

Building Blocks of Life

16 Discipleship Principles

***Building a personal life structure that
will withstand the storms of life...***

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one must be careful how he builds. For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. — 1 Corinthians 3:10–11 [BSB]

Building Blocks of Life – Discipleship Study

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Table of Contents

Purpose of This Book.....	1
A Good Foundation is Critical.....	1
Laying the Right Foundation	1
Rebuilding from a Previous Foundation.....	2
How to Apply the Material in This Book	3
The Authority of the Word	5
Introduction.....	5
Why Scripture Is Given	5
The Authorship of the Word of God	6
The Word of God Is Alive.....	7
Reasons For Studying the Bible	7
Man's Opinion in Light of God's Word	8
Getting the Most from the Word	9
We must align ourselves with the Word of God.....	9
Response To Truth.....	10
Final Thought!	10
The Lordship of Jesus Christ.....	11
Jesus is Lord by Hereditary Right and Preeminence	11
What does it mean for Jesus to be “Lord”?	13
Jesus’ Goals	14
Jesus’ Character.....	15
How Can We Truly Make Jesus Lord?	16
Divided Loyalties	17
So, What Do We Do?	18
Conclusion	19
Response to Truth	20
The Person, Work, and Ministry of the Holy Spirit	21
Introduction.....	21
Personality of the Holy Spirit.....	21
Work of the Holy Spirit.....	22
Holy Spirit at Salvation	24
Baptism with the Holy Spirit.....	25
The Holy Spirit and Tongues.....	26
Receiving the Baptism with the Holy Spirit	28
Response To Truth.....	29
Misconceptions About Tongues.....	31
Introduction.....	31
What are Tongues?	31
The Purpose of Tongues.....	32
Common Misconceptions about Tongues	32
Conclusion	36

Righteousness: Set Free from Sin's Power	39
We Are Guilty	39
The Law Can't Fix Us.....	40
Just Dying to Get Free	41
No Longer Under the Law	42
Adoption and Inheritance	42
The Law Was Never Plan A.....	43
Is it Okay to Sin?	45
The Law of Love.....	46
Do I Still Need to Repent?	46
No Condemnation	47
Conclusion	47
Spirit, Soul, and Body.....	49
Introduction.....	49
Three Parts — One Person	49
Salvation of the Whole Person.....	51
Successful Christian Living – Inside Out	53
Anatomy of Sin	55
How Does Spirit, Soul, & Body Impact Prayer & Praise?.....	56
Sanctification	56
Summary	57
Worship that Moves Father's Heart	59
Introduction.....	59
Ten Cents Worth of Instruction on Worship!.....	60
A Word about Musical Worship from our Sponsor!	60
Why is something like this a big deal to God!	62
Thinking Back.....	62
Response To Truth.....	63
From Forgiven to Forgiving	65
Hurts Happen	65
Responses to Hurts and Offenses	65
Reasons to Forgive	68
Wrong Ideas About Forgiving.....	69
Goal of Forgiving	71
Help Us Forgive.....	72
Properly Asking for Forgiveness	75
Consequences of Unforgiveness	76
Results and Benefits of Forgiveness.....	77
Homework.....	78
Faith that Pleases God	79
Introduction.....	80
Putting Our Definition to the Test!	81
Getting the Faith of God!	84
Releasing the Faith of God!	86
Response To Truth.....	86

Healing for Life.....	87
Having No “Little Faith” for... Healing!	87
Bringing Faith for Healing Home!	88
Faith for Healing Comes by Hearing His Word on Healing!	92
If Faith for Healing can come... it can also go!	93
Ways To Let Healing In!	93
Response To Truth.....	94
Effortless Prosperity.....	97
Introduction.....	97
A True definition of Prosperity.....	100
The Two Conditions of our Covenant for Prosperity!	101
Show Me the Money!.....	104
Where is “faith” in all this prosperity?	105
Response To Truth.....	105
The Things We Do	107
Biblical Practices.....	107
Water Baptism.....	107
Communion	112
Conclusion	116
Being a Follower of Jesus.....	117
Introduction.....	117
In The Beginning There was God... and it was all about Him!.....	119
So, Where Is (and Isn’t) He?	121
So, Where Are We?	121
Response To Truth.....	123
Prayer: Conversation with Your Father	125
Introduction.....	125
Who Ya Talkin’ To?	126
The Approach: Confidence is Key.....	127
Because I Said So!.....	129
Seen and not heard...not in this Family.....	130
Timing Is Everything (Kairos)	131
Persistence Pays Off	134
My Brother’s Keeper?	134
Expanding the Family	135
Hindrances to Prayer	136
Conclusion:	136
Scripture Prayers	136
End Times Overview.....	137
Introduction.....	137
Why is it Important to Know About End Times?	137
Purpose of Prophecy	137
Great Tribulation or Wrath of God?	138
The “Rapture”	140
Transition from Great Tribulation to Wrath	141

End Times Overview	142
What Difference Should It Make in Your Life?	145
Graphical Timeline Chart.....	147
Love Like Jesus.....	149
Love God and Others.....	149
What Is Agape Love?	150
Jesus Our Example of Agape Love	151
Agape Defines Your Purpose in Life	152
Practical Agape	152
Conclusion	155
Appendix – Answers to Questions.....	157

Purpose of This Book

Building Blocks of Life is designed to help you walk through the process of building a strong, biblical life structure that empowers you to live a productive and overcoming life as a Christian. Such a life can be resistant to the storms that we can encounter.

A Good Foundation is Critical

Before beginning to build a house or other structure, you must start with the right foundation. In a similar way, it is extremely important that you have the right foundation when building your life. When it comes to human lives, there is only one foundation that truly works and withstands the rigors of life and time: Jesus!

1 Corinthians 3:9–11 —For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one must be careful how he builds. **For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.** [BSB]

Once you have a foundation laid for your life in Jesus, it is critical that you follow through by building a life that includes strong building blocks of beliefs, character, purposes, goals, and actions. Then you will have a life that is unshakable.

1 Corinthians 3:12–15 —If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, his workmanship will be evident, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will prove the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive a reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but only as if through the flames. [BSB]

Luke 6:46–49 —Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ but not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to Me and **hears My words and acts on them**: He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and **laid his foundation on the rock**. When the flood came, the torrent crashed against that house but **could not shake it, because it was well built**. But the one who hears My words and does not act on them is like a man who built his house on ground without a foundation. The torrent crashed against that house, and immediately it fell—and great was its destruction!” [BSB]

Laying the Right Foundation

So how can we lay our foundation in Jesus Christ?

John 3:3–7 —Jesus replied, “Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” ... “Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh is born of flesh, but spirit is born of the Spirit. Do not be amazed that I said, ‘You must be born again.’ [BSB]

Jesus is telling us that our original foundation is flawed and that we need a “do over.” Jesus compares this process of laying a good foundation to being born again—a fresh start with a complete replacement of your foundation and a refocus of your life. This new foundation is not laid with physical work

(worldly knowledge, efforts, or tools), but by the work of God's Spirit in us through faith in Jesus.

Can't we just work harder and do better with what we already have? No, we need a totally new foundation based on faith rather than a flawed one based on good works and effort.

Galatians 2:16 —know that a man is not justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. [BSB]

We cannot lay a strong, properly aligned (justified) foundation by just being good or doing good things. Fortunately, the path to a right foundation is available in Jesus. He paid the debt we owed and provided forgiveness and redemption (justification) for all. But it requires an acceptance and response from each of us for it to become effective. We must each take that step of faith, turning from our self-rule to invite Jesus to be Lord (Ruler) of our lives. This is a step taken in faith as we call upon the Name of the Lord.

Romans 10:9–10, 13 —that if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with your heart you believe and are justified, and with your mouth you confess and are saved. ... for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Believing in Jesus and making Him your Lord is what lays the right foundation in your life.

Rebuilding from a Previous Foundation

Suppose that in building a new house, you put up several walls, then find that there are provisions for only two bathrooms when you need three. Upon investigation, you find that the foundation contractors used the wrong plans and laid the wrong foundation for your house. Unfortunately, to fix it you will need to remove the walls and other parts that have already been built on the wrong foundation, then completely replace the foundation with the right one. After that, you can begin to add the structural parts.

It is critical to lay a foundation of Jesus in your life as the base for everything else in your life. And changing from a worldly foundation to a foundation of Jesus in your life is like replacing any foundation, it affects EVERYTHING that was built on that old foundation. That means that the entire structure must also be rebuilt. There will be some parts from the old "building" that may be good and appropriate for reuse in your new structure. Yet many parts of the old building will be defective, damaged, or inappropriate—and these must not be reused on your new foundation in Jesus if you desire a storm-resistant life full of the joy, peace, and hope that we have been promised.

Romans 15:13 —Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. [BSB]

This book includes some of the critical "building-block" truths from God's Word, the Bible, so that anyone can build a good, durable structure upon the foundation that they have in Jesus. The material in the following chapters also helps us sort through the beliefs and practices in our lives so we can determine which ones belong in our new structure and which ones need to be replaced. As we develop a lifestyle upon God's Word and Truth, we will find

increasing resilience and strength against the storms we encounter in our daily lives.

How to Apply the Material in This Book

It is critically important that you build carefully upon your foundation of faith in Jesus.

1 Corinthians 3:10–11 —By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. **But each one must be careful how he builds.** ... [BSB]

As you work through the material, take time to thoroughly understand each topic. Don't rush through reading a chapter just so you can check it off of a list. The goal in Bible study is transformation of your beliefs, character, thought processes, purposes, and actions so that they more closely align to those of Jesus.

Romans 12:1–2 —Therefore I urge you, brothers, on account of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. [BSB]

Look up the referenced verses in the Bible and meditate on them. (Biblical meditation is to contemplate what the passage means and consider how it should apply to your daily life.) It is important to confirm for yourself that these critical teachings are truly what God says about each. Your faith must be built upon the Word of God in the Bible, not in just what someone tells you that it says.

As you read and meditate on the truths and principles God included in the Bible then obey them, your faith will grow. The more diligent you are in this, the more your faith grows.

Romans 10:17 —Consequently, faith comes by hearing, and hearing [comes] by the word of Christ. [BSB]

This is a life-long journey of growth that you are embarking on with Jesus! While the process may be difficult at times, you will experience an increasing joy and peace as you engage with this transformation process empowered in you by God's Word through the work of the Holy Spirit, your Helper in the journey.

John 14:26 —But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. [NKJV]

Jesus invites you to give up your own self-serving goals and follow Him.

Luke 9:23–24 —Then Jesus said to all of them, "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. [BSB]

May the Lord abundantly bless your growth and partnership with Him so that many will see Him and come to know Him through you.

 **Please note that answers to questions asked in each chapter are available in the Appendix where applicable.**

Audio Teachings Available

While this book is designed to be used on its own with the Bible, there are free audio teachings using this material for those who would like to take advantage of them. They are available online at <https://www.life4square.com/building-blocks/> .

The Authority of the Word

by Cere Muscarella

Key Verses:

2 Timothy 3:16–17 —All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. [KJV]

John 6:63 —It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. [KJV]

Introduction

The foundation and guide for the Christian life is the Word of God. Within its vast wisdom we find the keys to salvation for every area of our life: spirit, soul, and body. For a person to be solid in his beliefs about God, he must establish each belief on the Word of God.

It is also important for us to believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, carrying with it this promise for those who believe it:

Matthew 7:24–25 —Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the torrents raged, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, **because its foundation was on the rock.** [BSB]

However, of those who decide they will not believe and act on the Word or only a portion of the Word Jesus said:

Matthew 7:26–27 —But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the torrents raged, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its collapse!" [BSB]



According to Matthew 7:24-27, what is the outcome of those who place their confidence in the Word of God as final authority, versus those who do not accept its authority?

Why Scripture Is Given

2 Timothy 3:16–17 —All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. [KJV]

The word "inspiration" means "breathed out by God". Rephrased, this verse says,

"All scripture was breathed out by God and is inspired and profitable for teaching, conviction, correction, instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

To expand further, the word *doctrine* is translated "instruction," *reproof* is translated "conviction of sin," *correction* is translated "improvement of character" and *instruction in righteousness*, has the idea of "training or discipline."

We could accurately paraphrase this verse this way:

"The scriptures for the salvation of our spirit, soul and body are Divinely breathed by God and are profitable for instruction, for the conviction of sin, for the improvement of our character and for our training in righteousness, so that we may be mature, being fully equipped for every beneficial work!"

The Word of God is (and has) everything we need to become a complete and perfected Christian, fruitful in every good work!

 **According to 2 Timothy 3:16 the Scriptures are profitable in least four ways. List those ways and explain them briefly.**

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

The Authorship of the Word of God

2 Timothy 3:16 —All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [BSB]

2 Peter 1:20, 21 — "Know this first, that no prophecy is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." [KJV paraphrased]

The Bible is not attributed to men, was not originated by the human mind, was not compiled, nor can it be accounted for, on human terms, but fantastically, it came down from God to us through human vessels speaking (and recording) for Him!

The Bible expresses the same truth when it speaks of the Scriptures as the "Word of God," the "Word of the Lord," "My Word," "thus says the Lord," and in regards to men delivering it, "The Word of the Lord came unto me!" **THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD!**

Because it is supernatural in origin, it sometimes seems like the Word of God in the Bible is contrary to human reason. It is not contrary to reason, but it is contrary to the natural mind and ordinary human experience! Men being raised from the dead, being led by a pillar of fire and cloud, or hearing and writing the Word of God under Divine Guidance are not ordinary experiences... But given the extraordinary nature and abilities of God the events recorded for us are not contrary to reason. He can do anything!

The Word of God is completely trustworthy! We can build our lives on it without fear because He watches over His Word to perform it (Jeremiah 1:12), and He is not a man that He can lie (Numbers 23:19)!

The Word of God Is Alive

The Bible is the only book that can be read over and over and still bring new insights and understanding. There are no limits to what we can learn if we apply ourselves to the study of God's Word! Jesus said:

John 6:63 —The Spirit gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. [BSB]

There are two ways to learn spiritual things. First, we can learn mentally. We take things "in," think about them, and come to certain conclusions. Learning at this level alone will always lead us into error when it comes to spiritual things, because spiritual things are discerned at a spiritual level (1 Corinthians 2:14)! Second, we learn by direct revelation from the Spirit of God. He comes to quicken in us the things we know and to teach us things that we don't! This happens by a "quickenings" of the things we read in the Word or by Spirit inspired teaching. The things we think we are hearing by direct revelation and the things we are taught must line up with the whole Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12 —For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it pierces even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. [BSB]

When the Word of God is applied to our lives, it is capable of cutting out unwanted areas and replacing it with the life of God.

 **From the scripture mentioned above, describe the characteristics of the Word of God.**

Reasons For Studying the Bible

- The Bible will keep you from sin. **Psalm 119:9-11**
- It is a lamp unto our feet, lighting the way we should go. **Psalm 119:105**
- The Bible is a guide to, and equippage on, the way of life. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
- The Word cleanses us. **John 15:3, Ephesians 5:26**
- The Bible causes people to live fruitful and prosperous lives. **Psalm 1:1-3**
- To rightly divide the Word and not be ashamed. **2 Timothy 2:15**
- The Word is the Sword of the Spirit. **Ephesians 6:13-17**
- Because faith comes by the Word. **Romans 10:17**
- Because we are destroyed for a lack of knowledge of the Word. **Hosea 4:6**
- By it we receive hope **Romans 15:4**
- It brings us continuing salvation **1 Timothy 4:16**
- It contains everything we need to live a godly life. **2 Peter 1:3-4**

 **Look up the passages above and list the benefits we receive by studying the Bible. (Can you find more?)**

Man's Opinion in Light of God's Word

The authority of God's Word has been established. However, there are those who believe and preach contrary to the Word of God. What should our attitude be?

We must obey God's Word

Once we have knowledge of the Word, we must be obedient to that word in order to call Him Lord.

Luke 6:46 —Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I say? [BSB]

Galatians 1:9 —As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be under a curse! [BSB]

We must yield our personal opinions to scriptural authority.

Our preconceived ideas must be put away if they do not follow the established guidelines of the Bible. We should not change the Word to line up with our understanding of it, but change our understanding to line up with the Word of God.

2 Corinthians 10:5 —We tear down arguments and every presumption set up against the knowledge of God; and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. [BSB]

Proverbs 14:12 — "There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end of it is death." [KJV paraphrased]

We must hold fast to, and stand for, sound doctrine.

2 Timothy 1:13 —Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching you have heard from me, with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. [BSB]

2 Timothy 3:1,6,14,15 — "Know this, that in the last days dangerous times will come... And many will be led away with diverse lusts... But you continue in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them; and that from a child you have known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" [KJV paraphrased]

2 Timothy 4:2-4 — Preach the Word; be instant in season and out, reprove, rebuke, exhort with longsuffering and doctrine for the time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts will find for themselves reassuring teachers, having itching ears; and they will turn away from the truth and they will pursue fables" [KJV paraphrased]



What must our response be when we find that previously held doctrines and ideas are found to be contrary to the Word of God?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Getting the Most from the Word

We must read, hear, and meditate on the Word.

Joshua 1:8 —This Book of the Law must not depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in all you do. [BSB]

We must set aside time every day to read the Word of God. It is food for our hearts just like the food we have for our bodies. Without it we starve. Try this —don't eat food if you don't take time to imbibe the Word of God. Pretty soon you'll be reading regularly! Listen to the Word of God audio version in your car on the way to work or the store or wherever. Play the Bible audio next to your bed before you knock out at night. Listen to it while you soak in the tub. Have it as background "noise" in your home or while you're working on a favorite project instead of the TV or radio. It will get inside you without a lot of effort. Meditate on it! To meditate means to "rollover in your mind" or to "think about" or to "mutter" something over and over, pressing it into your mind.

For genuinely sincere students, try this old mnemonic device; write the Word! Start with a small epistle, sit down with your pen and a tablet, then write it out word for word (as if you were a centuries old scribe). Kick it up another notch by reading each phrase or verse out loud before you start writing and say it again as you write it! Engage the Word of God with your eyes, ears, voice, and hands and you'll find Scriptures being indelibly imprinted on your mind and heart! What would happen if you scribed all the Pauline epistles... or the entire New Testament... or added the first five books of the Old Testament? WOW! Try it! You'll love what happens to you!

 **What two promises are given for meditating on the Word?**

- a. _____
- b. _____

We must align ourselves with the Word of God.

It is crucial that we are not just hearers of God's Word, but that we also follow (do) His Word. That means we must align our thoughts, words, and actions with those of God as He has shown us in the Bible. To do that, we confess His Word, we examine our life in light of His Word, and we also apply the truths of God's Word to our daily living.

We must confess the Word

Hebrews 10:23 —Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) [KJV]

The word profession here is translated – "confession". We are admonished to confess our faith and not to waiver for He is faithful. When trials or temptations come, be ready to meet and defeat them with the Word. Confess the truth about yourself out loud!

We must examine ourselves by the Word.

2 Corinthians 13:5 —Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves... [BSB]

All too often we "compare ourselves, with ourselves" and as scripture says, this is not wise! (2 Corinthians 10:12) We can develop a sense of false security about our lives if we are looking around at others to see how we are doing by comparison! We can always find someone doing worse than we are and the problem is that often it makes us feel good about ourselves! Jesus and the Word of God are the standards of our lives!

Let the Word of God become a mirror that you look in to see what you look like! Do you see Jesus in the pages of the Bible? How much like Him do you look? Do you see yourself in the Word? How close to its calling to "higher ways, higher thoughts and heavenly places" are you?

We must apply the Word of God to ourselves.

Response To Truth

 **Do you believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

 **Are you willing to accept it as the final authority in your life?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

 **How well are you applying the Word in the following areas of your life?**
(0-10, zero = not at all, 10 = working well)

Doctrinal beliefs ____ (1-10) **Family relationships** ____ (1-10)

Sexual conduct ____ (1-10) **All other relationships** ____ (1-10)

Use of time ____ (1-10) **Financial accountability** ____ (1-10)

 **Are you willing to make a change?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

Final Thought!

Knowing the Word of God means knowing God! If you don't know the Word, you will always be hindered in knowing Him intimately. Through the Word we see His actions and learn His character. Through the Word we get familiar with His ways, drawing nearer to Him until, at some moment, we find ourselves in His wonderful presence. We will never exist on this earth without the continuing need to read and immerse ourselves in the Word. By spending quality time in the Word up front, we will come to the place where we will know His ways so well, we could live successfully in the end times without a copy of His Word! And His ways will shape our thoughts and life-styles.

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

by Sonny Bowman

Suppose you bought a new car from someone. One day you go out to get in your car and it's not there! It turns out that the previous owner kept a copy of the key and was using your car from time to time—and he didn't seem to think there was a problem. He would even wave to you as he brought the car back. Any time you wanted to go somewhere; you never knew if the car would be available. How would that make you feel?

That's how we treat Jesus. He purchased us with His blood. Yet we regularly take our lives out for "scenic drives." Sometimes we even go places that are dark and ugly. Jesus wants to use us, but we are not available. How do you think He feels about it.

The real question is, "Who is really running your life? Who is the Lord of your life?"

Luke 6:46–49 —Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them: He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid his foundation on the rock. When the flood came, the torrent crashed against that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears My words and does not act on them is like a man who built his house on ground without a foundation. The torrent crashed against that house, and immediately it fell—and great was its destruction!" [BSB]

Are you having trouble weathering the storms of life? Maybe it because you are not hearing and acting on God's words.

Do you have places in your life that have not been turned over to Jesus, yet? If you decide which parts of your life Jesus gets to rule over and which parts you reserve for yourself, who is the one really in charge? Jesus is not really Lord of your life—you are! It may be a discouraging realization, but recognizing this can help you know where to begin to truly let Jesus be Lord of all.

 **What does Lordship mean to you?**

Jesus is Lord by Hereditary Right and Preeminence

Jesus didn't just decide to be Lord. He is Lord!

Hebrews 1:1–4 —On many past occasions and in many different ways, God spoke to our fathers through the prophets. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He

made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature, upholding all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. So He became as far superior to the angels as the name He has inherited is excellent beyond theirs. [BSB]

Colossians 1:18 —And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead, so that in all things He may have preeminence. [BSB]

Jesus is God by nature

John 1:1–4 —In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. [BSB]

Jesus always existed. He was not created. Jesus, the Word was and is God!

Hebrews 1:8 —But about the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever, and justice is the scepter of Your kingdom. [BSB]

Jesus, the Son, is addressed as "O God."

Colossians 2:9 —For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form. [BSB]

All the fullness of God is in Jesus.

John 5:17–18 —But Jesus answered them, "To this very day My Father is at His work, and I too am working." Because of this, the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him. Not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. [BSB]

The Jews understood exactly what Jesus meant! They knew that when Jesus called God His Father, Jesus was declaring that He is God! Later, Jesus was even more clear in His assertion that He is God—and the Jews again wanted to kill Him for blasphemy.

John 10:30–33 —I and the Father are one." At this, the Jews again picked up stones to stone Him. But Jesus responded, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone Me?" "We are not stoning You for any good work," said the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because You, who are a man, declare Yourself to be God." [BSB]



Is Jesus God?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Jesus gave His life to give us life

Romans 3:23–24 —for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. [BSB]

Everyone is guilty of sin.

Romans 6:23 —For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. [BSB]

Our sin earns wages—death!

1 Peter 2:24 —He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. "By His stripes you are healed." [BSB]

Jesus literally took our individual sins in His own body on the cross, and died the death that we deserved.

Ephesians 2:1, 4-5 —And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ... But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved! [BSB]

We were dead because of our sin, but Jesus made us alive!

Jesus is worthy to be Lord

Romans 14:9 —For this reason Christ died and returned to life, that He might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. [BSB]

His resurrection demonstrates the authority and lordship of Jesus over every area of life and death.

Colossians 1:16-18 —For in Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead, so that in all things He may have preeminence. [BSB]

Jesus has superiority over everything.

Revelation 5:12 —In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" [BSB]

What does it mean for Jesus to be "Lord"?

To do what Jesus says.

Jesus expects us to do what He says.

Luke 6:46 —Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I say? [BSB]

Jesus made it clear that for Him to be truly Lord, we must do what He says. It is not optional!

 **How do we determine if Jesus is Lord in our lives according to Luke 6:46?**

If you think that Jesus is Lord, but you do not do what He says, then you are only deceiving yourself.

James 1:22 —Be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Otherwise, you are deceiving yourselves. [BSB]

 **If we call Jesus "Lord," but don't do what He says, we are _____.**

So let's see how well we are doing when it comes to some things that Jesus said.

Jesus said to love one another.

John 15:12 —This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. [BSB]

Jesus said to forgive others.

Mark 11:25 —And when you stand to pray, if you hold anything against another, forgive it, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your trespasses as well.” [BSB]

Jesus said to take up your cross and follow Him.

Matthew 10:38 —and anyone who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. [BSB]

2 Corinthians 5:15 —And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again. [BSB]

Jesus said to proclaim the good news of God’s Kingdom to everyone.

Mark 16:15 —And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. [BSB]

This is not just for preachers. We must all tell others about God’s solution for our spiritual deadness.

Jesus said to make disciples, teaching them to do what He says.

Matthew 28:19–20 —Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” [BSB]

We are commanded to teach others how to follow Jesus and truly make Him Lord of their lives. So what else is required for Jesus to be Lord of my life?

To run my life consistent with His goals and character.

How can Jesus truly be Lord of my life if I live in a way that is inconsistent with His goals and character? Am I doing things He would never do? Do I fail to do the things He desires?

In order for us to live a life that is consistent with Jesus’ goals and character, we must start by knowing what are His goals and character. The Bible is full of them, but here are a few examples.

Jesus’ Goals

Goals are the end results toward which your efforts are directed. Jesus’ work is done with specific end results (goals) in mind. We need to understand His goals so that we can get in step with His work.

Search for and save those who are lost.

Luke 19:10 —For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” [BSB]

Obey the Father's will.

John 5:19 —So Jesus replied, “Truly, truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself, unless He sees the Father doing it. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does. [BSB]

John 5:30 —I can do nothing by Myself; I judge only as I hear. And My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. [BSB]

Bear witness to the truth.

John 18:37 —“Then You are a king!” Pilate said. “You say that I am a king,” Jesus answered. “For this reason I was born and have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice.” [BSB]

Destroy the works of the devil

1 John 3:8 —The one who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the very start. This is why the Son of God was revealed, to destroy the works of the devil. [BSB]

Jesus' Character

Character involves who Jesus is and how He thinks. Things we do because of character are done because they are consistent with who we are and how we think. They are not done simply to achieve a certain goal or result. Following are some verses that describe Jesus' character.

Self-sacrificing love and service

John 15:9–13 —As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His love. I have told you these things so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. [BSB]

Matthew 20:25–28 —But Jesus called them aside and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their superiors exercise authority over them. It shall not be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” [BSB]

What about us? Do we usually look out for ourselves first? At a party, if there are only a few pieces of your favorite cheese cake, do you rush to the front of the line to be sure you get a piece? Looking out for our own interest before the best interest of others is inconsistent with the character of Jesus.

Philippians 2:3–5 —Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: [BSB]

Faithful

2 Timothy 2:13 —if we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. [BSB]

Jesus always does what He says. How about you? Can people always count on you to do what you say you will do—no matter what? Jesus is faithful even

when we are not faithful. Do you feel justified to break your word when the other party breaks his? We must remain faithful even when others are not.

Truthful, Honest

Luke 20:21 —“Teacher,” they inquired, “we know that You speak and teach correctly. You show no partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. [BSB]

Jesus never told even a little white lie. How about you? Any untruth or dishonesty is inconsistent with the character of Jesus.

Holy

Mark 1:24 —“What do You want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” [BSB]

1 Peter 1:15–16 —But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” [BSB]

Jesus is holy by nature (He is God), but He is also holy by character (how He thinks and what He does). To be holy is to have no place for impurity or evil—no mixture of impurity. (Even a tiny bit of poison in a glass of water makes it unsuitable for drinking.)

But we sometimes dabble in sin—just a little. We often have places in our lives that are closed off from the light, and we secretly visit those places from time to time. That is inconsistent with the character of Jesus.

 **For Jesus to be Lord of my life, I must live in a way that is consistent with His _____ and _____.**

How Can We Truly Make Jesus Lord?

Lordship, at least for now, is something that must be given freely. It is a **loving** response to the One who forgave your sins and made a way for you to be adopted into God’s family. It is a life-long process of growth as we journey with Jesus. It is not a one-time decision or event—though it often begins with a choice to follow Jesus. Sometimes we have to purposely reaffirm that decision when we get distracted or off track in following Jesus.

Learn and Know

Matthew 11:29 —Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [BSB]

It is hard to make Jesus Lord if you don’t study to learn Jesus’ commands, Jesus’ goals, and Jesus’ character.

So, for Jesus to be Lord, you must be regularly and effectively studying the Bible. Then regularly do what it says (Luke 6:46-48).

Obedience

Obedience is expected. You do not belong to yourself. You were dead in sin and destined for destruction. Jesus purchased you with His death on the cross. He has every right to expect our full obedience to His will.

John 14:15 —If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. [BSB]

Your actions show what you truly believe! If you say that Jesus is Lord, but don't obey His will, then you prove that you don't really believe that Jesus is Lord. That is why Jesus asked, "why do you call me Lord and don't do what I say?" (Luke 6:46) He knew why—because our disobedience proves that He is not Lord. His question was not to solicit information. It was to point out that our actions belied our claims. And that was not to condemn us, but to correct us. Remember! If you think that Jesus is Lord, but you do not do what He says, then you are only deceiving yourself.

James 1:22 —Be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Otherwise, you are deceiving yourselves. [BSB]

Deferring

What do you want? Often, we are most interested in what we want in a particular situation. But how often do we ask, what does Jesus want? Are we willing to defer to His will when we want something else?

Luke 22:42 —"Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me. Yet not My will, but Yours be done." [BSB]

James 4:13–16 —Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business, and make a profit." You do not even know what will happen tomorrow! What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord is willing, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your proud intentions. All such boasting is evil. [BSB]

Yield! At a yield sign, we are expected to allow the other traffic to go first. Since Jesus is Lord, we are expected to yield our rights and expectations to Jesus, granting Him the right to "go first." That means that work toward choosing to do what Jesus wants over what we want, in every situation.

Divided Loyalties

Lordship is an all or nothing proposition. Our goal must be to turn over lordship over more and more areas in our lives to Jesus—even though imperfectly at times.

James 4:7-10 — So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for **your loyalty is divided between God and the world**. Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor. [NLT]

We tend to compartmentalize our lives—typically into *spiritual* parts and *practical* parts. Then we let Jesus be Lord of the *spiritual* parts (church, prayer, Christian friendships, etc.). At the same time, we retain lordship over the *practical* parts (home, work, entertainment, secular friends, etc.). As a result, we live one way around Christians and another way in the world. There is a biblical term for this: *hypocrisy*!

Jesus expects to permeate every part of your being and life. It is a life-long process, but we must be actively engaged in turning over **all** territory to His rule and reign.

So, What Do We Do?

If you are like me, there are areas in your life where Jesus is not Lord, yet. What can keep us from making Jesus Lord of all of our life? Well, it can be due to any of the following.

Ignorance – *Oops! Guess that excuse is gone now that you know that Jesus expects to be Lord of your life!*

Distraction – This is a big one! We can become so busy with life—even Christian “things”—that we don’t take time to actively pursue submission to the will of God.

Outright rebellion – This one is extremely dangerous! We know Jesus expects to be Lord, but we want to do what we want to do, so we ignore His claims on our life.

1 Samuel 15:23 — For rebellion *is* as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness *is* as iniquity and idolatry.” [NKJV]

Whatever the case, we can get back on track by repenting, renewing, reviewing, and restoring.

Repent

Ask forgiveness for stealing what rightly belongs to Jesus—Lordship over your life. He purchased your life, and it does not belong to you!

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 —Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body. [BSB]

 **What right does Jesus have to demand to be Lord over all of you?**

Renew

Renew your commitment to the lordship of Jesus **in every area of your life**.

You must aggressively pursue making Jesus Lord throughout your entire lifetime.

Romans 12:1 —Therefore I urge you, brothers, on account of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. [BSB]

The trouble with living sacrifices is that they keep crawling off the altar. So, we must constantly corral our wandering souls, bringing them back to submission to Jesus.

Review

Regularly review Jesus’ instructions, goals, and character in the context of your life. (See verses above.) This can help you refocus and realign yourself with the ways of Jesus.

 **How well are your life and ways conforming to Jesus' ways, including His goals and purposes?**

Restore

Do what's necessary to restore Jesus as the true Lord of all your life. There is room for only one person at a time on the throne of your life. So get off the throne and let Jesus be Lord! Make changes now—don't wait until later.

Acts 2:36 —Therefore let all Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ!" [BSB]

Conclusion

Have you truly confessed Jesus as Lord in your life? Or are you simply looking to Him to save you from bad stuff in the future?

