* pages which follow according to the following scale:

- 3 = Consistently, definitely true
- 2 = Most of the time, usually true
- 1 = Some of the time, once in awhile
- 0 = Not at all, never

2. Using the response sheet below, write your responses to each statement in the block whose number corresponds to that number statement in the *Spiritual Gifts Assessment*.

3. **Important: Answer according to who you are, not who you would like to be or think you ought to be.** How true are these statements of you? What has been your experience? To what degree do these statements reflect your usual tendencies?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38
39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57
58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76
77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95
96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114
115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133

Total The Columns Above (Going Down) In The Boxes Below

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S

Taken from *Network: Participant's Guide* by Bruce Bugbee, Don Cousins and Bill Hybels. Copyright © 1994 by Willow Creek Community Church. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

1. I like to organize people, tasks and events.
2. I would like to start churches in places where they do not presently exist.
3. I enjoy working creatively with wood, cloth, paints, metal, glass or other materials.
4. I enjoy challenging people's perspective of God by using various forms of art.
5. I can readily distinguish between spiritual truth and error, good and evil.
6. I tend to see the potential in people.
7. I communicate the gospel to others with clarity and effectiveness.
8. I find it natural and easy to trust God to answer my prayers.
9. I give liberally and joyfully to people in financial need or to projects requiring support.
10. I enjoy working behind the scenes to support the work of others.
11. I view my home as a place to minister to people in need.
12. I take prayer requests from others and consistently pray for them.
13. I am approached by people who want to know my perspective on a particular passage or biblical truth.
14. I am able to motivate others to accomplish a goal.
15. I empathize with hurting people and desire to help in their healing process.
16. I can speak in a way that results in conviction and change in the lives of others.
17. I enjoy spending time nurturing and caring for others.
18. I am able to communicate God's Word effectively.
19. I am often sought out by others for advice about spiritual or personal matters.
20. I am careful, thorough and skilled at managing details.
21. I am attracted to the idea of serving in another country or ethnic community.
22. I am skilled in working with different kinds of tools.
23. I enjoy developing and using my artistic skills (art, drama, music photography, etc.).
24. I frequently am able to judge a person's character based upon first impressions.
25. I enjoy reassuring and strengthening those who are discouraged.
26. I consistently look for opportunities to build relationships with non-Christians.
27. I have confidence in God's continuing provision and help, even in difficult times.
28. I give more than a tithe so that kingdom work can be accomplished.
29. I enjoy doing routine tasks that support the ministry.
30. I enjoy meeting new people and helping them to feel welcomed.
31. I enjoy praying for long periods of time and receive leadings as to what God wants me to pray for.
32. I receive information from the Spirit that I did not acquire through natural means.
33. I am able to influence others to achieve a vision.
34. I can patiently support those going through painful experiences as they try to stabilize their lives.
35. I feel responsible to confront others with the truth.
36. I have compassion for wandering believers and want to protect them.
37. I can spend time in study knowing that presenting truth will make a difference in the lives of people.
38. I can often find simple, practical solutions in the midst of conflict or confusion.
39. I can clarify goals and develop strategies or plans to accomplish them.
40. I am willing to take an active part in starting a new church.
41. I enjoy making things for use in ministry.

