



**DISCIPLESHIP
TRAINING
COURSE**

EVERY CHRISTIAN'S JOURNEY

Lee & Elzari Cronje

DTC

Discipleship Training Course

Phase 1

Take the journey

By:

Lee & Elzari Cronje

INTRODUCTION

We welcome you to the DTC journey. A true adventure, where you will discover amazing things in God. You will understand your journey with Him, unfold Gods plan for your life and take hold of the tools and skills needed to walk through this Christian journey to the end.

We trust that this course will enrich and excite you whilst challenge the deep parts of your being as a believer. We consider this journey with the Lord an adventure. We can either see the mountains and valleys of our lives as obstacles, or we can see them as opportunités, and this is all determined by the shoes that you wear. You see, no one wears high heels on a hiking trip through the mountains, they will hardly make it out the door. No, you wear a good set of hiking boots, a back pack filled with all the gear, food and water you will need for your journey. And that is pretty much connected to your mindset on this journey. Dont expect a walk in the mall, for those experiences are short lived and quite expensive. Take on this journey as you would a hiking trip in the mountains. Gear up your heart and mind, and get ready to see the amazing atributes of God unfold and manifest through your life.

We trust that you will enjoy this journey with us and see it through to the end.

Much love.

Lee and Elzari.

DTC Discipleship Training Course

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For information contact :

(lfcronjel@gmail.com)

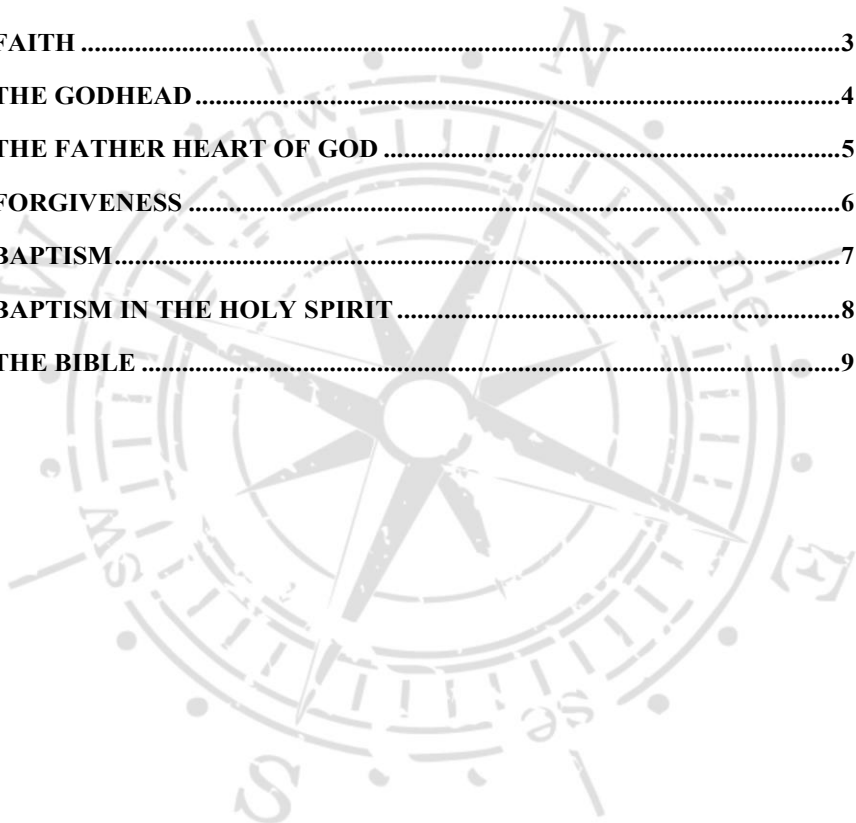
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Chapter One

Repentance

Before we get into the topic of Repentance I would like to lay a platform from which we will work. We will as far as possible be following a chronological approach to this journey. With that said please note that we will be starting at the topic of repentance, which in reality can only happen if one has been exposed to the gospel truth of the Lord Jesus Christ in some way or form, and where the Holy Spirit has convicted you of your life away from God. So here we go.

What is repentance?

Jesus said:

Luke 13:5 I tell you again that unless you repent, you will also perish

2 Chronicles 7:14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

To repent means to turn around; turn from sin and resolve my life.

A CHANGE OF MIND AND ATTITUDE leads to CHANGE OF HEART which equates to a CHANGE OF THINKING.

When we think differently we live differently. In other words, I exchange my opinion for God's opinion (Truth). I turn away from doing things my way or the way it has been done for generations.

True repentance: Includes the entire soul of man. Your mind (thoughts), will (decision making) and emotions (feelings); only takes place by starting with confession

1 John 1:8-10 *If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.*

This means that repentance needs to precede salvation. At the time of salvation, the Holy Spirit shows us how wrong our sinful lives have been and knowing that our sin has separated us from God, we experience a sense of grief and remorse, which we then need to act upon, not only with an emotional change but a change of our current state of life as we know it.

2 Corinthians 7:10 *For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.*

Repentance is not merely feeling guilty about our sins or the consequences thereof. It means hating sin because it has kept us from God and it produces a decision to remain away from sin.

Does this mean that we will never sin again? No. Our fleshly lusts seem to pull us back to the sinful ways we followed before we were born again.

Does this mean we didn't repent or weren't properly born again? No. Don't let the enemy deceive you with this lie. The truth is:

There is repentance at the time of salvation, which means that we decide to allow Jesus into the driver's seat of our lives. This however, is not the end of repentance. Repentance is an on-going experience and journey in our lives as Christians.

On-going repentance involves:

- Turning away from doing things your way

2 Corinthians 5:15 *He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves. Instead, they will live to please Christ, who died and was raised for them.*

- Turning to God

Zechariah 1:3 *Therefore, say to the people, `This is what the LORD Almighty says: Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD Almighty.*

- Turning away from sin

Zechariah 1:4 *Do not be like your ancestors who would not listen when the earlier prophets said to them, `This is what the LORD Almighty says: Turn from your evil ways and stop all your evil practices.*

- Turning to right living

Romans 6:13 *Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning. Instead, give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God.*

What should I do when I sin?

Firstly we should recognise the 3 Forms of sin

(Sin is anything that leads us to missing God's mark and plan for our lives!)

1) State of all mankind

Psalm 51:5 *For I was born a sinner, yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.*

This state was brought in though the act of disobedience to Gods instruction to Adam and Eve.

2) Disobedience to God.

Joshua 5:6 *The Israelites had traveled in the wilderness for forty years until all the men who were old enough to fight in battle when they left Egypt had died. For they had disobeyed the Lord, and the Lord vowed He would not let them enter the land He had sworn to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.*

3) A lifestyle of sin, Things, deeds, thoughts and actions done wrong

1 John 1:8-10 *If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts..*

If sin is not confessed, it will prevent us from having effective fellowship with our Father.

Isaiah 59:2 *But there is a problem, your sins have cut you off from God. Because of your sin, He has turned away and will not listen anymore.*

When we sin, we should immediately confess our sin. The moment we do, we open ourselves for Gods forgiveness.

1 John 1:9 *But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.*

Some important aspects regarding confession

- God already knows that we have sinned. Confession is for our benefit. In admitting our sins to God, we find compassion.

Proverbs 28:13 *People who cover over their sins will not prosper. But if they confess and forsake them, they will receive mercy.*

- Confession releases us from guilt. Sin that is not dealt with, has unpleasant consequences

Psalm 32:3 & 5 *When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable, and I groaned all day long. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the LORD." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.*

- When God forgives our sins, He chooses never to hold them against us again

Colossians 2:14 *He cancelled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross.*

Confession without a change of heart and attitude is empty. This requires a commitment to change.

Is repentance alone enough to make me a child of God?

John 3:3-5 *Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God. "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?" Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit..*

Can a simple change of one's mind restore mankind's relationship with God and cause man to become a pleasure to His Father God?

If yes: Then I have become a God to myself. I can deal with my state of sin in my own strength and I don't need Christ.

Romans 5:6 *When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.*

If no: Something else has to take place in man's life. Jesus Christ Himself is the very and only answer.

John 14:6 *Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me*

Now with our brief understanding of repentance, let's look at an explanation of the journey through repentance.



We need to take note that we were **born in sin** as stated in **Psalm 51:5**. Throughout our life without Jesus Christ we walk in darkness and live sin filled lives. Once we have an encounter with the Lord and our eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit to see the degree of our sin and separation from God, that is where conviction takes place. And if we are willing, its at that point that repentance can start.

The first part of this process is that you will find yourself filled with **sorrow** and remorse over the life that you have lived, and at the same time stirred with a desire for freedom.

2 Corinthians 7:9b-10 *your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. ¹⁰ Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*

The next step is **confession**. An admittance of ones sin. The bible says in

Isaiah 59:2 *But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.*

1 John 1:9 *But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong*

James 5:16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

This is quite a hard part, as this is where you are peaking out of darkness into the light. It is hard to open up your life to someone else especially if it is filled with a bad past. However don't be caught in the trap of pride, shame and condemnation. For it is in the light that all darkness flees.

1 Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen race, A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light*

Ephesians 5:8 *for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light*

A vital part after confession is **accepting the forgiveness of the Father**. Far too often many fall away by holding their own past against themselves, feeling it is far too great for the Lord to forgive. If you fall into this trap it is a slippery slope that pulls you back into the life of sin. It is the result of your doubt in His amazing grace and forgiveness of your sins.

Psalm 103:12 *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

The next step is to **pursue a Godly lifestyle**. This is where you make conscious and deliberate decisions to change life habits and thought patterns in your life that are not pleasing to God, everything from a lying tongue, anger outbursts, a manipulative attitude, selfish desires or lustful thoughts and actions. And the list goes on.

Well this is the part of the process that becomes tricky, and this is where the enemy loves to trip up new believers. However there is Gods Holy Spirit that will convict, lead and encourage you to take the right steps in every decision and change that needs to take place.

True repentance is made SECURE when we enter a **process of Restoration**.

Now this process of restoration is where the body of Christ "the church" comes in. To help maintain and guide your Godly lifestyle you need to be connected into Godly relationships and a Godly family. However there needs to be a deeper sense of accountability that cannot be attained alone. You need Godly

and mature input into your life. And that is only found in the body of Christ.

It's like the needle of a compass, it is a powerful instrument of direction, but without the needle it's pretty useless. In the same manner is the relationships of mature men and woman of God in your life. Uncomfortable but very needed.

Proverbs 27:17 *As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.*

In the next part of this illustration we look at the consequences of not having a process of restoration



If we don't have the guidance through a process of restoration, it paints an easy target for the enemy to attack your new found freedom.

As in the wild we see how the predator will single out the weak and young ones, force them away from the herd and go in for the kill.

So too with us Christians, if we are alone it is far more easier to step into old patterns of sin and comfort and that is called compromise. We start with small compromises that leads us to disobedience to Gods word, and before we know it we have fallen back into the cycle of sin. The problem is that there is a consequence to sin. Sin brings death and seperation from God, your heart will be filled with renewed shame and you will struggle to find your way back.

James 1:15 *These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.*

So it is vital to embrace a process of restoration as part of your repentance journey.

What is the result of repentance?

The result of repentance is freedom from the condemnation of sin and joy from a pure conscience before God.

Acts 3:19 *Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord*

In conclusion:

Repentance is not a once-off event in my life. In my walk with God, He reveals motives and behavioural patterns in my life which are not in accordance with His Character. For this reason, repentance must become a lifestyle. It is a lifelong process in which I constantly choose to work with God. We must understand repentance so that our relationship with God can be influenced positively by it. Repentance is not a burden or a punishment; in fact it is quite the opposite. It is the wonderful opportunity that we have to set things right, right with God and right with man.

Think about it in this way: When you buy a motor car, you don't just take it for 1 single service and expect it to give you the best performance for thousands of kilometres without ever servicing it again. In the same way with our lives as Christians, there is wear and tear that takes to the heart and soul of man, and needs to be attended to by the Lord Himself. But that can only happen if I drive my life into the "garage" of His care and show Him through confession where the faults lay within my life. And then to allow Him to show me through His Spirit, where I need to change in order to have a safer and secured journey as a believer.