People sometimes accept Jesus as Savior for nothing more than "fire insurance." Just in case there is a hell, they get "saved." But then their lives are not much different than before. They will do just enough to keep God from getting too mad at them. They go to church—at least sometimes. They try to clean up their lives—at least a little. And they focus on their good intentions, even though they seldom follow through with real change. They proclaim, "God knows my heart...." as an excuse for not following Jesus.

Everyone has good intentions! Having good intentions is nothing! Someone has said, "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions." We can sometimes rest on simply having good intentions as being virtuous, allowing us to feel comfortable in not making any real change in our life. God is not impressed by your good intentions. Obedience to God's will is what changes you and changes the world around you.

For now, your obedience is a free choice. You can choose to make Jesus Lord of your life, or you can be lord. But a day is coming when that will change. Do it now! Don't wait until it is too late!

Philippians 2:10–11 —that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [BSB]

Whether willingly or unwillingly, everyone will bow to the lordship of Jesus.

Today is the day to make Jesus Lord of your life. Tomorrow might be too late. I hope none of us hear Him say, "Why did you call me 'Lord,' but didn't do what I said?" (Luke 6:46)

Response to Truth



What do I need to do for Jesus to truly be Lord of my life?

The Person, Work, and Ministry of the Holy Spirit

by Stacy Collins & Sonny Bowman

Key Verse:

Acts 1:8 —But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” [BSB]

Introduction

God declares in the Bible that there is only one God (Isaiah 43:10-13, 1 Corinthians 8:4-6). He has also told us in the Bible that the Father is God (Matthew 11:25, Galatians 1:1), the Son is God (John 1:1, Hebrews 1:8), and the Holy Spirit is God (see below).

Biblical evidence shows us three distinct persons of the Godhead, yet working as one. Some try to explain the Trinity using an egg with its shell, white (albumen), and yoke. Some liken the Trinity to water in 3 stages – solid (ice), liquid, gas (steam). Those images can help, but they all fall short. It is important to remember that this is a walk of faith where it is important to take a face value what God has declared—especially when it comes to His nature. There are some things our natural minds cannot grasp, they must be spiritually discerned by faith as revealed to us by the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 2:4–12 —My message and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith would not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power. ... we speak of the mysterious and hidden wisdom of God, which He destined for our glory before time began. ... “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed it to us by the Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of man except his own spirit within him? So too, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. [BSB]

In the Godhead, the Holy Spirit plays a special role in equipping a believer to live a life that accomplishes God’s will.

Personality of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has a personality. He is not an impersonal force or energy (such as electricity). He is not an “It.” He enables a personal relationship between us and the Godhead. The Bible describes several attributes of personality that the Holy Spirit has.

The Holy Spirit speaks.

An impersonal force cannot talk. The Spirit talks with people.

1 Timothy 4:1 —Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, [NKJV]

Acts 13:2 —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.” [BSB]

Acts 8:29 —The Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to that chariot and stay by it.” [BSB]

The Holy Spirit can be lied to.

You cannot lie to an inanimate object or energy. When you lie, you are lying to someone with a personality.

Acts 5:1–3 —Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge, he kept back some of the proceeds for himself, but brought a portion and laid it at the apostles’ feet. Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and withhold some of the proceeds from the land? [BSB]

The Holy Spirit can be grieved.

The fact that the Holy Spirit can be grieved demonstrate that He has emotions—a trait of personhood.

Ephesians 4:30 —And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [BSB]

The Holy Spirit is God.

The Bible is very clear that the Holy Spirit is equated with God.

Acts 5:3–4 —Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and withhold some of the proceeds from the land? ... You have not lied to men, but to God!” [BSB]

1 Corinthians 3:16–17 —Do you not know that you yourselves are God’s temple, and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple. [BSB]

1 Corinthians 6:19 —Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; [BSB]

 **Is the Holy Spirit God?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

Work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit relates with Christians in four important ways.

1. He Lives in You

It’s a truly amazing revelation that the Holy Spirit dwells within believers. He is always actively present in your life.

Galatians 4:6 —And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” [BSB]

2 Timothy 1:14 —Guard the treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. [BSB]

1 Corinthians 3:16 —Do you not know that you yourselves are God’s temple, and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? [BSB]

 **For a Christian, where does the Holy Spirit live?**

2. He Helps You

Jesus told us that He was sending the Holy Spirit to help us with day-to-day living. We definitely need the Holy Spirit’s help in our lives.

John 14:15-17 — “If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. [NKJV]

John 15:26 — “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. [NKJV]

John 16:7-8 — Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: [NKJV]

 **Why was it important for Jesus to go away?**

 **According to John 16:7-8, what three things does the Holy Spirit do for the world?**

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

3. He Teaches You

The Holy Spirit helps us know and understand God’s truth and His ways of living.

John 14:26 — But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. [NKJV]

John 16:13–15 —However, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak what He hears, and

He will declare to you what is to come. He will glorify Me by taking from what is Mine and disclosing it to you. Everything that belongs to the Father is Mine. That is why I said that the Spirit will take from what is Mine and disclose it to you. [BSB]

1 Corinthians 2:9–12 —Rather, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed it to us by the Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of man except his own spirit within him? So too, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. [BSB]



What does the Holy Spirit teach you?

4. He Empowers You for Ministry

Just as the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus for His ministry (Luke 4:18-19), the Holy Spirit also empowers us for the ministry that God has called us to do.

Acts 1:8 —But you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” [BSB]

Acts 4:31 —After they had prayed, their meeting place was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and **spoke the word of God boldly**. [BSB]

Acts 13:52 joy / **Acts 19:6** prophesy / **Acts 10:45, 46** exalting God

Holy Spirit at Salvation

The Holy Spirit is directly involved when you get saved through faith in Jesus, bringing you into the Body of Christ (includes all believers). He then places God’s seal of acceptance and ownership upon you.

1 Corinthians 12:12–13 —The body is a unit, though it is composed of many parts. And although its parts are many, they all form one body. So it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given one Spirit to drink. [BSB]

Romans 8:9–11 —You, however, are controlled not by the flesh, but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you. [BSB]

2 Corinthians 1:22 —placed His **seal** on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a pledge of what is to come. [BSB]

Ephesians 1:13–14 —And in Him, having heard and believed the word of truth—the gospel of your salvation—you were **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the pledge of our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession, to the praise of His glory. [BSB]

 Does the Holy Spirit live in you personally?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Baptism with the Holy Spirit

As seen above, if you are a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit living in you. In addition to this, a believer can be “baptized with the Holy Spirit.” This separate work of the Spirit was received by many people in the Bible and is still available today for equipping believers to accomplish the Lord’s work. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is for impartation for power to do Christian service.

John 20:21–22 —Again Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, so also I am sending you.” When He had said this, He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” [BSB]

This receiving of the Holy Spirit is a salvation experience where the person’s spirit comes alive spiritually. A little later on, Jesus told them a “baptism” with the Holy Spirit that would come soon.

Acts 1:4–8 —And while they were gathered together, He commanded them: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift the Father promised, which you have heard Me discuss. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” So when they came together, they asked Him, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus replied, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” [BSB]

Two distinct things happen here. The first is for believers when the Holy Spirit brings them new life in Jesus. The second is for empowering those believers for the work of ministry.

 What did Jesus say we would receive when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit? Then what did Jesus say we would be?

a. _____

b. _____

Then, a few days later, the disciples were baptized in the Holy Spirit in a dramatic way.

Acts 2:1–4 —When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. [BSB]

Immediately, the power for ministry that Jesus promise was there with great results.

Acts 2:38–41 —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. This promise belongs to you and your children and to all who are far off—to all whom the Lord our God will call to Himself.” With many other words he testified, and he urged them, “Be saved from this corrupt generation.” Those who embraced his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to the believers that day. [BSB]

Sometime later, we read about when the Gentiles (non-Jews) first were saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:44–47 —While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard his message. All the circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and exalting God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone withhold the water to baptize these people? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have!” [BSB]

Then Paul made sure that new believers were also baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 19:2–6 —and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” “No,” they answered, “we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” “Into what, then, were you baptized?” Paul asked. “The baptism of John,” they replied. Paul explained: “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the One coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. [BSB]



From Acts 10:44-47 and 19:2-6 (above), what manifestations were evident when people were baptized in the Holy Spirit?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Baptism with the Holy Spirit can occur at the same time as salvation (see Acts 10:44-47 above), or it can happen later.

Acts 8:14–17 —When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. On their arrival, they prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. [BSB]



Were some people in the Bible baptized in the Holy Spirit a day or longer after becoming Christians?

☐ Yes ☐ No

The Holy Spirit and Tongues

Baptism vs. Spiritual Gift

There is a difference between the tongues prayer language received when a person is Baptized in the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gift of tongues that are

given on occasions by the Holy Spirit to benefit (edify, build up) a group of Christians.

The first tongues received with the Baptism in the Holy Spirit are for all and are spoken as we choose for speaking prayers.

Acts 2:4 —And they were **all** filled with the Holy Spirit and **began to speak** in other tongues **as the Spirit enabled them**. [BSB]

These tongues are given by the Holy Spirit, but we choose whether or not to speak them. In the verse above, “**as the Spirit enabled them**” shows that the Spirit is the source, but we do the speaking. Example: If I spoke to someone in Swahili, that didn’t know Swahili and asked them to repeat what I was saying. They would have to trust that what I was telling them to say was ok. They themselves would have to open their mouth and make a choice to speak.

 **Who spoke with other tongues?**

☒ Holy Spirit ☐ Believers

 **How many of the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues in Acts 2:4?**

Believers often pray in tongues when (and after) they are Baptized in the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-47; and Acts 19:2-6 above).

Separate from that is a ministry gift of tongues that the Holy Spirit gives to certain individuals at certain times for ministry to other Christians.

1 Corinthians 12:4–11 —There are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. There are different ways of working, but the same God works all things in all people. 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 the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, **to another speaking in various tongues**, and to **still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, who apportions them to each one as He determines**. [BSB]

Praying in the Spirit

Tongues that come with the Baptism in the Holy Spirit should be used in your personal prayers.

1 Corinthians 14:14–15 —For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What then 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. [BSB]

Romans 8:26–27 —In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know how we ought to pray, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. [BSB]

1 Corinthians 14:18–19 —I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church, I would rather speak five coherent words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. [BSB]

Tongues and Interpretation

At times, the Holy Spirit may give you a message in tongues for the church (other believers). Such messages require interpretation so that the hearers will understand and be edified by the message.

1 Corinthians 14:2–5 —For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries in the Spirit. But he who prophesies speaks to men for their edification, encouragement, and comfort. The one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. I wish that all of you could 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. [BSB]

1 Corinthians 14:39 —So, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. [BSB]

Edification

Praying in tongues edifies (builds up) the person praying. Edification is similar to charging a battery. The battery must be charged up so it can do the work for which it is designed. It is not charged primarily just for its own benefit. Similarly, God's people must be edified so they can accomplish the work for which He has called them.

1 Corinthians 14:2–4 —For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries in the Spirit. But he who prophesies speaks to men for their edification, encouragement, and comfort. The one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. [BSB]

Jude 20 —But you, beloved, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, [BSB]

The following tables helps understand the difference between praying in tongues that is available for all believers who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit compared to the special gift of speaking in tongues to a group of people at the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism Tongues – Acts 2	Spiritual Gift Tongues– 1 Cor 12
All Believers	As the Spirit Wills
Any Time	Under the Unction
Spirit to Spirit Communication	Spirit to Body/Church Communication
Building Yourself Up	Building the Body Up
No Interpretation Necessary	With Interpretation = Prophecy
Evidence of Holy Spirit Indwelling	Evidence of Holy Spirit Distributing Gifts

For more information about tongues, see the next chapter on *Misconceptions about Tongues*.

Receiving the Baptism with the Holy Spirit

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is available to all who are born again. See the following verses for insights about those receiving the Holy Spirit baptism.

Luke 11:9–13 —So I tell you: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? So if you who 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!" [BSB]

Jesus points out that Christians (those you can truly call God their father) can ask and God will give them the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38–39 —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. **This promise belongs to you and your children and to all who are far off—to all whom the Lord our God will call to Himself.**" [BSB]

The promise of the baptism with the Holy Spirit (as just received by Peter and the other disciples) is a promise to all who become Christians, even into the far future of this world.

Acts 10:44–48 —While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard his message. All the circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and exalting God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone withhold the water to baptize these people? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have!" So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for a few days. [BSB]

In some situations, the baptism in the Holy Spirit with tongues occurs along with salvation in Jesus.

Acts 8:14–17 —When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. On their arrival, they prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. [BSB]

In other situations, born again Christians have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit some days after their salvation.

Response To Truth

 **Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit with the manifestation of tongues?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

 **If you answered "no" above, are you willing to let the Lord baptize you with the Holy Spirit and to receive the gift of tongues?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

 **If you answered that you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, do you regularly pray in the spirit (tongues)?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

Misconceptions About Tongues

by Stacy Collins & Sonny Bowman

Key Verses:

1 Corinthians 14:39–40 —So, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything must be done in a proper and orderly manner. [BSB]

Ephesians 5:18–21 —Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to reckless indiscretion. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. [BSB]

Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter, *The Person, Work, and Ministry of the Holy Spirit*. Both chapters should be studied for a well-rounded understanding of these truths.

There seems to be much confusion and disagreement on the purpose and the proper place of tongues. Some say tongues have passed away. Others say tongues are of the devil. While others say tongues are okay, but cannot be used at all in a church unless they are interpreted. This study will attempt to bring a biblical balance to the understanding of tongues.

What are Tongues?

Tongues sometimes refers to the “gift of tongues,” a spiritual gift or manifestation of the Holy Spirit mentioned in several passages in the Bible. The gift of tongues is sometimes called glossolalia from the Greek word for tongues *glossa* (*gloce sah*).

1 Corinthians 12:4–11 —There are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. There are different ways of working, but the same God works all things in all people. 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 the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in various tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, who apportions them to each one as He determines. [BSB]

Tongues are also associated with what Jesus called the “Baptism with the Holy Spirit.” It is also called being “filled with the Spirit.”

Acts 1:4–5 —And while they were gathered together, He commanded them: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift the Father promised, which you have heard Me discuss. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” [BSB]

Acts 2:4 —And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. [BSB]

In the Bible, the first recorded outpouring of the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues was on the Day of Pentecost several days after the resurrection of Jesus.

Acts 2:1–4 —When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. [BSB]

Speaking in another tongue in this context occurs when a person is empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak a language that he or she does not know. This language can be one of the many human languages (tongues of men) or can be a heavenly language (tongues of angels).

1 Corinthians 13:1 —If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a ringing gong or a clanging cymbal. [BSB]

 **Are tongues always in a human language?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

The Purpose of Tongues

Tongues serve several purposes as explained in the Bible.

- Edifies (builds up) the one who prays (1 Corinthians 14:4)
- Stimulates faith (Jude 20)
- Empowers the believer for ministry (Acts 1:5,8; Acts 4:29-31)
- Enables the believer to pray God's perfect will (Romans 8:26-27, 1 John 5:14,15)
- Provides richer words for praise and worship of the Lord (Acts 2:4,11)
- A sign to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:21-25)
- Evidence of God's work in believers (Acts 10:44-48, 11:15-18)
- Able to give thanks well (1 Corinthians 14:15-17, Ephesians 5:18-21)
- Edifies or instructs others when accompanied with the gift of interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:2-5)

Common Misconceptions about Tongues

Following are some common misconceptions about tongues.

Misconception #1: Tongues Have Passed Away

Some people claim that tongues were once a valid work of God, but that they have passed away and are no longer valid. They often use part of the following verse to support their view.

1 Corinthians 13:8–10 —Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; **whether *there are* tongues, they will cease**; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when **that which is perfect** has come, then **that which is in part** will be done away. [NKJV]

The question we must ask is, “what is the *perfect* referred to here and when does it come?” The Greek word for perfect here means *complete*. This passage contrasts that which is perfect (complete) with that which is in part (incomplete).

Could “that which is perfect” refer to the Bible? It is complete in that it contains all that God intended for it to contain. However, it does not contain all knowledge and information.

John 21:25 —There are many more things that Jesus did. If all of them were written down, I suppose that not even the world itself would have space for the books that would be written. [BSB]

Revelation 10:4 —When the seven thunders had spoken, I was about to put it in writing. But I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.” [BSB]

If God knew that tongues would not be needed after the Bible was completed, why does the Bible contain instructions on the proper functioning of tongues? The Corinthians needed the instructions before the Bible was written, but it wasn’t necessary for God to get those instructions into the Bible if tongues were not going to be given after that. We must conclude that since God made sure the instructions about tongues are in the Bible, then tongues did not pass away with the coming of the Bible.

The key to understanding 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 is given just two verses later.

1 Corinthians 13:10–12 —but when the perfect comes, the partial passes away. When 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 set aside childish ways. Now we see but a dim 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. [BSB]

The perfect here refers to the perfection that comes to a believer at his resurrection. At that time, he will see the Lord clearly. There will be no need for tongues or learning (knowledge) in the New Kingdom.

Tongues will cease when their purposes are no longer needed. Do we need edification? Does the Church need edification? Are there times when we need help from the Holy Spirit so we can pray according to God’s will? Do we still find our earthly languages inadequate for praising and worshipping our Lord? Absolutely! Then the need for tongues has not ceased.

 **Did the completion of the Bible eliminate the need for Tongues?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

Misconception #2: Tongues are of the Devil

Have you ever heard of a counterfeit \$13 bill? By nature, you cannot have a counterfeit if there is no genuine. There are counterfeit tongues just like there is a counterfeit humility, counterfeit healing. However, do we stay away from encouraging people to be humble and get healed just because the enemy has a counterfeit? So why do we do that with tongues?

All instances in the New Testament where the utterance in tongues are discussed describe it as a work of the Holy Spirit. Not one attributes it to the devil. So when did God lose tongues and the devil get them? One of the strongest warnings that Jesus gave anyone was when people said that the work He did by the Holy Spirit was actually empowered by the devil.

Matthew 12:24–32 —But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “Only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, does this man drive out demons.” Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan

drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and steal his possessions, unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters. Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the one to come. [BSB]

While there may be instances where people speak in a counterfeit tongues to deceive (Matthew 24:24), we must be very careful not to claim that a genuine work of the Holy Spirit comes by the power of Satan.

Misconception #3: Tongues Must Always Be Interpreted

There is only one purpose of tongues that the Bible states that requires interpretation: when the tongues are for the edification of the Church. The other purposes of tongues do not require interpretation. Therefore, to know whether a tongue needs interpretation, you need to know the purpose of that instance of tongues. All of the purposes for tongues can be needed in church, so not every instance of tongues inside a church needs interpretation.

1 Corinthians 14:26–33 —What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a psalm or a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. All of these must be done to build up the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two, or at most three, should speak in turn, and someone must interpret. But if there is no interpreter, he should remain silent in the church and speak only to himself and God. Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is seated, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace—as in all the churches of the saints. [BSB]

When a person is praying in the Spirit (tongues) privately (in a crowd or alone), the purpose of the tongues is edification of the one praying, for praying according to the will of God, or for praising God. This tongue does not require interpretation because he is speaking to God, and God doesn't need an interpreter. This is true even when praying "privately" in a group or in a church setting, (i.e., between yourself and God, 1 Corinthians 14:28).

1 Corinthians 14:2 —For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries in the Spirit. [BSB]

When tongues are spoken out in a church or small group where the purpose is to instruct the group or to pray in agreement, they require interpretation.

1 Corinthians 14:18–19 —I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church, I would rather speak five coherent words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. [BSB]

Before speaking out in tongues in church or to a small group, how do you know if someone is present to whom the Spirit will give the gift of interpretation? Often, you do not. If the Holy Spirit prompts you to give a message in tongues to the church or a small group, then speak it out at an appropriate time. Then pray that the Lord will provide the interpretation. If no interpretation is spoken, then another tongue should not be given during the meeting. In such cases, it may be that the person giving the tongues

misunderstood or that the person who should have given the interpretation failed to respond due to fear or some other reason. In such cases, we should not be critical of either the person giving the tongues or the person who did not give the interpretation. However, to be sure that all is done decently and in order, another message in tongues should not be given.

 **When do tongues need an interpretation?**

Misconception #4: Tongues Are an Ecstatic, Uncontrollable Utterance

Ecstasy is a state of emotion so intense that one is carried beyond rational thought and self-control.

Sometimes, people think that the Holy Spirit will take control of their mouths and do the speaking when they receive the ability to pray in tongues. The Spirit gives the words to you, but you do the speaking part.

Acts 2:4 —And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and [they] began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. [BSB]

Occasionally, you may find the joy of the Lord bubbling up in you so strongly that you almost cannot contain yourself. However, you still have control and are expected to follow guidelines for exercising this gift according to Bible instructions.

1 Corinthians 14:26–33 —What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a psalm or a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. All of these must be done to build up the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two, or at most three, should speak in turn, and someone must interpret. But if there is no interpreter, he should remain silent in the church and speak only to himself and God. Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is seated, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace—as in all the churches of the saints. [BSB]

1 Corinthians 14:40 —But everything must be done in a proper and orderly manner. [BSB]

 **Are tongues impossible to control?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

Misconception #5: Tongues Is the Least Gift and Thus Unimportant

Since 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 lists tongues toward the end, some people think tongues is the least important gift. However, the most important gift at any time is the one you need the most at that time. Each gift from God has an important purpose. Even if tongues were the least gift that God has for us,

why would He waste His time giving us something that is not important. Moreover, who would be so foolish to tell God, “No thank you, that gift is not important enough for me to waste my time on it. Just give it to someone else.”

Misconception #6: Tongues Are Not for Everyone

Remember: the issue is Holy Spirit Baptism vs. Gift. Every believer needs the power that Jesus promised would come with the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus promised (Acts 1:4-5), every disciple in the upper room (men, women, and possibly children) received the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

Acts 2:4 —And they were **all** filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. [BSB]

Every believer needs to be edified, and there are times when every believer needs help praying according to God’s will. God made provisions to meet our needs through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and tongues. Why reject His provisions to meet your needs? Paul said,

1 Corinthians 14:5 —I wish you all spoke with tongues, ... [NKJV]

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit with tongues is for all believers.

Acts 2:38–39 —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. This promise belongs to you and your children and to all who are far off—to all whom the Lord our God will call to Himself.” [BSB]

Luke 11:9–13 —So I tell you: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? So if you who 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!” [BSB]



As a believer, is the Holy Spirit Baptism for you?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Conclusion

Tongues are one of God’s provisions to empower us so we can accomplish His will for our lives. Tongues are not earned or merited by any quality or ability on our part. Therefore, we should receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues by faith with humility, and rejoice when others receive the gift. Never look down on others who have not experienced the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit and tongues helps you become a better servant of God than you would be without it. It is not intended to make you a better servant than another brother or sister who has not received it. Do not compare yourself with others. It leads only to pride or discouragement.

2 Corinthians 10:12 —We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they show their ignorance. [BSB]

Jesus is your standard of comparison. Strive to attain the goal He has set before you, keeping your eyes on Him.

Hebrews 12:1–2 —Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with endurance the race set out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith... [BSB]

Righteousness: Set Free from Sin's Power

by Sonny Bowman

Key Verses:

Romans 8:2-3 — And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. [NLT]

John 8:36 — So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. [BSB]

Galatians 5:1 — It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be encumbered once more by a yoke of slavery. [BSB]

This issue was a major turning point in my life. It is a key issue that every Believer must understand.

Would you like to be totally free from sin, bondages, guilt? Jesus made a way. He didn't just forgive your sins. He set you free from sin's power.

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 — The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! [BSB]

We Are Guilty

What is righteousness? Righteousness is being right with and acceptable to God. It's also called "justification." Righteousness is required to see God or to be in His presence. Since God is holy, no sin or unrighteousness can enter into His presence. It's not a matter of prudishness on God's part like a little girl who doesn't want to touch a fishing worm. It's just a fact. It's simply impossible for sin to mix with, or even be in the presence of, our holy God.

 **What is righteousness?**

1 John 3:4 — Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God. [NKJV]

The problem is that we are all guilty of sin. As a result, we are all unrighteous. Our sin prevents our entrance into God's presence. When a person commits any sin, he or she is a law breaker. Break just one of God's laws and you are guilty of being a lawbreaker, so none of us are without sin.

Romans 3:23 — for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [BSB]

James 2:10 — Whoever keeps the whole law but stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. [BSB]

It doesn't matter if it was a "little" sin or a "big" sin. You cannot take even the tiniest possible bit of sin to where God is. So there is a big problem. We want to be with God (at least some people do), but we are guilty of sin and cannot come near Him.

The Law Can't Fix Us

Unfortunately, doing good or right stuff doesn't get rid of sin that has been committed. For example, if a rich man gets mad at his bookkeeper and kills him, then he is a murderer. It doesn't matter if he has built hospitals and homeless shelters. It doesn't matter if he discovers a cure for cancer. No matter how many people he helps, it cannot erase the fact that he is a murderer. In the same way, it doesn't matter how many good or godly things you do. You cannot erase your sin guilt by doing good things. Even if you could keep the Law of God perfectly for the rest of your life, that cannot remove the sin that you have already committed. Every one of us has sinned and fallen short of God's expectations.

Romans 3:20 —Therefore no one will be justified in His sight by works of the law. For the law merely brings awareness of sin. [BSB]



Can a person be righteous with God by keeping the Law?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Galatians 2:21 —I do not set aside the grace of God. For if righteousness comes through the law, Christ died for nothing. [BSB]

It seems that no matter how hard we try, we still mess up. We want to do good, but somehow, we can't seem to maintain goodness for more than a few minutes—maybe a few hours if you are really strong willed. There's this constant battle inside between the desire to do things God's way and to do things our way. It gets pretty miserable at times, and many Christians seem to just give up. They lower their standards to a less stressful level and muddle through life. They're not satisfied, but they don't have much hope of ever being better. We console ourselves saying things like, "I really tried." Or "God understands my heart." But it doesn't produce much hope, joy, or freedom. Don't settle for less than what God gave you!

Romans 7:9–10 —Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. So I discovered that the very commandment that was meant to bring life actually brought death. [BSB]

There's good news, and there's bad news. First the bad news. The mighty apostle Paul, the one who wrote a good portion of the New Testament, struggled with the same thing!

Romans 7:14–24 —So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power

within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! ... [NLT]

Oh, no! I just thought the struggle was hopeless before. If Paul couldn't live good enough, how could I ever hope to make it? Thanks a lot for the discouragement!

Just Dying to Get Free

Hold on! Remember, I said there was good news and bad news. The good news is that Paul found deliverance from the treadmill and frustration. He didn't find it in being good, he found it in the substitutionary work of Jesus on the cross. Paul continues in passage in Romans with...

Romans 7:24–25 —Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. ... [NLT]

The Law is not the problem. We are! We need to be fixed, but the Law cannot fix us. Remember what Paul said?

Romans 7:14 — So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. [NLT]

There's only one way to get out from under the judgment of the Law and slavery to sin—we have to die! Whoa! That's a pretty radical solution for the sin problem. Yes—and it's the **only** solution!

Suppose you are driving along and die from a heart attack. As your car coast to a stop, it comes to rest in a no parking zone. When the policeman comes up, he drags you out of the car, puts handcuffs on you, reads you your rights, and takes you off to jail. The next day, they take your body into court and charge you with parking in a no parking zone. "How do you plead?" When you don't answer, they add a contempt of court charge. By the time it is all said and done, you are sentenced to twenty years in prison. Pretty silly, huh? Dead men don't get parking tickets! When you die, you are no longer judged by the law. In a similar way, the Law of God has jurisdiction over a person **only** while he is alive.

That's what happens to us when we accept Jesus' payment for our sin. We spiritually die on the cross **with** Jesus.

Colossians 3:3 —For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. [BSB]

Romans 6:6 —We know that our old self was **crucified with Him** so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. [BSB]

Romans 7:1–4 —Do you not know, brothers (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the **law has authority over a man only as long as he lives**? For instance, a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she is joined to another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law and is not an adulteress, even if she marries another man. Therefore, my brothers, **you also died to the law through the body of Christ**, that you might belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. [BSB]

No Longer Under the Law

The Law of God was never intended to make a person right with God. It cannot make a person right with God because doing right and godly things cannot erase the bad things he or she has done in the past.

Romans 6:14 —For sin shall not be your master, because **you are not under law, but under grace**. [BSB]

When you die with Jesus (at salvation), you are no longer judged by the Law.

Romans 7:6 —But now, having died to what bound us, **we have been released from the law**, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. [BSB]

Romans 8:2–4 —For in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man, as an offering for sin. He thus condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous standard of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. [BSB]

Jesus completely solved the sin problem for us.

Galatians 3:23–25 —Before this faith came, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law became our guardian to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. [BSB]

The Law was our guardian (teacher) to lead us to salvation by faith. Once that salvation comes, we are no longer under control of that guardian—the Law.

Galatians 5:18 —But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. [BSB]



If you are saved, are you under the Law?

☐ Yes ☐ No

We are no longer judged by the Law. But the Law still teaches us about the character, nature, and will of God. It still declares His righteous standard. **So, knowing and following the Law is still very important to us. But we recognize that it cannot be the source of our righteousness with God, and it no longer condemns us.**

Adoption and Inheritance

In life, you want to be sure to get everything you earn. Just let someone try to short your paycheck and you're going to be all over it! We also earn things in the spirit realm.

Romans 6:23 —For the wages of sin is death... [BSB]

This is one case where you don't want to demand that you get what you deserve.

We've learned so far that you cannot do enough good works to earn your way to God's Kingdom. So, how are you going to get there? There's only one way—you have to inherit it.

When God saves you, He adopts you into His family. As a family member, you enter God's Kingdom because it is your inheritance. An inheritance is

something you receive not because you earned it, but because of who you are related to.

Galatians 4:4–7 —But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive our adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, you are also an heir through God. [BSB]

At the end of a church meeting, some of you may go pick up your kids in the nursery or children's department. Which ones do you take home? The ones that belong to you. There's going to be trouble if you try to take kids that don't belong to you. That's similar to how it is with God. When the end of this age comes, Jesus will come pick up His kids and take them with Him. He's not going to pick up someone else's kids, just His own.

Suppose you were a teacher in the children's department. At the end of the night, a man came up to get his two sons, Billy and Bobby. Unfortunately, you had to inform him that Billy had been harassing other kids, stealing money, and fighting. While running away from the teacher, he tripped and broke his arm. So the man asked, “What about Bobby?” Fortunately, Bobby was a model student. He even went out of his way to help the other kids.

Next, the man asked about another boy in the group, “What's his name? Has he been good tonight?” “That's Jimmy. Yes, he is a very good child.” “Great!” the man exclaims. “I will take my son, Bobby, and this boy, Jimmy. You can keep Billy.”

What would you do? Probably call the police! Yet this is what we think God is going to do at the end of the age—take the good and healthy ones with Him and leave the bad, broken ones behind.

When Jesus comes at the end of time, He is going to take all God's kids—good or bad, healthy or broken—to live with Him for eternity. He is not going to take anyone else's kids. So the most important thing each person needs to do in this life is to be sure that he or she is adopted into God's family before it is too late. And the sooner be better so we can enjoy our relationship with God here and now.

Salvation is all about relationship. We live with God for eternity because that is our inheritance as His adopted children.

Romans 8:14–17 —For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery that returns you to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. And if we are children, then we are heirs: heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with Him, so that we may also be glorified with Him. [BSB]

The Law Was Never Plan A

God was too smart to ever think we humans could manage to be righteous by keeping the Law. The Law was never God's plan for our relationship with Him. Our relationship with God is based strictly on the promise that He gave to Abraham more than 400 years before He gave the Law to Moses.

Galatians 3:17–21 —What I mean is this: **The law that came 430 years later does not revoke the covenant previously established by God**, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God freely granted it to Abraham through a promise. Why then

was the law given? It was added because of transgressions, until the arrival of the seed to whom the promise referred. It was administered through angels by a mediator. A mediator is unnecessary, however, for only one party; but God is one. Is the law, then, opposed to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come from the law. [BSB]

The Law was never God's plan for us to be righteous. From all eternity He determined that we would be made right with Him through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Ephesians 3:11–12 —according to **the eternal purpose** that He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In Him and through faith in Him we may enter God's presence with boldness and confidence. [BSB]

But what about the sacrifices, laws, and rituals that God gave through Moses? Didn't those make people right with God?

Hebrews 10:1–20 —For the law is only a shadow of the good things to come, not the realities themselves. **It can never, by the same sacrifices offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.** If it could, would not the offerings have ceased? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt the guilt of their sins. Instead, those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.** Therefore, when Christ came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sin offerings You took no delight. Then I said, 'Here I am, it is written about Me in the scroll: I have come to do Your will, O God.'" In the passage above He says, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings You did not desire, nor did You delight in them" (although they are offered according to the law). Then He adds, "Here I am, I have come to do Your will." He takes away the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been sanctified through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands to minister and to offer again and again the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time, He waits for His enemies to be made a footstool for His feet, because by a single offering He has made perfect for all time those who are being sanctified. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First He says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord. I will put My laws in their hearts and inscribe them on their minds." Then He adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." **And where these have been forgiven, an offering for sin is no longer needed.** Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way opened for us through the curtain of His body, [BSB]

Romans 5:11 —Not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. [BSB]

Now, as friends and children (heirs) of God, we can boldly come into His presence because Jesus made a way for us.