42. I help people understand themselves, their relationships and God better through artistic expression.
43. I can see through phoniness or deceit before it is evident to others.
44. I give hope to others by directing them to the promises of God.
45. I am effective at adapting the gospel message so that it connects with an individual's felt need.
46. I believe that God will help me to accomplish great things.
47. I manage my money well in order to free more of it for giving.
48. I willingly take on a variety of odd jobs around the church to meet the needs of others.
49. I genuinely believe the Lord directs strangers to me who need to get connected to others.
50. I am conscious of ministering to others as I pray.
51. I am committed, and schedule blocks of time for reading and studying scripture, to understand biblical truth fully and accurately.
52. I can adjust my leadership style to bring out the best in others.
53. I enjoy helping people sometimes regarded as undeserving or beyond help.
54. I boldly expose cultural trends, teachings or events which contradict biblical principles.
55. I like to provide guidance for the whole person: relationally, emotionally, spiritually, etc.
56. I pay close attention to the words, phrases and meaning of those who teach.
57. I can easily select the most effective course of action from among several alternatives.
58. I can identify and effectively use the resources needed to accomplish tasks.
59. I can adapt well to different cultures and surroundings.
60. I can visualize how something should be constructed before I build it.
61. I like finding new and fresh ways of communicating God's truth.
62. I tend to see rightness or wrongness in situations.
63. I reassure those who need to take courageous action in their faith, family or life.
64. I invite unbelievers to accept Christ as their Savior.
65. I trust God in circumstances where success cannot be guaranteed by human effort alone.
66. I am challenged to limit my lifestyle in order to give away a higher percentage of my income.
67. I see spiritual significance in doing practical tasks.
68. I like to create a place where people do not feel that they are alone.
69. I pray with confidence because I know that God works in response to prayer.
70. I have insight or just know something to be true.
71. I set goals and manage people and resources effectively to accomplish them.
72. I have great compassion for hurting people.
73. I see most actions as right or wrong, and feel the need to correct the wrong.
74. I can faithfully provide long-term support and concern for others.
75. I like to take a systematic approach to my study of the Bible.
76. I can anticipate the likely consequences of an individual's or a group's actions.
77. I like to help organizations or groups become more efficient.
78. I can relate to others in culturally sensitive ways.
79. I honor God with my handcrafted gifts.
80. I apply various artistic expressions to communicate God's truth.
81. I receive affirmation from others concerning the reliability of my insights or perceptions.
82. I strengthen those who are wavering in their faith.
83. I openly tell people that I am a Christian and want them to ask me about my faith.

84. I am convinced of God's daily presence and action in my life.
85. I like knowing that my financial support makes a real difference in the lives and ministries of God's people.
86. I like to find small things that need to be done and often do them without being asked.
87. I enjoy entertaining people and opening my home to others.
88. When I hear about needy situations, I feel burdened to pray.
89. I have suddenly known some things about others, but did not know how I knew them.
90. I influence others to perform to the best of their capability.
91. I can look beyond a person's handicaps or problems to see a life that matters to God.
92. I like people who are honest and will speak the truth.
93. I enjoy giving guidance and practical support to a small group of people.
94. I can communicate scripture in ways that motivate others to study and want to learn more.
95. I give practical advice to help others through complicated situations.
96. I enjoy learning about how organizations function.
97. I enjoy pioneering new undertakings.
98. I am good at and enjoy working with my hands.
99. I am creative and imaginative.
100. I can identify preaching, teaching or communication which is not true to the Bible.
101. I like motivating others to take steps for spiritual growth.
102. I openly and confidently tell others what Christ has done for me.
103. I am regularly challenging others to trust God.
104. I give generously due to my commitment to stewardship.
105. I feel comfortable being a helper, assisting others to do their job more effectively.
106. I do whatever I can to make people feel that they belong.
107. I am honored when someone asks me to pray for them.
108. I discover important biblical truths when reading or studying scripture which benefit others in the body of Christ.
109. I am able to cast a vision that others want to be a part of.
110. I enjoy bringing hope and joy to people living in difficult circumstances.
111. I will speak God's truth, even in places where it is unpopular or difficult for others to accept.
112. I can gently restore wandering believers to faith and fellowship.
113. I can present information and skills to others at a level that makes it easy for them to grasp and apply to their lives.
114. I can apply scriptural truth that others regard as practical and helpful.
115. I can visualize a coming event, anticipate potential problems and develop backup plans.
116. I am able to orchestrate or oversee several church ministries.
117. I am able to design and construct things that help the church.
118. I regularly need to get alone to reflect and develop my imagination.
119. I can sense when demonic forces are at work in a person or situation.
120. I am able to challenge or rebuke others in order to foster spiritual growth.
121. I seek opportunities to talk about spiritual matters with unbelievers.
122. I can move forward in spite of opposition or lack of support when I sense God's blessing on an undertaking.

123. I believe I have been given an abundance of resources so that I may give more to the Lord's work.
124. I readily and happily use my natural or learned skills to help wherever needed.
125. I can make people feel at ease even in unfamiliar surroundings.
126. I often see specific results in direct response to my prayers.
127. I confidently share my knowledge and insights with others.
128. I figure out where we need to go and help others to get there.
129. I enjoy doing practical things for others who are in need.
130. I feel compelled to expose sin wherever I see it and challenge people to repentance.
131. I enjoy patiently but firmly nurturing others in their development as believers.
132. I enjoy explaining things to people so that they can grow spiritually and personally.
133. I have insights into how to solve problems that others do not see.