Chapter Two

Salvation.

What an amazing experience when you are in some form of trouble and someone saves you from that situation. We usually don't know how to thank that person other than to repay them with a favour. Well in our case as Christians, we were lost in utter darkness destined for hell itself, but through the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we now have eternal life. We will never be able to pay Him back, and He doesn't expect us too. What is expected is to walk fully in this new bought freedom, and to shadow the life of Jesus for the world to see.

Understanding Salvation

Adam and Eve were created in the image of God for fellowship and to enjoy Him forever. But as they disobeyed God, sin entered and they were defiled in body, soul (mind, will, emotions) and Spirit.

Throughout the ages there after man's effort to cleanse and purify himself was done through sacrifices. God saw that the only way to save man was to pay the ultimate price Himself, by sacrificing His only son. With the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, through His blood we have found redemption for our souls and can walk a road of new birth through the salvation plan of our Heavenly Father.

We read in

Romans 3:23 *we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

This means we all need to repent and be born again. This can only be done through accepting Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior.

John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

This is the first step into the Kingdom of God. By doing this, our spirit gets renewed but our soul area is now in a process of renewal

Hebrews 10:14 "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified"

Let's look at the meaning of being born-again.

John 3: 3-5 Jesus said: "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again (referring to all mankind), he cannot see the kingdom of God".

He is talking about supernatural birth. Why do you think Jesus said that?

Let's go to the beginning:

Gen 2:16-17 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.

The knowledge of right and wrong will bring death, because I cannot please God out of my flesh. v17: *The consequences of eating will bring death.*

Which death is God talking about?

- Physical death? No! **Gen 5:5** – Adam lived 930 years.
- Soul death? No! **Gen 3:10** – Adam was afraid, so he hid.
- Spiritual death? Yes! The spirit of Adam became dormant.

We need to understand that man consists of 3 parts –
spirit, soul and body.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.*

To enter the kingdom of God, two births need to take place:

John 3:5 *Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.*

Natural birth (body and soul)

Spiritual birth (spirit)

Spiritual rebirth happens when my (dormant) spirit is made alive and I can enter into a righteous relationship with God my Father, through Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour. However there are many people who come to Christ simply to confess their sins, but they do not confess Jesus as their Lord. This is not the rebirth that **John 3:5** speaks of, for confession alone cannot save a person. This causes them to remain dormant in spirit and a fruitless religious lifestyle will follow.

How does this happen?

Lets look at this simple illustration. Take note: The house represents your life (spirit man), the little man represents your will (soul), and the dots represents the areas of your life; career, family, relationships, money, health etc. the cross represents the Lord Jesus and His Lordship.

The Unbeliever



This person has never accepted Jesus as their Lord in their life.

1. Jesus Christ: Where is Jesus in this person's life? Jesus is not present in this person's life. He may or may not have heard about Him. Jesus' offer of salvation falls outside of this person's reference.

2. Authority: Who makes the final decisions in this person's life? Who steers this person's life?

This person rules his own life. He lives by his own rules in every aspect of his life. He makes his choices according to his own values (right and wrong)

The Believing Christian



This person has given his life to Christ, but there are certain things that are not in line. This person lives a segmented life.

1. Jesus Christ: Where is Jesus in this person's life?

Believers include Jesus in their lives as one of many aspects of their lives. Jesus is merely something on their "to-do" list.

2. Authority: Who makes the final decisions in this person's life? Who steers this person?

This person sits on the throne of his own life. He lives by his own rules. His values may be influenced by Jesus and the Bible, but he believes that he is free to choose whatever suits his lifestyle. He does not see the Bible as God's standard set by which man should live. It is like a savoury meal. I can choose what I want to eat and discard the rest. Connection with Christ usually only occurs when crisis strikes. God is "on call" for his times of crisis.



The Kingdom Christian

This is the person who places Jesus at the centre of his/her life.

1. Jesus Christ: Where is Jesus in this person's life?

Jesus is the centre of this person's life. Jesus is involved in every area of this person's life.

2. Authority: Who makes the final decisions in his/her life?

Who steers this person's life?

Jesus sits on the throne of this person's life. He lives according to the Word of God and allows God to bring order and healing to all areas of his life.

In these illustrations you can clearly see the difference of where a person has simply confessed Jesus Christ as Lord, and where they have actually submitted to His Lordship. This can quite often be identified by the fruit upon such a person's life.

Matthew 15:8 *these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.*

Luke 19:10 *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.*

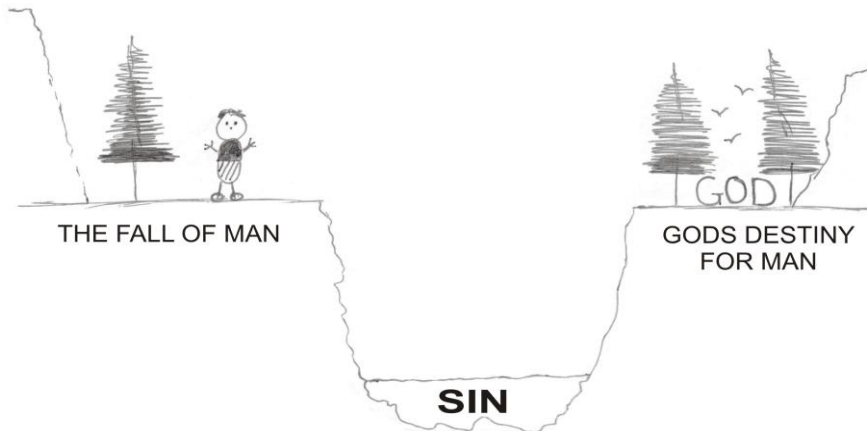
John 1:12 *"But to as many as did receive and welcome Him, He gave the authority (power, privilege, right) to become the children of God, that is, to those who believe in (adhere to, trust in, and rely on) His name.*

THE PROCESS OF THE TRUE BORN AGAIN BELIEVER

Firstly we need to understand sin and its consequences.

Romans 6:23 *for the wages of sin is death.*

Let's look at a practical explanation.



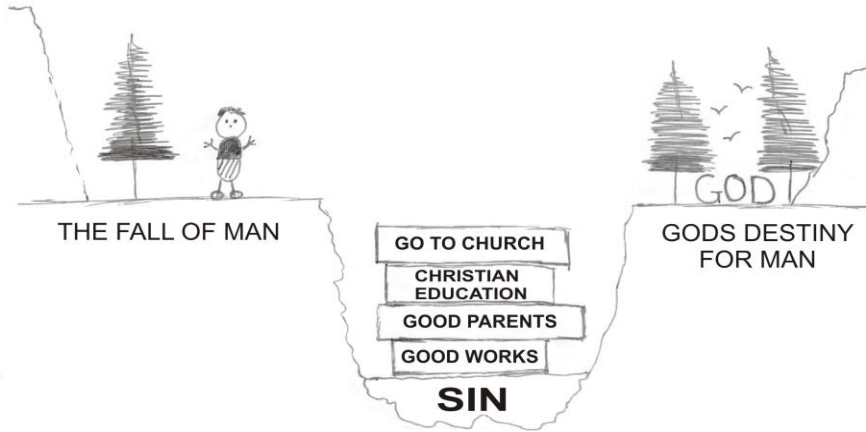
SEE HOW SIN HAS SEPARATED US FROM GOD AND HIS DESTINY FOR US.

Romans 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Isaiah 53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way*

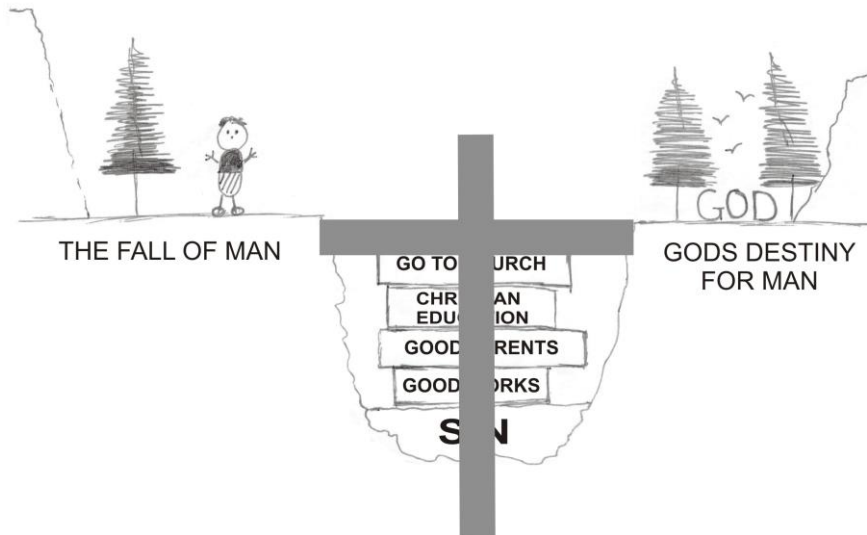
The fall of mankind has created a chasm between us and God, and now sin prevails between us and keeps us separate.

The chasm between us and God needs to be bridged. The problem is that many people try to fill the gap with religious acts and deeds. But it is impossible to get to God this way.



Be reminded of this: YOU CANNOT SAVE YOURSELF

Ephesians 2:8-9 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.



A BRIDGE IS MADE THROUGH THE CROSS, AND IS THE ONLY WAY TO THE FATHER

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

RECEIVING JESUS LEADS US TO A RESTORED RELATIONSHIP WITH FATHER GOD

John 1:12 *But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God.*

So let's look at the steps of Salvation:

1. Repent of your sins(embrace the process of repentance)
2. Confess that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior
3. Place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ
4. Live a surrendered life to Jesus Christ
5. Walk in a relationship with your Heavenly Father

The results are awesome:

2 Corinthians 5:17 *this means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

An example of a salvation prayer:

Dear Lord God, I come before today and confess that I am a sinner and that I need your forgiveness. Please forgive me Lord. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He took my place and paid the full price for my sin by dying on the cross of Calvary. I believe that You raised Jesus from the dead and that He sits at Your right hand interceding for me. I now invite you, Jesus Christ, to come into my life and take full control as my personal Lord and Savior , I choose to submit with my whole heart and soul to your Lordship in my life . Amen.

In conclusion:

Salvation is an amazing Gift from God that we so desperately need, and are thankful for. This is however only the beginning. We need to walk through the door of salvation into His wonderful plans for our lives. There is a continual process of cutting away all the habits that are ungodly and to embrace the character of Christ as our norm.

Philippians 2:12 *continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*

Salvation is not a mere prayer but a deep daily process of regeneration, repentance of dead works, forgiveness of sins and allowing Gods word to expose the areas of your life that are not submitted to Him in fullness. So be encouraged on this amazing journey as a follower of Jesus.

Chapter Three

Faith

Faith is one of the most fundamental and crucial building blocks for a Christian. It is so easy to become used to a word we hear a lot and then become desensitized to the true meaning or reality of the word. We need to get a good grip on what faith is in order for us to get a grip on how to live and function through our faith in God. Let's take a fresh look at faith.

WHAT IS FAITH?

Faith is **complete** trust or confidence in someone or something.

In reference to our lives as Christians, we are referring to our complete trust in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are also referring to completely trusting and being confident in what God has said is true and will come to pass.

Faith has substance and is not merely a good idea or feeling.

Hebrews 11:1 now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.



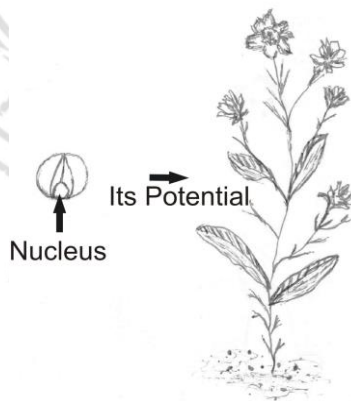
As we see in this sketch, faith is the beautiful proof that the bridge is definitely connected to something beyond our sight or reason.