Hebrews 4:16 —Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. [NKJV]

Is it Okay to Sin?

Since I am no longer under the Law, is it okay to go ahead and sin?

Romans 6:14–15 —For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? **Certainly not!** [BSB]

Romans 3:31 —Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Certainly not! Instead, we uphold the law. [BSB]

Supposed the government repealed all the laws against illegal drugs including heroin. Then it would be legal to use all the heroin you want. However, you will soon become addicted if you do. You will find that you have become a slave to drug addiction. That's similar to what happens when we give ourselves to sin—even when we are not under the law.

Romans 6:16–19 —Do you not know that when you offer yourselves as obedient slaves, **you are slaves to the one you obey**, whether you are slaves to sin leading to death, or to obedience leading to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you once were slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were committed. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to escalating wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. [BSB]

When you serve sin, you become a slave to sin. Not all sin is as obviously damaging as our illustration of heroin. Often, it does its work quietly until, like a cancerous tumor, its destructive power grows to the point of destroying lives. Also, **all** sin is contrary to the nature, character, and goals of God. (See the chapter on *The Lordship of Jesus Christ*.)

It is dangerous to allow sin in your life even when you are not under the Law.

1 Corinthians 6:12 —“Everything is permissible for me,” but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me,” but I will not be mastered by anything. [BSB]

Your actions produce consequences that don't just affect you. Depending on your actions, you bring glory to God or shame, causing people to turn away from Him and His Truth. Your actions reflect good or bad on God.

Matthew 5:16 —In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. [BSB]

Romans 2:23–24 —You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: “God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” [BSB]

You can also cause others to suffer because of your attitude and actions.

Romans 14:12–21 —So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop judging one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. I am convinced and fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed by what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother, for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good, then, to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For whoever serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. So then, let us pursue what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong

for a man to let his eating be a stumbling block. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything to cause your brother to stumble. [BSB]



Since we are no longer under the Law, is it okay to do whatever we want? Why?

There is another important reason to do what is right. Even though we are no longer under the Law, that doesn't mean that we are without law.

The Law of Love

When born again (salvation), you died to the old Law. But with your new life in Jesus comes a new law, the law of agape love. (Also called the royal law and the law of Christ.)

James 2:8 —If you really fulfill the royal law stated in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. [BSB]

Galatians 6:2 —Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. [BSB]

Matthew 22:36–40 —“Teacher, which commandment is the greatest in the Law?” Jesus declared, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” [BSB]

When we love others, we automatically fulfill the law of God.

Romans 13:9–10 —The commandments “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and any other commandments, are summed up in this one decree: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. [BSB]

That means we will act in ways that are consistent with God's nature, character, and goals when we love God and others.

Galatians 5:13–14 —For you, brothers, were called to freedom; but do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. Rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is fulfilled in a single decree: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” [BSB]

So live in the freedom from the Law that Jesus provided, but don't use your freedom as an opportunity to just do what feels good or to do what you want. You have been set **free from sin—not free to sin**.

Do I Still Need to Repent?

Christianity, similar to marriage, is all about the relationship. Jesus' main goal in dying for you was not to save you from hell. It was to bring you back into relationship with God. And that relationship begins the moment you are born again into His family. If all you want from Christianity is a “get out of hell free” card, then you have missed the whole point of Christianity. No wonder you feel miserable and unfulfilled!

As in a marriage, we sometimes do things that hurt our relationship. As a result we may feel distant, but we are still legally married. At those times, we need to ask forgiveness and restore our relationship. In a similar manner, we still need to ask for forgiveness and turn from sin as a Christian to restore the interactive relationship part of our adoption—even though we are no longer under the Law.

There are three things that need to happen in repentance.

- Change the way you think – turning upward
- Turn away from sin – turning from
- Choose to follow Jesus – turning toward

These three things need to work together. That way they support and strengthen each other. For example, as you choose to follow Jesus more, it also helps change your thinking towards God's ways. If you only do two out of three requirements, you won't be successful.

True repentance results in a changed life!

There is a repentance that leads to salvation, but we also need to repent as necessary when we get off track as Christians. That last repentance does not save us, but it does get us back in step with the Lord, restoring the intimacy of the relationship.

No Condemnation

As Christians, we are no longer condemned by failure to obey the Law of God.

Galatians 2:16 —know that a man is not justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. [BSB]

Romans 5:1 —Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [BSB]

Romans 8:1 —Therefore, **there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** [BSB]

We can truly walk in freedom from the condemnation and bondage that sin brought into our lives. Righteousness is ours—not because we keep the law of God, but because we have put our faith in Jesus.

Conclusion

There is a lot of information in the Bible on righteousness, particularly in Romans chapters 3-8 and the entire book of Galatians. Also, the next chapter on *Spirit, Soul, and Body* is very helpful in better understanding some of the material covered in this chapter on righteousness.

Spirit, Soul, and Body

by Stacy Collins & Sonny Bowman

Key Verse:

1 Thessalonians 5:23 — Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit (*pneuma*), soul (*psuche*), and body (*soma*) be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [NKJV]

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we learned that we are made righteous through faith in the finished work of Jesus. However, in our day-to-day living, we often do not seem to be very righteous. How can God say we are righteous when we make such bad choices at times? The key to understanding and correcting this situation lies in the proper understanding of the three-part nature of man.

Three Parts — One Person

Man has three dimensions: spirit, soul, and body. He is a spirit being who has a soul and lives in a body. Each part contacts and connects with a different realm: spiritual, mental, and physical.

What is Man?

Psalms 8:4-8 — What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas. [NKJV]

The eternal God created Man, setting Man over Angels and to rule over the rest of Creation. Notice that this is a hierarchical order, not a chronological order.

Genesis 1:26 — Then God said, "Let Us **make** man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. (**make** = *asah* = to form, construct, prepare, and build) [NKJV]

Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God **formed** man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (**form** = *yatzar* = to form or shape [like a potter shapes clay]) [NKJV]

Genesis 1:27 — God **created** man in His own image, in the image of God He **created** him; male and female He **created** them. God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth. (**create** = *bara* = the production or effectuation of something new, rare & wonderful) [NKJV]

What are the three parts of a man or woman?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Spirit of Man

Man's spirit is that part that relates to God. It is the real you, and it's the part we can't see. Your spirit is the part that connects with God.

1 Corinthians 2:11-14 — For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. [NKJV]

Soul of Man

The soul of man includes his intellect, will, and emotions. People sometimes confuse the spirit and soul of man, thinking they are the same. While it may be difficult at times to distinguish between the two, they are not the same. There is a separation between them.

Hebrews 4:12 — For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. [NKJV]

Body of Man

The body is that outward part of a person that houses the real you. It contacts the physical realm. The body is a housing or vehicle through which a person's spirit and soul function in this present physical world.

2 Corinthians 5:1-6 — For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. [NKJV]

Spirit	Soul	Body
Similar to Holy of Holies	Similar to Inner Court	Similar to Outer Court
Contacts God	Contacts minds/emotions	Contacts world
Spiritual realm	Intellectual realm	Physical realm
God-conscious	Self-conscious	Sense-conscious

Salvation of the Whole Person

Man is a three-part being. Each part has suffered corruption. The salvation of each of those parts is related to the born-again experience. However, each part experiences a different salvation **process** as we move toward that final righteous and perfect state originally intended by God.

The spirit attains perfection at the very instant a person is born again. The soul ideally moves toward perfection over time as it is renewed to the things of God. Final perfection of the body is completed at the resurrection when the person receives his or her new body.

Isaiah 53:4, 5 — Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. [NKJV]

In this passage, the griefs and sorrows relate to a person's soul. Our transgressions and iniquities relate to our spirit. And well-being and healing relate to our body. Jesus saved all three parts of us.

The body moves away from perfection as it deteriorates throughout a person's life until it finally decays in death. Perfection comes to the body when believers receive a new body at the coming of the Lord. What we can experience now is divine health in our body through the healing power of Jesus. (See the chapter on *Healing for Life*.)

 **Which part of man experiences full salvation first?**

Salvation and the Spirit

Before salvation, a person is dead in sin. When a person is born again, his spirit is made alive, making him a new creature in Christ.

Ezekiel 11:19 — Then I will give them one heart, and **I will put a new spirit within them**, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh... [NKJV]

Ephesians 2:1 — And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins... [NKJV]

2 Corinthians 5:17 — Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, **he is a new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. [NKJV]

This new spirit is joined to God's spirit and has the righteousness of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 6:17 — But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*. [NKJV]

2 Corinthians 5:21 — For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [NKJV]

When God says you are righteous, He is referring to the real you, the spirit. The spirit man of a born-again Christian is totally righteous. There is nothing that can be done to make that spirit more righteous than it is.

When the Bible states that you are righteous, what part does it mean?

At the death of a believer, his spirit immediately goes to be with Jesus. His works will be judged to determine his rewards, but his salvation will not be in question.

2 Corinthians 5:6–8 —Therefore we are always confident, although we know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, then, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. [BSB]

1 Corinthians 3:11–15 —For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, his workmanship will be evident, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will prove the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive a reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but only as if through the flames. [BSB]

At the death of a non-believer, his spirit eventually ends up at the Great White Throne Judgment before being cast into the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 20:11-15 — Then I saw a great white throne The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. [NKJV]

Salvation and the Soul

After the new birth, a Christian's soul (mind, will, and emotions) must be saved. This salvation of the soul is a process that takes place over a believer's entire life as his mind is renewed and transformed to conform to the will and ways of God. How fast or slow this transformation of the soul takes place depends on how diligently you apply the instructions given in the following verses to your life.

James 1:21 — Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to **save** (deliver, protect, heal, preserve, do well, make whole) **your souls**. [NKJV]

Romans 12:2 — And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. [NKJV]

1 Peter 1:22 — Since you have **purified your souls in obeying the truth** through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, [NKJV]

Ephesians 4:23 — and be renewed in the spirit of your mind... [NKJV]

At physical death, the soul goes with the spirit to be with the Lord (for believers) or to await the Great White Throne Judgment (for non-believers).

Salvation and the Body

When a person is born again, he receives a new spirit, but his body is not replaced. If you were bald a minute before salvation, you will still be bald a minute after salvation. Unfortunately, the body also retains its old desires for self-gratification after you are born again.

Romans 7:18–25 —I know that nothing good lives in **me**, that is, in my **flesh**; for I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do. Instead, I keep on doing the evil I do not want to do. And if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So this is the principle I have discovered: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my **inner being** I delight in God's law. But I see another law at work in my **body**, warring against the law of my **mind** and holding me captive to the law of sin that dwells within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! ... [BSB]

At death the body dies and decays. Later, when Jesus returns and Christians are resurrected, they will receive a new, spiritual body that is perfect in every way.

1 Corinthians 15:42–44, 51–52 —So will it be with the resurrection of the dead: What is sown is perishable; it is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ... Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in an instant, 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. [BSB]

Philippians 3:20–21 —But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to subject all things to Himself, will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body. [BSB]

However, until that day when we receive a new body, the Bible gives us specific instructions on how we are to rule our bodies rather than to let our bodies rule us. (See “Body Responsibilities” later in this chapter.)

Successful Christian Living – Inside Out

3 John 2 — Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. [NASB]

How can you make your soul prosper? Read God's Word, getting it inside of you so that it transforms who you are. You also need to start ruling over your body from the inside—from your spirit and soul.

To live a life that brings glory to God and joy to us, we must properly address the various aspects of our three-part nature. Attitudes, actions, responses, and reactions to life's circumstances are determined by your conscious & subconscious self-perception. If you see yourself as a victim, you'll live like a victim. But if you see yourself like God see you—as His child—then you'll live like a child of the Most High God.

2 Corinthians 4:16 —Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. [NKJV]

In this verse, Paul talks about an inner life and an outer life. Think of a geode—rough and unappealing on the outside, but beautiful crystals on the inside.

Spirit Responsibilities

The born-again spirit will always seek to serve God. A Christian must realize that his spirit is righteous with the righteousness provided by Jesus. Attempts to perfect our right relationship with God through good works will hinder our relationship with God (see the chapter on *Righteousness: Set Free from Sin's Power*).

Body Responsibilities

We must not let our body rule over our spirit and soul. The body will self-destruct if we let it. The body is sense oriented. It chooses to do what feels good for the moment, regardless of later consequences. It does not like pain, discomfort, or pressure. It will avoid anything that is difficult and run to anything that feels good or brings pleasure. If we allow the body to have its way, it will bring death to our life.

Romans 8:5–7 —Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh; but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. The mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind of the flesh is hostile to God: It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. [BSB]

We must present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. That means that we must bring our bodies into submission to God's will. The key to accomplishing this on a regular basis rests in the realm of the soul.

Romans 12:1 —Therefore I urge you, brothers, on account of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. [BSB]

1 Corinthians 9:27 — But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection... [NKJV]

Colossians 3:5 —Put to death, therefore, the components of your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. [BSB]



What are we supposed to do with our bodies?

Soul Responsibilities

A person's spirit is in union with Jesus and it will always want to do God's will. The body is always seeking that which is easiest or produces the most pleasure. Therefore, the body (the flesh) will always choose against God's will in order to satisfy its own desires. There is constant conflict between a believer's spirit and body.

Galatians 5:16–17 —So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh craves what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are opposed to each other, so that you do not do what you want. [BSB]

The soul has an essential function in this conflict. When a situation arises, your born-again spirit will always urge you to do God's will while your body will always urge you take a self-serving route. Your soul will cast the "tie-breaking vote."

Romans 12:1–2 —Therefore I urge you, brothers, on account of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. [BSB]

Which way your soul “votes” depends on how well you have renewed your mind to the things of God. If your soul is strong in the things of God, it and your spirit will gang up on your body to drag it to the altar and present it as a living sacrifice to the will of God. However, if your soul is weak in the things of God, you will end up following the desires of your body and further weaken your soul.

 **What must you do with your mind so you can effectively present your body as a living sacrifice to God?**

1 Peter 2:11–12 —Beloved, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from the desires of the flesh, which war against your soul. [BSB]

You can view your progress in renewing your mind by evaluating the choices that you make each day. Are you more consistently choosing to follow God's truth and ways, or are you yielding more to the lusts of your flesh?

Anatomy of Sin

Are you a sinner or are you a saint? If you see yourself as a sinner, you will remain in bondage to sin. Does the Bible call us believers or sinners? Sinners saved by grace? In the Bible, we are called saints, holy ones, children of God—who occasionally sin.

Remember the war in Romans (7:18-19)? Where is it fought? ...in the mind. When you were saved through faith in Jesus there was no “clear” button for the mind. If Satan can control your thoughts, he can control your behavior. You, the spirit you, is not the problem. For example: if a dog ran up and bit you on the leg, would you beat on your leg or the dog? The dog represents sin in this example. So don't beat yourself up over sin. Confess the sin, get right with God, and move forward with no condemnation.

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 —For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of **strong holds**;) Casting down **imaginations**, and every **high thing** that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every **thought** to the obedience of Christ; [KJV]

1. **Thought**: it's a plan; scheme; device; plot; spontaneous thoughts and temptations used to assault believers in their mind (soul)
2. **High Thing**: it's an elevated place or thing; all pride that rises up which you meditate upon in your mind
3. **Imagination**: calculative reasoning; wisdom or logic; you begin to play out situations (imagine) in your mind
4. **Stronghold**: anything that has a strong hold upon you or your thoughts

5. **Action:** When the opportunity arises, you will begin to act out what you have imagined in your body

Joshua 7:20–21 —“It is true,” Achan replied, “I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I did: When I **saw** among the spoils a beautiful cloak from Shinar, two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I **coveted** them and **took** them. They are **hidden** in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.” [BSB]



This is the path that Achan took. The thought came when he saw the spoil. That led to it becoming a “high thing” when he coveted certain items he saw. He apparently began to imagine having those items, which became a stronghold in his mind. That moved him to action when he took the items when there was an opportunity, hiding them in his tent.

How Does Spirit, Soul, & Body Impact Prayer & Praise?

Prayer involves your entire spirit, soul, and body. It starts in the spirit, goes to the soul, then you speak it out of your body using your mouth.

Mark 12:30 — ...love the Lord w/ all heart, soul, mind & strength [NKJV]

Praise starts in your heart. Then it begins to affect your thinking and emotions (your soul). Finally, it is expressed as you speak, stand up, sing, or dance with your body. True worship starts in the spirit but affects every part of you.

John 4:23–24 —But a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such as these to worship Him. God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” [BSB]

Sanctification

When something or someone is sanctified, it is set apart for God’s use. As Christians, our lives—**spirit, soul, and body**—must be set apart (sanctified) for the use of our Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–7 — For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. [NKJV]

John 17:17-19 — Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. [NKJV]

1 Thessalonians 5:23 — Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [NKJV]

Extreme Thinking

Some have taken the understanding that our bodies are hopelessly dead to an extreme conclusion. They reason that since the body is spiritually dead (with no hope of redemption here on earth) and that the spirit is righteous through faith in Jesus—just let the body do what it wants.

While it is true that salvation is by faith rather than the works of the flesh, this view ignores the ongoing transformation of the soul and the commandments of God.

Galatians 6:7-9 —Do not be deceived: God is not to be mocked. Whatever a man sows, he will reap in return. The one who sows to please his flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; but the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. [BSB]

To allow your flesh (your body) to run free brings your whole being into **slavery to sin**. Your spirit doesn't want to go, but the body will drag it along—kicking and screaming the whole way.

Romans 6:15-16 —What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that when you offer yourselves as obedient slaves, you are slaves to the one you obey, whether you are slaves to sin leading to death, or to obedience leading to righteousness? [BSB]

To experience the fulness of the freedom that Jesus purchased, you must renew your mind with the Word of God and by obeying truth. It is not enough to just hear the truth—you must live out the truth.

James 1:21-22 —Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and every expression of evil, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save your souls. Be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Otherwise, you are deceiving yourselves. [BSB]

Your body is the **temple of God**. It is also the temple of **your** spirit. You are to maintain it in a manner that is worthy of its contents.

1 Corinthians 3:16 —Do you not know that you yourselves are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells in you? [BSB]

2 Corinthians 4:7 — But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. [NKJV]

Summary

Man is a three-part being—spirit, soul, and body.

The spirit, when born again, is righteous. You cannot add to what Jesus did to make it any more righteous or pure than He makes it through faith. Your new spirit always desires to serve and glorify God.

The body is self-serving, even after salvation. It must be presented as a living sacrifice, requiring it to serve God's purposes rather than its own desires. Your body will be replaced with a new, perfect body at the return of Jesus.

Conflict results between the born-again spirit and the fleshly body. The soul chooses which path to follow—godly or fleshly. The soul needs diligent work to progressively renew our mind over our entire lifetime so that we live with godly purpose and wisdom rather than with self-serving and worldly goals.

Your mission in life is to renew your mind and rule your body. If you do this, your life will bring glory to God and joy/peace to you. Failure to be diligent in this mission will lead to discouragement and shame.

Worship that Moves Father's Heart

by Cere Muscarella

Key Verses

Matthew 4:4 —... 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" [BSB]

2 Peter 1:21 —For no such prophecy was ever brought forth by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. [BSB]

John 4:23 —But a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such as these to worship Him. [BSB]

John 9:31 —We know that God does not listen to sinners, but He does listen to the one who worships Him and does His will. [BSB]

2 Chronicles 16:9 —For the eyes of the LORD roam to and fro over all the earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are fully devoted to Him. ..." [BSB]

Introduction

Father is "pushing through," traveling, looking eagerly throughout the whole earth to show Himself courageous, a conqueror, an aid, and valiant on the behalf of people whose hearts are at peace with, established in, made ready for, and receptive of Him!

That doesn't mean God only loves perfect people. It's not saying that He will show Himself strong on behalf of "accomplished" saints, but that He comes to provide power to those He finds to be the "willing" ones! That passage reveals that there is a yearning in His heart to find people who are yearning to fulfill their parts of His revealed will.

Father is searching for men and women who will embrace His Word as final authority, regardless of what others say, of what self says, of what circumstances may try and dictate, of what it may personally cost. He is searching for people who believe that His Word and His ways are always the best... no matter how it seems at the start!

Nowhere is there more of a need for the Body of Christ to embrace His ways than in the arena of Worship! And that in fact is what true worship is... bowing down before Him; embracing His rule *and with abandon*, offering up our ways, our thoughts, our tastes, our opinions, our rule—anything, that stands against His divine, perfect and revealed Word. Once our spirit man knows what Father wants, it's ready to bow... but the battle for true worship is a fight against the flesh and soul, which are literally fighting for life! In that battle we find the Scriptures coming true that our hearts are wicked and will deceive us

Jeremiah 17:9–10 —The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart; I examine the mind to reward a man according to his way, by what his deeds deserve. [BSB]

The "heart" there is not the born-again spirit of a man but the core of his self-nature! In this battle for who or what we will worship, our carnal nature will never be at a loss for justification. But the saints who are defeating the self-

nature, who are walking with diligence in the Spirit, who are willing to do Father's revealed Word will find Him eagerly waiting to provide the power to overcome and to crucify the natural man with his lusts.

Ten Cents Worth of Instruction on Worship!

Worship is an all-encompassing subject. It is so big, so broad, so deep that it's virtually impossible to deal with it as a whole! However, we can take a look at the whole of it by looking at a small part.

It has been rightly said that worship is not singing, but that singing is part of worship. As a dime is part of a dollar, but is not the whole sum of money, so musical praise and worship with its attendant expressions are part, but not the whole of worship! True worship is bowing down our lives before Him. Musical worship is bowing down one area of life before Him. However, with such an abundance of self-worship/self-rule in the arena of musical expression of worship, we can use it as an example to learn a great lesson.

Before we see if we are ready to bow down this area of our lives before the Lord, let's ask:

 **Is the Word of God our authority?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

 **Is the Word of God the supernatural bread of our spiritual lives?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

 **Are we willing to embrace the Word of God as Holy Spirit authored directives from Father's own heart?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

 **Do we recognize that the only way to worship the Lord in Spirit and Truth is to obey His revealed will?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

 **Do we want to be heard when we pray and have the power of God without wanting Him and His rule?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, No, then let's go on...

A Word about Musical Worship from our Sponsor!

Psalm 149 — "Praise ye (Halal: be clear of sound, shine, make a show, boast, be clamorously foolish, cry loudly, sustain a din, rave and celebrate) the LORD (Yahh). Sing (*shiy*: as a strolling minstrel) unto the LORD a new (*chadash*: fresh, new) song, and his praise (*tehillah*: laud) in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice (*samach*: brighten up, be gleeful, cheer up and make selves glad) in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful (*gyl*: spin under passionate influence) in their King. Let them praise (Halal: be clear of sound; shine, make a show, boast, be clamorously foolish, cry loudly, sustain a din, rave and celebrate) his name in the dance (*machowl*: twist or whirl [in a circular or spiral manner]): let them sing (*zamar*: accompanying with the voice the slapping of the strings, the playing of the musical instruments) unto him with the tambourine and harp. For

the LORD takes pleasure (*ratsah*: Is pleased, satisfied, enjoys, takes pleasure) in his people: he will beautify (*pa'ar*: gleam, embellish, boast over, glorify) the meek (*'anaw*: humble, lowly, saintly, needy) with salvation (*Yeshuwah*: victory, deliverance, prosperity, health, welfare). Let the saints be joyful (*'alaz*: jump for joy, exult, rejoice, triumph) in glory (*kabowd*: splendor and honor): let them sing aloud (*ranan*: emit loud sounds, shouts of joy, cry out, sing aloud) upon their beds. Let the high praises (*rowmemah*: exaltation) of God be in their mouth, and a two edged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor (*hadar*: magnificence, ornament, splendor, beauty, honor, majesty) have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD (*Halal-Yahh*). [KJV paraphrased]

This is just one Psalm of many such psalms and non-psalm passages (all Holy Spirit authored truth) regarding our Father's heart for times of musical worship. It's not hard to see that we have a definitive prescription for musical worship in the Word! All we have to do is read: "be loud and clear, rave, move, compose, sing hymns and songs of praise, smile, spin around, be passionate, twist and whirl, accompany the instruments with singing, jumping and emoting, etc." Notice that when we do those things that the Lord does some things; He takes pleasure in us, boasts over us, glorifies us, He brings victory, deliverance, prosperity and divine enablement! **The Lord moves when we worship Him according to His Word! The rewards are there for people who will worship the Lord His ways. He is there for people who will worship Him, His ways! Listen to this...**

Zephaniah 3:17 — "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee [sounds like He's speaking to a gathered crowd] is mighty (*gibbowr*: a valiant champion); he will save (*yasha*: free, defend, deliver), he will rejoice (*suws*: be bright, be cheerful, have gladness with laughter) over thee with joy (*simchah*: glee, exceeding gladness, pleasure, joyfulness); he will rest in his love, he will joy (*giyl*: spin around) over thee with singing (*rinnah*: shouting, crying out, proclaiming)." [KJV paraphrased]

He is ready to intervene (remember Paul & Silas? Acts 16:25)! He is ready to come down in majestic power (2 Chronicles 5:13-14)! He is ready to move against our enemies (2 Chronicles 20:20ff)! But oftentimes we aren't ready to move in worship! **And there's the rub... us. Again worshipping what (who) is not God, in a way that is our way!**

Many people, especially American-Democratic Society people, today think that worshipping God is a matter of choice, of style, of personality! Like every other fundamental Bible concept, and as we've already seen in this study, the Bible offers us instruction and a clear picture of how we adopt and adapt the principle to our lives if we want to be in Father's divine will. The reality is that the Word of God dictates how we worship, musically and otherwise, once we have made the decision to worship Him.

What is the real issue behind the person who says, "I will lift up my hands unto the Lord (as numerous passages say to do) but I will not dance. I will dance, but shouting is a little too primal. I will sing aloud with passion, but no whirling. I will stand but I will not bow down to the ground (plenty of scriptures for both!)" The real issue is control... and control has everything to do with worship... Who is going to sit on the Throne? Who is going to call the shots? Who will I obey?

If the people are gracious, they justify their position by saying, "It's okay for others to do that but that's not me, it's not my personality!" [If they're not gracious they just reject expressive worship and praise out of hand.] The

"me" they're talking about is the soul/flesh "me," and they're right! The soul/flesh person-ality doesn't want to do what God wants them to do, *no matter how often He repeats Himself*. The soul/flesh person-ality wants to stay in control so badly that it will compromise if that's what it takes to stay on top (determining the limits of obedience upraised hands, loud singing)! But the spirit "me" always wants to do what God wants to do... and God is looking for those who want to do His will and fulfill His Word! It's the un-renewed "me" that resists spiritually defined worship. It's a self-rule issue to define "thus far and no farther" when it comes to the limits of yieldedness! Again, true worship is not about "me," and it's our person-ality that is in the way no matter how much we do or don't obey! It is a self-rule, self-worship issue that keeps us from doing what the Bible says to do!

Why is something like this a big deal to God!

Actually it isn't a big deal to God... it's only a big deal for man! The way we were designed originally left us free for an open response to our Father! Sin changed it all... and like so many other things in our lives, the Word of God states and delivers, *even stands to legislate when necessary*, a return to healthy life-giving way of life! We have forgiveness for disobeying the Word... and our salvation is not at stake. But true freedom, getting centered as a "child" for whom the kingdom unfolds, and the fullness of life are the things at stake. And Father wants us to have those things: freedom, the kingdom unfolding, and fullness right here and now as well as in the future! There are many times I come into a service, feeling tired or low, jammed up, confused or grumpy, muddle through a couple songs, when all of a sudden the lyric begins to hit home... It's there, pushing through to the freedom that is mine in Jesus, that I find the resources of His kingdom flowing in to energize me with His fullness! Father's ways bear much fruit for the spirit of man!

[Necessary note: We're not talking about choreographed praise and worship services here in church. No one is thinking that the next time our worship leader says "let's dance" that everyone is going to start jumping. No, this is not a run toward more expressive corporate gathering times. That will happen on its own as Father cuts through to each of our hearts... We're talking about issues of the heart, of self-rule, of the integrity of our words (both in performing the things we sing about, and in truly worshipping the Lord we proclaim we love), of the integrity of His Word! We're talking about the true issues of worship and that's letting Father call the shots and define our responses.]

Thinking Back

We can see the wrangling of the soul/flesh to maintain control and sit on the throne of decision in this one simple area. If the Lord will do all that He has promised in these few passages of Scripture for those who will do what he says in these few passages concerning musical worship, which is just a part of true worship... Just think what He will do for those whose lives are "perfect" toward Him in all worship!

What will Father do for those who will worship Him in the arena of Love? Will he not provide the power of His compassion to flow through them? What would that do for our marriages, families, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and the world?

What will He do for those who will worship Him as he says with their financial resources—giving according to His prescription with a cheerful heart and bowels of compassion? Will he not open up the windows of Heaven and pour out a blessing upon them that cannot be contained? Wouldn't the overflow of His life and resource be a blessing to the people around us? Isn't He looking for men and women that He can once again use as Joseph that saved a nation, or Solomon who built one?

What will He do for those who will worship Him as He says with their time, talents, and energies? Will He not use them like Paul and Peter, James and John? Can He still support those who going out in His Name, open blind eyes, heal the sick, preach the gospel to the poor and set the captives free?

And what about the man or woman who will yield up all things to Him as the worship that is due Him? Won't it be evident that the things we hear them say and the things we see them do will be coming straight from the heart of God? Won't He pour out His Spirit upon them and cause them to be a delight to the lost and the needy, the poor and the infirm, like He did with Jesus?

Obedience in musical worship is just one stop on the pathway of true worship (and we must be more than overcomers here!)... But Father is looking for people in this day... who appropriate His power venturing out one step, shout, song, hop at a time!

We were created to worship Him! Don't deprive Him any longer! Especially not when He has provided us with the power to obey!

Deuteronomy 30:8–10 —And you will again obey the voice of the LORD and follow all His commandments I am giving you today. So the LORD your God will make you abound in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the offspring of your livestock, and the produce of your land. Indeed, the LORD will again delight in your goodness, as He delighted in that of your fathers, if you obey the LORD your God by keeping His commandments and statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to Him with all your heart and with all your soul. [BSB]

Jeremiah 7:23–24 —but this is what I commanded them: Obey Me, and I will be your God, and you will be My people. You must walk in all the ways I have commanded you, so that it may go well with you. Yet they did not listen or incline their ear, but they followed the stubborn inclinations of their own evil hearts. They went backward and not forward. [BSB]

Response To Truth

Note: To listen to Cere Muscarella's personal testimony of the first time he was confronted by these truths, go to the 45:49 minutes point in the audio file available free at: <https://www.life4square.com/bldgblocks/block7.mp3> .

Worship is a huge issue! Resistance to a "forced" response (at any level) seems almost "natural!" Allowing a "hole in the dyke" at the base level of musical worship is almost universally rejected! But with every small response to the Lord, first at the easy levels, it becomes easier to respond rightly and immediately in the toughest of "worship" challenges! Let the Lord have His way in this small slice of worship! Even if you let him have it slowly!



I am ready to wiggle my foot side to side instead of the traditional up and down the next time I sing the word "dance" in conjunction with the word "I" (that's a 1 on a scale of 0-10, you're on the way!)

☐ Yes ☐ No

 I am willing to take a hard look at the way I musically worship, to ask “why,” and to judge whether or not it is an example of the way I truly worship the Lord with the rest of my life! (that’s a 5, and 90% of the way to freedom!)
☐ Yes ☐ No

 I am willing to do what I say and sing because I have a revelation from the Word concerning the ways to praise and worship, and I see Him, high and lifted up, worthy of it all! (that’s a 10 and heading off the scale!)
☐ Yes ☐ No

From Forgiven to Forgiving

by Sonny Bowman

Key Verse:

Colossians 3:12-13 — Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. [NLT]

Hurts Happen

It is important to acknowledge that hurts happen to us. We frequently are mistreated, offended, abused, cut off, belittled, or otherwise maligned.

In many cases the hurts are caused by real offenses. However, we are also frequently hurt by imagined or perceived offenses. The hurt can be real even when the offense was not.

Many offenses are intentional, but often they are unintentional. But knowing that usually doesn't help. We still sting from the hurts whether they were caused intentionally or not. Sometimes the perpetrator is aware of the offense, but often he is clueless of just how much damage has been done by his words or actions.

When offenses happen, forgiveness is needed. The very idea of forgiveness includes the acknowledgment that a wrong has been committed—whether intentional or unintentional. In fact, if there is no offense, there is no need for forgiveness. If the offense was a matter of perception with no real sin, then the solution is communication and awareness, not forgiveness.