Spiritual Gifts Assessment Key

First, second, and third Spiritual Gift highest letter totals ...

_____ : _____
_____ : _____
_____ : _____

Spiritual Gift Assessment Key

A = Administration

B = Apostleship

C = Craftsmanship

D = Creative Communication

E = Discernment

F = Encouragement

G = Evangelism

H = Faith

I = Giving

J = Helps

K = Hospitality

L = Intercession

M = Knowledge

N = Leadership

O = Mercy

P = Prophecy

Q = Shepherding

R = Teaching

S = Wisdom

Healing, Interpretation, Miracles, and Tongues are not included in the *Spiritual Gift Assessment* or *Observation Assessment* because their presence in the life of a believer tends to be self-evident.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS DESCRIPTIONS

Administration

Literal Meaning: To pilot or steer a ship

Description: The gift of Administration is the divine enablement to understand what makes an organization function, and the special ability to plan and execute procedures that accomplish the goals of the ministry.

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Develop strategies or plans to reach identified goals
- Assist ministries to become more effective and efficient
- Create order out of organizational chaos
- Manage or coordinate a variety of responsibilities to accomplish a task
- Organize people, tasks, or events

Traits:

- Thorough
- Objective
- Responsible
- Organized
- Goal-oriented
- Efficient
- Conscientious

Cautions: People with this gift

- Need to be open to adjusting their plans so that they don't stifle a leader's vision.
- Could use people simply to accomplish goals without being concerned for their growth in the process.
- Could fail to see God's purposes being fulfilled in the process of meeting a goal.

²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 1 Cor. 12:28 (NIV)

¹In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

⁵This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. Acts 6:1-7 (NIV)

Exodus 18:13-26

Apostleship

Literal Meaning: To be sent with a message

Description: The gift of Apostleship is the divine ability to start and oversee the development of new churches or ministry structures.

NOTE: While the "office" of apostle that the original disciples of Christ held is unique and no longer exists, the "role" of apostle continues today and functions through the Spiritual Gift of Apostleship.

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Pioneer and establish new ministries or churches
- Adapt to different surroundings by being culturally sensitive and aware
- Desire to minister to unreached people in other communities or countries
- Have responsibilities to oversee ministries or groups of churches
- Demonstrate authority and vision for the mission of the church

Traits:

- Adventurous
- Entrepreneurial
- Persevering
- Adaptable
- Culturally sensitive
- Risk-taking
- Cause-driven

Cautions: People with this gift:

- Should be aware that misusing their authority can quench the Spirit in others
- Need to be affirmed and sent by the church
- Can be demanding and pessimistic

¹¹It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up Ephes. 4:11-12 (NIV)

²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 1 Cor. 12:28-29 (NIV)

²While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. Acts 13:2-3 (NIV)

⁵Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. Romans 1:5 (NIV)

Craftsmanship

Literal Meaning: To craft, design, build

Description: The gift of Craftsmanship is the divine enablement to creatively design and/or construct items to be used for ministry.

Distinctives: People with this gift

Work with wood, cloth, paints, metal, glass and other raw materials
Make things which increase the effectiveness of others' ministries
Enjoy serving with their hands to meet tangible needs
Design and build tangible items and resources for ministry use
work with different kinds of tools and are skilled with their hands

Traits:

Cautions: People with this gift

Creative
Designer
Handy
Resourceful
Practical
Behind-the-scenes
Helpful

Could fail to see that their gift is significant and one that make a spiritual contribution to the body.
Could use people to get things done instead of helping them to grow in the process.
Should remember that the things they produce are just a means to the end and not the end itself.