Matthew 17:14-18 *At the foot of the mountain, a large crowd was waiting for them. A man came and knelt before Jesus and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son. He has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. So I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't heal him."*

Jesus said, "You faithless and corrupt people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." Then Jesus rebuked the demon in the boy, and it left him. From that moment the boy was well. Afterward the disciples asked Jesus privately,

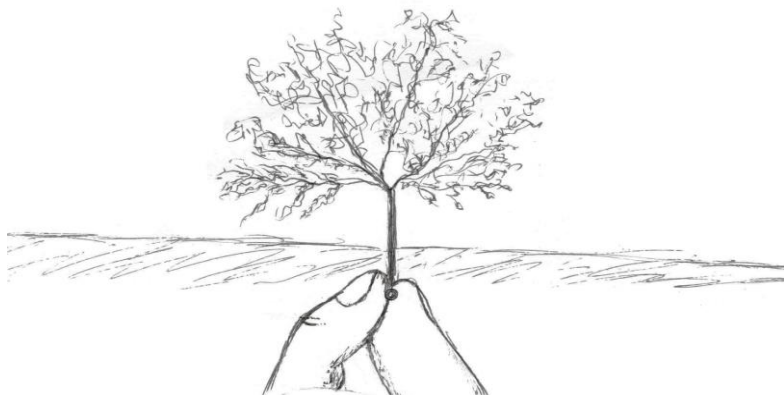
"Why couldn't we cast out that demon?" "You don't have enough faith," Jesus told them. "I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible.

Jesus likens faith to that of a mustard seed. One of the smallest seeds that produces the biggest bush.

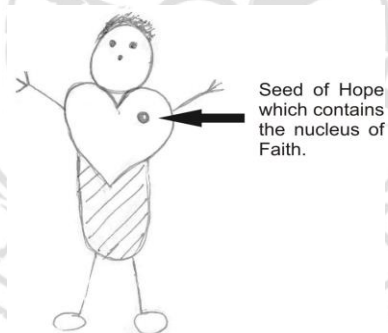


Every seed contains a nucleus that produces exactly what it was created to become. It's DNA.

The nucleus holds great potential to produce fruit and to influence the world with beneficial properties.



When faith comes to us through the form of the gospel truth, we carry the seed of hope in our hearts. Faith is the primary ingredient in the nucleus of this seed, from which the things we hope for or dream about will be produced.



Seed of Hope
which contains
the nucleus of
Faith.

The Word of God is the only way through which the truth of faith can be produced in the nucleus of our hearts.

WHY IS FAITH IMPORTANT?

To start off we need to know that without faith it is impossible to please God.

Hebrews 11:6 and it is *impossible* to please God without faith.

Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him by faith.

We need faith to draw near to God,

Hebrews 10:22 *let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting Him.*

We saw in our first chapter on Repentance that sin is the barrier that keeps us from coming to God. He has told us, that if we sincerely repent and ask for his forgiveness, we are made to be righteous before God. Therefore, if God has said it is so, we should neither question nor doubt, but should have faith in what He has said. Faith is the center of our Christian way of life (the nucleus) and is essential to sustain us in our walk with God.

Faith always leads towards God.

Repentance is **from** - Faith is **towards**.

Repentance is always from something, while faith is always towards something. Repentance is always linked up with faith. Repentance without faith is penitence (*a feeling of sorrow and regret*) and that is in essence dead work.

True repentance turns you from that which is wrong in your life towards something that is of value namely: the goodness of God.

Romans 4:20-21 *Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever He promises.*

We have now looked at what faith is, and why it is so important, but let's go a bit deeper. God does not simply ask us to have a portion of faith, but He desires for us to put all our faith (complete trust) in Him and Him alone, which leads to Him being pleased with us as referred to in Hebrews 11:6.

Proverbs 3:5-8 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take. Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the LORD and turn away from evil. Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones.*

Faith and Hope

Let's pursue the connection between hope and faith a little.

Where hope is explained in the dictionary as a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen, faith is putting our complete trust in God beyond our feelings, circumstances, and desires or even what our senses tell us. And that is what separates worldly hope from biblical hope. Going beyond feelings and stepping into the revealed promise without faith, hope will never materialize.

When we hope as believers our hope is always connected to faith for we trust not in ourselves or our plans but fully in God's supreme power.

Psalm 33:20-22 We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name. Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord, for our hope is in you alone.

THE SIX LEVELS OF FAITH:



1. NO FAITH

Mark 4:40 Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

Jesus asked some pointed and hard questions here. He was addressing His disciples when they reacted negatively to a

potential disaster. Their boat was nearly swamped and they panicked.

Mark 4:38 *Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"*

They doubted His faithfulness and integrity.

NO FAITH IS EQUAL TO FEAR. FEAR IS THE PERVERSION OF FAITH.

Here are a couple of comparisons between the behaviour of fear and faith.

- Faith meditates while fear worries
- Faith confesses the truth while fear grumbles around the facts
- Faith acts on good news while fear acts on bad news
- Faith exalts God while fear exalts the adverse circumstances of life.

FEAR AND FAITH CAN NOT DWELL TOGETHER.

2. LITTLE/WEAK FAITH

Little/weak faith is sometimes believing and sometimes doubting.

James 1:6 *But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.*

**Lack of faith is unbelief whereas doubt is inconsistent faith.
They are very similar and equally harmful to faith.**

Little/weak faith is dominated by Things

People of little faith worry about their earthly possessions and treasures. The problem is that if our eyes are set on the wrong place, our minds are set on the wrong things.

Matthew 6:30-33 *And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.*

Little/weak is dominated by Circumstances

People who have little faith are intimidated by adverse circumstances of life. They are the people who are full of praise and victory when things are going well, but who grumble and complain when things are not going well.

Mark 4:38 *Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"*

Little/weak is dominated by Doubt

Matthew 14:27-33 *But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here, then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water. Yes, come, Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"*

Jesus equated doubt with little faith. Notice that Jesus questions Peter's DOUBT and LITTLE FAITH as He expected him to continue walking on the water. Jesus is not lenient in His rebuke. If you have little/weak faith, expect Jesus to question your actions, for He knows your true potential through Him. And as any good father He will encourage you to go beyond the comfort zone of your mind.

Little/weak is dominated by fear

Apart from doubt and unbelief, fear is a foe of faith, if not perhaps the biggest. If we have little/weak faith, it is easy for fear to take over in the face of danger and calamity and for panic to set in.

The bible speaks a lot about being weak in faith. That should not discourage you from pursuing fullness of faith in your journey with God, for even with his weak faith, Peter still walked on water.

Romans 4:19-20 *without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead, since he was about a hundred years old and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God.*

If we are found with weak faith, this scripture gives us encouragement to persist beyond our weak faith as a result of difficult or seemingly impossible circumstances or situations. Unlike Peter, we see that Abraham faces his overwhelming circumstances, face on, and fully confident in the promise of God.

Note:

There is a big difference between being confident in God and being arrogant. Confidence means complete assurance in God whereas arrogance is an attitude of superiority manifested in an overbearing manner or in presumptuous claims or assumptions.

Arrogance is demanding, where faith is submissive, patient and persevering.

We who are stronger in our faith should protect those who are weak in their faith.

Romans 14:1 *Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.*

We should not be so quick to judge those who have weak faith, for we ourselves are not above it, instead we should draw in and encourage those whose faith is weak. It will stir our own level of faith, and encourage them not to give up.

3. GROWING FAITH

How do we grow in our faith?

Give yourself fully

Make a firm decision to grow in faith. If you desire to grow in faith, then you must commit to grow in faith and do so wholeheartedly.

So here are the steps:

Meditate in the word of God

What do you spend your time thinking about?

Are your thought patterns anchored in God's word or not?

Romans 10:17 *consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*

Be determine to obey the instructions of the word

When we have come to the place of giving ourselves fully and making God's word our anchor for our faith, we then need to act on our faith and be determined to obey what Gods word instructs. Obedience produces confidence.

4. GREAT FAITH

Matthew 15:28 *Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.*

Great Faith is persistent

Persistence is founded in being fully convicted that the Lord is able to perform what He has promised. It refuses to give up and it has a tenacity and boldness that pushes through the obstacles to obtain all the promises of God.

Great faith is patient

Impatience is one of the greatest enemies of our current generation. We are an instant generation, and when things do not materialise instantly we often draw away from it or build a negative review in our hearts. Much like when we receive slow service from a drive through, or the computer that is loading too slow. Quite sadly we bring this same frame of reference into our walk with God and so often miss out on His wondrous work because we don't have the ability to wait.

Hebrews 6:12 *We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.*

Hebrews 10:36 *You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.*

5. SUCH GREAT FAITH

Luke 7:1-10 *When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue."*

So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

When it comes to stepping into the purest form of faith in God, there are important principles we need to apply. And we can see that through this story of the centurion.

God is a God of order, although His ways and thoughts are higher than ours, and we don't always understand all that He does, this does not give us license to operate without boundaries in our faith.

Faith is grounded and planted and established in the word of God, so too we need to be careful to simply think that great faith in the Lord means I need to be "super spiritual" and untouchable or detached from reality.

Let's look into these principles.

The principle of **submission**

Luke 7:8 *For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me...*

We see that he knows there is a greater power at work, and that he cannot do it on his own. We too should know that its not by might or by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.

The principle of **command**

Luke 7:8 *... I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."*

He understands the power of the word coming from the one who is given authority. He knew all that was needed, was the spoken word from Jesus.

The principle of **authority**

The authority we have depends on which authority we are under. Our authority who is God, made and created us! All things are subject to Him in heaven, on earth and under the earth.

6. WRECKED FAITH

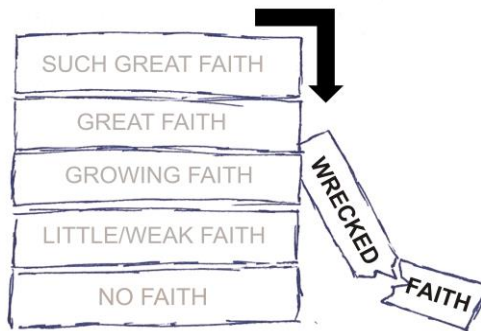
In our life of faith we need to be very aware that there is no such thing as arriving and relaxing. If this is your attitude then you are destined to wreck your faith.

1 Timothy 1:18-19 *Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, holding on to **faith** and a **good conscience**, which some have **rejected** and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith.*

Just to mention one example of this let's look at Samson. A powerful man of faith, dealing in much of the power of God, not only in physical strength but in wisdom as well. But as we know his heart fell prey to PRIDE and he then played with Gods favor and lost his good conscience and suffered the ship wreck of his faith.

Why do I mention Samson? Because graciously God restored his strength to do one final act of faith. But there are many stories where men never recover from a shipwrecked faith. So we too need to be humbly aware as we grow in our faith not to lose sight of the almighty Father who is the true power that works within us.

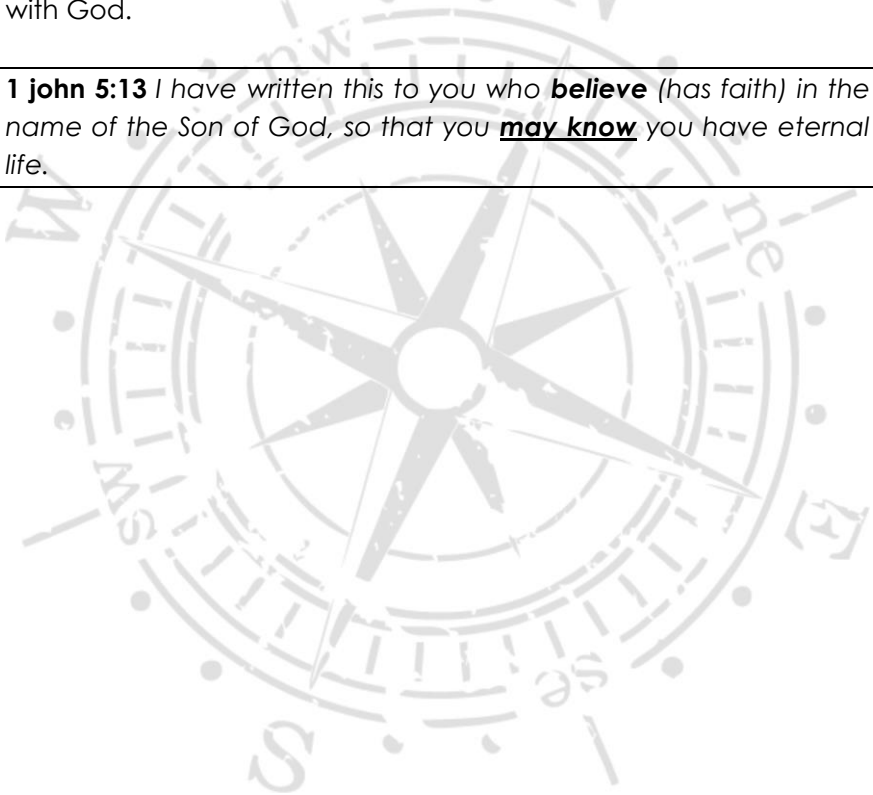
And as we see in this diagram of the levels of faith, let's be reminded that one can easily fall to the ground and it is a hard journey back up.