Unfortunately, we often compound the problem by committing offenses in response to other's offenses (real or perceived). In this way, a whole closet full of offenses and counter-offenses occur resulting in full breakdown of relationship—sometimes based on a simple misunderstanding. Though the original act may not need forgiving, all the resulting offenses and hurts need to be communicated and forgiven.

It is important for us to learn to handle hurts and offenses in a godly way.

Responses to Hurts and Offenses

Different people in different situations deal with hurts and offenses in different ways—most of which are unhealthy. Following are five unhealthy and two healthy ways that people deal with hurts and offenses.

Withdraw

One unhealthy response to hurts and offenses is withdrawal. We withdraw either to protect ourselves from further hurt and/or to inflict hurt back on the perpetrator. In either case, withdrawal is basically a selfish response to offenses and is very unhealthy in many cases. [We are talking about occasional hurts and offenses here, not dangerous attacks.]

Bite Back

This may be the most common unhealthy response to offenses—imagined or real. It generally includes an immediate response with our own offense in retaliation. After all, “The best defense is a good offense.” So we go on the offensive to get the upper hand and to deflect or deflate the hurt. This technique is designed to stop and disarm the perceived offender.

Biting back usually takes the form of a strong, sometimes violent, reaction involving little forethought. And that swift, reactive response is what makes it difficult to change this form of response. Biting back may also be the response of pent up frustration from previous hurts. While there is a need to communicate those frustrations or hurts, biting back is never an appropriate response to hurts and offenses.

Revenge

Sometimes we respond to hurts and offenses with a plan for revenge. Our sense of justice has been violated and we are going to make sure the perpetrator pays. So we seethe, plan, calculate, imagine, and plot our attack. This is a very self-centered and ungodly response to offenses. It can lead to bitterness and will cut us off from the blessings of relationship with God and others.

Blame

It's common to shift all blame for problems to some other person—the offender in this case. That makes it easy for us to justify our own actions and feelings. However, it is highly unlikely that we did everything perfectly the way God expects. We must own our part of the problem. Regardless of how the other person responds, we must repent for our sins and ask for forgiveness for any of our poor responses.

Ignore

Sometimes we ignore an offense because we are oblivious to the assault. For example, a driver may make an obscene gesture as he races around your car. If you don't happen to see it, then it does not have the desired effect and the attempted offense is ignored.

At other times, people ignore offenses as a way to ease the hurt. This denial of the offense is an escape mechanism to avoid the pain of the hurt. Unfortunately, it also avoids any constructive progress from the event. For example, you may see a driver race around you while making an obscene gesture. Your first reaction may be to assume he has an anger problem and ignore the incident to avoid the hurt. However, a better approach is to ask yourself why he may be upset. As you look around, you realize that while talking on your cell phone, you had wandered into his lane. So you get back in your lane and make a note to not talk on your cell phone while driving. While the offense was not appropriate, you were able to gain some insight and benefit from it by approaching it with the right attitude.

There are also times when we should ignore an offense out of love. While most offenses need to be addressed to solve the underlying problems, there are a few occasions when the offense should be overlooked or ignored.

Proverbs 19:11 — Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs. [NLT]

Proverbs 12:16 — Fools quickly show that they are upset, but the wise ignore insults. [NCV]

 **By Proverbs 12:16, what do you typically act like?**

☐ a fool ☐ wise

 **Is it time for a change?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

Confront

When it comes to confronting someone about an offense, it seems we take either of two extremes. On the one hand, we totally refuse to confront the other person. That is motivated by fear, lack of love for the other person, and selfishness. We are motivated more by our own needs and desires (peace, quiet, comfort, freedom from pain, etc.) than we are by a love for the other person (correction, growth). We are saying that we do not value the relationship with the other person enough to endure the potential pain needed to help them or to rebuild a close, loving relationship.

1 John 4:18 — Where God's love is, there is no fear, because God's perfect love drives out fear. It is punishment that makes a person fear, so love is not made perfect in the person who fears. [NCV]

John 15:12–13 —This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. [BSB]

At the other extreme, we can be very confrontational, pushing hard to make the other person change. This, too, can be motivated by self-love and lack of love for the other person. We want them to change so our lives will be better. The focus is us, not them or the relationship.

Often, we must confront those who commit offenses. But we must do it in a spirit of humility and love. Our motivation must be the well-being of the other person rather than our own personal peace and comfort. We must also value an open, loving relationship with that person more than our fear of hurt and rejection. We have to be willing to risk getting our hand bitten as we reach out in love.

2 Timothy 2:24-25 — A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. [NLT]

Forgive

Forgiving a person, along with confronting the offense, is usually the correct response to hurts from an offense.

In some cases, forgiveness is not required. When sin is involved, forgiveness is needed. It doesn't have to be overt sin. Ungodly attitudes of selfishness, failure to love others, and other similar sins all need forgiveness.

However, we are sometimes offended by the personalities, choices, or habits of another person. We may also be offended when others don't fulfill our expectations—which may or may not be valid. While such situations may lead to sinful responses, they in themselves are not sin and do not need to be forgiven.

For example. I might be offended and hurt because my wife didn't properly thank me for the new ring I bought for her. While she may have been appreciative, it just wasn't as much as I wanted. So now I am hurt and offended. As a result, I withdraw, cutting off some of the closeness in our relationship. And when little things happen, I snap at her in unkind ways. The original offense is not a sin and does not need to be forgiven. However, my response to failed expectations is wrong and I need to repent and ask for forgiveness.

Reasons to Forgive

God has given us reasons to forgive others.

We, Ourselves, Are Loved and Forgiven

God loved us enough to confront us, correct us, and forgive us. Each of us has been forgiven for much. In love, God forgave us a tremendous debt that we could not pay.

Romans 5:6-10 — When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. [NLT]

God paid a high price to satisfy your sin debt and provide for your forgiveness. Sin is contrary to God's nature and abhorrent to Him. God is pure; sin is the opposite of pure. The wonder of the Cross is that God was willing to take our sin upon Himself to bring us into relationship with Him. God's love for us is greater than His hatred of sin. Therefore, Jesus personally took our sins in His body and paid our debt in order to deliver us from the power of sin.

1 Peter 2:24 — He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross [NLT]

God is a perfect God, and His forgiveness is perfect. When we forgive someone, we often do not forget it. Then, when that person does something else wrong, we bring back the memory of that early offense to show them how really bad they are. Some people think God does the same thing. However, when God forgives our sin, He will not remember it against us.

Isaiah 43:25 — "I—yes, I alone—will blot out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again. [NLT]

Micah 7:19 — Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean! [NLT]

Psalms 103:11-12 — For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. [NLT]

God **could** remember our sin after it is forgiven. However, He **chooses** not to remember it against us. God's love and forgiveness for us is a choice He makes.

We Are Commanded to Love

We must learn and follow God's ways. We are not here simply to enjoy life. There is much to enjoy in God's beautiful creation. However, we are here because others don't know Jesus, yet. And if we don't reach them, they may spend eternity separated from God. We are God's representatives and need to accurately represent Him.

2 Corinthians 5:20 — So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" [NLT]

Isaiah 2:3 — People from many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of Jacob's God. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." [NLT]

God desires for us to walk in the same kind of love that He has.

John 15:9-17 — "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. This is my command: Love each other. [NLT]

Jesus has provided the example of love that we are commanded to follow. He has also provided the necessary power to walk in that love by the Holy Spirit whom He sent to dwell in us (see the chapter on *The Person, Work, and Ministry of the Holy Spirit*). Our part is to daily **choose** to love with His kind of love.

 **To follow Jesus' example in loving people, what is your part?**

We Are Commanded to Forgive

Loving others cannot be separated from forgiving others. Forgiving others is not optional.

Matthew 18:21-22 — Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven! [NLT]

Matthew 18:32-35 — Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart." [NLT]

Wrong Ideas About Forgiving

There are many wrong ideas about forgiving others. Following are some common ones.

But My anger is justified

God's anger over our sin was more than justified, yet He loved and forgave us. We are called to do the same. Actually, forgiveness presupposes a real violation along with true justification for anger. If there is no sin, then there is no real need for forgiving that person. So any time there is a need to forgive someone, there *is* justification for anger—but not the scriptural *right* to be angry. So being justified is no excuse for refusing to forgive.

But I Just Can't Forgive

God would not command you to do something that is impossible. Since He commands us to forgive others, it is not impossible for us. Refusal to forgive someone is a choice that you cannot afford to make. So, ask for the Lord's help and choose to forgive.

But I Can't Forget

Totally forgetting the hurt is not required in forgiving. Many hurts leave deep scars and take years for healing. You may not be able to forget the pain and hurt. Forgiveness, like love, is a choice you make. Often, you have to remake that choice several times along the way. Each time it comes to mind, keep choosing to forgive. Then allow God to heal the hurts. Forgiving the perpetrator is part of the path that leads to healing of the hurts they caused.

But If I Ask Forgiveness, I Am Saying It is All My Fault

It may have been all your fault. But that doesn't matter. When you repent and ask forgiveness, you are taking ownership of the part that *you* did wrong. You are working to make it right. It is not your responsibility to ensure that the other person understands his guilt or that he repents.

Helpful Rule: *It is better to be right than to look right.*

But I Can't Act Like Nothing Ever Happened

Something *did* happen or there would be no need of forgiveness. Forgiving someone does not mean you have to ignore the wrong things they did. God is commanding that we be loving and forgiving. He is not asking us to be stupid.

Matthew 10:16 — “Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. [NLT]

2 Timothy 4:14-15 — Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm, but the Lord will judge him for what he has done. Be careful of him, for he fought against everything we said. [NLT]

Even when you have forgiven someone, there is a level of trust that has been damaged. Trust is built over time as a person proves himself faithful, good, and trustworthy. True, godly love and forgiveness are based on qualities in the one giving the love or forgiveness, not the one receiving it. Trust is different. Trust is based on qualities in the recipient expressed over time. Godly love and forgiveness occur instantly as a result of choice. Trust develops over time. Because of Love, all should be forgiven—but not all should be trusted. Note: Depending on the breach of trust involved, full restoration and reconciliation may not be possible or advisable in this life.

Helpful Rule: *Love all, forgive all, trust some.*

But If I Forgive Him, I am Saying Everything is Okay

Actually, in forgiving you are just releasing your claim for vengeance and justice. In essence, you are acknowledging that you belong to God, and not yourself. Forgiving someone would hopefully lead to everything *becoming* okay. But it doesn't excuse or make right the wrong things that were done. Nor does it eliminate all consequences of the actions.

But He Isn't Sorry

In an ideal situation, the offender would recognize his offence and come ask for forgiveness. In a near ideal situation, the offender would recognize his offence as soon as you point it out to him, then he would ask to be forgiven. But in many cases, the offender just doesn't get it. But you are still required to forgive him, which fulfills your obligation. What he does with it is between him and God. What if God waited until you fully understood the magnitude of your sin before forgiving you? Jesus died for our sins long before any of us alive realized that we needed His forgiveness.

But All of the Offense is by the Other Person

"I have no guilt in the situation. I was fully in the right." Yeah, sure! None of us are perfect. In most conflicts and offenses, there are wrongs on both sides. Your job is to let the Lord show you the areas where you were wrong, repent, then ask the other person to forgive you for those specific actions. Often the other person will reciprocate, but that is not a condition for your repentance.

Helpful Rule: *I am not as innocent as I think I am.*

But He Started It

"He was in the wrong first. Why do I always have to forgive first?" Well, if you want to be godly, you need to go first.

Romans 5:10 — For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, [NLT]

Jesus did not wait for us. Even while we were actively fighting God as His enemies, Jesus died for us.

Helpful Rule: *Love always goes first in the hard stuff.*

I Just Can't Forgive Myself

Some people are able to forgive others more easily than they can forgive themselves. Like for others, you must choose to forgive yourself. God has forgiven you. Who are you to refuse to forgive someone whom God has forgiven—including yourself? Are you greater than God?

Goal of Forgiving

The ultimate goal of forgiving is the restoration of a relationship that has been damaged by offenses and hurts. God is a God of restoration. The primary reason that Jesus died was to restore our relationship with God which had been broken by our sin. It was not His primary goal to just keep us from going to Hell. God desires an intimate relationship with each of us.

Ephesians 2:13 — But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. [NLT]

Romans 5:11 — So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God. [NLT]

God is also interested in our relationships with one another. That's why He commands us to love and forgive each other. Sin damages fellowship and relationship. Sin can only be fixed by repentance and forgiveness. Nothing else works. Forgiveness puts you on the road to restored relationship.

Matthew 5:23–24 — “So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. [NLT]

Help Us Forgive

Forgiving love is so foreign to this world's love that even many Christians struggle with how to regularly walk in it. It is so easy to be carried away with murmuring, complaining, faultfinding, division, and bitterness. Here are some practical guidelines to help you walk in God's love rather than succumbing to the hatred and bitterness so common in this world.

Learn and Remember

Daily remind yourself of God's great love for you that paid a tremendous sin debt that you could never begin to pay. The more you truly begin to see God's great love for you and the deliverance He provided, the easier it is to love Him and to love others.

Ephesians 2:4–5 — But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) [NLT]

Luke 7:36–47 — One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat. When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!” Then Jesus answered his thoughts. “Simon,” he said to the Pharisee, “I have something to say to you.” “Go ahead, Teacher,” Simon replied. Then Jesus told him this story: “A man loaned money to two people— 500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?” Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt.” “That's right,” Jesus said. Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. “I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.” [NLT]

Both Simon and the woman owed a greater sin debt than either of them could repay. However, only the woman realized the magnitude of the debt.

Because of that, she understood the vastness of God's love that would forgive such a huge debt. Her response to that great outpouring of love was a genuine response of great love.

If you have trouble loving and forgiving others, maybe it's because you haven't seen (or have forgotten) the magnitude of your sin for which you were forgiven and its terrible cost for Jesus.

Choose

Realize that love and forgiveness are choices you make, not feelings. You make the choice, God provides the power. Feelings follow later. Love and forgiveness are both processes that must be walked out day by day.

2 Corinthians 5:7 — For we live by believing and not by seeing. [NLT]



Are you walking by what you see or feel instead of by what you know is true?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Deuteronomy 30:15-19 — “Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster. For I command you this day to love the LORD your God and to keep his commands, decrees, and regulations by walking in his ways. “Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! [NLT]

Our part is to choose. God provides the power to walk it out *after* we choose. Notice that an angel strengthened Jesus only after He had made the difficult choice to follow the Father's will.

Luke 22:42-43 — “Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.” Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. [NLT]

Watch Your Perception

Realize that offenses you feel are sometimes a matter of your perception rather than their intention. In the seventies, it was popular to have a “Honk if you love Jesus” bumper sticker on your car. Unfortunately, some Christians forgot that they had the sticker and became very offended when people kept honking at them. The offense was in the perception of the intent, not the actual intent. Love expects the best rather than assuming the worst. A lifestyle of loving others with God's agape love will protect us from succumbing to many of the opportunities to be offended that we face daily.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 — Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. [NLT]

Helpful Rule: *Assume that they did not intend to offend you until they tell you that they intended to offend you.*

Overcome Evil

Overcome evil with good. Even if the offense is intentional, we are still required to love and forgive. You dissipate darkness by shining the light, not

by adding more darkness. Love always overcomes evil. Every time you respond to evil with God's love, you are giving the kingdom of darkness a black eye.

Romans 12:14-21 — Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. Never pay back evil with more evil. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the LORD. Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads." Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good. [NLT]

Luke 6:32-36 — "If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! "Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate. [NLT]

Think and Speak Life

God tells us what we should think about and how we should speak. Refuse to think or speak in an unloving way. Rather, think loving, godly, and life-giving thoughts. If you keep your thinking right, your speaking and actions will also be right.

Philippians 4:8-9 — And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you. [NLT]

How does this compare to the things you often think about? Just listen to the conversations you hear at work, home, and church. Do they exhibit the kind of thinking described in this verse? In most cases, our thinking and conversations are very negative—just the opposite of God's will.

Ephesians 4:29-32 — Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. [NLT]

Life works better when you do it God's way. He knows what's best!

Encourage Others

Encourage others to walk in God's love and forgiveness. It will help you remember to do it, also.

Titus 3:1-2 — Remind the believers to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. They must not slander anyone and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone. [NLT]

Correct in Love

Where correction is needed, bring it in a scriptural manner with a spirit of love. Jesus' love does not allow us to continue in our error. True love for others will confront and restore. It is not love to ignore or excuse a friend's sin.

Leviticus 19:17-18 — “Do not nurse hatred in your heart for any of your relatives. Confront people directly so you will not be held guilty for their sin. “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. [NLT]

Matthew 18:15-17 — “If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector. [NLT]

Jesus is not instructing us to hate these people. That would conflict with His other teachings. We are to consider them as people heading in the wrong direction whose ways we must not follow.

Acknowledge God's Rights

Acknowledge that justice and vengeance belong to God. You do not have a right to them because your rights were purchased by God when He redeemed you from slavery and death.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 — Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. [NLT]

So release your rights for justice—which don't really belong to you anyway. Quit trying to take what belongs to God.

Properly Asking for Forgiveness

Most of this chapter has been about forgiving others. But it is important that we learn to humble ourselves and ask forgiveness when we sin against or offend others. Often, we must take the first step in the restoration process. So what is the right way to ask for forgiveness?

Cool Down & Listen

I can't see my faults clearly in the heat of an argument. Often I have to calm down some before I can begin to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit pointing out where I have been unkind and unloving. So it is always good to get quiet, draw near to God, and listen to what He has to say about the situation.

Honestly Evaluate

We usually replay conflicts over and over in our minds, reinforcing what the other person did wrong. Bad idea! Instead, you should carefully replay the incident in your mind while watching for things **you** did wrong. Don't worry that you might not find anything that you did wrong. The Holy Spirit is a great

help if you will let Him. Regardless of how wrong the other person was, there almost always are things that you said or did that need to be fixed.

Repent

Acknowledge your sins to the Lord and to yourself. Then determine what you should have done. Reinforce that in your thoughts and determine to follow through properly the next time. There will be more opportunities to get it right—and probably sooner than you think. The next step will help remind you to get it right next time.

Request Forgiveness

Ask the other person to forgive you. Avoid generalities like only saying, “I’m sorry.” Also avoid shifting blame or otherwise bringing up what the other person did wrong. “I’m sorry for getting mad when you acted like a jerk.” Keep the focus on you, not them. It is also important that you be very specific in owning up to what you did wrong. Say, “I am very sorry for Will you please forgive me?”

If the other person refuses to forgive you, it may be because you were not specific enough, accurate enough, or sincere. Our pride wants to minimize our guilt, so don’t be surprised if your request was unacceptable. If rejected, honestly evaluate your motive and presentation, then try again. Once you’ve made an honest attempt at acknowledging your guilt and requesting forgiveness, then don’t worry if he still refuses to forgive you. You have done your part.

Verbalize Forgiveness

If the other person also asks forgiveness, forgive them verbally. Take the request as it is given, even if it is general. Don’t think about the other wrongs that should have been listed. Just graciously forgive with, “Yes, I forgive you.” And mean it!

Helpful Rule: *Always be quick to ask for forgiveness and quick to forgive others.*

Consequences of Unforgiveness

Our motivation to love and forgive others must come from a love for Jesus rather than from a fear of consequences. However, it is important to realize that there are some serious, negative consequences when a person chooses not to love or forgive.

Matthew 18:32-35 — Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. “That’s what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.” [NLT]

In this passage, the unforgiving servant was turned over to the torturers (tormentors). Unforgiveness leads to bitterness and torment to the person who refuses to forgive. This torment is often evident in heightened stress, emotional pain, isolation, and possibly even physical problems. This bitterness can take root and spread torment to others like a cancerous tumor.

Hebrews 12:15 — ... Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many. [NLT]

Choosing not to forgive someone is like handing the enemy a two-by-four and inviting him to beat you up with it. You don't have to ask him twice. If you refuse to forgive people, then God will not forgive you. This does not mean that you lose your salvation—that is based only on faith in Jesus. It means that the blessings of God are cut off in your life. If you want the blessings of God released in your life, you must release others by forgiving them. When you refuse to forgive someone, you are the one who is really imprisoned!

Mark 11:25 — But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too." [NLT]

Luke 6:37-38 — "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back." [NLT]

Lack of godly love among Christians also makes it difficult for others to come to Jesus and experience the deliverance available in loving relationship with Him and believers.

John 13:35 — Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." [NLT]

1 Corinthians 8:13 — So if what I eat causes another believer to sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don't want to cause another believer to stumble. [NLT]

Seeing unloving actions and unkind attitudes in the Church has possibly offended more people than any other cause. Such demonstrations of ungodliness have also caused many immature Christians to become bitter, disillusioned, and eventually cease following the Lord.

Mature Christians should have their eyes fixed on Jesus. They may be grieved by ungodliness among other Christians, but they realize that people are people. Mature Christians choose to follow Jesus even if no one else does.

Results and Benefits of Forgiveness

Walking in love and forgiveness brings glory to God, peace to His people, and the flow of God's blessings in our lives.

Matthew 5:16 — In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. [NLT]

Romans 8:6 — So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. [NLT]

If you want life and peace, you must choose to walk in love and forgiveness. It is not optional!

Homework



List anyone you need to forgive.



List anyone you need to ask forgiveness from.

Faith that Pleases God

by Stacy Collins

Key Verse:

Hebrews 11:6 —But without faith *it is impossible* to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. [NKJV]

Exegesis: “**Without faith**, (*pistis*: persuasion, moral conviction, consistency in the profession of the truthfulness of God) **it is impossible** (*a-dunatos*: no power) **to please Him**: (*euaresteo*: to be fully agreeable to, acceptable to, well pleasing to, gratifying to) **for he who comes to God** (*proserchomai*: approaches, comes near, worships), **must believe** (*pisteuo*: have the persuasion, conviction and trust) **that He is**, [that He is God, ever-present and alert, able and willing, caring and loving] **and that He is a rewarder** (*misthapodotes*: remunerator, paymaster) **of them that diligently seek** (*ekzeteo*: search out, investigate, crave, desire, demand and worship) **Him!**

"Nobody reaches God's presence until he has learned to believe; to believe that God exists and that He will reveal Himself to those that sincerely look for Him"

"Without living by the unseen, it is impossible to get God's approval. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is and He amply rewards them that make Him their quest."

Why is faith so important? You can't please Him without it. Strong faith is the result of rich fellowship with Father. And...fellowship is not relationship. Think of a man and a woman getting married, they can walk down an aisle, say their vows, and are now related to one another. But what if they never speak to each other again. Legally they are in relationship, but there is no fellowship.

Daniel 11:32 —... but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out *great exploits*. [NKJV]

Some will say, well I know the Bible, so I know God. Not so! You can read a book backwards and forwards and still not know the author. I did that in Middle School—Tom Clute "Prince Tom: Champion Dog" project.

Romans 10 tells us that faith comes from hearing Him speak His Word. FAITH = a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgment of God's revelation or truth; a personal surrender to Him. FAITH is the product of a relationship.

Why is this so important? Because we can't walk this walk without it.

2 Corinthians 5:7 —For we walk by faith, not by sight. [BSB]

You can't praise without faith. You can't pray without faith. You can't perform ministry or miracles without faith. Miracles take place in Jesus' Name, with power flowing from the invisible world where God is, through the spirit of man, where the center of our being is, through the mind of man (where doubt can arise), and out into the world around us through the spoken Word.

Introduction

In short, faith that pleases God is *believing in the reality, faithfulness and truthfulness of God!* Shorter still, faith is *believing God and, therefore, receiving what He says!* The shortest is, *believing God!* Our Father is trustworthy, and His Word is good!

Numbers 23:19 —God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? [NIV]

Salvation is ours by *believing* that He is our Savior! Healing is ours by *believing* that He is the Healer of all our sicknesses and diseases! Prosperity is ours by *believing* that He “cares for our every need” and “will supply our needs according to His riches in glory in Christ!” Healed relationships are ours by *believing* that He is the Healer of the breaches! (If He reconciled the world to Himself through the plan hidden in Jesus, He can be trusted to heal our broken family-and-friend ties!) Security is ours by believing that if He is for us, no one (or thing) will rule against us! (He *is* the avenger of the elect!) The fruit of the Spirit is ours by believing He is our Husbandman! You name it, “all things are possible to those who *believe Him*” and trust Him with all their needs! *Believing Him* instead of *believing Him for things* (a focus on Him vs. a focus on us) is the shortest route to having His fullness and being free from care over the affairs of this life!

In our modern Christian society, many people think of faith as a tool, a muscle, or “personal power” to be used to materialize blessings or protection or other things from out of the unseen spiritual realm. Their banner is: “*Thy faith has made thee whole*” (Which places their faith, in *their faith*, rather than on God)! For them, faith is *the pathway* by which the things they yearn for travel to them. Faith is *a magnetic force*, latching on to and reeling in “whatsoever” they have their hopes set on (regardless of where the “desire in their heart” began)! It’s a very self-focused, high-maintenance, competitive-Christian lifestyle marked by power buzz words like command, demand, specify, possess, declare, take, mandate, authority, control, etc. (not exactly the vocabulary of a servant)! It only differs from the American Captain-of-my-destiny syndrome in that it is highly spiritualized! Though it is an extremely attractive and popular “belief,” it is at best the very narrowest use of a divine gift of Father’s grace and at its worst it is simply spiritualized greed. [Having been an ardent member of the movement in its formative years, I know whereof I speak!]

But biblical faith is, and should be, much more than a way to tap into Father’s bank of resources! It should be a *way of life* that is pleasing to God, because it places Him at the center of it!

Romans 4:3, 11 —... “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ... And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe [*God*] ... that righteousness might be credited to them. [NIV]

According to our verses, “faith” in its higher, wider, deeper definition is *believing God*. It is believing He will reward us with everything we have need of; if, when, where, and how we need it! It is believing that He has an *effortless prosperity* for those who seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33)! We seek Him and He does all the maintenance! We seek Him and He watches over and cares for us with all He

has promised in His Word! We seek Him and He provides everything for those who *believe* Him because every promise is “Yes and amen” in Him! Not one of us, commissioned as an ambassador for Christ who has engaged in the spiritual battle for the souls of men, has to be concerned (or distracted) for a moment with what we will wear, what we will eat, where we will live, how we will survive! We are not “at war” at our own expense (1 Corinthians 9:7). He has promised to supply, enable, and equip us for every bit of our work! And believing all that and focusing all our attention and affection on Him is faith that pleases our Father!

By believing God, by believing He has good plans and an abundant life for us, we can cast all our cares on Him and spend our time serving Him! However, when we choose to believe Him *for things* then we have to maintain our focus, time, energy, prayer and “confession” on those things until they manifest. Once that “goal” has been accomplished, there is the next thing and the next and so on and so on... Life becomes consumed with the “rights of acquisition” where we have to lay hold of “The good things God has given us richly to enjoy” instead of drawing near to the One who is Good and will give us (plant in us) the desires of our hearts! Life begins to focus on “the abundance of our inventory” instead of trusting the Lord to manifest *abundant life* for us, as He desires! Life is too short for this kind of “walk!” [It’s hard to seriously consider this level of faith a “walk in the spirit” when at its best it is self-focused life of acquisitions!] A lack of peace, contentment, and rest characterize this choice of “faith walk!” The short cut, and how to move into the realm of the Spirit, is to “*BELIEVE HIM*” for all the things necessary to this life and to be free to “be about our Father’s business!”

So then, the short definition of faith, which is *believing God*, is the very corner stone, the origin, the indispensable and fundamental basis, of our walk with Him! And if we are willing to *believe God* to provide whatever is necessary, when it is necessary, then we have very little to do to secure our lives and needs and possessions!

 **The short definition of faith is:** _____

 **The best way to enter into His peace, joy, rest, care is:** _____

 **Are you getting the picture now?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

Putting Our Definition to the Test!

In the New Testament, *pistis* is the divinely implanted principle of inward confidence, assurance, trust, and reliance in God and all that He says. The God-kind of faith is the kind of faith in which a person believes in his heart, and then he says with his mouth what he believes in his heart.

If faith is believing God and believing God is faith, then let’s run a test to see if it can really be that simple.

Every Believer Has Faith

1 John 5:4; Mark 11:22-26; Romans 12:3 → at least a measure of faith

Faith Is Measurable

2 Thessalonians 1:3 → "faith groweth exceedingly"
 Luke 12:28; Matthew 6:30; 14:22-31 → "little faith"
 Matthew 8 → GREAT faith - centurion was commended
 Romans 4:19 → "weak in faith"
 Romans 4:20 → "strong in faith"
 James 2:5 → "rich in faith"
 Acts 6:5 → "full of faith"
 James 2:22 → "faith made perfect"
 1 Timothy 1:5 → "faith unfeigned" = genuine and sincere
 1 Timothy 1:19 → "concerning faith have made shipwreck"
 1 John 5:4 → "overcometh the world, even our faith"

We are saved by believing God!

Romans 10:9–11 —that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, *"Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."* [NKJV]

[Further study: John 3:16,18,36; 5:24; 6:35,40,47; 7:38; 11:25; Acts 10:43; Romans 1:16; 4:16; 10:9-11; Galatians 3:22,26; Ephesians 2:8; 1 John 5:13]

There is a heart and mouth connection. How did Father create all that He created? In Genesis 1:3 we are told, "God said..." In Hebrews 11:3 it tells us that God "framed" the world by His words. If God had to do it this way: believing and confessing, how much more should we?

The heart needs to be aligned with the lips (Matthew 15:7-11). Proverbs 16:23, 24 "Heart of the wise teaches his mouth..."

Paul Cho was talking to a neurosurgeon in Korea. The neurosurgeon was explaining that the speech center in the brain exercises dominion over rest of body; said it was a new discovery. Cho says, "Dr. James" knew that a long time ago —the tongue determines the direction and destiny of your life, it's a rudder. Neurosurgeon continues...we've discovered if a person begins to speak failure or weakness it sends out a signal through the nerves telling the body, "Prepare for failure". Or if people say, "I'm old, I'm old"; nerves tell body, "Prepare to die". [Excerpt from the 1979 edition of *The Fourth Dimension, The Creative Power of the Spoken Word* by Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho]

Once saved we are called to "live and stand by believing God!"

Romans 1:17 —For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, *"The just shall live by faith."* [NKJV]

[Further study: 2 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38; Romans 11:20; 2 Corinthians 1:24]

We are justified *and* sanctified by believing God!

Romans 3:26, 28, 30 —[God sent redemption through Jesus] to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. ... Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. ... since *there is* one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. [NKJV]

Acts 26:18 —[I am sent and so are you] to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' [NKJV]

[Further study: Romans 3:22; 4:5; 5:1; Galatians 3:24; 5:5; Acts 15:9; Philippians 3:9]

We do great works, overcome darkness and the world by believing God!

John 14:12 —“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father. [NKJV]

John 12:44–46 —Then Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. [NKJV]

1 John 5:5 —Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? [NKJV]

[Further Study: 1 Peter 2:6]

Believing God makes us heirs...

Believing God makes us heirs of the kingdom and partakers of the promises made to Abraham, the father of the faithful!

Romans 4:3, 11 —For what does the Scripture say? “*Abraham believed God, and it was* accounted to him for righteousness.” ... And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith ... that he might be the father of all those who believe [*God*]... that righteousness might be imputed to them also, [NKJV]

Galatians 3:29 —And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. [KJV]

James 2:5 —Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? [NKJV]

The life of Abraham stands as a testimony to us all that whatever we have need of: Father's presence, provision, healing, forgiveness, or defense, comes as we will simply *believe God!* Believing God was Abraham's righteousness, his right standing with God, and it's the same for all, like him, who believe!

Two kinds of Faith: Thomas and Abraham

1. The Thomas-kind of faith = head-faith (natural faith) John 20:24-29

You have natural faith in: a chair, a recipe, parents...

This kind of faith believes only what it can see, hear, taste, smell, or touch. Jesus did not commend this kind of faith.

2. The Abraham-kind of faith = heart-faith Romans 4:16-21

This is the faith that believes in spite of what it sees, in spite of circumstances. This kind of faith calls those things that be not as though they were. It's not calling those things that are as though they were not. Faith does not ignore or deny what's there. It brings into our reality what is already in His reality.

 **Now that I've seen "faith" in action, can my definition of faith be simplified and changed?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

Getting the Faith of God!

Believing God in all things is the goal! If He has said something, we want to answer "AMEN! I BELIEVE IT!" There are however multitudes of things that come to get in the way of simple, childlike faith! Things like circumstances! Things like the enemy! Things like people! Things that come to cast doubt on Father's truthfulness and reliability! Things that come to frustrate us while we wait on the Lord. We must be aware of, and on guard against, things that come to steal the Word from us and destroy our faithfulness!

There are at least five ways to insulate ourselves against things that steal faith and to build up our "believe-ability"!

1– Have ears that hear!