I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts--
Exodus 31:3 (NIV)

³¹ he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts--
- ³²to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, ³³to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship. ³⁴And he has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. ³⁵He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers--all of them master craftsmen and designers. Exodus 35:31-35 (NIV)

⁵Have them entrust it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple. And have these men pay the workers who repair the temple of the LORD-- ⁶the carpenters, the builders and the masons. Also have them purchase timber and dressed stone to repair the temple. 2 Kings 22:5-6 (NIV)

³⁶In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor. ³⁷About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. ³⁸Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!" ³⁹Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. Acts 9:36-39 (NIV)

Creative Communication

Literal Meaning: To communicate artistically

Description: The gift of Creative Communication is the divine enablement to communicate God's truth through a variety of art forms.

Distinctives: People with this gift

Use the arts to communicate God's truth
Develop and use artistic skills such as drama, writing, art, music, etc.
Use variety and creativity to captivate people and cause them to consider Christ's message
Challenge people's perspective of God through various forms of the arts
Demonstrate fresh ways to express the Lord's ministry and message

Traits:

Cautions: People with this gift

Expressive
Imaginative
Idea-oriented
Artistic
Creative
Unconventional
Sensitive

Need to remember that art is not for art's sake, but it's to glorify God and edify others
Could find evaluation and constructive criticism difficult to accept
Might be uncooperative (because of ego, pride, or individualism) and need to work as being a team player

¹⁴David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, ¹⁵while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets. 2 Samuel 6:14-15 (NIV)

³Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,
⁴praise him with tambourine and dancing,
praise him with the strings and flute,
⁵praise him with the clash of cymbals,
praise him with resounding cymbals.
Psalm 150:3-5 (NIV)

²He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: Mark 4:2 (NIV)

³³With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. Mark 4:33 (NIV)

Discernment

Literal Meaning: to separate or make a distinction, differentiate

Description: The gift of Discernment is the divine enablement to distinguish between truth and error. It is able to discern the spirits, differentiating between good and evil, right and wrong.

Distinctives: People with this gift

Distinguish truth from error, right from wrong, pure motives from impure
Identify deception in others with accuracy and appropriateness
Determine whether a word attributed to God is authentic
Recognize inconsistencies in a teaching, prophetic message or interpretation
Are able to sense the presence of evil

Traits:

Perceptive
Insightful
Sensitive
Intuitive
Decisive
Challenging
Truthful

Cautions: People with this gift

May struggle with how to express their perceptions, feelings or insights.

Could be harsh when confronting others, instead of speaking the truth in love.

Need to confirm their perceptions before speaking.

¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 1 Cor. 12:10 (NIV)

²¹From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²²Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

²³Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." Matthew 16:21-23 (NIV)

¹Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.

²With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

³Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." Acts 5:1-4 (NIV)

Encouragement

Literal Meaning: To come along side of

Description: The gift of Encouragement is the divine enablement to present truth so as to strengthen, comfort, or urge to action those who are discouraged or wavering in their faith.

Distinctives: People with this gift

Come to the side of those who are discouraged to strengthen and reassure them
Challenge, comfort or confront others to trust and hope in the promises of God
Urge others to action by applying biblical truth
Motivate others to grow
Emphasize God's promises and to have confidence in his will

Traits:

Cautions: People with this gift

Positive
Motivating
Challenging
Affirming
Reassuring
Supportive
Trustworthy

Can sometimes be overly optimistic, too simplistic or flattering.
Should first take time to understand where others are what they really need.
May want to just say "positive" things to others and avoid being confrontational when it's needed.

⁸if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Romans 12:8 (NIV)

²²News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

²³When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Acts 11:22-24 (NIV)

³⁰The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. ³¹The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. ³²Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers. Acts 15:30-32 (NIV)

Evangelism

Literal Meaning: To bring good news

Description: The gift of Evangelism is the divine enablement to effectively communicate the gospel to unbelievers so that respond in faith and move toward discipleship.

Distinctives: People with this gift

- Communicate the message of Christ with clarity and conviction
- Seek out opportunities to talk to unbelievers about spiritual matters
- Challenge unbelievers to faith and to become fully devoted followers of Christ
- Adapt their presentation of the gospel to connect with the individual's needs
- Seek opportunities to build relationships with unbelievers

Traits:

Cautions: People with this gift

Sincere

Candid

Respected

Influential

Spiritual

Confident

Commitment-oriented

Need to remember the Holy Spirit, not guilt, is the motivator in a person's decision for Christ.

Should avoid becoming critical of others by remembering that we are all "witnesses," but we not all "evangelists".