In conclusion:

We can see by the various aspects of faith that we have discussed, that it is no small matter to simply glide past. It is the foundation as well as the nucleus of our belief system. Which therefore requires much of our daily attention and commitment. We can also see though out history and our current generation that the fight of faith is no easy task and not to be frowned upon or taken lightly. For faith leads us to the assurance of our salvation, our fullness in our walk with Christ, as well as our future in eternity with God.

1 john 5:13 *I have written this to you who **believe** (has faith) in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.*



Chapter Four

The Godhead

One of the most misunderstood and simply sidestepped truths in the Christian faith is around the Godhead, and that because we don't understand it. Here is a subject that will stretch our brains to their limits. Don't be caught up by what you don't understand, but simply take in what is comprehensible to you and allow the Holy Spirit to settle the rest in your heart. But we will keep it as simple and as practical as possible. It's not something to fear or ignore, in fact it's something we need to celebrate, as well as secure in our faith. The enemy comes to bring confusion, and knows if we don't understand God, then we are vulnerable to get lost to our own ways. So let's dive in and learn the truths around the Godhead.

Acts 17:29 *For as much then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.*

With this introduction scripture we need to understand that God is AWESOME beyond description and our natural understanding, and that we cannot put God in the little box of our minds. Here are some points to help us understand His greatness.

1. God Is.

God IS. God IS there. He IS the real God, the God who really exists. He says of Himself,

Exodus 3:14 *"I am what I am".*

He is the great "I Am". God is God. He exists eternally without origin or change. He exists in fact and truth, and not merely as a human thought or word. If every human on earth that ever lived, never believed in God, He would still exist. He has pure existence, compared to whom everything else is but a shadow.

2. God is Life.

God not only exists, He is alive. A stone exists, a person lives. But God is the living God, as opposed to the false and dead gods of pagan religions. He is **life** itself. He has life **in Himself**, not from another. He is the **source** of all life.

John 1:4 *The Word gave life to everything that was created, and His life brought light to everyone.*

John 5:26 *The Father has life in Himself, and He has granted that same life-giving power to His Son.*

He has permanent and never ending life. God is **pure** life. Therefore He is immortal.

3. God is Personal.

God is not an impersonal force or thing. But God is personal. God is a He, not an It, and that leads to the reality of relationship between the creation and its creator. Not merely an awareness of a figment or an object, but a personal journey and relating with our creator. To know God is the true meaning of life. Being born in sin we don't know God, therefore we cannot relate to His Person, yet being born again through His son we are given the right to relate and to know God on a personal level.

John 17:3 *And this is the way to have eternal life, to **know** You, the **only** true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.*

4. God is Incomprehensible but not impossible to understand.

God has told us He exists and also gives us the privilege of knowing Him personally. God is knowable. Yet we can never know or understand everything about God. **Finite** Man can never know all about the **infinite** God. His attributes are beyond our full knowledge.

Psalms 145:3 *Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise. No one can measure His greatness.*

There will always be something about God that only God knows, and even understands. And we should make peace with that fact, and simply believe.

Rev. 19:12 *His eyes were like flames of fire, and on His head were many crowns. A name was written on Him that no one understood except Himself.*

Isaiah 55:9 *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

5. God is Perfect.

God is perfect. He is complete in every way. He does not need food or drink. He does not need Man. He lacks nothing in every way. He has perfect life and existence, and does not grow weary at all. He is absolute perfection. He IS. God is not lonely. He did not create Man because He was lonely. If that were true then that would mean that there is a measure of imperfection in God, which cannot be. There was perfect happiness, fellowship and love within the Godhead before creation.

Psalms 18:30 *God's way is perfect. All the Lord's promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection.*

6. God is Eternal.

God fills all time and dwells in the realm of eternity

Isaiah 57:15 *The high and lofty one who lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this: I live in the high and holy place.*

He is not only older than the universe, He is eternal. He never had a beginning. He has always been the great I AM.

Psalms 90:2 *from everlasting to everlasting He is God. He is, was and always shall be.*

We cannot fully grasp just what eternity is, for we are not eternal. We are limited by time; God is not. God is eternal in His love and

other attributes. He gives eternal life, which is not merely endless life but eternal in its quality.

Now that we have a slight description of God in our hand, I think it's safe to say that we can't put God in a box of preconceived ideas or perceptions. Let's explore the reality of the Godhead and their relationship.

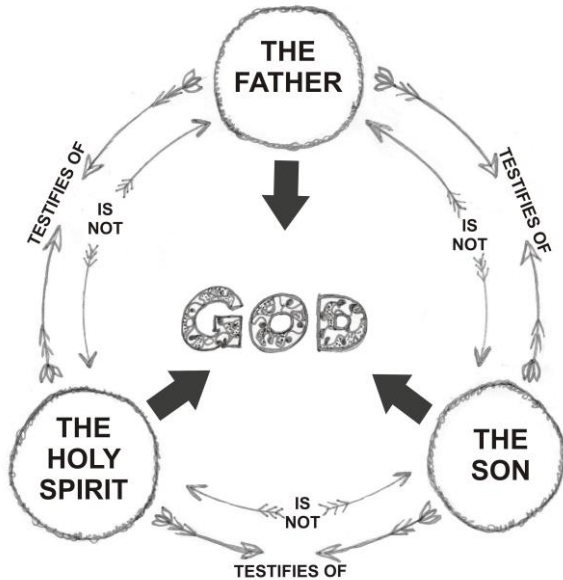
Often the word "trinity" is used to describe God, it is a theological term used by theologians and Christians to describe God, however you will not find the word "trinity" in the bible. It simply comes from the word "tri" meaning three and "unity" meaning "one". God being three distinct individuals, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in One God. It is the doctrine of the trinity that separates us from all other beliefs, and it is foundational to our belief system in Christianity. There is nothing wrong with the term "trinity" as it does express the triune relationship in the Godhead. We will however use the biblical term "Godhead" to describe this subject further.

It is also important to note that Christians do not believe in three Gods, we don't believe them to be three forms or three parts of God. If that were so then that would imply that the Father is 1/3rd God, Jesus is 1/3rd God and the Holy Spirit is 1/3rd God. It is vital that we never deviate from the point that the three persons are not each a part of God, but are each fully God and equally God.

The first truth that we need to note is that **there is only one God.**

1 Timothy 2:5 *For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

The fact is that God is three persons in one being. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They operate in singleness of mind and of purpose.



It is safe to say that there is no perfect analogy to describe the Godhead. So any picture or explanation will always be partial. We see that God being three persons in one being testifies of one another with perfect unity and synergy. These persons are not separate from one another. They are unified in one divine being. Yet we need to understand that the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father, as well as with the Spirit is not the Father or the Son.

Matthew 3:7 the father testifies of the son

John 5:19 the son testifies of the father

John 14:26 the son testifies of the spirit

John 15:26 and the spirit testifies of the son

We as Christians believe, that only one God exists but this God exists as a unity of three persons: a Trinity (the Godhead). God does not transform from one person to another, neither does God exist as three separate beings. Instead, each person is co-equal, co-powerful and co-eternal. While each person is distinct, they are never separate from one another.

GOD THE FATHER (the creator)

The bible repeatedly speaks of God as the Father. He is not just the Father of Christians, but the Father of the Son. And He is eternally the Father of the Son, not just from the Virgin Birth. He was Father to the Son from all eternity.

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, He gave His one and only Son..*

We see that this was pre decided in the Godhead that the Father would represent God in His dealings with Man, and so the name "God" by itself sometimes refers to the Father.

Romans 8:15-16 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

GOD THE SON (the savior)

The distinctive character of the Son namely Jesus, is that He is the savior of the world. He was sent by the Father and became the atonement for our sins when he hung on the cross. He is also the mediator between us and the Father.

1 Timothy 2:5 and

Hebrews 9:15 *For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

Jesus Himself often said that to see Him was to see God. To know Jesus is to know God. He is the greatest of all revelations, because Jesus is God Himself in the flesh.

John 14:9 *he who has seen Me has seen the Father.*

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Jesus is called “The Word” because He is the greatest and clearest revelation of God

John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

He is the personal, living Word of God. Jesus is now in Heaven interceding for us.

John 10:11 *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.*

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT (the comforter)

The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Godhead. He is personal, for He speaks, feels, thinks, is grieved, has joy, etc. He convicts the world of sin, regenerates sinners into children of God, dwells within believers. And comforts the children of God. When Jesus went to the Father, He sent us the gift of the Holy Spirit, and He is the one who guides us in our time on earth.

John 14:16 *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.*

The Holy Spirit reveals the Father and the Son to us, and encourages a deeper more personal relationship with Him. The more we are aware and obedient to His voice we will take on the character of the Lord in our lives.

John 14:26 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything that I have told you.*

1 Corinthians 2:10-12 *For His Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets. No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.*

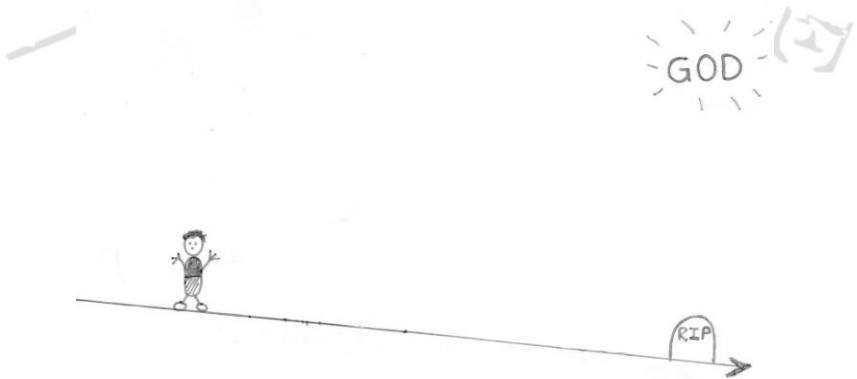
The Holy Spirit is our guide here on earth and we should have the full freedom to pray to Him for guidance and direction, all for the purpose of us drawing closer to the Father.

How do we relate to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

The general pattern of prayer in the Bible is to pray **to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit**

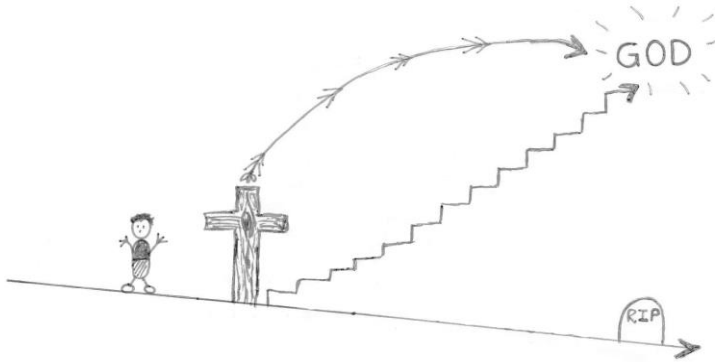
With that in mind let's explore a bit of the practical journey in our relationship with God.