Romans 10:17 —So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. [NKJV]

Reading Father's Word is one key to building your faith! As you hear His Word in your heart and it makes its imprint, you'll find it easier and easier to believe Him! Listen to the Bible in your car and it get downs in there without much effort! (Have you ever heard a song twenty years after the time it was popular and you remembered every word? The song is down inside you from repetitious hearing! If a worldly song can make an imprint, think what the Word of God can do, being alive and quick and powerful!) Hearing the Word preached, testimonies of the great things Father does, all add up to increased believe-ability!

What bread or food is to the body, the Word of God is to the spirit (Matthew 4:4). After every meal, Smith Wigglesworth would always push back from the table, get out his Bible, and say, "Well, we've fed the body; now let's feed the inward man." [quoted in "Feed Your Spirit Daily" on the Nairaland Forum, <https://www.nairaland.com/1469832/feed-spirit-daily>]

F.F. Bosworth said, "Most Christians feed their bodies three hot meals a day, and their spirit one cold snack a week. And they wonder why they're so weak in faith." [quoted in "Mountain Moving Faith" by Kenneth E. Hagin, page 43]

Be careful what you "consume." While in Africa, I began to read, "Where There Is No Doctor" out of curiosity on how to deal with illnesses when you don't have access to medical help. As I read about the symptoms, it was amazing how my mind and body immediately started pondering if I had this disease or that sickness. I stopped reading that book for "entertainment."

2– Pray regularly in your spiritual language!

Jude 20 —But you, beloved, building (*epoikodomeo*: building on, rearing up) yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, [NKJV]

No one is exactly sure how praying in the spirit “builds” faith, but the words “building up” means to construct something and they have the aspect of charging something up, like we do a battery. So, we know that praying in the Holy Spirit builds and charges a “faith-storage-system.” “How” is just a guess... but let’s ponder this:

1 Corinthians 14:2–4 —For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies (*oikodomeo*: builds, strengthens, emboldens his house) himself... [NKJV]

It could well be that drawing near to, and speaking mysteries with God, that *the things He says* to our spirit man are things that build us up and charge us with an increased ability to believe Him! It could be that *interacting with Father* on that spiritual dimension gives us the buildup and charge we need to stand fast! It could be both! The issue is that we obey the Word and “build up” our most holy faith by praying in the Holy Spirit!

3– Spend time worshipping!

If praying in the spirit works for building us up, then worshipping in the spirit will too... And even more, worshipping sets the stage for faith! Worshipping is an expression of BELIEVING GOD IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS! There is nothing like a good worship session to iron out a wrinkled atmosphere, to quiet your heart in His presence, and to begin believing all will be well, because He is there! When we draw near to Him, He draws near to us, and in His presence it’s almost impossible to not believe Him!

4– Find good friends!

“Love edifies: *oikodomeo*: builds up!” — 1 Corinthians 8:1

“Faith works by love.” — Galatians 5:6

Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify (*oikodomeo*: build up) one another, even as also you do. — 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Iron sharpens iron. — Proverbs 27:17

Friends who encourage friends to stand fast, to hold on, to believe God, to read and study the Word... Friends who challenge us to good things, to continue in well-doing, are an invaluable aid to our faith! Find them, cultivate them, encourage them (Do unto them as you would have done unto you) and keep them! Surround yourself with people of like precious faith!

5– Limit some of the things you do!

1 Corinthians 10:23 —All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient (contributory; profitable): all things are lawful for me, but all things edify (*oikodomeo*: build up and charge) not. [KJV]

Nothing saps our ability to believe God quite like the “little foxes” that come to spoil the vine! Things that steal time from us, things that steal attention, things that fill our ears with words and thoughts having nothing to do with,

even detracting from, the Kingdom... If you want to be a "believer" some things are just going to have to take a back seat!

Releasing the Faith of God!

"Faith without corresponding actions of obedience is dead" — James 2:17, 20, 26

Faith in God is vertical while works to a needy world is horizontal. Faith creates works; works perfects faith. Our works show how genuine is that which we profess.

Luke 17:5, 6 explains that increase functions like a mustard seed—you've got to put it into the dirt, plant it, if you want it to do something. How do I plant it? "You would say..." Say to the seen (the tree/mountain/etc.). How does it work?

Mark 4:26–29 —And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." [NKJV]

Remember the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34): she heard, she believed, she said, she acted, and she was made whole.

Plant it, water it, God will bring the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).

What kinds of things do you see faith being released for in the Bible?

Response To Truth

"I AM A BELIEVER. I'M NOT A DOUBTER. I HAVE A MEASURE OF THE GOD-KIND OF FAITH. I HAVE A MEASURE OF THE KIND OF FAITH THAT CREATED THE WORLDS IN THE BEGINNING. I HAVE A MEASURE OF THE MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH."

 **I need to build up my faith! Of the five ways to build and charge up my faith:**

I am strongest in: _____

I am weakest in: _____

 **I know what I have to do to build myself up:**

☐ Yes ☐ No

Now that we have a broad definition of faith and the key to "divine life" which is: *believing God*... We can look at two main areas of our lives that Father has bountifully provided for us, which are appropriated by believing Him: **Our Healing** and **Our Prosperity!**

Healing for Life

by Stacy Collins

Key Verses:

Exodus 15:26 —... I *am* the LORD who heals you.” [NKJV]

Exodus 23:25 —“**So you shall serve (*abad: be a bondservant, slave and worshipper of*) the LORD your God**, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. [NKJV]

Isaiah 53:5 —But He was wounded for our transgressions, *He* was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. [NKJV]

God is our Healer! Healing is His idea! He authored all the healing promises! Healing is His heart's desire! It is His expressed will for us, manifest through Jesus! You and I have nothing at all to do with providing healing except to *believe Him* and receive it from Him! (*Remember our definition from the previous chapter on “Faith that Pleases God”? Broad faith [vs. narrow or little faith], the faith that pleases God is simply, “Believing Him!”*)

Having No “Little Faith” for... Healing!

Before the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, there was no sickness and there was nothing but prosperity (definition to follow in next chapter)! Father clothed Adam and Eve in His glory and He created everything for them to richly enjoy, literally!

With the advent of sin, “bodily sorrow”—struggle, toil, labor, worry, and pain—entered the world. At the same time, we lost the free-flowing provision that Father had intended for man to enjoy, and the stress-full cycle of “working-to-exist” began. Sickness and disease, striving, and poverty came into the world with Adam's sin.

Everything changed for us when our ancestors fell. But Jesus came for the expressed purpose to reconcile all things to God... to put everything back on track! By the first Adam, sin—with the death that comes from sin—entered the world, and it reigned (and history and our present human condition stands as proof)! By the second Adam—who is Jesus—life, with the power that comes from redemption, entered the world and became available to all who would believe! As Adam's disobedience brought condemnation on us all and severed the full provision of God... So, Jesus' obedience brought redemption (grace, mercy, and righteousness) and reconnected the flow of the “life more abundant” that Father had planned!

Healing and prosperity are not in question! Jesus *substitutionary* sufferings (the things He suffered in our place vs. His exemplary sufferings, the things He modeled for us) paid the price and put the provisions in store for us. Healing and Prosperity are ours! The only question is, **DO YOU BELIEVE HIM?**

In the Old Testament, Isaiah looking ahead 750 years to the promise of the atonement (amends, reparation, reconciliation) of Messiah, prophesied:

Isaiah 52:14 - 53:5 (Paraphrased) — “His appearance is astonishing! No one was ever so disfigured! He no longer had the appearance of a human being! This is how He will atone for the nations! And who will believe our message? He is despised and rejected by men. He is a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering. He is abandoned and we did not value nor regard what He was doing. He was lifted up with our diseases, the beast of burden for our pain, yet we judged Him beaten, punished and brought low by God (Interjection: that was *our* future, to be beaten, punished, brought low, and completely disfigured until the image of God was wiped away!). But He was tormented, beaten and bruised for our rebellion, He was crushed for our perversity: the beatings of our wholeness were upon Him; *and with His stripes we are healed!*”

DO YOU BELIEVE HIM?

The New Testament word for salvation: *soteria*: always means rescue, health, salvation, and safety! That promise of redemption comes to us for our spirit (eternal salvation), soul (lifetime transformation), and body (from health → divine life → complete replacement). DO YOU *BELIEVE HIM?*

How can we believe God for salvation from eternal Hell, and then not have the “faith” to believe God for earthly healing? If you have the ability to believe Him for salvation, then you have the ability to believe Him for healing! It’s the same work and promise of God! The healing work of Jesus was accomplished with the redeeming work of Jesus on the cross, two thousand years ago. The only way we can split the work of Jesus and the promise of God making it of no affect is by NOT BELIEVING HIM! By choosing to believe what we see in our bodies (or someone else’s) rather than believing God, we can stay sick in the midst of healing promises that are all “yes and amen!” Remember, we walk by faith, believing God, not by sight!

Bringing Faith for Healing Home!

So, what do we do about the issue of healing when we think we are believing God for the restoration of our health and nothing seems to be happening? Maybe a fictionalized, but functional, run-through will help.

“I’m sick! My head is spinning, my throat is on fire, my stomach is churning, my hair hurts, my whole body aches. I’m dying!” This may be an accurate assessment of your situation. You are sick if you have all those symptoms... and of course, since the outward man is perishing daily, it’s accurate, though not in perspective, to say you’re dying! To think it is faith to deny you are sick or to ignore symptoms is not only ignorant and dangerous (“my people perish for a lack of knowledge”) but it is playing right into the hands of the enemy! [Please remember he is the one who has come to steal, kill and destroy your health! As in all things, he begins his attack by tweaking the truth! Don’t you do it for him!]

So, you’ve made a fairly accurate assessment and what you do next is very important! Next you will choose who or what you will believe. At this point there are two basic players: God’s Word and your sick body. Your mind will side with one or the other, putting you in the hands of the Lord or of the devil!

“Okay, I’m sick and You are the Lord who heals me... Healing is the children’s bread... By Christ’s stripes I have been healed! That’s what the preacher said... That’s the Word and three times ought to do it” Let’s see, how do I feel? I still feel sick! Let’s try that again with a little more vigor and volume! ***“You are the Lord who heals me...Healing is the children’s bread... By Christ’s stripes I have been healed!” (6x)*** How do I feel now?

Worse! Now I feel sick and stupid! One *last* time... Now with great fervor, tears, and sprinkles of spiritual language! **YOU ARE THE LORD WHO HEALS ME...HEALING IS THE CHILDREN'S BREAD... BY CHRIST'S STRIPES I HAVE BEEN HEALED!** Still nothing... and that makes me mad and hurt and worse, it leaves me hurting and vulnerable. It's the devil's turn, he moves near, and with a sneer in his voice (how come we can always hear the devil so clearly and complain that we can't hear God?), he says: "God doesn't care for you the same way He does others. He's unfair like that, you know... and it lets you know right where you stand, too." Then with a smile on his face, "Let's get you to bed. Forget about this talking into the air! Take two aspirin and call your doctor in the morning." Now struggling to restrain his pounding heart and wiping away his drool: "I want a whole night to make you and your family miserable and to torment you about the silliness of your faith!"

In a hundred variations, this is pretty much the scenario that plays out in us. We make the mistake of thinking that saying a thing and believing it is the same! We make the mistake of thinking there's a faith-talking formula to take the place of a lifestyle of believing God! We make the mistake of thinking that because the preacher says it, that's good enough for us! We make the mistake of judging the faithfulness of God by surveying our circumstances! We make the mistake of setting limits on God, as though He was to conform to our wills, or on the number of approaches we will make, as though we were to conform to His. And we make the could-be-fatal error of listening and giving in to the enemy's suggestions. It not only defeats us now, but it sets the stage for "faith failure" later!

 **What are some of the "Mistakes" that you have made in the past when asking the Lord to heal you according to His promises?**

A better way! **"Father, I'm not sure why this got through to me, but my body is sick and hurting! As Your child I know nothing gets by You that You have not deemed winnable for me. If this challenge is the result of sin, I ask you to forgive me and set me back up on my feet.** This is the place to start when we are sick because we have abused, overindulged, or deprived our bodies. A lot of our sickness and disease (also simple dis-ease) would be done away with if we would just use some common sense. It's also the place to begin when we ignore Bible directives of how to care for our bodies with proper diet and balanced work-exercise-recreation-rest-sleep routines. (We never break God's laws, they always break us somewhere.) But even when we are the source of our own troubles, it does not mean we should hesitate to come to Father, ask forgiveness, and seek His power to turn things around!

"Father, if this challenge is because of sin that I don't see, please show me. I want to ask your forgiveness and receive the power to repent of (turn around) my actions. Sometimes we are doing things that we don't recognize as sin and we need help to see it. Sometimes there are cultural issues, habits, tastes, (im)maturity issues, etc., that Father wants to deal with.

When we won't respond to Spirit leading, He pulls back His supernatural protection and we see and feel the results of that sin. (Circumstance leading, yuck!) In this instance we have a need to see, so in wisdom we pray, "open my eyes!"

[Necessary Note: Included in these first two points of prayer would be the issues of dealing with "suicidal spirits" which exercise themselves in the things that we know bring death to our physical lives. Drugs, alcohol, tobacco, habit-forming dietary (or otherwise) aids, sugar abuse, aspartame, illegal steroids, etc. Eating disorders: over eating, bingeing, anorexia, bulimia, etc., fall into this "suicidal" category too! We may, or may not know we have a problem, or recognize the depth of the problem, but the results are the same! Those "spirits" open the door to destruction and the only way out is praying for "sight," obtaining forgiveness, asking the Lord to rebuke those controlling spirits (Jude 9) or rebuking them as the Holy Spirit directs, laying hold on repentance, deliverance, and restored health!]

Sin separates us from God, and no matter how much He has provided for us, His promises will never be ours if sin is ruling in our bodies! Let's continue in our approach...

"Father, if this is an assault of the devil or of circumstances in my life, I ask you to rebuke him (or them) for my sake and to glorify Yourself in this momentary trial in my life! Sometimes physical assaults come and we have absolutely nothing to do with it! Job is an Old Testament example of this. The devil initiated the assault on him. Father was present throughout the contest and in the end, He glorified Himself and restored twice what was taken from Job. The New Testament also carries examples, one of which is in John 9: "For whose sin did this blindness come? This is not a matter of sin but an opportunity for Father to show the glory and beauty of His kingdom!" Sometimes it's just a matter of something not working or wearing out in our body. We are not to despair there either! Whatever we have need of, our Father wants to provide it!

1 John 5:13–15 —These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence (parrhesia: the all out-spokenness) that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. [KJV]

"I know that your Divine will and provision for me is that I be well! The price was paid so that I could be whole, thoroughly furnished, and equipped for every good work... So I look to you Father for all I have need of! I receive Your provision for me in Jesus! As Your child, I live by and I will die by Your hand alone..."

 Can you name two or three sources for the sicknesses that make their way into our lives?

 What is Father's divine will for us concerning sickness and disease?

So far, you are praying the type of prayer of one who believes God! But there are two very crucial steps left, one that generally gets misinterpreted, the other ignored!

Entrust yourself to the Lord! **“Father, manifest my health according to Your divine will... Make an assessment of your situation (Restored? Well? Hurting? Weak?), but remember that this assessment only tells you whether or not healing has come or is still on the way!** It’s not a matter of Father’s faithfulness! It’s not a matter of being healed or not! It is a matter of the *manifestation* of your healing: has it arrived or not!

When you buy something online and give the people your credit card number, the product is yours *then*... You don’t actually have it yet, but you own it! It a “done deal” and you anticipate its arrival. At this point there’s not a bit of doubt that it’s on the way. You don’t think the Company doesn’t like you because you don’t have it yet. You don’t bad-mouth them. You just go about your business until it comes, sometimes forgetting about it until it arrives! That’s faith in action!

How about your work experience? You go to work each day, do your best, put in your time... But in most cases, you know and accept that you won’t be paid for this week’s work for another week or so! That’s faith in action! If we can have faith in an Internet company or in the folks we work for, can we have the same faith in God and the same action of faith?

Do not let the devil challenge you concerning the faithfulness of God! Do not assess, misinterpret, and then doubt! Healing is yours! He is your Healer! Anticipate the embrace of your healing!

James 1:2–8 — Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. An indecisive man is unstable in all his ways. [HCSB]

1 Corinthians 1:9 —God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. [KJV]

1 Corinthians 10:13 —There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*. [KJV]

Hebrews 10:35–36 — “Cast not away your confidence which has great reward. For you have need for patience that after you have done the will of God [interjection: which Jesus said was believing!] you might receive the promise!

Hebrews 10:35–36 —Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God [interjection: which Jesus said was believing!], you may receive the promise: [NKJV]

God is faithful! Settle the issue! You said you *believed Him!* Is He good? Is His Word true? YES! AMEN!

The second and last thing to do is, get up and get “back in service!” **“As Your servant, I am going back to work now Father...”**

Now that doesn’t mean you can’t stay in bed and rest. That may be the very antidote to what made you sick in the first place! (Sometimes sleeping is the

most spiritual thing you can do!) It doesn't mean you ignore the doctors' orders to rest or take your medicine, etc. ...

[Necessary note: Taking an aspirin to defeat the pain of a headache is no more a lack of faith for healing than is the case of changing the channel when there's something on the TV causing you to struggle with lust! Cutting off the symptoms that interfere and compete with believing God is wisdom! And why would we consider the man who changes channels for relief to be less (especially remembering both are seeking relief from the "flesh")! Both are clearing the distractions on the pathway of faith! No thinking person who takes an aspirin or other medication believes he is healed because the symptoms are masked. He remains in the place of believing God for the healing of whatever is causing the headache, just without the distraction of the pain!]

In fact, with each occurrence of sickness the actual physical thing you do next may be different... But "as a man thinks in his heart, so is he!" If you are *believing God* for your health then you *are healed* because Jesus paid the price to fulfill Father's will for our lives! If you *are healed*, then think of yourself *as healed* and *act* that way (*not fake it till you make it... but take action!*)! Remember the ten lepers of Luke 17:12ff, their prayer: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us..." Jesus' response (confirmation): "Go your way...show yourselves to the priest" The assault of doubt: Show him what? Nothing is changed! Their (decision to take) action: "*and it came to pass that as they went* (believing) they were cleansed!"

So, here is the progression of a person standing in faith for healing:

Recognition: "I have a problem and my Father has the answer for me!"

Research: "I will ask if there is any reason for this in me."

Repentance (if necessary): "I will receive my forgiveness and turn around."

Reliance: "Into Your hands I commit myself! I know Who I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him..."

Return: "I will go my way believing, regardless of how I feel or what it looks like to my natural eyes, because I know my Father and that He is faithful!"

Faith for Healing Comes by Hearing His Word on Healing!

Faith does come by hearing, and hearing, by the Word of God! There are multiple promises for healing in the Word of God... From Father's Old Testament description of Himself as Jehovah-Rapha—the God that heals you, to the New Testament Scriptures showing us His heart, expressed in Jesus, and giving us the testimonies of healed multitudes proclaiming Father's complete faithfulness! But we cannot place our faith in the promises, but on the Promisor! We can know the promises and never be healed! Our faith must be in the One who authored the promises! They're His words all right, but He is what makes the words good! Listen to His Words of promise and provision, meditate on them, rolling them over and over in your mind, and let them convince you that "Faithful is He that promised" because He is "the One who promises a thing and then makes it good!" (Numbers 23:19)

[Special note: nothing can take the place of personally digging through the Word of God and letting His truth wash away doubt and fear... But there are

also several good topical books available that give you a condensed version of healing promises.]

If Faith for Healing can come... it can also go!

Things that defeat our faith and let sickness in:

Ignorance of God's Word. "My people perish for lack of knowledge!"

Unbelief! "He could do no mighty works there because of unbelief!"

Accepting the words of men over the Word of God! Such as, "God gave you this sickness."

Sin alive in our hearts! "Your sins separate us!"

No diligent search for the Lord! "Apathy is a killer!"

Unforgiveness in our hearts when we pray! "When you pray, forgive...that you may be forgiven of your sins... and be healed!"

Walking by sight not by faith! Just the opposite of walking in the Spirit!

Faith without works (is dead!)" "Once you pray, believe and act like a believer!"

Husband and wife in strife! "Prayers not answered!"

Breaking natural laws and common sense over and over again!

Limiting Father's response to you! "I'll only accept healing if it comes this way..."

Fear!

Living in a bad previous experience! "It didn't work last time..."

The Perceived Benefits of Sickness! Attention, money, rest, avoidance, etc., are lures that can have serious consequences for our lives.

Self-Rule! "It's my body, I'll do what I want with it!"

Pride! "I don't want anyone to know!"

Ways To Let Healing In!

Find a believer and let Him lay his hands on you!

Mark 16:17-18 —And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." [NKJV]

Call for the Elders of the Church!

James 5:14-15 —Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith (Is it the eloquence or fervency of the prayer or prayer or believing God that) will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. [NKJV]

Find someone who can agree with you!

Matthew 18:19 —"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. [NKJV]

Ask in Jesus Name!

John 14:14 —If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*. [NKJV]

Take Communion, rightly discerning the Lord's body (broken for you)!

1 Corinthians 11:24–30 —And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. ... For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. ... But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. [KJV]

Walk in faith, *believing God* for the health Jesus provided at the cross!

1 Peter 2:24 —Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. [KJV]

Matthew 9:22 —... be of good comfort (cheer and gladness); thy faith (your persuasion and conviction in God) hath made thee whole. ... [KJV]

God promised. Jesus provided. We were healed at the Cross. If we were healed then, we are healed now. And believing God means we receive what He says is done, as done! "It's a new and living way, walk in it!" And that's something to cheer (up) about!

Response To Truth

 What are the names of some "believers" that I can call on?

 What are the names of some of the "elders" in our church that I can call on if I have the need?

 What are two or three different things I can do to get healing into my body?

 Thinking back on our studies so far, what is the bigger, broader definition of "faith that pleases God?"

 **Thinking about it now, what is the easiest way to walk in divine health?**

 **One thing that I've learned from this study is...**

Effortless Prosperity

by Stacy Collins

Key Verses:

Matthew 6:24ff Paraphrase — “No man can be the servant of two ruling authorities for he will hate and despise one, and love and hold on to the other. *You cannot be the servant of God and of mammon.* So I tell you, “Take no distracting, anxious thoughts for your life, what you will eat, or what you will drink; nor for your body, what you will put on. *Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing?* Take a look at the birds of the air: they don’t plant, they don’t reap, they don’t store up food in barns yet your heavenly Father feeds them. *Aren’t you more highly valued than them?* And can any of you add height to your frame by taking thought to add height? And why take thought for clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they don’t work for clothing, they don’t make their clothing: And yet even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of them. So, if God so wonderfully clothes the grasses of the field which are here today and gone tomorrow, *won’t He take great care of you, you little-faither [you confidence lacker – the self-rule issues are fueled by insecurity, aren’t they?]* So, take no distracting, anxious thoughts, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what will we be clothed? *(For after all these things do the unsaved seek) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But you seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.*”

Hebrews 11:6 —But without faith *it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.* [NKJV]

Genesis 22:14 —And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide (YHWH Jireh); as it is said to this day, “In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.” [NKJV]

Introduction

Our key verses tell us that Father has provided an “effortless prosperity” for us all. Plainly, it comes by “*seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (character)*” and by “*believing that He is a rewarder, paymaster, compensator, of all who diligently seek (crave) Him!*” The Scriptures declare this all-encompassing provision to those who believe Him, trust Him, and completely yield themselves into His care as they seek His rule and transformation into the image of dear sons and daughters, ***above all else!***

His provision for prosperity is *not* the same type of “Jesus-did-it-all” provision as salvation and healing—*We have a part to fulfill to have His intended fullness*, But He offers a “no maintenance” option to those who will simply *believe Him!* Salvation and healing were purchased for us solely by Jesus’ redemptive sacrifice and were offered to us *by grace through faith!* Prosperity was provided for us when Jesus resurrected as “the firstborn from the dead in whom *all fullness dwells*” and is offered to all who have *faith, with obedience!* To have salvation and healing we *believe Him* and walk in them! To have effortless prosperity we *believe Him and, while walking after Him, we “keep”* (guard, stay focused on, hold fast to) *His Words!*

“Effortless prosperity” is Father’s idea! He makes it possible! But “effortless” doesn’t mean we have nothing to do! It means we have nothing to do with *getting* or *maintaining* our prosperity! It means we do nothing of equal or great consequence to have and enjoy prosperity! It means we spend no energy, and conversely get no satisfaction or stress from, creating, increasing, directing, and protecting our prosperity! It means we’re not in the game of life as the world plays it! IT MEANS:

We give up the typical Christian response to prosperity!

Luke 10:41,42 (paraphrase) — “Martha, Martha, you are **careful** (*merimnao*: distracted, anxious) **and troubled** (*turbazo*: disturbed and in an uproar) **about many things** [she had invited Jesus into her home – good move, usual (wrong) response]. Only one thing is needful (required, necessary now) and Mary has selected the beneficial part (portion and participation) [Having the Master there she sat at His feet to hear His word – v39], which shall not be taken away from her.”

2 Timothy 2:4 (paraphrase) — “No man that serves in the army **entwines himself with the affairs of this life** so that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

We do prosperity the way He intended!

Matthew 11:28-30 — (Exegetical paraphrase) “Come unto Me all of you that are work-wearied and overburdened and I will give you refreshing. **Team-up with Me, let Me disciple and show you**; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you will find an intermission and recreation for your souls. Joining-up with Me is easy, and my tasks light.”

We let Him take care of our needs (so we can be about our Father’s business)!

1 Peter 5:7 —casting (throwing, divesting – aggressive) **all your care** (*merimna*: distracting, anxious thoughts) upon Him, for He cares (*melo*: is interested and concerned) for you. [NKJV]

We realize that this life is not about us, what we need, what we want, what we can get or what we end up with at the end!

Luke 12:15 —... “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” [ESV]

Effortless prosperity means we spend our energies doing our job; extending His kingdom, touching the world with His love, being obedient to His will, overcoming this world with its lusts, all the while letting Him take care of our earthly needs. It means we let Him decide if, when, where, and how He will provide whatever it is He wants us to have, knowing He is better than the best of Father’s who will give us all we have need of and more! It means trusting Him to distribute our “rewards” between earthly and heavenly accounts, at times delaying our immediate gratification to store up treasures in heaven! It means we choose to believe Him, seek Him, trust Him, and let Him work out all the hard and complex details of our “having and staying in” His prosperity! He offers this no maintenance (on our part) prosperity plan to “servants” who trust, and leave, the issues of provision to Him!

📖 **If we're not burning energy getting and maintaining prosperity, where are we supposed to spend our energies?**

[Necessary note: Many people accept salvation, most Christians embrace healing, but few press into the “kingdom rule → kingdom plan → kingdom blessing” that Father has prepared for those who fully yield to Him! In fact, most U-turn before this point thinking they have experienced all there is to a faith walk!]

Of all the “Short-cuts” (*“You do the simple things and I will do the complex things in response”*) given us in the Word of God (*For holiness, 1 John 3:3; for answered prayer, 1 Peter 3:7; for fulfilling the commandments, Matthew 22:40, etc.*), this “no-rule-but-His-rule” short-cut to prosperity may be the most important to us by virtue of our daily struggle with money and possessions! (*Strangely enough, it is also the most frequently rejected short-cut! Most Christians opt for the high-maintenance program with the custom “self-rule” features!*) Honestly, our prosperity, money and possessions, take up far too much of our waking hours! (And we worry about it when we have and when we don't!) We're too concerned about how it's coming in, how come it's not coming in, where it's going when it does come in, how much is staying “home” and how much leaves home without us! It takes up so much of our time that there is little left over to spend doing the things that are important and eternal! *We can't go a day without worrying about money and stuff, but we can go weeks, months, and even years without bearing the fruit of righteousness! Something's wrong!*

There should be no doubt in a believer's mind that prosperity is part and parcel of the Christian life. Poverty is as much of the curse that came on the world through sin (Genesis 3:17ff) as is sickness and disease.

The curse of the law: Blessed in Deuteronomy 28:11-13; Poverty in Deuteronomy 28:15-18; 38-40; Redeemed in Galatians 3:13-14.

The “Blessing of Abraham” Genesis 22:14-18. How and Why are we blessed? What are the results? What is the purpose?

Poverty is a hindrance to spreading the Gospel. A poverty mentality in a believer is worse than poverty itself, and a sure killer of the abundant life Jesus came to deliver. There should be no doubt that Jesus came to reconnect all of Father's original plans for mankind, which included the free-flow of prosperity! But, Father's definition and measure of our prosperity can be vastly different from ours... Prosperity *is* part of every believer's life, but it should never be the whole of any believer's life! *Abundance is ours*, but it should never be our focus! There are more important things to focus on:

1 Timothy 6:6–12 —... *godliness with contentment* is great gain. ... But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. *But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.* [KJV]

A True definition of Prosperity

The Bible definition and the world definition of prosperity are completely different! The Word definition of prosperity is “having all the resources of God available when you need them for the task He’s given you!” The world definition is having our resources stored up and close by for whatever we want! (“Get all you can, can all you get, then sit on your can!”)

Joshua 1:7–8 —Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. [NLT]

3 John 2 —Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. [NKJV]

Luke 12:16–21 —Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” [NKJV]

There’s a price tag for that kind of foolishness! The Bible never promises that we will have a fat bank account... Never have to look at price tags... Never have to plan for purchases... Live in the biggest homes in the city... Drive the biggest and newest cars, etc. The world describes prosperity as fatness! But if we held Jesus up to the world’s definition, He would fail the prosperity test! Fatness is not Father’s goal! Historically proven, fatness breeds independence from God! If godly prosperity was fatness then, in effect, it would separate most of us from Him! Father’s prosperity does exactly the opposite—it breeds total dependence on Him to furnish everything, all the time! It breeds a heart of contentment and expressions of trust in Him; that He will take care of us no matter where we are, no matter what the situation! Just a few verses before one of the greatest promises of effortless prosperity (Philippians 4:19) Paul says:

Philippians 4:11–13 —... I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. [KJV]

In fact, the Word tells us that Father purposely sets adversity against prosperity so that we’ll never be too “fat!”

Ecclesiastes 7:14 —In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him. [KJV]

Bible prosperity has nothing to do with the concept: “the one who has the most when the game is over is the winner!” In fact, many that are called heroes of faith, friends of God, men and women of Holy Spirit power have nothing that the world strives after... But in the Kingdom of God, where Father records and stores the riches of those who love Him... They were, and are, rich beyond understanding!

The Prosperity of God is having all the resources of God available for any need we face! It is having enough for whatever place we find ourselves in life so that we are not distracted with anxious thoughts of what we will wear, eat, and live so that we can continue in obedience to our primary calling as ambassadors of Christ!

 **What is Father's definition of Prosperity?**

 **What is yours?**

The Two Conditions of our Covenant for Prosperity!

The first condition is “seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness!” On the heels of the *directive*, the *promise* declares, “and all these things will be added unto you!” What’s so wonderful about that promise is the complete release of care for the things we need for life! It’s the promise “If you will yield yourself into My care completely, I will take over the care of your life entirely!” That means one, or all, of these things; He will provide everything we have need of, change our perception of the things we have need of, give us complete contentment in the midst of perceived needs, or keep us from ever feeling like we have a need for something we don’t have! Take your pick! They all add up to the same experience: effortless prosperity! We set our affections on “things above” and He cares for everything “below!” (Colossians 3:1-3) We put to death things like covetousness which is idolatry (Having another God—mammon?), passionate lusts, envy, etc., and He releases us into the fullness of Spirit-life! We serve Him, the Master of the House/ The Husbandman of the Vine/ The Owner of the Fields/ The Steward of All Resources, and He provides everything we have need of to “fulfill our service to Him!” He is the All in all, He has all and He will give all to those whose hearts are perfect toward Him! (2 Chronicles 16:9) Yield and receive! *Well almost...*

If the first condition of effortless prosperity is simply that we put Him first... then the second is a lot like it... We obey Him!

The second condition of effortless prosperity is obeying His Word! He has spoken the guidelines for everything that pertains to our lives and our becoming like Him (2 Peter 1:3-4) and whatever the Word says is what we should be doing!

 **What are the two conditions of our Covenant for Prosperity?**

a. _____

b. _____

In the case of biblical, effortless prosperity, no one will ever have it without obeying His Word concerning *the minimum covenant requirement of the tithe!*

[Necessary Digression #1: To tithe is to give a “tenth” of everything incoming! The tithe was instituted by Abraham, the Father of our faith, as an appropriate response to the Lord for His goodness! 400 years after inception it became a non-negotiable piece of legislation installed to keep the covenant of effortless prosperity in force! When Israel could not be trusted to do what was right on their own, Father legislated this minimum so that Israel would do what was right and what would ensure their covenant of prosperity. (Israel’s compliance and wealth is legendary!) Father’s desire for His people was that they would be a “delightful land,” a people flowing with provision, that all nations would call “Blessed!” (Malachi 3:12) Seeing, and liking, the results of effortless prosperity in their lives they became legalistic with the tithe to a fault... But Jesus, while condemning the abuse, commended and verified the practice of the tithe in the New Testament!