Need to listen carefully, because the same approach is not appropriate for everyone

¹¹It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, Ephes. 4:11 (NIV)

Acts 8:26-40

Luke 19:1-10

Faith

Literal Meaning: To trust, have confidence, believe

Description: The gift of Faith is the divine enablement to act on God's promises with confidence and unwavering belief in God's ability to fulfill his purposes.

Distinctives: People with this gift

Believe the promises of God and inspire others to do the same
Act in complete confidence of God's ability to overcome obstacles
Demonstrate an attitude of trust in God's will and his promises
Advance the cause of Christ because they go forward when others will not
Ask God for what is needed and trust him for his provision

Traits:

Prayerful
Optimistic
Trusting
Assured
Positive
Inspiring
Hopeful

Cautions: People with this gift

Need to act on their faith.
Should remember that those who speak with reason and desire to plan do not necessarily lack faith.
Should listen to and consider the counsel of wise and spirit-filled believers.

⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 1 Cor. 12:9 (NIV)

²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 1 Cor. 13:2 (NIV)

¹Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

¹⁸Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. ²⁰Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. Romans 4:18-21 (NIV)

Giving

Literal Meaning: To give part of, share

Description: The gift of Giving is the divine enablement to contribute money and resources to the work of the Lord with cheerfulness and liberality. People with this gift do not ask "How much money do I need to give to God?" but, "How much money do I need to live on?"

Distinctives: People with this gift

Manage their finances and limit their lifestyle in order to give as much of their resources as possible

Support the work of ministry with sacrificial gifts to advance the Kingdom

Meet tangible needs that enable spiritual growth to occur

Provide resources, generously and cheerfully, trusting God for his provision

May have a special ability to make money so that they may use it to further God's work

Traits:

Stewardship-oriented

Responsible

Resourceful

Charitable

Trusts in God

Disciplined

Cautions: People with this gift

Need to esteem their gift, remembering that giving money and resources is a spiritual contribution to the body of Christ.

Need to remember the church's agenda is determined by leaders, not by the giver's gift.

Need to guard against greed.

⁸if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Romans 12:8 (NIV)

⁸through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; 2 Cor. 6:8 (NIV)

¹As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ²He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ³"I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." Luke 21:1-4 (NIV)

Healing

Literal Meaning: To restore instantaneously

NOTE: The word is actually plural, "healings," which indicate that different kinds of healings are possible with this gift (i.e., emotional, relational, spiritual, physical, etc.)

Description: The gift of Healing is the divine enablement to be God's means for restoring people to wholeness

Distinctives: People with this gift

- Demonstrate the power of God
- Bring restoration to the sick and diseased
- Authenticate a message from God through healing
- Use it as an opportunity to communicate a biblical truth and to see God glorified
- Pray, touch, or speak words that miraculously bring healing to one's body

Traits:

- Compassionate
- Trusts in God
- Prayerful
- Full of faith
- Humble
- Responsive
- Obedient

Cautions: People with this gift

- Need to remember that it is not always their or the faith of the sick that determines a healing, but God who determines it.
- Need to realize that God does not promise to heal everyone who asks or is prayed for.
- Should remember that Jesus did not heal everyone who was sick or suffering while he on the earth.

⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 1 Cor. 12:9 (NIV)

²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 1 Cor. 12:28 (NIV)

³⁰Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 1 Cor. 12:30 (NIV)

Mark 2:1-12 (NIV)

Acts 3:1-16 (NIV)

Helps

Literal Meaning: To take the place of someone

Description: The gift of Helps is the divine enablement to accomplish practical and necessary tasks which free up, support and meet the needs of others.

Distinctives: People with this gift

Serve behind the scenes wherever needed to support the gifts and ministries of others

See the tangible and practical things to be done and enjoy doing them

Sense God's purpose and pleasure in meeting everyday responsibilities

Attach spiritual value to practical service

Enjoy knowing that they are freeing up others to do what God has called them to do

Traits:

Available

Willing

Helpful

Reliable

Loyal

Dependable

Whatever-it-takes attitude

Cautions: People with this gift

Need to esteem their gift, remembering that doing practical deeds is a *spiritual* contribution to the body of Christ.

Find it difficult to say "no".