Ephesians 2:18 *for through Him (Jesus) we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father*



Firstly we are reminded that we are born in sin and that throughout life there is a natural decline away from the Father that leads to death.

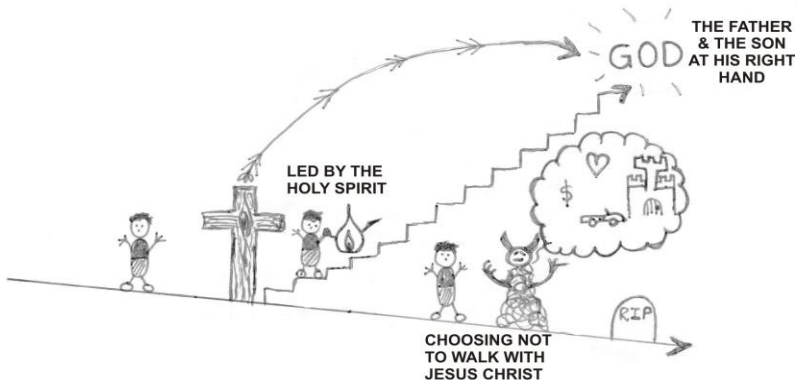
Isaiah 59:2 *It's your sins that have cut you off from God.*



Then Jesus came to the earth and died on the cross to make a way for us to the Father.

He then after rising from the dead went to sit at the right hand of the father, but the door of the cross is ALWAYS open to all who will repent and turn from sin to God.

Romans 16:19 *When the Lord Jesus had finished talking with them, he was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand.*



We then see that the Holy Spirit is the one who guides us on our journey on earth, ever closer to the Father, through the son in the way of the cross.

However if you reject the way of the cross, you are lead away by the devil into all forms of lusts and pleasures that are designed to distract you from the Father.

Being aware of the distinct role that each Person of the Godhead has in our salvation can especially serve to give us greater comfort and appreciation for God in our prayers, as well as helping us to be specific in directing our prayers. Nonetheless, while recognizing the distinct roles that each Person has, we should never think of their roles as so separate that the other Persons are not involved. We need to know that God is fully involved in our lives, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When it comes to the Father, many of us cannot relate well with Him as a result of a weak or no example of fatherhood through our earthly fathers. But this is why Christ came. In His eternal sonship He obeyed His Father and died on the cross the most painful death in order to heal the hearts of mankind and to reestablish a true relationship between the Father and us.

Relating to the Father we need to extinguish a lie that the Father is sitting on His throne in heaven with a lightning bolt, just waiting to strike us when we put a foot wrong. When God exercises His wrath for any reason He sees fit, it is in complete unity with the Son and the Holy Spirit. With that said, we can have the same confidence coming to the Father as we would to Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

It is for us to simply come before Him and trust beyond our earthly father experiences that He will lift us up and never drop us, or leave us vulnerable. In fact quite the contrary, both Jesus and the Holy Spirit lead us to the Father. Why? For us to be confused, and afraid? No. On the contrary, it is surely the safest most amazing and fulfilling place to be. In the Fathers arms.

And that is one of the reasons why the enemy works so hard to distort our view of the Father, because he knows if we are secure in God the Father, we will carry His character and authority with confidence as sons and not as orphans.

Relating to the Son should be the same as how sheep relate to their shepherd. Jesus equates Himself to being the good shepherd in:

John 10:11-14 *and how He knows His sheep and they know Him.*

The only way that can happen is in a very real and up close and personal relationship on a daily basis.

We see throughout scripture the more “human” factor in Jesus that often leads us to relate to Him more as an older brother and friend. But we are never to get familiar with Jesus to the point of dishonor. Remember He is God, nor forget the fact that He Himself in all that He does and says leads us to the Father. As it states in Romans 8:34 that He prays for us.

Romans 8:34 *Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*

Relating to the Spirit is a wonderful experience, knowing that God the Father gave us the gift of His Spirit to lead and guide us on a daily basis, and that He through Jesus reveals the heart of the Father to us. We need to be very aware that the Holy Spirit is sensitive and can be quenched and grieved.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 *Do not extinguish the Spirit.*

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

To quench the Spirit carries the idea that we can dampen the flame of the Holy Spirit fire, which is poured out to purify, enlighten, and warm us. We cannot take our relating to the Spirit lightly. We need to guard our relationship with Him as severely as you would a lit candle on a windy night. Work hard at eliminating the voices that clutter your heart, so that you can hear His voice. He speaks to us EVERY day, the problem is that we don't listen.

We see in the book of acts how the apostles related to the Spirit and how we too can have that kind of relationship which is to exciting as it keeps us on the cutting edge of Gods heart and plan.

Acts 15:28 *For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials*

In conclusion

Don't try to complicate this process in your head. You are relating to **God** full stop. And I say it again FULL STOP. The greatest key in our connection with the Godhead is RELATIONSHIP. It's as simple as building a friendship and pursuing a more intimate relationship with the Lord. It's not favouring one over the other, or separating them in your heart or mind, for you cannot separate them in any way or form. So I think it is us mortals that need to relax it the fact that we will never fully be able to comprehend the fullness of God and His complexities. but to rather honour and love Him in all that we are and do, and to never lose our awe and wonder for Him.



Chapter Five

The Father Heart of God

There are many characteristics to Gods character, but the one that is stressed and expressed throughout scripture is the very heart of God being a Father us and the nations. For many this is a foreign concept, but God is the best expression we will ever find of Fatherhood. Let's explore this a bit closer.

Jesus came to earth and opened the way for us to the Father

John 14:6-11 *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you really knew Me, You would know My Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered, "Don't you know Me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me? The words I say to you are not just My own. Rather it is the Father living in Me, who is doing His work. Believe Me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.*

Difficulty in relating to God the Father can arise from:

Wrong beliefs about God

Inaccurate teachings and ungodly beliefs or lies imparted during our formative years. For example,

God will strike you with a lightning bolt if you sin, or God is the "big man upstairs" and that makes Him quite unapproachable.

Negative experiences of father figures.

- Addictive fathers – fathers who abuse alcohol, drugs, etc.
- Immoral fathers – fathers who have had an affair, sexual addictions to pornography, etc.
- Absent fathers – fathers who are absent through divorce, absorbed in their careers, etc.
- Passive fathers – fathers who are present but not involved in their children's lives.
- Controlling fathers – fathers who are dominating or manipulative.
- Abusive fathers – fathers who are verbally, emotionally, physically or sexually abusive.
- Erratic fathers – fathers who are unpredictable or who have psychiatric conditions.
- Demanding fathers – fathers who drive their children to perform and make them feel that they are never good enough.

Knowing the Father

God loves to reveal Himself to us as a loving father who is kind, generous and gracious, a Father who takes great delight in us as His children.

God fulfils His role as Creator, King, Redeemer and Judge as a father who wants the best for His children. When God acts as a judge, it is because of His desire to protect His children.

As a father God deals with sin because He hates the way that it damages His children. He deals with it for their good as well as to prevent further damage.

The Fathers heart is family

- A father is defined by his children just as much as children are defined by their father.
- A Father and family speak of relationship and intimacy. The Father's heart is for every person to enjoy an intimate, father-child relationship with Him. Man was created with the ability to relate intimately and wilfully way to God the Father.

The Father created family

- Godhead represents a heavenly family unit, Father Son Spirit.
- God then created man in His own image, male and female (**Gen 1:27**).
- God instructed them to multiply and fill the earth with this type of family (**Gen 1:28**).
- God instituted the marriage covenant as one of the most important relationships for mankind.
- God wanted to ensure that children were born into and belonged to a secure and loving family.
- God's intention was that earthly fathers would express His character in their families.
- God intended the family environment to be a place where a child's character, beliefs and value system would be shaped by loving parents, especially the father.

The Father protects family

- Satan's strategy is to destroy families, because he knows that God intended earthly families to reflect His nature. If Satan can succeed in breaking the covenant between husband and wife, he can also cause great damage to the children involved, and with that break a generations view of the Father
- There is a major attack by Satan on earthly fathers, because earthly fathers represent our heavenly Father.
- The destruction of a family unit could be the start of a cycle where generations of children grow up as ungodly offspring. When the pattern of divorce or separation repeats itself in successive generations, the distortion of the father image is multiplied.
- An accumulated distortion of the father image can cause a curse upon a land, as a fatherless generation is established. Such a generation of orphans does not have a healthy sense of identity, security and purpose

Mal 4: 6 *And He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.*

- God is absolutely committed to restoring families and father-child relationships.
- The key is humility repentance and forgiveness.

It is clear that God's heart is all for family and relationship with man. Our lives are broken, unsettled, unfulfilled until we know the embrace of the Father. Human intimacy will not answer the deepest cry of our spirit. A generation without God seeks out all the comforts of the world to fill the void created within us. However the only one who can truly fulfill that void is no man, woman or any created thing, but rather it can only be filled by the touch of the Father Himself.

We can never equate intimacy with the Father with that of the natural realm. When we have that deep connection with God, He fills the deep spaces of our hearts and souls. Any other form of intimacy or comfort might elude to that space being filled, only for one to realize that it fades away within an instant, simply because worldly intimacy and comfort was never meant to fill that void.

UNDERSTANDING THE FATHER'S HEART

The Father embraces us in affection. One of our greatest needs is to have the assurance that He enjoys us even in our weakness. The Father pursues us to share His heart with us. He wants to break the spirit of shame and despair in us. His heart since the beginning has been to break the divide between us. And like any good father, He wants to teach, train, equip, laugh and cry with His children.

The Father knows our weakness.

Psalm 103:14 *For He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust.*

The Father is patient with us.

Romans 2:4 *Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

The Father disciplines us for our good.

Hebrews 12:6-10 *For the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes each one He accepts as His child. As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as His own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn't discipline you as He does all of His children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really His children at all. Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in His holiness.*

The Father loves us.

John 3:16 *For this is how God loved the world: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.*

1John 4:10 *This is real love not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

In conclusion to this chapter the main point for us to take from it is that our God and Creator was before time and is now a Father. And throughout the ages the devil has come to distort that view in our hearts bringing a divide and separation due to shame and condemnation as we see with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. May you relate to God the Father with a clearer understanding that He desires a personal intimate relationship with you. And that you will change the core default settings of your heart, to rather run to Him in a time of trouble and need than to the world. Because we simply know He is a Good Good Father.



Chapter Six

Forgiveness

There is no way to soften the subject of forgiveness. This is probably the most powerful action God expressed towards us as mankind after the fall. He could have simply wiped us off the face of the earth and created new beings, but rather he forgave mankind, sacrificed His only Son for our salvation. After all, we were destined for hell. But His grace was greater than our damnation. He set us free through forgiveness so that we could live in His forgiveness and set those free who need our forgiveness. And with that in mind, we need to stand still and understand the gravity of forgiveness and the relationship that we need to have with it beyond our own personal forgiveness from God.

Mat 6:14-15 *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

To start off we need to be reminded of the following:

Forgiveness: The action or process to set free, or release.

Ephesians 4:32 *Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

Forgiveness is modelled to us. God never instructed us to forgive anybody without a clear expression of forgiveness modelled for us through Himself. We can and should therefore forgive others, because God has forgiven us.

Forgiveness is a gift and a responsibility. Forgiveness was never created by us, but given to us by God through Christ.

Forgiveness is not restitution or reconciliation, it is an unconditional pardon. It is complete cancellation of judgment in your heart. Forgiveness therefore involves both a recognition(a clear understanding of what is being forgiven, in order to not withdraw that forgiveness), and an irreversible decision that the offence and judgment will be cancelled.

It is therefore not a matter of simply forgetting the past, it is a powerful annulment of the past, an act in which the chains of the past are broken in your life.

It's the chains of the past that holds us back. But just as Jesus came and broke them in our lives, so we too need to set others free in our lives who has caused us pain and hurt.