Matthew 23:23 —Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye *pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin*, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and *not to leave the other undone*. [KJV]

The tithe did not end with Jesus dying on the cross as some would like to think. The tithe was not part of the substitutional, ceremonial law that Jesus fulfilled and did away with (the blood of bulls, goats and birds, etc.)! But Jesus did change the “rules” regarding our prosperity! Instead of being God’s chosen people and owing and returning a “tenth” of everything to Him, New Testament believers were now wholly owned, acknowledging that 100% of everything they have belongs to God, is provided for the benefit of His Kingdom, and is to be used at His direction and discretion... Unfortunately most New Testament believers do not live the 100% lifestyle, so the “old laws” of minimums are still in force to legislate right behavior when we won’t willingly comply! [Honestly, aren’t you glad that Father sometimes makes us do what is genuinely for our own good?]

Asides: “Laws of Minimums” **Matthew 5:17ff** “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, *but to fulfil, re-inflate, perfect*. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all is fulfilled. [**Jesus didn’t do away with the law; He raised the bar on our behavior!**] Whosoever therefore shall break one of these *least commandments*, and shall teach men so, *he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven*: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, *Thou shalt not kill* [**Old Testament minimum still in force?**]; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, *That whosoever is angry* [**New Testament 100% lifestyle!**] *with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca* [**New Testament 100% lifestyle!**], *shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool* [**New Testament 100% lifestyle!**], *shall be in danger of hell fire... Thou shalt not commit adultery* [**Old Testament minimum still in force?**] *I say, Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her* [**New Testament 100% lifestyle!**]...

Divorce, making promises, taking vengeance, extending love... All have Old Testament minimums in effect with the anticipation of supersedure by believers with New Testament 100% lifestyles!

[Back to digression #1] Obviously, if you can do away with the tithe, you are off the hook, you are back in control, and if you don't do right, well "Father understands!" That's right! People who don't tithe are off the hook of obedience! They are back in control! Effortless prosperity gives way to the high maintenance version—the one where you have to control all the details and be "on" all the time because you have an enemy who is seeking whom, and what, he can devour! [Insight: God's ways are better!] And Father *does* understand, He knows the small, groping, fearful, and unthankful hearts of men, and He extends forgiveness, mercy, and grace-opportunities to repent... But He does not extend effortless prosperity! Effortless Prosperity is a covenant between Father and those who seek Him and His kingdom FIRST, while obeying His commands!

[Necessary Digression #2: Because people ask, the tithe is a tenth of *all that comes in*. You can't give five percent of what comes in and say you are tithing. You can't give eight percent of what comes in and expect the covenant to be in force. Father is the one who gives us the power to get wealth...

Deuteronomy 8:16-18 – In the wilderness it was He who fed you manna which your fathers did not know, in order to humble you and in order to put you to the test, to do good for you [e]in the end. Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' But you are to remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, in order to confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. [NASB]

...and He knows exactly how much is coming in and how much a tenth of it is! He is not fooled by all the schmoozing we do! When it comes to paychecks the tenth is on the gross, before taxes, not the net. (Some people have so many auto-deducts; mortgage, car payments, medical, personal loans, savings, retirement, etc. that by the time they get their check and tithe off the net, they would have us believing they're living on \$149.00 a week!) (How come we can quote the right "income figures" to the mortgage banker considering making us a loan and we become confused about which numbers to use when we're dealing with God? That silliness breaks our covenant! And if we're going to miss having the covenant in force by a few bucks, then it would be smarter to miss it by a lot!) Payroll, various refunds [Before anyone asks: *reimbursements*, which are an exchange of money, and *returns* of merchandise, which generally are re-spent don't *necessarily* qualify], settlements, financial gifts, profits from sales (i.e. stocks, bonds, home, auto sales), interest, etc. If it's *in-coming*, it's tithable, and it's part of the covenant for your effortless prosperity! [Cere's personal rule for safety: "When in doubt, do it!" Anytime I am challenged to "exclude" something from the tithe; I tithe on it to break the hold of it! I will not let anything rise up to challenge my openhandedness with Father's provisions, nor let covetousness rule in my heart! I never worry about the "balances" because I can never out give my Father, and He will never let me be depleted for giving back to Him!]

There is no way around it! Tithing is the cornerstone of our prosperity covenant relationship with the Lord! If tithing is just a religious invention or conspiracy, then prosperity, having all the resources of God available when you need them, would work without obedience to His commandment, but let's listen to what He has to say:

Malachi 3:7-12 (Expositional paraphrase) — "From the beginning you have not kept My ways and have tried to do this your way. "Return to Me, and I will return unto you," says the LORD of hosts [Interjection: that is a promise of true revival!

Father and sons teamed up together again!]. But you ask, "How will we return?" Well, will a son of earth defraud God? Nevertheless you have tried to defraud Me! But you ask, "How have we defrauded You?" In tithes and offerings. *You are cursed with a curse*: for you have defrauded Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and experience Me now with it, says the LORD of hosts! See if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing on you, that there will not be enough room to contain it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he will not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a desired and pleasant land, says the LORD of hosts."

Here is yet another promise of effortless prosperity in overflowing abundance, to those who do things His ways! But there is also the warning of the "severance of provision" (the curse), of the impending destroyer, and the wake of his destructive bent for failing to be obedient! Disobedience always breaks the flow of blessing and opens the door for destruction! In John 10:10, Jesus said that He came to bring us life and life more abundant (which is a prosperity-of-God promise) but that the devil comes to *steal* (the quality of life), *kill* (to take away life) and *destroy*!

Most Christians want to have prosperity (We have an inward sense of our inheritance in God!). Many Christians (Especially American ones) have prosperity (the worldly type). But few have lives characterized by the peace, contentment, rest, and generosity of God that in-fills a person who knows he is being backed-up in abundance by the Lord no matter what the circumstances! If we're going to focus on and "go for" prosperity... let's go for the real thing!

Show Me the Money!

Now remember, prosperity is more than just money! It is having the resources of God available when you have a need! Let's see if it works in real life situations!

Illustrative verse #1: When Jesus needed money (for taxes):

Matthew 17:27 (paraphrase) — "To keep from offending them, go down to the sea, cast out a line, reel in the first fish that takes the bait; and when you open his mouth, you will find a coin: take it, and pay our bill!"

Illustrative verse #2: When Jesus needed transportation:

Luke 19:30-32 (paraphrase) — "He said, Go into the next village ahead of you... right inside the gate you will find a colt tied up, that no one has set upon: untie him and bring him to Me. And if any man asks you, "Why are you untying him?" Just say, Because the Lord has need of him. And they *that were sent* went their way and found it even as He had said to them"

Illustrative verse #3: When Jesus needed accommodations the question arose:

Mark 14:12-17 —..."Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?" And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?" ' Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished *and* prepared; there make ready for us." So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover. In the evening He came with the twelve. [NKJV]

[And don't forget the manna, quail, and water for Israel (Moses)! Elijah's ravens. The widow at Zarephath (Elijah). The widow whose debts were paid by the supernatural supply of oil! (Elisha). The fishes and loaves [twice] (Jesus)... and many more! Father's promises cover effortless provision for your family, for your taxes, for almsgiving, and for His kingdom! "He can do it... oh yes He can...!"]

Where is "faith" in all this prosperity?

Some folks have a faith in God that says that He will give them things, specific things, things they have the "pleasure" of defining. Things like houses that belong to the unrighteous (whose "fortunes" are laid up for the "just"), things like red Cadillac's with custom options, or blue bicycles, or snowboards, etc. There is encouragement to visualize the prize and turn their "believers" on. Next is to protect their hearts against doubt, confess their hopes time and again, and hold on to their passions while cultivating their "faith muscles!" It's a lot of work and it takes up a lot of precious time, but this kind of faith works! It has happened often enough (by supernatural means that exclude the deceptive works of "mammon") to be validated by scores of sincere people. Father does give the "desires of heart" (though a misnomer for the soulish, self-ruled part of a man and not the biblical context or principle) to people so fixated on the gift(s) that they don't know they can have, or who are willing to forego, an experience with the Giver Himself. Father is the reader of the thoughts and intents of our hearts... and if by providing us the gift, which has no ability to satisfy, He can get us looking "for more" He will do it. The unfortunate part is the compromise made to have the "stuff" of this life, when Father is offering us *His Life!* But Father meets us and encourages us wherever we are in our growth, whatever our grasp of faith!

There is however, a faith beyond the faith that believes for things! There is faith that pleases God and brings Him into our lives in genuine manifestation and co-habitation (John 14:21,23)! That faith simply *believes Him, and that He will reward us (as children of His love, as laborers together with Him in heavenly enterprise, as soldiers of His army, etc.) with everything we have need of in this life, if, when, where, and how we need it!* It is this faith that brings us into "effortless prosperity!" What do we need to live at this level of prosperity? A love-motivated, fear-overcoming, mind-transforming, heart-conforming, in-every-circumstance-trusting belief that He will do, exactly, what is right for our lives, spirit, soul and body while we are serving Him here on earth! "We know in Whom we have trusted and that He is well able...!"

Response To Truth

 For "Effortless Prosperity" to be mine I have to do two things:

- a. _____
- b. _____

 Am I at the place to accept this "rise" of faith?

☐ Yes ☐ No

The Things We Do

by Sonny Bowman

Water Baptism, Communion, and Laying on of Hands

Key Verses

Matthew 3:13–15 —At that time Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” “Let it be so now,” Jesus replied. “It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness in this way.” Then John permitted Him. [BSB]

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 —For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. [BSB]

Mark 16:17–18 —And these signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not harm them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will be made well.” [BSB]

Biblical Practices

There are several practices observed by the Christian Church. Of particular interest in this study are: water baptism, communion, and the laying on of hands.

Water Baptism

There are several types of baptisms mentioned in the Bible.

Baptism into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit is the most important and takes place at salvation.

1 Corinthians 12:13 —For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body... [BSB]

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is for Believers. This is when the Holy Spirit fills a person and provides power and gifts for ministry.

Acts 1:4–5, 8 —And while they were gathered together, He commanded them: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift the Father promised, which you have heard Me discuss. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” ... But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” [BSB]

Acts 2:4 —And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. [BSB]

Acts 11:15–16 —As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He had fallen upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, as

He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' [BSB]

Baptism of suffering is primarily used in reference to Jesus' crucifixion. It can also apply to intense suffering that results from laying down your life in service to Jesus (Matthew 20:21-23).

Luke 12:50 —But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! [BSB]

And then there is water baptism...

What is Water Baptism?

For Christians, water baptism is an observance that symbolizes our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ.

Romans 6:3–4 —Or aren't you aware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may walk in newness of life. [BSB]

Water baptism is the heart-felt obedience of a person who has chosen to follow Jesus. When baptized, that person is declaring visually and publicly that he or she has died to his old life and is now raised to new life as a follower of Jesus.

Does Baptism Save Us?

Based on certain Scriptures, some people teach that you must be baptized to be saved, or that your sins are forgiven at baptism. Some verses interpreted to "prove" that a person cannot be saved without being baptized include the following.

Mark 16:16 —Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. [BSB]

Acts 2:38 —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. [BSB]

1 Peter 3:20–21 —who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In the ark a few people, only eight souls, were saved through water. And this water symbolizes the baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, [BSB]

Acts 22:16 —And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized, and wash your sins away, calling on His name.' [BSB]

Notice that in Acts 22:16, it is the "calling on the name of the Lord" that washes away your sins, not baptism. There are other verses that clearly demonstrate that baptism is not the mechanism of forgiveness or salvation. For example...

1 Corinthians 1:14–17 —I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that I do not remember if I baptized anyone else. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with words of wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. [BSB]

Paul had an amazing ministry and brought many into the Kingdom of God—and it continues today through the words he wrote which are included in the

Bible. If Paul believed that a person cannot be forgiven or saved without being baptized, then he would never have said, "...Christ did not send me to baptize..." when he preached the gospel. It's hard to believe that Paul got it wrong. Jesus did not believe a person had to be baptized in order to be forgiven and saved.

Luke 23:42-43 —Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!" And Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." [BSB]

The thief on the cross went to Paradise with Jesus without being baptized.

Romans 10:9-10 —that if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with your heart you believe and are justified, and with your mouth you confess and are saved. [BSB]

Notice that in this passage in Romans where the requirements for salvation are clearly explained, there is no mention that a person must also be baptized to be saved. Baptism is not required for salvation or forgiveness of sin.

So Why Should You Be Baptized?

When Jesus began His public ministry at about the age 30, He started with water baptism. Jesus was fully righteous and did not need to get saved like we do. However, to fulfill the righteous requirements of God, Jesus needed to be baptized (Matthew 3:13-15).

Matthew 3:16-17 —As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. Suddenly the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and resting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" [BSB]

Right after His baptism, Jesus spent forty days fasting and praying—being worn down physically, but built up spiritually. Afterward, when offered a "short cut," Jesus chose God's truth and defeated the enemy's lies.

Matthew 4:1-4 —Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. The tempter came to Him and said, "If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." But Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" [BSB]

When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, equipping Him for ministry.

Luke 4:18-19 —"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 liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." [BSB]

Baptism is generally an act of obedience, following Jesus' example and following His command to baptize people. But we also look to baptism as a new beginning of Holy Spirit empowered living.

Matthew 28:19-20 —Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age." [BSB]

Who Should Be Baptized?

Baptism is appropriate only for those who are saved. Baptism is not appropriate for a non-Christian and may give that person a false sense of being right with God.

Since baptism is the response of a born-again Christian who is choosing to declare his decision to follow Jesus, baptism is also not appropriate for babies or very young children. However, anyone who is truly saved can be baptized at any age.

When Should You Be Baptized?

Generally, a person should be baptized soon after salvation, especially once you realize the importance and meaning of baptism.

Baptism is typically a one-time event, but you can be baptized more than once. This sometimes happens when a person is originally baptized as a child or some other time before he or she was truly born again. Baptism can also be repeated if a person comes to a new appreciation of the meaning of baptism (proclaiming our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ – Colossians 2:11-13) or with a renewed dedication to follow Jesus.

How Should You Baptize?

The Bible model of baptism is full immersion in water. The symbolism is that of someone being buried, then raised from the dead. This gives a visual declaration of what has taken place spiritually when a person is born-again (saved). The words *baptize* and *baptism* have the following meaning.

907 βαπτίζω [*baptizo* /bap·tid·zo/] verb. From a derivative of 911; TDNT 1:529; TDNTA 92; GK 966; 80 occurrences; AV translates as “baptize” 76 times, “wash” twice, “baptist” once, and “baptized + 2258” once. **1** to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk). **2** to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one’s self, bathe. **3** to overwhelm. **Additional Information:** Not to be confused with 911, *bapto*. The clearest example that shows the meaning of *baptizo* is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be ‘dipped’ (*bapto*) into boiling water and then ‘baptised’ (*baptizo*) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism. e.g. Mark 16:16. ‘He that believes and is baptised shall be saved’. Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle! *Bible Study Magazine*, James Montgomery Boice, May 1989. [Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible* (electronic ed.) (G907). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.]

Some groups typically sprinkle or pour water on a person for baptism. In other cases, sprinkling or pouring water over the person is used when the circumstances prevent full immersion. While sprinkling or pouring can be used to declare a decision to follow Jesus, it does not follow the New Testament form of baptism. Nor does it provide the visual image of what has

taken place spiritually. But the exact method of baptism is an area where we should extend grace to those who see it differently.

Any Believer can baptize someone. It does not require a pastor or other church leader. We encourage Christian parents to baptize the members of their families. Baptism can take place anywhere there is adequate water for immersion.

Acts 8:36–38 —As they traveled along the road and came to some water, the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is there to prevent me from being baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. [BSB]

Some people teach that you must baptize people only in the Name of Jesus. They get this from passages such as the following.

Acts 2:38 —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. [BSB]

Acts 10:48 —So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ... [BSB]

Actually, baptizing someone in the “Name of Jesus” means to baptize them in the authority of Jesus.

Matthew 28:18–19 —Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, [BSB]

Notice that Jesus does not say to baptize only in the Name of Jesus. If there is specific wording required, we would have to follow Jesus’ direct instruction and say, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Anytime a Christian baptizes a person saved by faith in Jesus, it is done in the Name (authority) of Jesus, regardless of whether he says “in the Name of Jesus” or “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” This authority (name of Jesus) distinguishes Christian baptism from other baptisms such as John’s, which was a baptism of repentance.

Acts 19:2–5 —and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” “No,” they answered, “we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” “Into what, then, were you baptized?” Paul asked. “The baptism of John,” they replied. Paul explained: “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the One coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. [BSB]

Since baptism is not a mechanism or requirement for salvation, getting baptized the wrong way (or not being baptized) does not keep you out of heaven.

 **What is our method of water baptism?** _____

 **Have you been baptized in water?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

 **If not, why not?** _____

Communion

What is Communion?

Communion, also called *The Lord's Supper* and *Eucharist* by some groups, was instituted by Jesus on the night before His crucifixion. During the evening meal Jesus took bread, broke it, and shared it with His disciples. Then He took a cup and shared it with the disciples.

Matthew 26:26–29 —While they were eating, Jesus took bread, spoke a blessing and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in My Father’s kingdom.” [BSB]

Communion is a Christian observance that remembers the payment Jesus made for both our healing and our salvation. It also symbolizes our union with Jesus—that we are part of the Body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:16–17 —Is not the cup of blessing that we bless a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one loaf. [BSB]

1 Corinthians 12:12–14, 27 —The body is a unit, though it is composed of many parts. And although its parts are many, they all form one body. So it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given one Spirit to drink. For the body does not consist of one part, but of many. ... Now you are the body of Christ, and each of you is a member of it. [BSB]

Why Should You Take Communion?

We take communion to remember and celebrate Jesus’ sacrifice with provision for your salvation and your healing. It should be taken any time you need to bring your life back into proper perspective. It also reminds us that we will soon join the Lord for another meal and communion in heaven.

Matthew 26:29 —I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in My Father’s kingdom.” [BSB]

Revelation 19:9 —Then the angel told me to write, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” ... [BSB]

Who Should Take Communion?

Communion is only meaningful to Christians. While a non-Christian can take communion, it does not accomplish its designed purposes.

When Should You Take Communion?

As often as it would be helpful to refocus and remember Jesus’ sacrifice and provision for your salvation and healing.

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 —... do this in remembrance of Me.” ... For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. [BSB]

Communion should be taken from time to time to remember the great sacrifice Jesus made and your commitment to follow Him. It also should be

taken to remember that we are healed by the broken body of Jesus. Taking communion every day can be valuable, but be careful not to let it become just a ritual or duty. It is important to take time to reflect on the Lord along with His provision and calling upon your life on a regular basis.

Isaiah 53:5 —But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. [BSB]

How Should You Take Communion?

Communion is usually taken with grape juice and unleavened bread—often called *the elements*. Since the first communion was taken during Passover, Jesus and the disciples only had unleavened bread available. It is the remembrance and celebration of communion that is important. There is nothing magical about the elements, so other juices and breads can be used.

An Intimate Fellowship

The word *communion* denotes an intimate time of sharing. During the three years of active ministry by Jesus, there was little time for intimacy. At times, He and the disciples didn't even have time to eat because of the crowds (Mark 6:31-33). On the eve of His sacrifice, Jesus found a secluded place to eat a meal with His closest disciples. The crowds were gone—probably preparing for the Passover. Also gone was the fervent activity of daily ministry. It was a rare quiet time to commune with one another.

John 13:23–25 —One of His disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was reclining at His side. So Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus which one He was talking about. Leaning back against Jesus, he asked, “Lord, who is it?” [BSB]

When you partake of communion, it is important that you don't lose sight of the intimacy and fellowship that it represents. It is a time for you to draw near to the Lord and to others who are close to Him. It's a time to slow down and remember what and who it's all about.

1 Corinthians 11:27–32 —Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Each one must examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. Now if we judged ourselves properly, we would not come under judgment. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. [BSB]

There are some who believe that the juice and bread actually become Jesus' blood and body when you take communion. Those emblems only represent and remind us of His shed blood and broken body. However, when we take communion, we must not fail to realize that Jesus' body is actually present. Look around at those taking communion with you. You and they are the Body of Christ.



Communion is something I can do at home or in Church or anywhere that I have the need to remember Jesus' sacrifice and provision!

☐ Yes ☐ No

Laying on of Hands

The laying on of hands is a “right” given us in the Lord that has application in everyday life. All of us who belong to Jesus have been given authority in Jesus to be utilized for doing good things. The laying on of hands can confer many of those good things. We should be employing it far more than we do. The reason we don’t do this very much may be because we don’t fully understand its scope of use. Following are some of the ways the laying on of hands is used in Christianity.

For Healing

Mark 16:18 —... they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will be made well.” [BSB]

This is more than the positive power of touch (which should not be minimized in our touch-less society). This is the touch of identification, of compassion, of impartation. When Jesus conferred this benefit on all Believers, He was asking for people to be His hands extended. More often than not, Jesus touched the people He was praying for. When you pray for someone, it is good to make a kingdom connection by laying a hand on their shoulder, arm, or head. But it is important to be sensitive to the recipient’s concerns, and ask permission as appropriate.

For Infilling with the Holy Spirit

Acts 8:18–19 —When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money. “Give me this power as well,” he said, “so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” [BSB]

People sometimes want to know if “just anyone” can do this. The answer is “Yes!” Anyone who is born again can pray for someone who is desiring to receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a gift that the Lord desires every believer to experience (Acts 2:38-39). Any person of faith (because we receive Him by faith) can lay their hands on someone and ask Father for the same gift poured out two thousand years ago. There is nothing quite like the experience of praying for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with someone then seeing and sensing the power of God flowing into their lives!

For the Impartation of Spiritual Gifts

Romans 1:11 —For I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, [BSB]

2 Timothy 1:6 —For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. [BSB]

Is this something for every Believer? If we can have a part in praying for someone to receive the Holy Spirit, certainly we can have a part in laying hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit’s gifts as He directs us. Since we don’t have any gifts of our own to distribute, and it’s not our will, all a person will get from us praying without direction is messed up hair or a sweaty head. And if someone wants you to pray for them to receive some gift, remember the injunction to not lay hands on any one quickly (1 Timothy 5:22). You must hear from the Holy Spirit that it’s His will to impart His spiritual gifts.

For Blessings on Your Children

Mark 10:13–16 —Now people were bringing the little children to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them, and the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and told them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And He took the children in His arms, placed His hands on them, and blessed them. [BSB]

Jesus calls us to imitate (follow) Him. A praying touch is far more effective than a touching prayer. It is a wise person who takes the time to lay a hand on a child to ask Father for a blessing upon them.

For Ordination and Setting Apart for Ministry

Acts 6:3–6 —Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men confirmed to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will appoint this responsibility to them and will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.” This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, as well as Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these seven to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. [BSB]

Acts 13:2–3 —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.” And after they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and sent them off. [BSB]

This is such a touching moment for all concerned when, in obedience to the Lord’s direction and confirmation by the Holy Spirit and visible fruit, we commission a brother or sister for ministry. It’s such a joy to lay hands on them as we pray symbolizing our commitment to them, our support for them, our identification with them, and our partnership with them in the field of their work.

When commissioning, be very careful not to lay hands on someone (thereby conveying authority) before they are ready to go forth in ministry.

1 Timothy 5:22 —Do not be too quick in the laying on of hands and thereby share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure. [BSB]

How Should You Lay Hands on Someone?

Generally, you place your hand on the recipient’s shoulder, arm, or head. When praying for healing, you may want to place your hand on or near the physical part of the body that needs healing. However, care should be taken not to touch someone inappropriately, particularly between mixed sexes.

 **List the ways you have employed the laying on of hands during your Christian lifetime.**

Conclusion

It's all about relationship.

With water baptism, we declare our union/relationship with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection to new life. Like Jesus, we go forth in the authority of God as His sons and daughters with the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

With communion we declare our union/relationship with the Lord's Body—the Body of Christ—which includes Jesus and all Believers. This includes our recognition, acceptance, and care for one another.

With laying on of hands we declare our union/relationship with the Lord and another individual. We join with the other person physically (by touch), mentally (in agreement), and spiritually (in the power of the Holy Spirit) to accomplish the Lord's will.

Being a Follower of Jesus

by Cere Muscarella

Key Verse:

John 21:18-23 — “Firmly and trustworthily, firmly and trustworthily, (KJV: verily, verily... Greek: amen, amen [doubled for effect]) I say to you, When you were younger, you did whatever you wanted and went wherever you wanted to go: but when you are older, you will stretch out your hands and others will direct you and take you places you don’t want to go. This He spoke, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said to him, “Follow me.” Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following... and asked, “Lord, what about him?” Jesus said to him, “If I will that he lives until I return, what is that to you? You follow me... [KJV paraphrased]

Introduction

What an awesome passage of Scripture... so loaded with Truth! Who can get by the pre-colon phrase of the very first sentence without being overcome by the reality of *our own* self-rule struggles!

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, When you were younger, you did whatever you wanted and went wherever you wanted to go:”

I have lived my life my own way, doing what I wanted, whenever it suited me, by choice and with pride! In step with the world order of things, I was singing “I did it my way.” I called my lifestyle aggressive, dominant, bold, strong, decisive, cavalier, independent, free, self-made, and sufficient, all “desirable” qualities. Never once did I consider the words: stupid, selfish, short-sighted, bound, deceived, anti-God, irrefutably wrong! I brought the baggage of my self-rule with me into my Christian life, thinking it was especially okay now that I was bringing my “strengths” to bear on doing “good stuff” for God! It has only been since following, rather than running out ahead of Jesus (“let’s go this way Lord and this way and this...”) that I have perceived the abject ignorance of my directing! It is only since beginning to serve rather than being a master commanding (“Do this and this and this...”) that I have come to know the “youth-full lusts” of my sins of self-rule! It is only since yielding control (yielding and yielding control are two very different things!) to the Holy Spirit rather than orchestrating life from the caverns of my mind (“I think we should go and do and get...”) that I have come to taste the bitterness of my ignorance. It is only since wanting, more than life, to please my Heavenly Father rather than myself, that I have come to know the joy and sweet release promised to all control-yielded believers! The world honors independence; Jesus freed us for dependence on God!

I reel from the *incarnational* applications of the promise to Peter regarding his “future” state!

“but when you are older, you will stretch out your hands and others will direct you and take you places you don’t want to go. This He spoke, *signifying by what death he should glorify God.*”

Necessary note: Many readers, students and teachers interpret this as a negative comment! While it could be, if read like a newspaper, it is rich with nuggets of heartwarming truth!

To the man whose “leadership” had failed so often... Peter had failed to control Jesus with his influence (Mt 16:21-23 “Get behind Me Satan.”), he failed to control violent circumstances with his strength (Mt 26:51-52 “I can’t protect You.”), and he failed to control himself with human courage (Mt 26:69-75 “I do not know Him.”) but as Jesus speaks these words, and they slowly sink in, sparks must have flown upwards from his heart igniting his mind with the realization that he was being forgiven, restored, and re-commissioned! The Risen Savior is making a raid on Peter’s broken life! “You’re going to be caring for my sheep Peter; you’re going to be part of the kingdom again! Your flesh might not like the way things go and where you end up, but you’re going to be part again, and effective, glorifying God until, even with, death!”

Historical Note: Tradition says that Peter was crucified at the end of his life (AD 64) upside down because he didn’t count himself worthy to be crucified the same way as the Lord. There is, however, nothing to suggest that he experienced a life in bonds, suffering the whims of others (that was Paul’s life, which he willingly embraced!).

This whole thing comes alive for me the more I “serve” our Father’s desires! The more I grow-up in the Lord, I realize life is not “living for me,” but first, for Him and then for others! And as I stretch forth my hands unto Him (true worship) and others (true loving service) I am being “more and more directed” by the Lord, and others’ needs, and find myself doing things and going places I never would have conceived of, or chosen, for myself! I am experiencing Peter’s wonder (Paul’s too), and every other servant-believer’s awe, **of how death to self-rule brings glory to God!**

Paul’s description:

2 Corinthians 4:5–12 —For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Now we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this surpassingly great power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on all sides, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always consigned to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. [BSB]

I have empathy with the man being led by Jesus away from self-mastery, personal waywardness, and self-gratification as he looks back and asks, “But what about him (them/that)?”

And when He had spoken this, Jesus said to Peter, “Follow me.” Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following... And Peter seeing him said to Jesus, “Lord, what about him?”

I am pierced by Peter’s situation. He is in the process of being restored—but he is still looking back, “What about him?” and Jesus words, “What is that to you?”

What does emerging from, and standing against, my sins have to do with others? Why do we always want to compare with others and set ourselves up for the (further) compromise it breeds! The echo grows louder in my ears with

every year of service; “You follow me. You Follow Me! YOU FOLLOW ME! **YOU FOLLOW ME! YOU FOLLOW ME!**”

In the text, Peter is instantly put in mind of his self-will which is the source of his weakness and *individuality* (our “uniqueness” should not stem from self-will but from God’s creative plan for each of us!)! In his return to Jesus, he is being told that from this step onward, his future is sure, he is no longer his own, his strength will give out (hallelujah!) and he will be without control. Gratefully, Jesus elevates him from thoughts of “dismal death” to true life by injecting “this is how you will glorify God!”

We have been commanded by the Holy Spirit to flee (*pheugo*: escape) our youthful lusts... which includes “doing what we want when we want where we want while we want it!” In place of fulfilling our own desires we are to yield control of ourselves to “His good pleasure,” pleasing Him whom has called us out of darkness and purchased us with great price! In place of following our own desires we are to follow Jesus, and to follow (*dioko*: pursue) righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart! Once saved we are not supposed to be “about us” anymore but about our Father’s Kingdom (and His Rule)! Up to the time of salvation He may be chasing us around, cleaning up after us, protecting us, herding us in the direction of finding Him, but once saved, we are called to follow Him!

Jesus final words, “If I will that he...” tells us that He has personalized thoughts and a perfect will for each of His servants! The Bible says His thoughts are higher than ours are... And those thoughts are plans for good and not for evil!

In The Beginning There was God... and it was all about Him!

In the beginning of the Church, it was all about Him! He was everything! Everyone wanted Him, and everyone who believed wanted to be like Him! From the beginning of the Church, Jesus intended for people coming to a life of faith to be instantaneous “followers” of Him, “*Never being where He isn’t and always being where He is!*” The disciples (Matthew 4:19; 9:9), the rich young ruler (Mt 19:21), the all-too-busy and involved people of his day (Matthew 8:22; 16:24), all those who were (and are) His sheep were to hear His voice and follow Him! (Let the image of the Shepherd and sheep fill your mind! Watch what the sheep do as the Good Shepherd walks away toward the “upper slopes,” speaking to them as He goes!)

While many might say they are “following Him” from the moment of their salvation, modern men are not so immediately submissive nor as mentally prepared as our first century counterparts to abandon “all else” for the sake of the Kingdom. We are quick to say one thing and then do another... to say the Christian world is made up of “true followers” is not accurate!

First Century believers saw Him, accepted Him, followed Him, imitated Him, and by doing what He did—they comprehended the Kingdom and became extraordinary witnesses of Him! We have changed that simple order and have added a few hamstringing “extras” that now hobble the church!

Now, we see Him, accept with assurance our insurance, then strive to comprehend Him and His kingdom over a conveniently scheduled period of time before agreeing to fully enter into a service agreement. We want a full explanation of benefits, of the possible changes and potential consequences

before we will make the commitment to “follow along.” We want discussion, personal input, our suggestions and opinions to be considered and testimony from others actually doing the job before we’ll sign up. We want to know how much training we will receive before asked to do the job on our own, who our “supervisors” are, who our “helpers” will be, how long the job will last, and what sort of package we can expect at the end!

The modern model is that we come out of the world through salvation, over the process of time and by mental engagement in study (equivalent roughly to pre-K through college years) we *become* a disciple (student). Then properly prepared we do a short and hopefully productive tour of duty for God! Jesus’ model was that we be saved from death by conversion, and as one newly-alive, we follow Him, imitate Him, and perceive the kingdom of God in its depths throughout a lifetime of service!

[Note: In our modern case: if you are one of the “special ones” called to a life of “ministerial service” you study a little more than everyone else and that basically makes you a super-disciple, capable of leaping tall obstacles in a single faith bound, and teacher of the rest! Generally, Pastors are selected from the top of the “disciple pool” and taught to bring more people out of the world, into salvation, and into the same mind model. This mind-centered mentality has crippled us! That “Get saved (a very emotional experience) and fill up your head (a very intellectual pursuit)” Christianity is far away from the “Get saved and learn as you Get going” life of the Holy Spirit minded and controlled, wonderfully chaotic, turn the world upside down, signs-and-wonders first century church!]