Need to be responsive to the priorities of leadership instead of setting their own agendas.

¹In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." Acts 6:1-4 (NIV)

⁷If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; Romans 12:7 (NIV)

¹I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. ²I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.
Romans 16:1-2 (NIV)

²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 1 Cor. 12:28 (NIV)

Hospitality

Literal Meaning: To love strangers

Description: The gift of Hospitality is the divine enablement to care for people by providing fellowship, food and shelter.

Distinctives: People with this gift

- Provide an environment where people feel valued and cared for
- Meet new people and help them to feel welcomed
- Create a safe and comfortable setting where relationships can develop
- Seek ways to connect people together into meaningful relationships
- Set people at ease in unfamiliar surroundings

Traits:

- Friendly
- Gracious
- Inviting
- Trusting
- Caring
- Responsive
- Warm

Cautions: People with this gift

- Should avoid viewing their gift as just “entertaining”.
- Need to remember to ask *God* who he wants them to befriend and serve.
- Should be careful not to cause stress in their own family when inviting others into their home.

¹³Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Romans 12:13 (NIV)

¹Keep on loving each other as brothers. ²Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:1-2 (NIV)

⁹Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:9-10 (NIV)

Intercession

Literal Meaning: To plead on behalf of someone, intercede

Description: The gift of Intercession is the divine enablement to consistently pray on behalf of and for others, seeing frequent and specific results.

Distinctives: People with this gift

- Feel compelled to earnestly pray on behalf of someone or some cause
- Have a daily awareness of the spiritual battles being waged and pray
- Are convinced God moves in direct response to prayer
- Pray in response to the leading of the spirit, whether they understand it or not
- Exercise authority and power for the protection of others and the equipping of them to serve

Traits:

- Advocate
- Caring
- Sincere
- Peacemaker
- Trustworthy
- Burden-bearer
- Spiritually sensitive

Cautions: People with this gift

- Should avoid feeling that their gift is not valued, by remembering that interceding for others is their ministry and spiritual contribution to the body of Christ.
- Should avoid using prayer as an escape from fulfilling responsibilities.
- Need to avoid a "holier than thou" attitude sometimes caused by extended times of prayer and spiritual intimacy with God

²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. Romans 8:26-27 (NIV)

John 17:9-26 (NIV)

¹I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- ²for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 1 Tim. 2:1-2 (NIV)

⁹For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. Col. 1:9-12 (NIV)

Interpretation

Literal Meaning: To translate, interpret

Description: The gift of Interpretation is the divine enablement to make known to the body of Christ the message of one who is speaking in tongues.

Distinctives: People with this gift

- Respond to a message spoken in tongues by giving an interpretation
- Glorify God and demonstrate his power through this miraculous manifestation
- Edify the body by interpreting a timely message from God
- Understand an unlearned language and communicate that message to the body of Christ
- Are sometimes prophetic when exercising an interpretation of tongues for the church

Traits:

- Obedient
- Responsive
- Devoted
- Responsible
- Spiritually sensitive
- Discerning
- Wise

Cautions: People with this gift

- Need to remember that the message being interpreted should reflect the will of God and not man.
- Should remember that this gift is to provide edification, it's to build up the church.
- Use it in conjunction with tongues and it should be used in an orderly manner.

¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 1 Cor. 12:10 (NIV)

⁵I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified. 1 Cor. 14:5 (NIV)

²⁶What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. ²⁷If anyone speaks in a tongue, two--or at the most three--should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. ²⁸If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God. 1 Cor. 14:26-28 (NIV)

Knowledge

Literal Meaning: To know

Description: The gift of Knowledge is the divine enablement to bring truth to the body through a revelation or biblical insight.

Distinctives: People with this gift

- Receive truth which enables them to better serve the body
- Search the scriptures for insight, understanding and truth
- Have an unusual insight or understanding that serves the church
- Organize information for teaching and practical use
- Gain knowledge which was not attained by natural observation or means

Traits:

- Inquisitive
- Responsive
- Observant
- Insightful
- Reflective
- Studious
- Truthful

Cautions: People with this gift

- Need to be careful of this gift leading to pride (“knowledge puffs up”).
- Should remember that it's God message, not theirs, when they give a word of knowledge to the church.
- Need to remember with the increasing of knowledge comes the increasing of pain.

⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 1 Cor. 12:8 (NIV)

⁶Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷"Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

⁸Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Mark 2:6-8 (NIV)

⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

⁴⁶"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false."

⁴⁸"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

⁴⁹Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

⁵⁰Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." John 1:45-50 (NIV)

Leadership

Literal Meaning: To stand before

Description: The gift of Leadership is the divine enablement to cast vision, motivate and direct people to harmoniously accomplish the purposes of God.

Distinctives: People with this gift

- Provide direction for God's people or ministry
- Motivate others to perform to the best of their abilities
- Present the "big picture" for others to see
- Model the values of the ministry
- Take responsibility and establish goals

Traits:

- Influential
- Diligent
- Visionary
- Trustworthy
- Persuasive
- Motivating
- Goal-setter

Cautions: People with this gift

- Should realize their relational credibility takes time and is critical for leadership effectiveness.
- Should remember that servant leadership is the biblical model, the greatest being the servant of all.
- Do not need to be in a leadership "position" use this gift.

⁸if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Romans 12:8 (NIV)

¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17 (NIV)

²⁵Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. Luke 22:25-26 (NIV)

Mercy

Literal Meaning: To have compassion

Description: The gift of Mercy is the divine enablement to cheerfully and practically help those who are suffering or are in need, compassion moved to action.

Distinctives: People with this gift

- Focus upon alleviating the sources of pain or discomfort in suffering people
- Address the needs of the lonely and forgotten
- Express love, grace, and dignity to those facing hardships and crisis
- Serve in difficult or unsightly circumstances and do so cheerfully
- Concern themselves with individual or social issues that oppress people

Traits:

- Empathetic
- Caring
- Responsive
- Kind
- Compassionate
- Sensitive
- Burden-bearing

Cautions: People with this gift

- Need to be aware that rescuing people from their pain may be hindering God's work in them.
- Need to guard against feeling “unappreciated,” since some of the people helped will not show or express any appreciation.
- Should guard against becoming defensive and angry about the sources of others' pain.

⁸if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Romans 12:8 (NIV)

⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Matthew 5:7 (NIV)

Mark 10:46-52 (NIV)

Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)

Miracles

Literal Meaning: To do powerful deeds

Description: The gift of Miracles is the divine enablement to authenticate the ministry and message of God through supernatural interventions which glorify him.

Distinctives: People with this gift

Speak God's truth and have it authenticated by an accompanying miracle
Express confidence in God's faithfulness and ability to manifest his presence
Bring the ministry and message of Jesus Christ with power
Claim God to be the source of the miracle and Glorify him
Represent Christ and through the gift point people to a relationship with Christ

Traits:

Bold
Venturesome
Authoritative
God-fearing
Convincing
Prayerful
Responsive

Cautions: People with this gift

Need to remember that miracles are not necessarily caused by faith.
Should avoid viewing this gift as a personal responsibility, remembering that God determines the location and timing of his deeds.
Need to guard against the temptation to call on the Lord's presence and power for selfish purposes.

¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 1 Cor. 12:10 (NIV)

²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 1 Cor. 12:28-29 (NIV)

Luke 5:1-11 (NIV)

John 2:1-11 (NIV)

Prophecy

Literal Meaning: To speak before

Description: The gift of Prophecy is the divine enablement to reveal truth and proclaim it in a timely and relevant manner for understanding, correction, repentance or edification. There may be immediate or future implications.

Distinctives: People with this gift

- Expose sin or deception in others for the purpose of reconciliation
- Speak a timely word from God causing conviction, repentance and edification
- See truth that others often fail to see and challenge them to respond
- Warn of God's immediate or future judgment if there is no repentance
- Understand God's heart and mind through experiences he takes them through

Traits:

- Discerning
- Compelling
- Uncompromising
- Outspoken
- Authoritative
- Convicting
- Confronting

Cautions: People with this gift

- Need to be aware that listeners may reject the message if not spoken with love and compassion.
- Need to avoid pride which can create a demanding or discouraging Spirit that hinders the gift.
- Should remember that discernment and Scripture must support and agree with each prophecy.

⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. Romans 12:6 (NIV)

¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 1 Cor. 12:10 (NIV)

²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 1 Cor. 12:28 (NIV)

²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 1 Cor. 13:2 (NIV)

¹⁹And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:19-21 (NIV)

Shepherding

Literal Meaning: To shepherd a flock

Description: The gift of Shepherding is the divine enablement to nurture, care for and guide people toward on-going spiritual maturity and becoming like Christ

Distinctives: People with this gift

- Take responsibility to nurture the whole person in their walk with God
- Provide guidance and oversight to a group of God's people
- Model with their life what it means to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus
- Establish trust and confidence through long-term relationships
- Lead and protect those within their span of care

Traits:

- Influencing
- Nurturing
- Guiding
- Discipling
- Protective
- Supportive
- Relational

Cautions: People with this gift

- Should remember that God judges those who neglect or abuse their oversight responsibilities.
- Need to be aware that the desire to feed and support others can make it difficult to say “no”.
- Should realize that some of those being nurtured will grow beyond the shepherd's own ability and need to be freed to do so.

⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. Romans 12:6 (NIV)

¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 1 Cor. 12:10 (NIV)

²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 1 Cor. 12:28 (NIV)

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Teaching

Literal Meaning: To instruct

Description: The gift of Teaching is the divine enablement to understand, clearly explain and apply the word of god, causing greater Christ-likeness in the lives of listeners

Distinctives: People with this gift

Communicate biblical truth that inspires greater obedience to the word
Challenge listeners simply and practically with the truths of scripture
Present the whole counsel of God for maximum life change
Give attention to detail and accuracy
Prepare through extended times of study and reflection

Traits:

Cautions: People with this gift

Disciplined
Perceptive
Teachable
Authoritative
Practical
Analytical
Articulate

Should avoid pride that may result from their "superior" biblical knowledge and understanding.
Could become too detailed when teaching and fail to make life application.
Should remember that their spirituality is not measured by how much they know

⁷If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; Romans 12:7 (NIV)

²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 1 Cor. 12:28-29 (NIV)

²⁴Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

²⁷When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. ²⁸For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. Acts 18:24-28 (NIV)

²And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. 2 Tim. 2:2 (NIV)

Tongues

Literal Meaning: Tongue, language

Description: The gift of Tongues is the divine enablement to speak, worship or pray in a language unknown to the speaker. People with the gift may receive a spontaneous message from God which is made known to his body through the gift of Interpretation.

Distinctives: People with this gift

- Express with an interpretation a word by the Spirit which edifies the body
- Communicate a message given by God for the church
- Speak in a language they have never learned and do not understand
- Worship the Lord with unknown words too deep for the mind to comprehend
- Experience an intimacy with God which inspires them to serve and edify others

Traits:

- Sensitive
- Prayerful
- Responsive
- Trusting
- Devoted
- Spontaneous
- Receptive

Cautions: People with this gift

- Should remain silent in the church if there is no interpreter.
- Should avoid expecting others to manifest this gift which may cause inauthenticity of the Spirit.
- Should remember that all the gifts, including one, are to edify others.

¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 1 Cor. 12:10 (NIV)

²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 1 Cor. 12:28-30 (NIV)

^{13:1}If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 1 Cor. 13:1 (NIV)

1 Cor. 14:1-33 (NIV)

Acts 2:1-11 (NIV)

Wisdom

Literal Meaning: To apply truth practically

Description: The gift of Wisdom is the divine enablement to apply spiritual truth effectively to meet a need in a specific situation.

Distinctives: People with this gift

- Focus on the unseen consequences in determining the next steps to take
- Receive an understanding of what is necessary to meet the needs of the body
- Provide divinely given solutions in the midst of conflict and confusion
- Hear the Spirit provide direction for God's best in a given situation
- Apply spiritual truth in specific and practical ways

Traits:

- Sensible
- Insightful
- Practical
- Wise
- Fair
- Experienced
- Common Sense

Cautions: People with this gift

- Could fail to see the wisdom that God has given them.
- Need to avoid having others develop a dependence upon them, which may weaken their faith in God.
- Need to be patient with others who do not have this gift.

⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 1 Cor. 12:8 (NIV)

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. James 3:13-18 (NIV)

1 Cor. 2:3-14 (NIV)

Jeremiah 9:23-24 (NIV)

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