It is then from that place that one can walk a road of restitution, if it is possible. For many, they have to forgive a person that has either passed away, or someone with whom they have no contact whatsoever, or even a person that is not interested in their forgiveness. With that said restitution in those cases quite often will not happen, but where possible and desired, one should strive towards restitution.

What holds us in a place of un forgiveness?

Ungodly Anger which leads to a revengeful heart of which both are rooted in Pride.

Ephesians 4:26-27 *Go ahead and be angry. You do well to be angry—but don't use your anger as fuel for revenge. And don't stay angry. Don't go to bed angry. Don't give the Devil that kind of foothold in your life.(msg)*

Anger is a natural emotion in all of us. Often felt as as result of being done wrong by someone. Christians often feel that it is un-Christ like to experience anger, while victims of abuse are often intimidated by their abusers and thus not able to "rightfully" express their anger in a healthy manner.

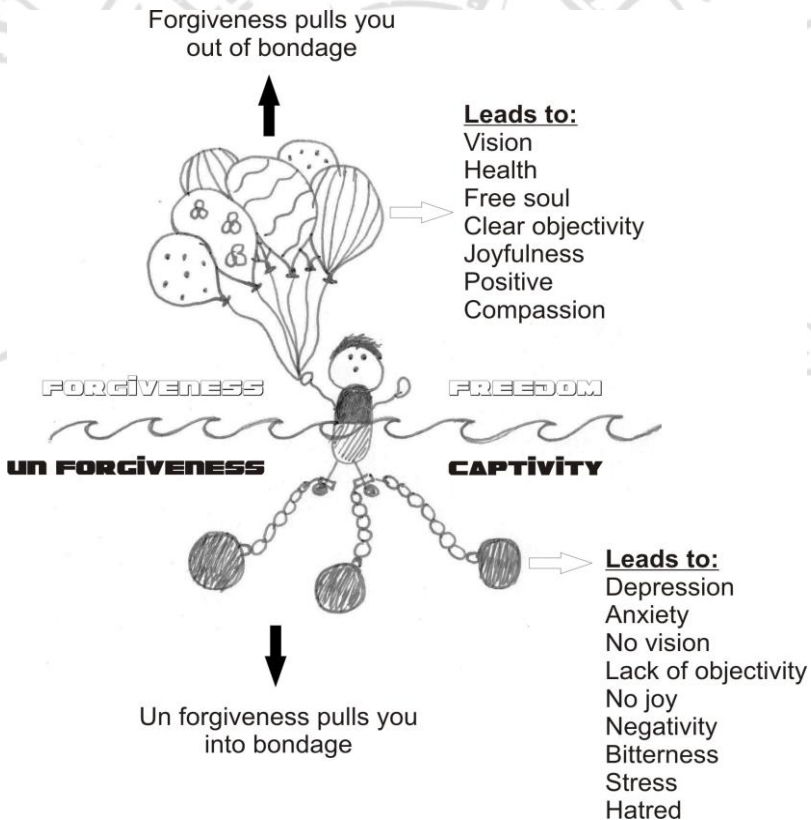
PHASE 1 – TAKE THE JOURNEY

This leads to suppressing our emotions which often leads to unhealthy explosions or outbursts.

Others simply fall into the trap of denial and avoidance. All of which is a ball and chain around the ankle. It is how we act and react to the situations that matter.

The problem with this deeply rooted anger no matter how it manifests is the sin that it leads us to if we don't deal with it, namely unforgiveness.

Lets look at the consequences of either walking in forgiveness or not. As we see in this sketch, each ball and chain signifies an unforgiven situation/person in your life. And this leads to a considerable amount of symptoms. The balloons signify the fruit of forgiveness exercised.



There is no specific biblical reference to the emotional health and freedom that forgiveness brings, but we can clearly see in our own lives what an effect un forgiveness and forgiveness has on us, and its effect upon our health and emotional state.

Forgiveness for many is not necessarily a light switch. But for many it is a timely process to completely set someone free. So it's important not to point our fingers at others, but rather let us continue to check our own hearts and not cast judgment upon others expecting them to forgive when we do not carry their burden or experience.

Matthew 7:3-5 *And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.*

Instead it is our place to pray for them, that the Holy Spirit will continue to soften their hearts to a place of complete forgiveness, and support and encourage them in the process.

We also can never say "I've forgiven most of the people who have wronged me, therefore my freedom should balance me out." That's a lie. Even one unforgiven person in your life will keep you bound and in captivity.

Embracing the process.

- Identify the root of the un forgiveness, we cannot pretend that nothing happened. Take hold of that anger in the deep place of your heart towards a person or situation.
- Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling, and in some cases we need to forgive more than once. Haven't we often needed forgiveness more than once?

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!"*

- Ask God for the power to forgive and set free. He doesn't expect us to do it alone. Its only through His power and grace that we can fully release.
- A great step is to ask someone to pray with you. Bringing it into the light brings great freedom.

James 5:16 *Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*

- True forgiveness requires of us to find mercy and compassion in our own hearts.

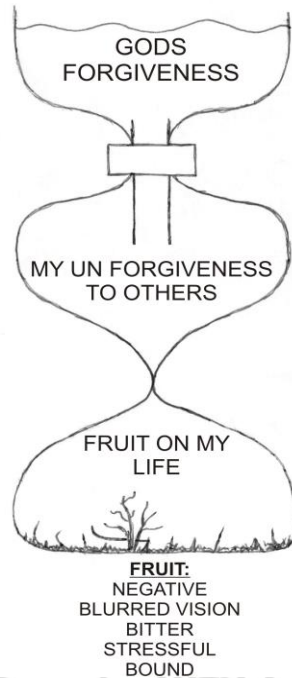
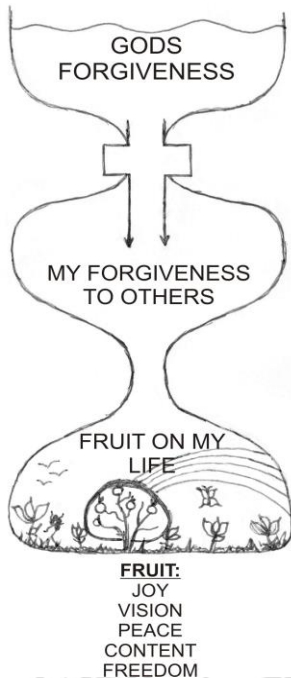
Matthew 5:7 *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

(**Mercy** - compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm.)

If we do not forgive, we clearly do not have an understanding of His forgiveness of us, and not understanding the complete work of the cross.

In doing that, "we" decide the level of impact the cross has in someone's life. In essence we are playing God. Deciding who deserves grace and forgiveness or not.

As we see in this next diagram. Gods forgiveness flows to us through the cross of Jesus Christ and if we choke forgiveness towards anyone who has wronged us in any way, we are choking our own forgiveness from God.



Mat 6:14-15 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Forgiveness is not saying that someone who has wronged you should not pay for their offence, (like a thief who has robbed your home, and now sits in prison for his crime) rather it is you releasing them in your heart, so that you can be free. However if it is in your power to release the debt needed to be paid, (like a loan that someone won't pay you back), it would be wise to release that, and trust God to redeem what has been lost.

We also need to be aware that there might be one person that has offended or hurt you, but many different transgressions or occasions of hurt by that one person. They all specifically need to be addressed and forgiven. You cannot forgive someone for one thing and not the other, it will still keep you bound.

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!*

Please do note, that God is a gracious and merciful God, and He fully, if not better than us understands our hearts and the pains we face in this life. He knows that forgiveness is not a clinical move within us, and has grace if we cannot immediately step into it. The key in this is that our hearts should not be shut off towards forgiving the offender. We might struggle with it today, but Gods Spirit could lead you to the breakthrough tomorrow. It is however critical that we never play with Gods grace in our lives and in others.

Another important point of why we need to forgive, is so that bitterness doesn't take root in our hearts and that we don't defile ourselves and those around us. If the enemy can get us and keep us at a place of bitterness, the seed of Gods word will not take root and bear fruit in your life. Bitterness keeps your spirit a dormant land where nothing good can grow.

Hebrews 12:14-15 *Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy, without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

In conclusion

Forgiveness is massive. It can be very complex but at the same time it can be very simple. Be encouraged not to disqualify anybody of your forgiveness, rather embrace a process towards complete forgiveness than none at all. Gods heart is for you and the offender to be free. But we have been given a free will, and with that comes the power to hold people captive in our hearts or not. Make the right choice for your freedom. It is hard, but remember the one who paid the ultimate price for your freedom. It's worth it.

Chapter Seven

Baptism

Water baptism otherwise known as the believers' baptism is such an exciting milestone in our lives as believers. It is foundational to our faith, it confirms and affirms our commitment and dedication to Jesus Christ as our Lord. Proof to the world and spirit realm that you are born again, the old you died and was raised with Christ Jesus a new creation.

Baptism is one of the most significant and solemn commands of the Lord Jesus Christ. He rated it important enough that He submitted Himself to it.

Matt 3:13-17 *Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him. After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.*

Jesus practiced baptism throughout His ministry. He was baptized and He baptized others. The Bible says that He made and baptized more disciples than John the Baptist.

John 4:1 *Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that He was baptizing and making more disciples than John*

So Jesus being our greatest example to follow, we too should walk on this path that He Himself walked.

Mark 16:16 *Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned.*

With this verse in mind, please recognize that this is not a polite option for us, but rather a clear instruction. Furthermore it states in:

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Here is an obligation for everyone who becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is very difficult to avoid the importance of baptism in the New Testament. If you are concerned about obeying the Lord, if you are concerned about following the New Testament, if you are concerned with living in fellowship with the Lord and pleasing Him, you will be concerned about baptism. It is a clear command of the Lord to those who serve and follow Him.

What is baptism and its purpose?

Baptism is a confession of identification with Jesus Christ.

It is where you are publically identifying yourself with Jesus, declaring your personal faith in Him. It is acknowledging that you depend upon Him alone for salvation. In essence saying, I am a believer, I believe in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ, and it is no longer I that live but Christ that lives within me. And this you echo from the rooftops through baptism.

Romans 6:3-4 Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined Him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

Who is baptism for?

Baptism is for believers only. An un believer cannot be baptized and that includes infants.

Mark 16:16 Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved.

Biblically you will not find any scriptural reference to infant baptism, nor will you find adult baptism, but rather the believer's baptism.

All scriptures pertaining to baptism refers to a person repenting, believing and then being baptised.

With that reference it is quite obvious that a baby does not yet have the ability to choose baptism or not, nor has a baby got the ability to choose whether it believes or not.

Therefore infant baptism is incorrect and unscriptural.

As the church we do however dedicate our children to the Lord, as Hannah dedicated Samuel to the Lord **1 Samuel 1:21-**.

If you have been "baptised" as a baby, you need to be baptised with the believers baptism which is a full emersion under water.

Baptism comes from the word "*baptizo*"(Greek) It means to dip or immerse under water.

What is the significant meaning in the action of baptism?

In baptism we identify with Christ in three great acts:

1. His death (*stepping into the water*) as He died for us, so we too have to die to sin.
2. His burial (*complete submersion under the water*) the old self must be buried.
3. His resurrection (*getting up out of the water*) raised from death to a new life in Christ.

There are three biblical prerequisites for baptism

1. Embrace the road of Repentance.

Acts 2:38 I need to repent of my old life and ways.

2. Walking by Faith.

Mark 16:16 I need to believe in Gods word.

3. Dedicated to Discipleship.

Matt 28:19 I need to hold fast to Christs instructions.

Matt 28:19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is not a magic trick to wash your sin away, or change your habits, only the redemptive blood of Jesus and a commitment to change can do that. Baptism is a very clear and purposeful declaration, that you are now dedicated and committed in your following of Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior.

Baptism is not something you can do on your own or in secret.

It's not the inner prayer of the heart, or the deed that goes unnoticed. Even Jesus could not baptize Himself, John had to baptize Him. So too we need to step forward for someone to baptize us.

It's to make clear to all, that I have let go of the world, no longer a slave to sin, and am now lead as Jesus was through the baptism waters, confirming my surrender.