The mind-focused part of our discipleship training should come very quickly, **and as** we begin experiencing life in God as a follower of Jesus! New believers should be taught from the moment of new birth that life with Christ begins with *living with Christ, never being where He isn’t, always being where He is!* I can’t prove it from Scripture as a specified amount of time, but all the training a person should need to get their *Bible basics* in could be taught in a matter of weeks, maybe months, at the outside a year! [Yes, the disciples had three years with Jesus, but they didn’t have the Holy Spirit to give light to their darkened understanding! And look how quickly they got started ministering once He came and brought them the fire!]

Life as a Christian is not just knowing stuff about Him, but knowing Him, loving Him, following Him! The world is populated with churches where the congregations are great repositories of knowledge about the Kingdom, but it’s all head knowledge! They know much about the kingdom and little of the King, just like Jesus-day Pharisees and Sadducees! Discipleship was never the goal of spiritual development, “Now I have a diploma, therefore I am somebody!” It was meant to be the beginning of spiritual growth! “Go and make disciples of all nations” is the beginning of Spirit-led experience! Once you come into the kingdom and get your bearings (we call them basics) you’re supposed to get out there behind Jesus, never being where He isn’t, always being where He is, doing the will of God!

So, Where Is (and Isn't) He?

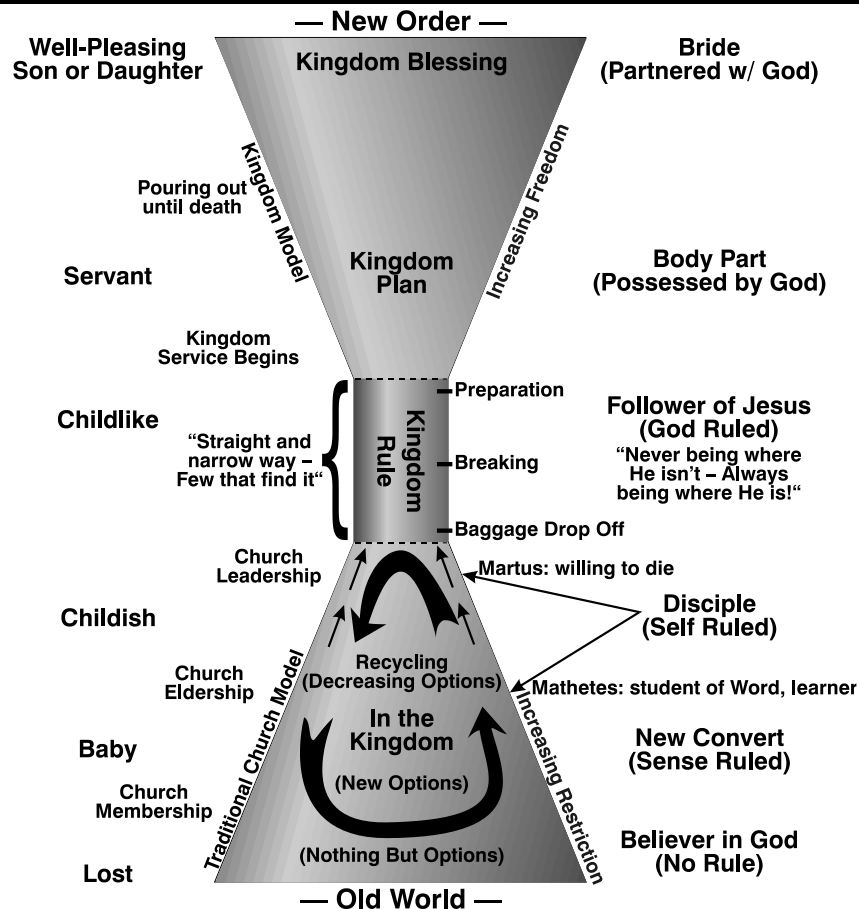
He is doing the will of God! He is always in His Father's presence! He is always in communication with Him! He is walking among His people, talking and touching and healing them! He is always present in times of trouble! He is at the side of those being forsaken! He is ever ready to forgive and rescue! He is on the job, fulfilling His role as an ambassador of God! He is bent over in service to all those who are in need, even those who aren't aware of what they need, and even those who aren't easy to serve! How about us? Are we His followers? If we are, then great things are happening all around us, in us and through us... just like it happened to Him!

Knowing where He is, where isn't He? He isn't holed-up at home killing time with the TV/video/radio/games. He isn't curled-up in the corner of the house or laying-up in bed reading His way into a vicarious life experience. He isn't consumed with hobbies or sports or anything that attracts His attention away from His primary role and assigns value to him that isn't lasting. He isn't counting His money and storing it up for a rainy day so that He's "independently" wealthy. He isn't off somewhere, isolated by fear, rejection, anger, cynicism, anxiety, uncaring, intimidation, sickness, discomfort, apathy, lust, selfishness, pride, the pride of life, misfortune, age, sorrow, sin, confusion, distractions, business, past performance, weariness, imagination, unforgiveness, bitterness, brokenness, weirdness, boredom or over-busyness, etc. If we look around, Jesus isn't a lot of places we find ourselves regularly! If we're not where He is, it's not because *He* moved away from us! As a child, Jesus did a lot of child things, but when He grew up He put away the child-ish ones.

1 Timothy 4:12 —Let no one despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. [BSB]

So, Where Are We?

There are several different pictures painted in the Word of God providing kingdom models of growth and progression. There is the "seed" model that germinates, grows, crowns, and bears fruit. There is the baby to child to adult to overseer model; the childish to childlike to servant to fully useful son or daughter model; The Believer in God → New Convert → Disciple → Follower of Jesus → Body part → Bride model. There is the no-rule to sense-ruled to self-ruled to God-ruled (Word) to Head-ruled (submitted) to God-partnered model. There is the initiation, information, imitation, integration, transformation, multiplication model. Actually we like them all and use them all from time to time... But our favorite model is what we call the double-funnel model. It's the combination of the traditional church leadership triangle (boo!) and the true-to-Jesus-likeness-of-the-servant triangle (yay!), both connected by the straight and narrow way (ouch!), which we fondly call "the tunnel of the funnel!"



According to our study and model, being a follower of Jesus (Never being where He isn't, always being where He is) *is the beginning of a true Christian life of service!* It's the point where having been saved, coming to knowledge of His love and sacrifice for us, climbing the ladder of understanding, desiring more and more of Him, we push through the "glass ceiling" of traditional church life and enter the tunnel of the funnel! It's where we first begin yielding control of ourselves to Him. It's where we enter the straight and narrow place! It's where we begin dropping off our baggage (there's little room for the past failures and triumphs, ever-present and swelling opinions, future dreams, goals, desires, etc., in such tight quarters). It's where we are brought into a close, tight walk with others, being sharpened and scraped by one another until it gets so tight it's a single file walk before the Lord into His processing chamber! One by one He breaks off the hard pieces of our lives and everything that doesn't look like a "follower of Jesus!" Once broken and cleaned it's into the molding stage, where He makes us, by the beautiful touch of His hands, able ministers of the gospel, glorious imitations of Himself! When we become a follower of Jesus we begin doing what He says rather than what we say... we begin doing what He is doing rather than what we want to do... we are never again where He isn't and always where He is!

[Note: It's *from* this stage that we enter in to the Kingdom Plan He has for us all. Ask Peter what the "tunnel of the funnel" was like for him! But see Peter in the balance of his life of service to the Lord and you'll see it's all worth it to be faithful unto death! It's from this stage of "following Jesus" that we enter into the Kingdom blessing stage! Until the tunnel and the ever-widening triangle of service; true spirituality, service, love, and effectiveness are just hopes, desires and dreams!]

So, where are we? Are we in the Kingdom (Hallelujah! — No one can take away the joy that we all feel at being saved!), but still serving according to our will, trying to gain more knowledge to be released at some point in the future for service to the King? Does the glass ceiling that says we can't go any further because we aren't pastors or teachers or leaders in the church lock us in? Are we in the recycling swirl where we've gone as high as we can go in one church and now we are starting all over again someplace else? Are we "circling" around the church just looking for something, or someone, to feed on like birds of carrion (positive or negative) instead of soaring up and over the limitations to high places like the eagles we are? Are we caught in the whirlwind, spinning-without-control, bumping into people and things, causing damage to them and ourselves? If you are, you didn't follow Jesus there! He isn't there! He's gone on, *resurrected*, with Father! And being a follower of Jesus we shouldn't be where He isn't, we should be where He is, *resurrected and with Father!*

If we find we have failed as a follower, if we have come to the end of this day; our influence ignored, own strength exhausted, our courage drained, remember Jesus restoring words to Peter, "You come follow Me!" It's an invitation to a new start, with new power, for everyone who can answer "Yes" to Jesus question; "Do you love Me?"

Response To Truth

 Are you willing, by prayer and consultation, to locate yourself on the diagram above?

☐ Yes ☐ No

 What is the definition of being a "follower of Jesus?"

 Regardless of where you find yourself, are you willing to press into Father's Kingdom Plan by becoming a true "follower of Jesus?"

☐ Yes ☐ No

Prayer: Conversation with Your Father

by Stacy Collins

Key Verses:

1 John 5:14,15 — This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. [NASB]

James 5:16 —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. [NIV]

Introduction

Prayer has to be one of the most central topics of Christianity. Just consider how many books have been written, how many messages delivered, how many seminars conducted on the subject of prayer. We have tried to formulaize it, mechanize it, package it, and inevitably imitate it, without grasping the true essence of prayer. Prayer is a conversation between Father and child—two-way communication (dialogue, not monologue) with Father; and the most basic definition being, “talking with God, your Father.”

How did you learn how to talk to your earthly father? By observation? By trial and error? By coaching from your mother or siblings? Maybe you never learned how to have that kind of relationship with your father and that’s been hindering you with the primary key to being successful in your journey with your heavenly Father. Fortunately, we can look into the Word to see how people communicated with Him, thereby understanding His will and His ways. We can see which prayers penetrated heaven and which prayers were miserably amiss.

Think about some of the things that characterize a parent/child relationship—things like: openness, honesty, confidence and trust. God answers prayer because His children ask. Children don’t find it too difficult or complicated (or too embarrassing) to talk to their parents, at least not in healthy relationships. Never make prayer too complicated. The more complicated prayer is made, the more others will depend on you to learn how to do it.

Children also teach us the value of imagination. Imagination often opens the door to faith. But, ideas, pictures, and words are of no avail unless they proceed from the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:26 —In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know how we ought to pray, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words. [BSB]

Secret, fervent, believing prayer forms the foundation of all personal godliness. You become like the one you are most around. What do they say about couples who’ve been together 30, 40, 50 years? Whose image would you like to be conformed to?

Real prayer is life creating and life changing. We are working with God to determine the outcome of events.

1 Corinthians 3:9 —For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building. [NKJV]

So, let's take a look into the two way conversation between you and your Father.

Who Ya Talkin' To?

Remember that true prayer is a two-way conversation, and simply said, "talking with God, your Father." To converse you have to have access to the person. To have meaningful conversation, there must be an element of intimacy. There is a difference between access and intimacy, especially when talking about God. All believers have unrestricted access, few have intimacy. Let's talk about the element of intimacy first. Intimacy begins when you know who you are talking to. How do you talk to a stranger? A friend? Your spouse? Is there a difference in tone? ...in choice of words? ...expression? Who will be answered?

There is a story told about a young boy and a soldier approaching President Abraham Lincoln that shows us the power of both access and intimacy.

During the Civil War, a Union Army soldier lost his father and his brother in battle. He knew his mother could not run the family farm without him, so he decided to see President Lincoln to ask for an exemption from service. When he reached the White House front gate, he was turned away by the guard, who told him there was no way he could see the president. Discouraged, he sat down on a bench nearby.

After a little while, a young boy came up to him. "Soldier, you look unhappy. What's the matter?" The soldier told the boy his story, and how he needed to see the president. The little boy said, "I can help you."

The boy grabbed the soldier's hand and led him to the front gate of the White House. They walked right through, all the way into the Oval Office, where President Lincoln sat working. "Good afternoon, Todd. Who is your friend?" he said. The boy answered, "Daddy, this soldier needs to talk to you." The soldier stated his case, and President Lincoln released him from service on the spot. <https://www.thespectrum.com/story/life/features/mesquite/2016/03/04/we-loved-god-his-children/81180938/>

Let's take a look at the Trinity to understand who we are talking to. To reach Father is our ultimate goal, the target for every believer. Jesus gives us access to and always points us toward Father. Holy Spirit woos us to Father. So...who are we talking to?

Matthew 6:9 — Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father, who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name...' [NASB]

John 16:23 In that day you will not question Me about anything Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. [NASB]

We can tell how well you know somebody by the way you talk to them and talk about them. You define your relationship by the words you use. When you pray to God, the language forms you use with Him reveal your perception of your relationship with Him.

Languages of Prayer:

- Slave – “Lord, Master, Almighty”
- Adoption – loving, but formal approach “Sir”
- Pharisee – “I am glad I am not like this person or that person...”
- Confusion & nervousness – “Oh Father..., Jesus..., Holy Spirit...”
- Child – “Father,” “Dad,” “Abba”

Romans 8:14–16 —For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, [ESV]

The importance of praying in tongues is that there are so many things God wants done, but we don't know what they are. The wonderful benefit of praying in the spirit is that you can bypass the mind (where all the feelings, doubt and reasoning arise that can throw your prayers off). There are no worries of prayers amiss because Holy Spirit gives you utterance. He is praying (perfectly) through your spirit as you cooperate with Him. You are the one doing the praying, so God can legally answer that prayer and perform His plan in your life or others based on the laws of authority that He has established to govern this world system.

1 Corinthians 14:2, 14 —For he who speaks in a [unknown] tongue does not speak to men, but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries [not obvious to the understanding] in the [Holy] Spirit. ... For if I pray in a [unknown] tongue, my spirit [by the Holy Spirit within me] prays, but my mind is unfruitful [it bears no fruit and helps nobody]. [BSB]

So, we pray/talk to our Father, in the Name of Jesus (meaning we have access because of what Jesus did for us), and the Holy Spirit will inspire us on what to say and how to say it.

The Approach: Confidence is Key

1 John 5:14–15 —Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, 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 the petitions that we have asked of Him. [NKJV]

Hebrews 4:16 —Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. [NKJV]

The word “boldly” used here means outspokenness; unreserved utterance; freedom of speech, with frankness, candor, **cheerful courage**. It's the opposite of cowardice, timidity or fear. It's a divine enablement that comes to ordinary & unprofessional people exhibiting spiritual power & authority. It is not a human quality but a result of being filled with the Holy Spirit (as in Acts 4:31). Luke 11:5-10 (KJV) uses the word “importunity,” which is shamelessness; boldness.

So, what's your approach in prayer? Let's remember what we've learned about knowing who you are talking to, about the dynamics of family relationships.

Some Common Approaches

- Fatalistic View – whatever will be, will be
- The Pout/Whine – use guilt & manipulation
- Let's Make a Deal – I'll do this, if You do that
- Boxing Gloves – fight with God, one will come out with what we want
- Hammer & Crow bar – if you won't do it God, then I'll get it done

How can I confidently pray? Know His will. How can I know His will? Know Him! Know His Word!

Daniel 11:32 — "...but the people who know their God will display strength and take action." [NASB]

John 11:41–42 —...Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me." [NLT]

So how do we approach God? We approach him with confidence. We approach him as a child to a father. We talk with him. We converse with him. Here's another thing that is very important. Confidence is not the same as arrogance. Do you know that? Do you know a confident person? And do you know an arrogant person? Can you see a difference? Consider a story called *The Battleship*.

This is a story about a naval officer who finally got his four stripes and became a captain. Then he was given the command of the biggest battleship of the fleet. So, while on maneuvers in the Atlantic during the darkest part of the night, the officer of the deck was cautiously piloting the warship through fog shrouded waters. With straining eyes, he scanned the hazy darkness searching for dangers lurking just out of sight, when his worst fears were realized. There in front of them was a bright light straight ahead, and on a collision course with the battleship.

The sleeping captain was immediately summoned from his quarters to the bridge and told about the light in the distance. To avert disaster, he quickly told the signalman, "Signal them to bear 10 degrees starboard." To the captain's amazement. However, the foggy image did not move, but instead sent back a signal saying, "You bear 10 degrees starboard." Appalled at the audacity of the message the indignant captain insulted by the blatant refusal to respect his rank as a commander of the battleship, the biggest thing afloat, the pride of the fleet, said, "Signal them again and tell them that this is the captain's orders to tell them to bear 10 degrees starboard now." A second time the oncoming light did not budge. "With all due respect Captain," came the signal again, "I am Seaman first class and I order you to alter your course immediately 10 degrees starboard."

Angered and frustrated that this sailor would endanger the lives of his men and crew. The captain signaled back, "Seaman. I can have you court martialed for this. For the last time, I command you on the authority of the United States government to alter your course 10 degrees starboard. I am a battleship." The Seaman's signal came back. The transmission was chilling. "Captain, sir, once again with all due respect, I command you to alter your course 10 degrees starboard. I am a lighthouse." The battleship moved.

Sometimes we can take a fixed position with God. This kind of goes back to the boxing gloves approach where we think we know what we need to pray for. We think we know the answer we need and we dig in. And we get arrogant with God. Arrogance with God is not going to go very far. God's Word says that we humbly approach Him, we boldly approach Him, we confidently approach Him... but not with our ideas and our plans. We have to

go to Him and say, “Father, I’m open to hear. What are your plans?” Is it me that needs to move 10 degrees or is it them that needs to move 10 degrees? What needs to happen in this situation?

Conversation. We never go in to the throne thinking we already know the answer, unless the Holy Spirit has revealed something to us about that situation. We always go in empty handed, and we say I need help. Father, I need help to figure this out what needs to happen in this situation. Then He’s going to speak something to me, then I pray it out, and then he answers my prayer. So, there’s a difference between arrogance and confidence. We want to be confident with God but never arrogant. On the heels of that, why are we going to be able to get answers to prayer? Why can we be the ones to speak up?

Because I Said So!

“...God does nothing but in answer to prayer.” — John Wesley
(<https://www.epm.org/resources/2009/Mar/28/great-quotes-prayer/>)

Children inherit a lot from their parents. Likewise, we have “inherited” the authority to “rule” on earth from our Father. In Genesis 1:26-28 we see that we were created in the image of God and we were commissioned to rule.

Psalms 115:16 — The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, But the earth He has given to the sons of mankind. [NASB]

The flip-side: to walk in authority, you must be submitted to authority.

James 4:7-8 — Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. [NKJV]

This always involves two movements:



Upward = Drawing near to God

Outward = Resisting the devil

Too many want to get involved in the good fight of faith without first submitting themselves to the spiritual discipline necessary to equip a warrior for battle. Danger: moving too far outward without moving far enough upward is not good. Your effectiveness all goes back to the quality of your relationship with Father.

Zechariah 4:6 —... ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts. [NKJV]

Three Things to Move Upward:

- Submit to God – obey God unconditionally
- Draw near to God – personal prayer life; measures quality of our relationship
- Cleanse hands/purify heart – what you do; what you think or feel – holiness

Hebrews 11:6 —But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. [NKJV]

Seen and not heard...not in this Family

So...are we, as children, supposed to be seen and not heard? How does that family dynamic work? Jesus kept silent (at the strategic moment) so that we could speak. One voice was to become millions of voices.

Isaiah 53:7 —He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. [NKJV]

Matthew 26:63 —But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" [NKJV]

Matthew 27:12–14 —And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly. [NKJV]

John 18:6 —Now when He said to them, "I am *He*," they drew back and fell to the ground. [NKJV]

Matthew 26:53 —Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? [ESV]

It all starts by listening to the Voice of God.

John 12:49 — For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. [NASB] (see also: John 14:10; 5:19-20, 30)

Elijah heard the Lord speak to him that there would not be rain, yet he had to speak it out. After three and a half years, the Lord spoke again and Elijah had to go "birth it out" on top of Carmel. (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 42-46; James 5:17-18)

Isaiah 55:11 —so My word that proceeds from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please, and it will prosper where I send it. [BSB]

Jeremiah 1:12 —Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it." [ESV]

The radical turning point in the history of humanity began when Jesus proclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17) Jesus was introducing the Kingdom of God upon this earth and the battle was now on. Jesus was totally dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish everything that He did. (Luke 4:1, 14; Acts 10:38) In Colossians 2:15 we see that He disarmed the enemy.

This means the war itself is over and the winner and the loser have been determined. We are here to enforce the victory. Think about the Emancipation Proclamation issued by Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863. It took effect legally, yet it took time to implement. How do we enforce the victory of Jesus? By being His voice here on the earth.

Psalms 2:8 — Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. [NASB]

Matthew 9:37–38 —... "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." [ESV]

If He wants to send rain and laborers, why does He tell us to ask? Prayer (talking with your Father) gives you revelation of the Word. In prayer, head

knowledge becomes heart knowledge. God tells us what He wants to do through His Word, and then He asks us to ask Him. That's why we can be confident. We are the legal rulers of this world (Adam lost it, Jesus regained it) so we are the ones that must ask. Prayer should be God looking at us and seeing His Word reflecting back—why would he not answer that?

Consequences of not opening your mouth can be severe. Herod put to death James and was going after Peter. The church had been silent, but then...they rose up in prayer and Peter was rescued by an angel. (Acts 12)

We can now open our mouths in confidence. Peter opened his mouth and 3,000 were saved (Acts 2:38-41). Phillip opened his mouth & the eunuch was saved (Acts 8:34-39). (See also: Acts 4:7-13; 4:29-31; 14:8-10; 16:16-18).

Timing Is Everything (Kairos)

Those who take the time both to talk and to listen to God before launching their ventures will not only find themselves in the right place at the right time, but they will also know what to do when they get there.

Two of the terms used in the Bible that describe time are:

chronos = time in general; time in which anything is done.

kairos = the strategic or “right time”; the opportune point of time at which something should be done; a window of opportunity; a well-timed attack in war; when someone is in danger or about to be attacked by Satan. (Strategic = Important or essential in relation to a plan of action; Essential to the effective conduct of war; Highly important to an intended objective; Intended to destroy the military potential of an enemy)

Luke 4:13 —And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a **season** (until a more opportune time). [KJV]

Luke 8:13 —They on the rock *are they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in **time** of temptation (well-timed temptation) fall away. [KJV]

Do we believe in “coincidental temptations”—wrong place at the wrong time? Or are there well-planned, well-timed temptations and attacks? If so, how do we combat them?

Case 1:

Luke 22:31–32 —And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have you*, that he may sift *you* as wheat: But **I have prayed** for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. [KJV]

Here Jesus interceded for Peter at his *kairos* time of temptation. He prayed that his faith not fail him after he denied Christ. Did it work? Yes

Acts 3:19 —Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times (*kairos*) of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; [KJV]

1 Peter 5:6 —Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: [KJV]

The good news—after a *kairos* attack comes a *kairos* refreshing and possibly a *kairos* promotion!

Case 2:

Acts 12:1–2 —Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. [KJV]

We saw how the church responded in that strategic moment of the newly formed Body of Christ (the Church)—with prayer. And we saw how Father answered by sending an angel to rescue Peter!

In the time of renewal and success of the early church, Satan launched orchestrated attacks, or strategically-timed persecution. This is to discourage, distract, or in extreme cases, to destroy. It failed. Why? Just look at the early churches' prayer life.

Ephesians 6:18 —Praying always (*kairos*) with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; [KJV]

“Praying always” seems like an impossible demand. It is not literal and does not mean at all times, it means at strategic times. We are at war and if we are alert He will warn us of the well-timed attacks of the enemy. When warned, we can create a boundary of protection by praying, and ways of escape will be revealed.

A man had a vivid, recurring dream that his married daughter was dying. He felt Satan had a well-laid plan to take her life, but didn't know how. Because he didn't want to alarm her, he told his son-in-law, and they began to pray. A month later, his daughter received a promotion at work and had to get an exam to get the new life insurance. The doctor questioned, “Lady, what have you been doing in your diet, you have no potassium. You should be dead.” She had been on a strange diet for several weeks, eating only one or two kinds of food and almost killed herself. But, the prayers of a father and husband at the *kairos* moment headed off the enemy's plan.

Luke 21:36 —Watch (keep on the alert, stay awake, in the sense that a sentry would need to refrain from sleep) ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. [KJV]

2 Corinthians 2:11 —Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. [KJV]

It is Father's design that we be forewarned of and pray against Satan's schemes and plans. We watch so that we won't be ignorant and therefore taken advantage of. What does “taken advantage of” imply? Answer: Had we known, we could have done something about it. Well...we do have a way of knowing.

Luke 12:56 —Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? [KJV]

What? We can tell signs of weather but can't distinguish the “times” of the Lord.

1 Chronicles 12:32 —And of the children of Issachar, *which were men* that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them *were* two hundred; and all their brethren *were* at their commandment. [KJV]

But wait, I thought all things were supposed to work together for the good!?!

Romans 8:26–28 —In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know how we ought to pray, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words. And He who searches our hearts knows the

mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. [BSB]

If God tells us to be alert, that means we have a responsibility. Again, it's not automatic. It also means that God wants to warn us. It is His will to warn us. If the attacks were going to be obvious, alertness would not be necessary. There are things He wants to do, but we still must invite Him to be involved, "Father, please, come, be a part of this situation..."

Elijah prayed about rain – James 5:17-18

Daniel called for the time to be fulfilled – Daniel 9:1ff

Disciples in upper room – Acts 2:1-4; 42-43 (united prayer)

Disciples call for God to stretch out His hand – Acts 4:29-31

Church prayed for Peter's deliverance after James killed – Acts 12:1-19

You can't change the seasons, but if you know what season it is, you can be prepared. It is God who changes the times and seasons.

Daniel 2:21 — He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding [ESV]

Ecclesiastes 3:1 —To every *thing* there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: [KJV]

You can't change the seasons. If winter is coming, it doesn't matter how much binding and loosing you do, it's still going to get cold, because it's winter and that's winter's job. Don't try to exercise your "spirituality" and find yourself fighting against God Himself. Communism had a season. But, when its season was over, God snapped His fingers and the wall fell.

Ephesians 5:15–17 —See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. [KJV]

Revelation 5:8 —And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. [KJV]

Revelation 8:3–5 —And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer *it* with the **prayers of all saints** upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the **prayers of the saints**, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with **fire** of the altar, and **cast it into the earth**: and there were **voices**, and **thunderings**, and **lightnings**, and an **earthquake**. [KJV]

He mixes your prayer with His fire and throws it back to the earth where explosive force is released. There may be times that we ask God to move in a certain situation and it seems as though nothing happens. Could it be that there was not enough prayer in our bowl? Are all bowls the same size? Are others contributing their prayers to that bowl? Is this a lack of faith issue or is this a timing issue?

We must keep on praying and we must realize that there might be a timing issue. There might be a force trying to hinder that answer coming to us. Those things are out of our hands. Our job is just to simply keep on putting those prayers back up to heaven and trusting that He's going to take care of it in the right time. So don't get discouraged.

But again, you have the flip side—don't delay either. Don't just have the attitude of, "Oh well, whatever is going to happen will happen because God is just God." No. There's danger in delaying, too. That's like the story of the seagull. He was on an ice chunk on the river that was feeding Niagara Falls. There were frozen fish in this ice chunk, and he started pecking at it, getting the fish out of there. As he's standing on that ice chunk, he's getting closer and closer to the falls. All the other seagulls were flying away off the ice chunks. But this one seagull just keeps staying on the ice chunk because he loved fish. He just keeps pecking those frozen fish and eating them. Pretty soon that ice chunk comes to the falls, and it begins to go over. The seagull starts flapping its wings. But he can't get off because his feet are frozen to that chunk of ice. Over the falls, he goes!

Don't delay. If God tells you to begin to pray. Then you pray. You stay with it. When he tells you to get off of it, then you fly away. Whether you see something or you don't see something, that part is not up to us. We're not in control of the seasons. We are not controlling or answering prayers. I don't have to promise anybody that something's going to happen in their life. If I pray, all I have to do is pray out by the unction of the Holy Spirit, give it back up to the Father, and just keep on doing my part till he says that it's done.

Persistence Pays Off

Where you ever persistent in a making a request to one of your parents? Just remember our earthly models are not perfect. For instance, we never become persistent with Father just so we can get our way. We cannot wear Him down or "lawyer up" on Him by debating to win our petition.

*S. D. Gordon "The purpose of prayer is not to persuade or influence God, but to join forces with Him against the enemy." [S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks in Prayer*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1904).]*

But there are powerful lessons to learn about persistence through two prayer encounters which took place in the lives of Elijah when praying for rain seven times (1 Kings 18:42-46) and Daniel praying for 21 days (Daniel 10).

Persistence is a choice:

Two frogs fell into a tub of cream. One looked at the high sides of the tub which were too difficult to crawl over and said, "It is hopeless." So, he resigned himself to death, relaxed, and sank to the bottom. The other one determined to keep swimming as long as he could. "Something might happen," he said. He kept kicking and churning, and finally he found himself on a solid platform of butter and jumped to safety. (Source: *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes*, Robert Morgan)

Galatians 6:9-10 —And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. [KJV]

My Brother's Keeper?

Am I my brother's keeper? Yes. That's called intercession.

1 John 5:16 —If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he should ask God, who will give life to those who commit this kind of sin. There is a sin that leads to death; I am not saying he should ask regarding that sin. [BSB]

Intercession is coming to God on behalf of another; going between; standing in the gap; the act of pleading by one who in God's sight has a right to do so in order to obtain mercy for the one in need. You are contacting God so His life and power can flow into a situation.

Ezekiel 22:30 —I searched for a man among them to repair the wall and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, so that I should not destroy it. But I found no one. [BSB]

God is looking for a reason to preserve, not to destroy. He doesn't want to judge us, but He has to if we don't ask to be cleansed.

Father is always looking for a reason to preserve and rescue, not destroy. But... if no one is found, what can He do? Let's invite Him in!

Begin praying for others by quieting your fleshly activity and just begin listening. Listening is the 1st thing, 2nd thing, and 3rd thing for successful intercession. You must hear, know, and obey the will of Father before praying into the lives of others.

Is it just "me"? Remember our chapter on *Spirit, Soul & Body*. The inner sense of compassion is one of the clearest indications from the Lord that this is a prayer project for you.

Expanding the Family

Satan's strategy has two objectives.

Primary Objective = prevent God from being glorified by keeping lost people from being saved.

Secondary Objective = make human beings and human society as miserable as possible in this present life, John 10:10 (it's a secondary objective because it's only temporal victory).

Satan deceives us into living below our God-given rights and means. He does it by telling people lies about God and getting them to ***talk against God*** rather than ***for God***.

Praying for the Lost:

1. Know the promise and God's will (Psalm 2:8; 2 Peter 3:9)
2. Pray that they come to their senses (2 Timothy 2:23-26; Luke 15; 1 Corinthians 2:14)
3. Pray for the veil to be removed (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)
4. Pray for their eyes to be opened (Acts 26:16-18; Psalm 119:18)
5. Pray for the strongholds to come down (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)
6. Pray for laborers to be released (Matthew 9:35-38)

Hindrances to Prayer

If there can be effectual prayers that means there can also be ineffectual prayers. Some things that cause prayers to be hindered include:

Unforgiveness, Sin (Mark 11:22-26)

Wrong Motives (James 4:2, 3) If unwilling to change, you will abandon prayer; to ask rightly involves transformed passions; through prayer we are taught to see things from God's point of view

Relationship Problems (1 Peter 3:7)

Conclusion:

When prayer (conversation with Father) slows down, spiritual progress slows down; anointing decreases, and flesh increases.

Matthew 26:41 —Watch and pray, ... the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak. [KJV]

When was the last time you had a conversation with your Dad? Find out what's on His mind and then talk it through.

Scripture Prayers

Ephesians 1:15-23

Ephesians 3:13-21

Philippians 1:9-11

Colossians 1:9-29 (esp. 9-11)

2 Thessalonians 1:11, 12; 3:1

End Times Overview

by Sonny Bowman

Key Verse:

Revelation 1:3 —Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and obey what is written in it, because the time is near. [BSB]

Introduction

Do you wish you had bought a bunch of Microsoft or Apple stock when it first went on the market? If you had, you would be extremely rich today. Imagine if you could know what was going to happen in the future. You can—at least parts of it. God told us quite a bit about the last days of this world in His Word—the Bible. And it's a lot easier to understand the Bible teachings about End Times than many people think.

Why is it Important to Know About End Times?

It is important to know about End Times so you won't be shaken, deceived, or side-tracked by wrong teaching about End Times.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 — Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? [NKJV]

It is also important for you to be able to help others because our time is short.

Hebrews 10:24-25 — And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. [NKJV]

Jesus said it was important to be alert concerning End Times.

Luke 21:31, 34-36 — So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. — “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” [NKJV]

Obviously, if it wasn't important, God would not have included teachings about End Times in the Bible!

Purpose of Prophecy

Before His birth, there were many prophecies about the coming Messiah (Jesus). Some prophecies described the Messiah coming to conquer and reign. Other prophecies described His suffering in payment for our sins.

These messianic prophecies were studied intently by the Jews. Unfortunately, many did not understand that the prophecies spoke of two separate comings.

Jesus was prophesied to come first as a **servant** to redeem man from sin (Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12). His second (later) coming would be as a **king**, conquering all evil and delivering God's people (Jeremiah 23:5-6; Daniel 7:13-14). Unfortunately, many people only looked for the kingly Messiah whom they expected would deliver the Jewish people from the tyranny of Roman rule (Acts 1:6). Since the servant Messiah prophecies did not seem to fit this expectation, those prophecies were often ignored or misapplied.

As a result, when Jesus came to live on earth, the people thought that He was the kingly Messiah who would set up God's kingdom in Jerusalem. A few days before Passover, these people spread palm branches and clothes in the road to welcome their coming King (John 12:12-13). When Jesus failed to fulfill **their understanding** of the prophecies, these people soon turned against Him, demanding His death (John 19:14-15).

The Jewish people made a common mistake when it comes to biblical prophecy. They thought that the primary purpose of prophecy was to describe what would happen in the future. They also added too many assumptions based upon their limited understanding of the prophecies. Even though the prophecies were fulfilled (to that point) exactly as given, many of the Jewish people did not recognize it because they were not fulfilled **the way they expected**. We must be careful to not make a similar mistake when studying end-time prophecies.

Throughout the Bible, God has provided many end-time prophecies for us. These prophecies serve two major purposes. First, when they come to pass, they assure us that God has everything under control (John 13:19; 14:29; 16:4). He is not surprised by the events taking place.

The second major purpose of these prophecies is to show us where we are in God's plan. For example, the Abomination of Desolation will show Christians when we are entering the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:15,21). We will probably not know ahead of time when the Great Tribulation will start. However, when we see the Abomination of Desolation, we will know that the Great Tribulation has started.

When studying end-time prophecies, avoid the temptation to be too detailed about how the prophecies will be specifically fulfilled. Primarily, seek to understand enough about the prophecies to recognize them when they come to pass. If you do that, you will be least likely to miss these important indicators provided by God. *Hold loosely to man's theories and firmly to Bible truth. Don't mistake the one for the other.*

Great Tribulation or Wrath of God?

To accurately understand end-time events you must get a clear understanding of the difference between the *Great Tribulation* and the *Wrath of God*. Unless this difference is clearly understood, it is virtually impossible to accurately understand end-time events.

The Great Tribulation

An important clue to remember when studying end-time events is that the Great Tribulation is demonic in origin. It includes the persecution and killing of

many people by Satan's representative—the Beast. The Beast (also called the Antichrist) will reign during the Great Tribulation. He will demand worship and conquer many countries. The Great Tribulation will be a time of intense evil. The source of the troubles during the Great Tribulation is Satan.

Revelation 13:2-4 — Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of* a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. And *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” [NKJV]

Satan's purpose for the Great Tribulation is to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10). A major characteristic of the Great Tribulation is the deception of those who do not love and believe the truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 — The coming of the *lawless one* [the Beast] is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. [NKJV]

Who is the source (cause) of the Great Tribulation?

The Wrath of God

The Wrath of God is godly judgment **against** evil. This judgment takes the form of seven plagues poured out against the Beast and those who worship him. These seven plagues are poured out by the angels of God. The purpose of the Wrath of God is to punish the Beast and his followers.

Revelation 14:9-10 — Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. [NKJV]

The major characteristic of the Wrath of God is severe punishment upon those who oppose God.

Revelation 16:1-2 — Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.” So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. [NKJV]

Who is the source (cause) of the Wrath of God?

The Difference

The Great Tribulation and the Wrath of God are **two separate** events coming from **two different** sources for **two different** purposes at **two different** times. The Great Tribulation is a time of intense **persecution**. It is instigated by Satan through the Beast in an effort to deceive people and cause them to worship him instead of Jesus. The Wrath of God is a time of **judgment** which will be poured out upon the world by God. Its purpose is to punish the Beast and those who have taken his mark during the Great Tribulation. The Wrath of God occurs immediately after the Great Tribulation. So when does Jesus come to rescue us from this mess?

The “Rapture”

When Jesus returns, He will gather His sons and daughters, taking them to be with Him forever. This is sometimes called the “Rapture” of the church. The word *rapture* (ecstasy, delight, joy) is not in the Bible, but the event is described in several places.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 — For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. [NKJV]

Matthew 24:30-31 — Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect [chosen ones] from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. [NKJV]

There are some people who teach that the Rapture takes place in two parts. They teach that the Christians are secretly taken out of the earth by Jesus just before the Great Tribulation. Christians will just disappear one day. This would be the first part of the rapture according to their teachings. They believe that people who become Christians after that first rapture will have to suffer intense persecution from the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation while those who were already Christians will get to bypass the troubles of the Great Tribulation. Later, when Jesus returns to put an end to the Antichrist, He will receive those people who became Christians during the Great Tribulation. **This popular theory of End Times does not agree with the Bible!**

The Rapture is Not Secret or Hidden

First of all, the Bible is very clear that the “Rapture” (gathering of the saints) is not a secret or hidden event. Everyone will see Jesus when He comes for us.

Matthew 24:23, 26-27, 30-31 — “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here *is* the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe *it*. — “Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; *or* ‘Look, He *is* in the inner rooms!’ do not believe *it*. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. — Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. [NKJV]

Revelation 1:7 — Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. [NKJV]

Revelation 6:15-17 — And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” [NKJV]

The Bible also does not teach a partial (or two-part) Rapture. All of those who belong to the Lord are taken to be with Him when He comes. (See verses above.)

Transition from Great Tribulation to Wrath

The return of Jesus and the gathering of his people (called the Rapture) signals the **end** of the Great Tribulation and the **beginning** of the outpouring of God’s Wrath. The Rapture is a **transition event** between these two important time periods—the Great Tribulation and the Wrath of God.

Matthew 24:29-31 — “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. [NKJV]

Revelation 6:12-17 — I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” [NKJV]

The Wrath of God is a time of punishment from God against the Antichrist and those who have rejected Jesus (Revelation 14:9-11). No one repents and turns to God during the Wrath of God.

Revelation 9:20-21 — But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. [NKJV]

Revelation 16:9-11 — And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds. [NKJV]

Since no one repents during the Wrath of God, there will be no new Christians to gather at the end of the Wrath of God. There will not be a second rapture.

End Times Overview

Now that we understand the distinction between the *Great Tribulation* and the *Wrath of God* events, let's see how those events fit into the End Times as described in the Bible.

First, There will be a Time of Relative Peace

Before the end, there will be a time of relative peace compared to events during the End Times. There will be rumblings such as wars and rumors of war along with serious environmental problems. We are probably already in that time of "beginning of sorrows" that precede the Great Tribulation.

Matthew 24:6-8 — And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. [NKJV]

Time of Violence and Persecution – The Great Tribulation

At the beginning of the End Times, a strong, anti-Jesus and anti-Christian ruler will gain power. The Bible calls him the *Beast* and the *Antichrist*. He could be very religious or an atheist. He may even appear to be a Christian at the beginning. He will conquer countries and kill those who oppose Him. His rule will be widespread, but not 100%.

Revelation 13:1-8 — ... I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. The dragon [Satan] gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. [NKJV]

In the Bible, this time period is called the *Great Tribulation*.

Matthew 24:9-22 — "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. ".... For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. [NKJV]

The Great Tribulation will last 3 ½ years (42 months).

Revelation 13:5 — And he [the Beast] was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. [NKJV]

Seven Plagues Poured Out – The Wrath of God

At the end of the Great Tribulation, Jesus will return to bring an end to the rule of this Beast and judgment upon those who follow the Beast. At that time, Jesus will rescue His own people (the Rapture, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Matthew 24:29-31 — “Immediately after the tribulation of those days ... they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. [NKJV]

This understanding of End Times events is sometimes called the “Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church.” This agrees with the Bible that Jesus takes His people out of the world **after** the Great Tribulation but **before** the Wrath of God. (The popular “Pre-Trib Rapture” view of End Times teaches that we will be taken out before the Great Tribulation—but that disagrees with the Bible.)

After His people are rescued, God will punish the Beast and those who serve him. Like the Egyptian plagues on steroids, God will pour out seven extreme plagues. The Bible calls this outpouring of God’s anger and punishment the *Wrath of God*.

Revelation 14:9-10 — Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation.” [NKJV]

Revelation 15:1 — Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. [NKJV]

God will not pour out the plagues of His wrath—His judgment—against Christians.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 — For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [NKJV]

A Thousand Years of Peace – The Millennium

After the end of God’s Wrath when the last of the seven plagues is finished, there will be 1,000 years of relative paradise on earth—often called the *Millennium*. The devil will be imprisoned so he cannot tempt or harass anyone during the 1,000 years. Jesus and those who belong to Him will rule and reign in Jerusalem during the Millennium. Non-Christians who survive the punishment of the seven plagues will live outside of Jerusalem.

Revelation 20:1-4 — ... an angel ... laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I* saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. [NKJV]

After the 1,000 years are finished, the devil will be released once again. Satan will tempt those who do not belong to God into rebelling against Jesus. It won't be much of a rebellion since no one is able to stand against God's might!

Revelation 20:7-9 — Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. [NKJV]

Satan will then be thrown into the Lake of Fire where he will be tormented for all eternity.

Revelation 20:10 — The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. [NKJV]

Final Judgment of Sinners – The Great White Throne

Following the Millennium, the earth and the whole universe will cease to exist, and this creation will come to an end. Then, the final judgment of sinners will take place with God sitting on a Great White Throne. Everyone who does not belong to God will be brought before Him and each person's works will be judged. Since everyone is guilty of breaking God's laws, each will be found guilty as a law breaker.

After each person is found guilty, the *Book of Life* will be consulted. This book contains the names of everyone who has made Jesus their Lord and Savior by accepting Jesus' payment for his or her sins. If the person's name is not recorded in the *Book of Life*, that means that he or she refused to accept God's offer of payment through Jesus in exchange for his or her life. That person will then have to pay the penalties himself or herself in the Lake of Fire where Satan is being tormented.

Revelation 20:11-15 — Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the *Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. [NKJV]

New Universe, Earth, and Jerusalem – Eternity

After the final judgment, God will make a new creation. This new creation will include a new universe, a new planet earth, and a special new city called the New Jerusalem. Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit, plus all those who belong to God will live there forever. There will be no sin, sickness, or sorrow.

Revelation 21:1-4 — Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more

death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." [NKJV]

What Difference Should It Make in Your Life?

Be Sure You Are Ready

There is coming a separation of those who belong to God from those who do not. It is like separating sheep from goats. They are similar types of animals, but there are significant differences. While all humans were created by God, not all of them belong to Him as His sons and daughters.

Matthew 25:32-34 — All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: [NKJV]

To become one of God's sons or daughters, you must be adopted into God's family through Jesus. Then you will become an heir of God.

Galatians 4:4-7 —But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. [NKJV]

It is important that you make sure that you belong to God. That is done only by accepting Jesus' payment for your sin and receiving His lordship in your life by faith.

Romans 10:8-9, 13 — But what does it say? "*The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart*" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ... For "*whoever calls* on the name of the Lord shall be saved." [NKJV]

Time Is Limited, So Get Busy

You must also realize that you have only a limited time to reach those around you who do not yet belong to Jesus. Whether we die first or Jesus comes today, the time each of us has remaining is very short. We need to be busy learning about and doing the Father's business as good servants dispensing the love and truths He has entrusted to us.

Matthew 24:45-51 — "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [NKJV]

Don't allow the cares and distractions of life to make you unfruitful in God's work.

Mark 4:18-19 — Now these [seeds] are the ones sown among thorns; *they are* the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. [NKJV]

Don't Fear

A feeling of urgency is good when it comes to thinking about the future. To be fearful is not good—unless you do not belong to Jesus. Then you should fear greatly! If you belong to Jesus and follow Him, you can know that fear does not come from God.

2 Timothy 1:7 — For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. [NKJV]

God will give you each day what you need for that day. But He won't always give you today what you will need for tomorrow. He will not forsake you.

Matthew 6:31-34 — “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble. [NKJV]

Hebrews 13:5 — Let your conduct *be* without covetousness; *be* content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*” [NKJV]

Watch and Be Strong

Trust in God rather than in your possessions or your own abilities. Be watchful and attentive to the things of God, following Jesus every day.

Ephesians 6:10 — Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. [NKJV]

Mark 13:35-37 — Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!” [NKJV]

Insider's Tip for Investment

Be careful not to invest too much into the kingdom of this world. This world and it's treasures are going up in flames! It will be the worst crash of all time. Remind yourself of the popular saying during the Jesus Movement of the 1970's: “It's all gonna burn!”

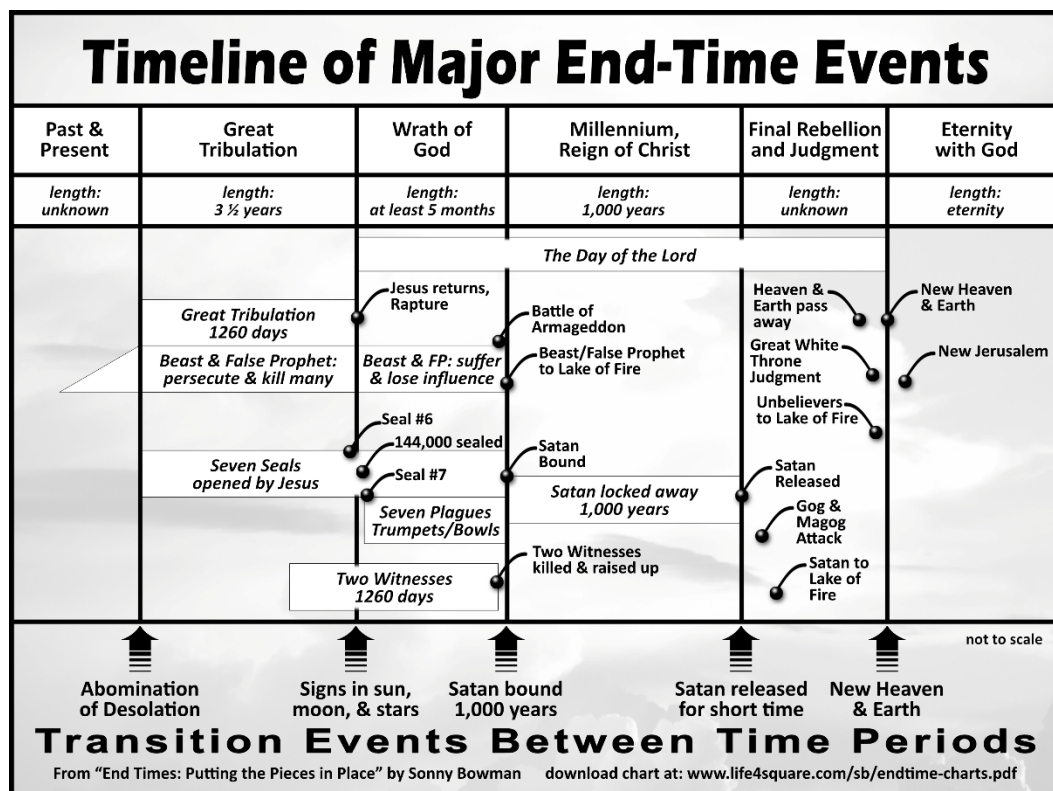
2 Peter 3:10-13 — But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. [NKJV]

Invest heavily in God's Kingdom! It's going to "go through the roof" so put everything you have into it. We're not talking just about money, but your time, talents, skills, and other resources. You will be set for life—eternal life!

Hebrews 10:34-35 — for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. [NKJV]

Graphical Timeline Chart

The following timeline chart provides a proposed visual overview of major time periods, transitional events, and key events of the End Times. A free, full-color version of this chart can be downloaded at www.life4square.com/sb/endtime-charts.pdf.



Love Like Jesus

by Sonny Bowman

Key Verses:

John 3:16 —For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. [BSB]

1 John 4:10 —And love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. [BSB]

Ephesians 5:1-2 — Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. [NKJV]

In this chapter we will explore what it looks like for us to walk in love like Jesus—sacrificially. But, first, let's consider why we should love like Jesus loves.

Love God and Others

It is the very nature of God to love. And God desires us to understand that love and to follow His example, which we can see clearly expressed in Jesus.

1 John 4:7–11 —Beloved, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God's love was revealed among us: God sent His one and only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. And love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. [BSB]

Loving God and loving others is not optional. It is the command of God for us. We see the love in Jesus, then we are called to follow the command to love as He loves us.

Matthew 22:36–40 —“Teacher, which commandment is the greatest in the Law?” Jesus declared, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” [BSB]

John 13:34–35 —A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.” [BSB]

John 15:12–13 —This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. [BSB]

Loving God and others with Jesus' kind of love (agapaō in the Greek) naturally fulfills all of the other laws of God because we are acting consistently with God's character and nature.

Galatians 5:14 —The entire law is fulfilled in a single decree: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” [BSB]

So, what should this God kind of love (agape) look like in our daily lives?

What Is Agape Love?

Different Kinds of Love

While English has one word “love” that is used in many different ways, the Greek language has four different words for love.

The word *love* in English can be used for an intimate relationship between a man and woman, for a close friendship, for an object that enhances your life (a car or expensive purse), for something that makes you feel good, or for many other things. Others think that love is: a feeling, irresistible, “chemistry” between two people, or a strong like for someone or something. Some believe that love can be fallen into and out of beyond any personal control. These ideas can lead to much confusion when people talk about “love.”

Greek is more precise in the meanings of each of the different words used for love that we often translate by just one English word, “love.” Following are some very simple definitions for Greek word groups often translated as love in English.

storge – relates to natural, familial love such as the love between a parent and child (only the negative form, *astorgos*, meaning “without natural affection” is used in the New Testament: Romans 1:31 and 2 Timothy 3:3)

erōs – sexual love (not used in the New Testament)

phileō – general word for love, a friendship love or love between two people (examples include Matthew 10:37, Romans 12:10, and Hebrews 13:1)

agapaō – (agape) sacrificial zeal that seeks the true good of another (examples include John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, and Matthew 24:12)

The Bible uniquely expands our understanding of agape by revealing God as the source and model of it, specifically as demonstrated by Jesus.

John 13:14–17, 34 —So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example so that you should do as I have done for you. Truly, truly, I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. ... A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. [BSB]

Matthew 20:25–28 —But Jesus called them aside and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their superiors exercise authority over them. It shall not be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” [BSB]

Characteristic of Agape Love

The Bible helps us understand what God’s agape love looks like.

John 3:16 —For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. [BSB]

1 John 4:9–10 —This is how God’s love was revealed among us: God sent His one and only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. And love

consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. [BSB]

Just as agape love motivated God, He wants us also to be motivated by agape love. You can do many sacrificial and miraculous things that appear very good and spiritual, but if they are not motivated by agape love there is no gain or profit to you in the doing of them.

1 Corinthians 13:1–3 —If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a ringing gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have absolute faith so as to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and exult in the surrender of my body, but have not love, I gain nothing. [BSB]

This passage goes on to describe what this special, and indispensable, agape love looks like.

1 Corinthians 13:4–8 —Love is **patient**, love is **kind**. It does **not envy**, it does **not boast**, it is **not proud**. It is **not rude**, it is **not self-seeking**, it is **not easily angered**, it **keeps no account of wrongs**. Love takes **no pleasure in evil**, but **rejoices in the truth**. It **bears all things**, **believes all things**, **hopes all things**, **endures all things**. **Love never fails**. ... [BSB]

In this passage, we learn the following about this agape love.

Agape love is: patient, kind; forgiving; gracious; steadfast; unailing; inexhaustible; honest (loves and speaks the truth); hopeful; and others-focused. Agape always works for the best interest of the recipient.

Agape love is not: envious; boastful; proud; rude; easily angered; keeping an accounting of wrongs; happy about evil; found insufficient for its task (running out; giving up; quitting, inadequate); limited on how far it will go; pursuing self-interests at the expense of others.

Agape is not just good feelings and thoughts for someone. Agape involves a choice we make not based on feelings. At times agape leads us to make a certain choice when we would rather not make that choice. Consistently loving others with agape love requires the help and empowering work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Agape takes action. That action may be simply a kind word, patience, or a helping hand, but we will be motivated to action that often involves laying down our own preferences, opinions, and “rights.” Just as agape love motivated God, He wants us to be motivated by agape love.

To choose to love others only when it is convenient or manageable is not the essence of agape love. Agape encourages sacrifice by one person that works toward the true benefit and best interest of another person.

Jesus Our Example of Agape Love

God loves the entire world with agape love (1 John 4:7-12 above). And Jesus is our model for this self-sacrificing love for others. It is critical for us to understand and follow Jesus’ model of agape love.

John 13:12–17 —When Jesus had washed their feet and put on His outer garments, He reclined with them again and asked, “Do you know what I have done for you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, because I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example so that you should do as I have done for you. Truly, truly, I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a

messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. [BSB]

Matthew 23:11–12 —The greatest among you shall be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. [BSB]

Jesus demonstrated agape by serving others, taking the humble attitude and position of a servant. He was moved with compassion for those who were suffering and in need.

Matthew 9:36 —When He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. [BSB]

Matthew 14:14 —When He stepped ashore and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick. [BSB]

Agape Defines Your Purpose in Life

It seems common for many of us to pursue life purposes that focus on serving ourselves in some form. Our pursuits can be largely focused on achieving enhancement of our own lives with goals such as increased comfort, peace, pleasure, happiness, recognition, acclaim, and personal security. Sometimes, even our sacrificial services can be motivated by our self-interests more than concern for the best interests of others. That can include doing something good to gain other's approval or to feel better about yourself. Self-serving purposes cannot satisfy long-term, thus leaving many with eventual feelings of meaningless and purposeless lives.

In Jesus, we are called to let agape love define our purpose and goals in life. God is moved by agape love (John 3:16). He desires that we imitate Him, finding our purpose and motivation in agape (Ephesians 5:1-2). Our personal purposes and motivations should be mainly focused on some aspect of loving God and loving others. "What is my purpose in life?" It is for you to bring glory to God as you continually grow in agape (1 Corinthians 10:31-33, 1 Peter 4:11). Your call is to be increasingly guided, motivated, and energized by agape for God and others in whatever context you find yourself.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 — For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. [NKJV]

Practical Agape

Following are some considerations that can help with growing in agape love. It cannot be demonstrated without interacting with God and people. Just like faith without works is dead, love without interacting with others is not agape.

Be Thankful and Grateful

Mercy is the gift from God when we don't get the harmful or bad things we deserve or earn. When we recognize God's great grace toward us, it leads to gratitude and a thankful heart.

Romans 6:23-24 — For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. [NKJV]

1 John 4:10–11, 19 —And love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ... We love because He first loved us. [BSB]

Our natural inclination without God is to be discontented and critical of our circumstances and interactions (complaining about the weather, job, being mistreated...) True agape love is founded upon a thankful and grateful lifestyle, which is just the opposite of a critical and complaining lifestyle. To grow in agape love, learn to appreciate and be thankful for the things God and others do for you. The more you recognize, appreciate, receive God's sacrificial love, the more you will truly love God and others.

Romans 1:21 —For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and darkened in their foolish hearts. [BSB]

1 Thessalonians 5:18 —Give thanks in every circumstance, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. [BSB]

It is also crucial to actively pursue the elimination of all habitually critical attitudes and words. You do this by focusing on godly and positive things, refusing to focus on problems and bad circumstances.

Philippians 4:8–9 —Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think on these things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. [BSB]

Contentment in the Lord leads to thankfulness and gratitude.

Hebrews 13:5 —Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, for God has said: "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you." [BSB]

Philippians 4:11 —I am not saying this out of need, for I have learned to be content regardless of my circumstances. [BSB]

Be Patient and Kind

In chapter thirteen of First Corinthians, we are given a long list of attributes and expressions of agape love. The first two attributes are "patient" (suffers long) and "kind" (1 Corinthians 13:4). If we simply are patient and kind to all those we encounter, we would have a tremendous impact on the world around us while helping to transform our own hearts.

Serve Others with a Smile

We sometimes want people to know that their request is inconvenient or costs us something. We have expectations of some acknowledgement, credit, or reward for our "valuable" help. This attitude makes it about us rather than about them. We feel entitled to be recognized for our "extra" effort in helping them.

Instead, practice doing with joy and a smile what you are going to end up doing anyway for them. In other words, don't make people feel bad or inconvenienced when they ask you for something. Choose to respond to them with joy and a smile as you help them without expecting anything in return.

Colossians 3:23–24 —Whatever you do, work at it with your whole being, for the Lord and not for men, because you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as your reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. [BSB]

Luke 6:35 —But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. [BSB]

It's not true agape when we focus on how much it costs or inconveniences us rather than focusing on valuing, enabling, edifying, and promoting others.

Keeps God's commandments

When you purpose to learn and conform to God's ways through keeping His commandments, you will find yourself growing in agape love.

1 John 2:3-5 — Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. **But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.** By this we know that we are in Him. [NKJV]

1 John 2:6-11 — He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. [NKJV]

Practice Self-Control

The greatest detriment to agape love is self-serving love, putting your own desires and benefit before the best interests of the other person. Therefore, self-control is an important aspect of practical agape. It's hard to practically agape love others without learning the skill of self-control. And self-control requires dying to self-interests as your primary consideration for choices you make.

Luke 9:23 —Then Jesus said to all of them, "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. [BSB]

Agape means dying to (giving up) self and self-promoting—enemies of agape love.

Love Those Nearby

Matthew 22:37–39 —Jesus declared, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: '**Love your neighbor** as yourself.' [BSB]

It's hard to agape from a distance. That's partly why God told us specifically to focus on loving our neighbors—those nearby. People we interact with could be considered our neighbors. That can include our literal neighbors, coworkers, and those we encounter in our daily lives. We must learn to be sensitive to opportunities and intentional about finding ways to love those we

encounter each day. This includes making an effort to engage with those who are nearby.

Speak the Truth in Love

Ephesians 4:15 —Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ Himself, who is the head. [BSB]

Romans 12:9 —Love must be sincere. Detest what is evil; cling to what is good. [BSB]

At times, we may be reluctant to speak needed Truth to others because we fear a negative response. Thus, we put our own comfort ahead of the other person's true best interest. If we truly love that other person, we must be willing to lovingly speak truth to them that will benefit their best interest—even if it may be temporarily uncomfortable or painful for both of us. We must also be committed to help them process that truth with patience and kindness.

Conclusion

Matthew 24:12 —Because of the multiplication of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. [BSB]

Revelation 2:4 —But I have this against you: You have abandoned your first love. [BSB]

We are in the time when the agape love of many (including Christians) has grown cold. What are you going to do about it in your own life? It is time for all of us to actively pursue loving more and more like Jesus—sacrificially and focused on the highest good of others! Choose to serve others generously and joyfully—just as Jesus modeled.

1 Corinthians 13:13–14:1 —And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love. Earnestly pursue love...

Appendix – Answers to Questions

This appendix includes the answers to the various questions asked throughout this book. Any listed as “personal response” means that the answer will vary between persons.

The Authority of the Word

Outcome of those who place confidence in Word of God: Those who do will stand. Those who don't will fall.

Four ways Scriptures are profitable (2 Timothy 3:16): instruction; conviction of our sin; improvement of our character; for our training in righteousness

Characteristics of the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12): quick, powerful, sharp, piercing, dividing, discerning

Benefits received by studying the Bible: several (see verses listed)

Our response when doctrines and ideas contrary to Word of God: obey God's Word; yield your own personal opinion; must hold onto truth and stand for it

Two promises for meditating on the Word: way will be prosperous; have good success

Believe Bible inspired Word of God? *personal response*

Willing to accept is as final authority? *personal response*

How well are you applying the Word in your life? *personal response*

Are you willing to make a change? *personal response*

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

What does Lordship mean to you? *personal response*

Is Jesus God? yes

How to determine if Jesus is Lord in our lives (Luke 6:46): whether or not we do what Jesus says

If call Jesus Lord but don't do what He says, we are: deceiving ourselves

...I must live consistent with His: goals and character

What right does Jesus have to demand Lordship in my life? He bought you with a price and you are not your own.

How well are you conforming to Jesus' ways? *personal response*

What do I need to do for Jesus to be truly Lord? *personal response*

The Person, Work, and Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Is the Holy Spirit God? Yes

For a Christian, where does the Holy Spirit live? in you

Why was it important for Jesus to go away? so He would send the Helper (the Holy Spirit)

What does the Holy Spirit do (John 16:7-8): convicts of sin; convicts of righteousness; convicts of judgment

What does the Holy Spirit teach you? all things, all truth, the things of Jesus, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him, the things freely given to us by God

Does the Holy Spirit live in you personally? *personal response*

What Jesus said we receive when baptized with Holy Spirit? Power **Then what would we be?** witnesses to all the earth

What manifestations evident when baptized in Holy Spirit? they spoke with tongues; they magnified God; they prophesied

Where some baptized in Holy Spirit a day or longer after becoming Christians? yes

Who spoke with other tongues? believers

How many filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4)? all (120), *personal response*

Have you been baptized in Holy Spirit with tongues? *personal response*

If not, are you willing to be? *personal response*

If baptized in Holy Spirit, do you regularly pray in the spirit (tongues)? *personal response*

Misconceptions about Tongues

Are tongues always in a human language? no

Did completion of Bible eliminate the need for tongues? no

When do tongues need interpretation? when spoken out in church or a group with the purpose to edify or instruct

Are tongues impossible to control? no

As a believer, is the Holy Spirit Baptism for you? yes

Righteousness: Set Free from Sin's Power

What is Righteousness? being right with and acceptable to God.

Can a person be righteous with God by keeping the Law? no

If you are saved, are you under the Law? no

Since we are no longer under the Law, is it okay to do whatever we want? no, **Why?** sin will enslave you, your sin has consequences, it will bring shame on the Father and cause people to blaspheme His Name, and it can hurt other people.

Spirit, Soul, and Body

What are the three parts of a man or woman? spirit, soul, body

Which part of man experiences full salvation first? your spirit

When Bible states that you are righteous, what part does it mean? your spirit

What are we supposed to do with our bodies? present them as a living sacrifice to God

What must you do with your mind...? renew your mind to the things of God

Worship that Moves Father's Heart

All questions require a personal response

From Forgiven to Forgiving

By Proverbs 12:16, what do you typically act like: A fool or wise?
personal response

Is it time for a change? *personal response*

To follow Jesus' example... what is your part? to daily choose to love

Are you walking by what you see or feel instead of what you know is true? *personal response*

List anyone you need to forgive: *personal response*

List anyone you need to ask forgiveness from: *personal response*

Faith that Pleases God

The short definition of faith: Believing God

Best way to enter into His peace, joy, rest, Believing God

Are you getting the picture now? Hopefully, "Yes"

... can my definition of faith be simplified and changed? Hopefully, "Yes"

Which of five ways of building faith am I strongest in? *personal response*

Which of five ways of building faith am I weakest in? *personal response*

I know what I have to do to build myself up: Hopefully, "Yes"

Healing for Life

What are some mistakes you have made when asking the Lord to heal you...? *personal response, such as... Limiting God, listening to the devil, looking at circumstances, saying one thing and believing another...*

Can you name two or three sources for sickness...? Sin, the devil, wear and tear, circumstances...

What is Father's divine will for us concerning sickness and disease?
That we are all well

Names of some "believers" I can call on: *personal response*

Names of some "elders" in our church I can call on: *personal response*

Two or three things I can do to get healing into my body? Find believer to lay hands on you, call for elders of church, find someone to agree with you

... broader definition of "faith that pleases God"? Believing God!

What is the easiest way to walk in divine health? believe God

One thing I've learned from this study: *personal response*

Effortless Prosperity

... where are we supposed to spend our energies? Doing our job of extending the Kingdom of God, Getting people saved, etc.

What is Father's definition of Prosperity? Having all His resources to meet any need

What is yours (definition of Prosperity)? *personal response*

What are the two conditions of our Covenant for Prosperity?

- a. We put Him first
- b. We obey Him

For "Effortless Prosperity" to be mine I have to do two things:

- a. Put Him first
- b. Obey Him

Am I at the place to accept this "rise" of faith? Hopefully "Yes"

The Things We Do

What is our method of water baptism? immersion

Have you been baptized in water? *personal response*

If not, why not? *personal response*

Communion is something I can do at home or in Church or anywhere that I have the need to remember Jesus' sacrifice and provision! yes

List ways you have employed laying on of hands... *personal response*

Being a Follower of Jesus

Are you willing by prayer and consultation, to locate yourself on the diagram above? *personal response*

What is the definition of being a "follower of Jesus?" Never being where He isn't, always being where He is!

Regardless of where you find yourself, are you willing to press into Father's Kingdom Plan by becoming a true "follower of Jesus?"
personal response

Prayer: Conversation with Your Father

No questions in this chapter.

End Times Overview

Who is the source (cause) of the Great Tribulation? Satan

Who is the source (cause) of the Wrath of God? God

Love Like Jesus

No questions in this chapter.