In conclusion

Baptism is not a negotiable point for a Christian. The enemy has kept many Christians bound, by letting them think that they can do it when they “feel” ready to do it, when we clearly see in scripture it is an instruction and not an option. Often by not being baptized the enemy will capitalize on this by luring you back into certain compromises, simply because you have kept your commitment to Christ a personal affair. With that you will also not walk as boldly as you should with the gospel message of hope in your heart, and can easily become lukewarm.

Be encouraged today not to hesitate any further. If you have not been baptized and you are a reborn Christian, make it a priority and get baptized as soon as possible.

Chapter Eight

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The most amazing experience and life empowering event we can have on this planet as Christians is the baptism and infilling of the Holy Spirit. It is the promise of the Father to us after Jesus was taken up into heaven. It is quite often frowned upon and misunderstood as a result of us not being able to put Him in the little box of our mind, or even being able to explain the outflow of the Holy Spirit. But with all that said we will now explore the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and evidences thereof.

Matt 3:11 *Jesus will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*

Jesus is the only One who baptizes us in the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, the disciples first received Jesus as their Savior, and then were baptized in the Spirit, that is, they were filled with the Holy Spirit for the first time.

John 20:21 *Again he said, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you. Then he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit.*

Just before His ascension, Jesus said that His disciples would be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:4 *Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.*

John the Baptist told us that Jesus would baptize us in the Holy Spirit.

Luke 3:16 *John said, “I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is first and foremost an encounter with Jesus and we can only receive this Promise from the Father if we have accepted Christ.

Luke 11:13 *Then if you being evil know to give good gifts to your children, how much more the Father out of Heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.*

So what is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

The meaning of “Baptise” is for something to be dipped or immersed”; thus, the phrase “to be baptized in the Holy Spirit” suggests that the believers’ whole soul: mind, will, and emotions, is immersed in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, coming down from above.

Acts 2:22 *There came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

The above scripture shows us that the Holy Spirit came down on them from above and completely immersed them, even filling the whole house.

Then, Peter goes on to interpret this experience in verses 17 and 33, and again it is confirmed that the Holy Spirit is poured out on believers from above.

Acts 2:17 *‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.*

Acts 2:33 *Now He is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God’s right hand. And the Father, as He had promised, gave Him (Jesus) the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today.*

When we take these references into consideration, the following conclusions can be drawn:

The experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit consists of two distinct aspects, one is inward and the other is outward.

Outwardly, the invisible presence and power of the Holy Spirit comes down from above upon the believer and immerses him. In effect all outward related aspects of a person will no longer be the same.

Inwardly, the believer, receives the presence and power of the Holy Spirit within himself until he comes to a place at which the Holy Spirit, thus received, in turn wells up within the believer and flows forth like a river from the innermost depths of his being.

The Purpose of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The primary purpose of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is to give us **power for service**. Its where the Holy Spirit begins to equip us and fill us to be ready and useful servants who can carry on the work of Jesus Christ in and through the church and the world around us.

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

He fills you with a supernatural power and boldness to go forth not in your own strength or reason but in His power. And all for the glory and revelation of the Father.

The initial evidence of Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Besides the inward nature of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, there are also outward signs that must be considered. We see Jesus compares the Holy Spirit to the wind.

John 3:8 *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.*

Although wind is invisible, the effects which it produces can, in many cases, be heard and seen. Jesus says that it is similar to the working of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit Himself is invisible, but the effects that He produces can often be seen and heard.

Acts 2:33 *Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He [Christ] poured out this which you now see and hear.*

1 Corinthians 2:4 *And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.*

We can clearly see that there are visible signs that indicate the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit that can produce effects which can be perceived by our physical senses.

There are various passages in the New Testament that describe the outward manifestations which accompany the operation of the Spirit, and with the above explanations in mind, it can be better understood.

The first example we see in

Acts 2:2-4 *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

The second example is that of Cornelius' household in

Acts 10:44-46 *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.*

Acts 19:6 *And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.*

When comparing these three passages, there appears to be one outward manifestation which is common to all three occasions where the people received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Therefore the scripture states that those who received this experience, "spoke in tongues", or "spoke with other tongues".

Other evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Another definite evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit is the desire and freedom to witness about Christ. Jesus clearly said in

Acts 1:8 *that the believers will receive power when they are baptized in the Holy Spirit in order to be His witnesses in the world.*

Other evidence of the Holy Spirit include the following:

- The Fruit of the Spirit is true Christian character (Gal 5:22).
- The character of Jesus Christ.
- A fullness and outflow of spiritual life.
- A deeper reverence for God.
- Deeper dedication and separation to God.
- More love and passion for Jesus and for the Bible.
- A deep sense of discernment for situations.
- Power and boldness to serve God.
- Deliverance from bad habits, doubts and fears, the power to overcome.
- Better relationships with others.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the first infilling or empowering, but being filled with the Spirit is a continuing experience in our daily Christian walk.

It is a constant replenishing; the soul is quite like a garden. And a garden often needs to be watered to grow and stay healthy, not just the initial watering at its planting.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is like a water pipeline that has been laid with a tap installed in your garden. The full power is given to you and is always readily available. However we need to open the tap

to allow the flow of water to our garden. And so too with us as Christians in our relationship with the Holy Spirit. If this was not so, then there would be no need for a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Yes we have the Holy Spirit within us and we are empowered for ministry, but we do go through dry seasons and need to seek a touch from the Holy Spirit for replenishing and refreshing. Just as any living thing needs that replenishment.

Eph 5:18-19 *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.*

The early Church was filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, and then filled again on a later occasion in Acts 4.

Acts 4:31 *After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.*

Likewise, we as believers need to make time daily for the Spirit of God to fill us anew and to saturate us with His tangible presence.

John 7:37-39 *On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.' (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.*

THE MAIN REASON GOD REQUIRES EVERY BELIEVER TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, IS THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES A BELIEVER FROM THE NATURAL REALM INTO THE SUPERNATURAL REALM.

Acts 1:8 "You will receive **power** (Greek –"dunomis" which is the root word for dynamite, it means force, specifically miraculous power, worker of miracles mighty, wonderful work) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you"

In the natural realm we all have human limitations, but when filled with the Holy Spirit, there are no limitations.

Speaking in tongues is one of the out flows of being baptised in the spirit. The purpose of tongues firstly is for personal edification, secondly for edification of the church. It is the outcry of the deep place of your spirit to the Spirit of God, it is the prayer of alignment where the flesh and soul cannot influence, even the angels, satan and his demons cannot understand your prayer in the spirit.

It is so important to pray continually in the spirit.

1 Corinthians 14:2 For if you have the ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking only to God, since people won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious. But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them. A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church.

1 Corinthians 14:14-18 For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying, but I don't understand what I am saying. Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit, and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will also sing in words I understand. For if you praise God only in the spirit, how can those who don't understand you praise God along with you? How can they join you in giving thanks when they don't understand what you are saying? You will be giving thanks very well, but it won't strengthen the people who hear you. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you.

Secondly if someone is praying in tongues in a corporate setting, it needs to be accompanied by interpretation either from someone else or the person who prays it, should be open for interpretation otherwise it benefits no one.

1 Corinthians 14:5 *I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you could all prophesy. For prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church will be strengthened.*

1 Corinthians 14:27 *No more than two or three should speak in tongues. They must speak one at a time, and someone must interpret what they say.*

If a believer cannot speak in tongues, it does not necessarily mean that he or she is not filled with the Holy Spirit. However, the promise of being able to speak in tongues is for all believers and should be pursued and desired by all believers.

Who may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?

- *Reborn Believers who are Disciples of Jesus Christ*
- *Anyone who thirsts and believes.*

John 7:37-39 *On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

- *They who ask.*

Luke 11:13 *If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"*

How does one receive baptism in the Holy Spirit?

1. *You have to be born again.*
2. *Wait on God. Either alone, or with other Christians who will pray with you. Acknowledge the presence of God and praise and worship Him.*
3. *Pray a prayer of invitation. In a simple fervent prayer ask Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit, or if somebody else is praying for you, agree with that prayer and be expectant.*
4. *Receive the Holy Spirit by faith. Surrender your whole being to Him, spirit, body, soul. This is total surrender to the Holy*

Spirit, although you don't lose control over yourself. Its not something you can reason with.

5. *Thank Jesus for the gift of the Holy Spirit in faith. Ask the Holy Spirit for a new language.*
6. *Receive and speak in tongues.*

Acts 2:4 *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Open your mouth and speak in faith. It will be a new language that you do not know.

In conclusion.

One of the greatest gifts one can be given as a believer, is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We do however see that He was given to those who were dedicated and seeking Gods face with a deep and sincere earnestness. There was desperation with in them and deep dedication and commitment as disciples of Jesus. We also notice that the Holy Spirit was given with a specific purpose and those who received His power went out and did many mighty works. Being baptised in the Spirit shifts you to function in a new spiritual dimension and equips you with what is needed for the task as a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ. If you have not been baptised with the Holy Spirit and desire Him, please be encouraged to press into God and ask Him for the gift. Secondly if you are baptised with the Holy Spirit, I encourage you to stir up the gifts of the Spirit and walk boldly in the Spirit and in obedience to Gods word. We are not called to point fingers at the world, we are called to be the hand of Jesus to the world through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Nine

The Bible

Is it not wonderful to know that we serve the living God? The God who is interested in our lives and desires a personal relationship with us? It's so exciting to know that God didn't just leave us to fend for ourselves or even discover His plan for us by chance, but that He gave us His own heart and thoughts through the Bible. In this chapter we discover how important the word of God is and that it is of utmost importance that we take the responsibility of our spiritual growth seriously. We can never point a finger of blame for our immaturity as a believer, each of us needs to have an attitude of self-development and growth as a Christian, and we have the best book in the world to guide us. The Bible.

Let's start off by looking at some facts about the Bible.

The Bible is the Word of God

The main title that the Bible has for itself is "The Word of God." This means several things. For one, it is, was and will forever be God's Word. It's essence and identity have not changed. Also, though God used many people to do the actual writing, it is primarily God's Word. It is not a collection of mere human books put together with Gods stamp of approval.

1 Thess. 2:13 *Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe.*

The Bible is Absolutely True.

Jesus said, **John 17:17** "Thy Word is truth".

Some other books may be true, in that their contents are correct; but only the Bible is TRUTH itself. It is the only reliable guide to ultimate truth. God is truth and cannot lie.

Titus. 1:2 *This truth gives them confidence that they have eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised them before the world began.*

The Bible is Inspired by God.

2 Timothy 3:16 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

This inspiration literally means "God-breathed". God did not breath something into a book called the Bible, God breathed the Bible out of His own mouth.

Matthew. 4:4 *Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*

He moved certain holy prophets and apostles through His Spirit, so that they then put down in writing the exact words God wanted them to write.

God Controlled the Writers of the Bible.

2 Peter 1:20-21 *knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

They did not simply sit down and decide to write the Bible. God chose who would do the writing. He worked miraculously in them so that He controlled what they wrote. It was not left to the fallibility of humans. They knew for a fact that the words they wrote were not merely their own, or of human unction.

I Corinthians 14:37 *If you claim to be a prophet or think you are spiritual, you should recognize that what I am saying is a command from the Lord himself.*

The Bible is Powerful.

The Word of God carries with it the very power of God. It is living and active.

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.*

It is compared to a sword that cuts between soul and spirit, a hammer that breaks rocks into pieces, the light that overcomes darkness, and a fire that cannot be extinguished.

Romans 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes*

Just as God created all things by the power of His Word, so He changes lives today by that same power.

The Bible is Our Final Authority.

God tells us to test all things.

I Thessalonians. 5:21 *Test all things; hold fast what is good.*

But with what gauge do we test all things? By the Word of God, as the Bereans did in Acts 17

Acts 17:11 *These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.*

Anything and anybody that contradicts the Bible is certainly wrong.

Isaiah 8:20 *Look to God's instructions and teachings! People who contradict His word are completely in the dark.*

Scripture alone is our final authority in all areas, such as faith and practice. It carries with it the very authority of God Almighty Himself. Therefore we need to stick to its purest form.

Galatians 1:8 *Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you.*

The Bible is over Church Tradition.

In **Matthew 15** the Lord Jesus confronted the religious leaders over the question of authority. They appealed to their tradition; Jesus rebuked them by appealing to Scripture. Church tradition must be subject to the Bible, otherwise it nullifies Scripture. We can never allow any culture or tradition to protrude above the word of God.

We Must Follow Scripture in All Things.

We must trust in God and His Word, even when we do not understand it.

Proverbs 3:5 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, do not depend on your own understanding.*

We should read it, study it, believe it and obey it. Our attitude to the Bible is to be the same as our attitude to God, for it is His own personal Word. We cannot just eat the parts we enjoy, we need to challenge ourselves to embrace and grasp all of His word in its totality and allow it to shape and form us to His will.

The Bible is 1 Book with 1 Author.

Although it has many individual books in it, the Bible is a book of unity. It is both one book and many books. It has unity and diversity. It is basically one book. Though it has many human writers for its parts, it only has one Author. God used the many writers over a period of approximately 1500 years to write the Bible progressively, each building on what has already been given.

Since it is an infallible unity, all parts agree. The individual authors and books ought not to be seen as contradictory, but complementary to each other.

The most obvious line of separation in the Bible is that it has two large sections known as the Old and New testaments. Each of these testaments is a covenant, or holy contract between God and Man. The first is the Old Covenant. It revolves around the special covenant which God made with Israel, described in the first 5 books. The rest of the Old Testament shows how Israel broke that covenant, and how God was preparing for a new and better covenant.

The New Testament revolves around the New Covenant which Jesus instituted to replace the Old Covenant. The New Testament consists of the 4 Gospels, Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation. The Old Testament looked forward to Christ and the New Covenant, the New Testament presents Him and it.

The Bible Has Sixty-six Books

THE OLD TESTAMENT

39 Books

The Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy)

The History of Israel (Joshua to Esther)

Poetry (Job to Song of Solomon)

Prophecy (Isaiah to Malachi)

THE NEW TESTAMENT

27 Books

The Life of Christ (the 4 Gospels)

The Growth of the Church (Acts)

Teaching (the Epistles)

Prophecy (Revelation)

We may never add to or subtract from the Bible.

Since the Bible is a complete unity, it is very dangerous to tamper with its content. God warns us against this. And the purpose therefore is so that we will not lead and confuse others with contradictions or deductions from Gods word, as well as removing or adding to it for justification of our sinful and lukewarm actions.

Deuteronomy 4:2 *Do not add to or subtract from these commands I am giving you. Just obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you.*

Proverbs 30:6 *Do not add to His words, or He may rebuke you and expose you as a liar.*

Now that we have some facts around the bible, let's look at the process that will lead us to grow in our journey of discovery in the word of God. It is a deliberate choice to follow, it cannot be fed to you through a tube. You need to take action in order for it to become part of your life.

THE SELF DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

THE PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE

It provides teaching for growth and knowledge

It provides reproof (blame or disapproval)

It provides correction from wrong

It provides instruction in righteousness

It leads us to maturity in our walk with God

It equips us for every good work in this life

We live in very confusing times, where there are many teachers, churches, books and friends who want to give us advice and guidance. However it is vital to our own salvation and walk with God that we gauge all that we learn by the word of God.

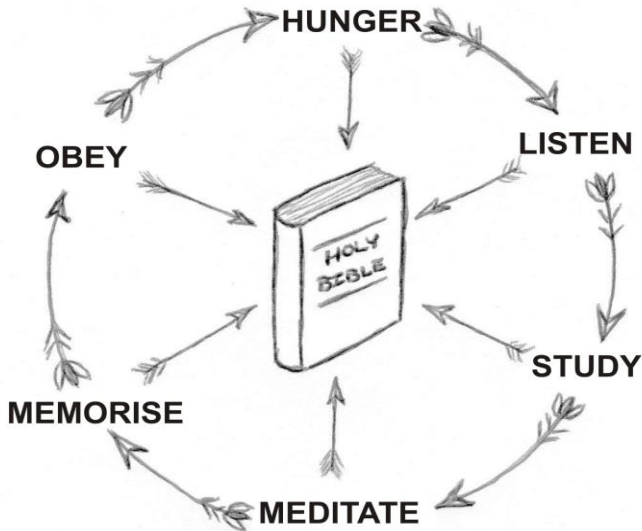
God gave us the Bible for this very purpose, to enlighten our minds and to help us to evaluate/measure the advice/guidance that is given to us.

It is as a result of our own laziness that we often get misled and hurt in many instances by people, ministries and other influences. Quite often it can be avoided and corrected if we take responsibility for our own growth by living in His word daily.

Philippians 2:12 *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THE BIBLE

Here is a 6 point guideline that will help you grow in the word. It starts with Hunger, a desire to eat Gods word, then we need to listen and take in His word, allow it to shoot root in our hearts, furthermore we need to study it and own it, not just on the surface but in its depth. For the word to settle in our hearts we need to meditate on it day and night, memorise its content and finally to keep us from being bloated with knowledge, it's crucial that we obey the word of the Lord fully in all that we are and do.



Hunger: if you come hungry and with an expectation when you get into the word, it will fill you like nothing else can. If you have no appetite or desire for the word, there is something wrong. Consider what else you are reading or watching, or who you are listening to. What are you exposing your spirit to? It could even be an unrighteous relationship that can numb the desire for the word of God.

1 Peter 2:2 *Like new born babes crave pure spiritual milk.*

If we just eat sweets and cakes, it spoils your appetite for good nutritional food. In the same way other writings, teachings, words etc. can spoil the appetite for the pure word of God.

Listen: Fellowship with a church where the Word of God is faithfully taught. And grow with the direction and vision of your local body. Be careful with outside teachers and preachers. If you are not sure of their integrity, ask your pastor to help guide you to what content you expose yourself too and how much.

Revelation 1:3 *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.*

Hebrews 10:24-25 *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.*

Study: Read your bible daily, but also separate a time for intentional study. Do cross reference checks with a good commentary and bible dictionary. Take notes in a notebook of what you are learning in your daily readings. There are many tools for bible study and some great study guides. Follow one and grow.

Meditate: Many religions and groups practice types of meditation. They try to completely empty their minds, repeat one word or phrase over and over to achieve a trance state, or visualize themselves on a journey to get spiritual guidance. This is NOT biblical meditation; it is part of divination, sorcery and idolatry, which God hates.

Deut. 18:9-13 *When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, be very careful not to imitate the detestable customs of the nations living there. For example, never let your son or daughter walk through the fire. And do not let your people practice fortune-telling, or use sorcery, or interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord. It is because the other nations have done these detestable things that the Lord your God will drive them out ahead of you. But you must be blameless before the Lord your God.*

Biblical meditation involves thinking and talking about God's Word. Separating yourself from other distractions with the sole purpose of focus on Him and His word.

Memorize: Memorize the word of God, not just for your mind but for your heart. It is good to memorize the word for it to be set in your heart. It is in the tough dry seasons that one can draw from that life giving water that has settled deep within your being.

Obey: If we simply study the word of God for its knowledge, we stand the huge risk of pride forming in our hearts. That is where we simply point out the short comings in others and form a critical heart and attitude. We see this attitude in the scribes and teachers of the law in the bible.

It is so vital that we go beyond study into practise and application. Firstly by practising the word of God we see that it is not always so easy, and we see that we totally need His strength to endure in it. When we practise and live what we learn, then we go from critical thinking to encouraging thinking. Instead of criticizing those who are not or cannot do it well, to the place where we stretch out our hands and guide them to walk worthy of the calling.

James 1:12 *God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

It is clear that Bible study is not just about gathering information, but it is about the practical application of what you learn.

When doing Bible study, consider the following **5 questions** to help you make the best out of your time in and around the word.

Let's use "**1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing.**" as an example, and this is how you can approach any scripture in your time of study.

1. What does the author want to say and to whom?

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, the church in Thessalonica. And it was around the issue of prayer. And the importance of constantly speaking to God.

2. Why did he say that?

Do a cross reference check to see what the reason was for Paul to write this to the church of Thessalonica.

Prayer is important, so read up on prayer and its power, and or consult with your pastor if you get stuck.

3. How does it apply to the church of today?

Purpose-filled prayer in a congregation is crucial.

How can I become involved? What part can I play to assist in the prayer of the church.

4. How does this apply to me as a person?

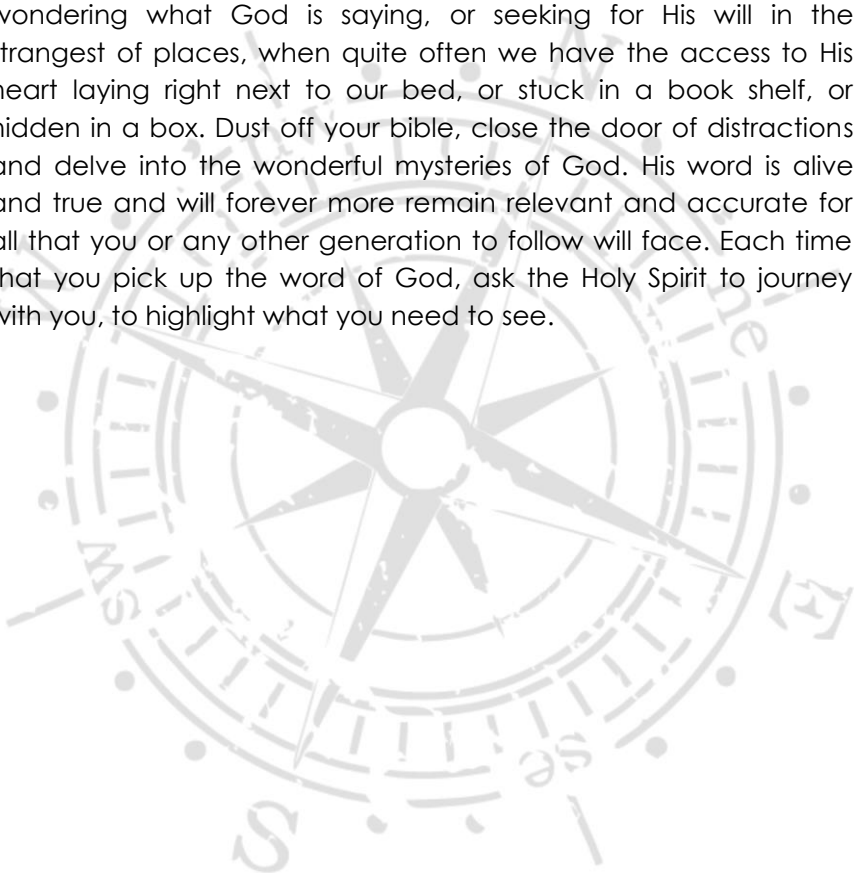
Is my prayer life in line with what the Apostle Paul was saying? What can I learn from this scripture to grow in the function of prayer in my life? Do I pray enough? Do I pray for the correct matters?

5. How can I implement this Scripture in my own life?

Make a decision to be active, draw up a prayer schedule, work out a prayer list for yourself, schedule a time of prayer. Join a prayer group. Etc.

In conclusion

Wow the bible, the word of our heavenly Father, so inspirational, so challenging, so inviting and so rich in wisdom and timeless truths for us His creation. I want to encourage you to endeavour on an intentional journey in the word of God. Don't leave your growth up to chance, for you will be disappointed. We are so blessed to have the written word of God in our homes. Let's not waste time wondering what God is saying, or seeking for His will in the strangest of places, when quite often we have the access to His heart laying right next to our bed, or stuck in a book shelf, or hidden in a box. Dust off your bible, close the door of distractions and delve into the wonderful mysteries of God. His word is alive and true and will forever more remain relevant and accurate for all that you or any other generation to follow will face. Each time that you pick up the word of God, ask the Holy Spirit to journey with you, to highlight what you need to see.





PHASE 2

LIVE THE JOURNEY

DTC

Discipleship Training Course

Phase 2

Live the journey

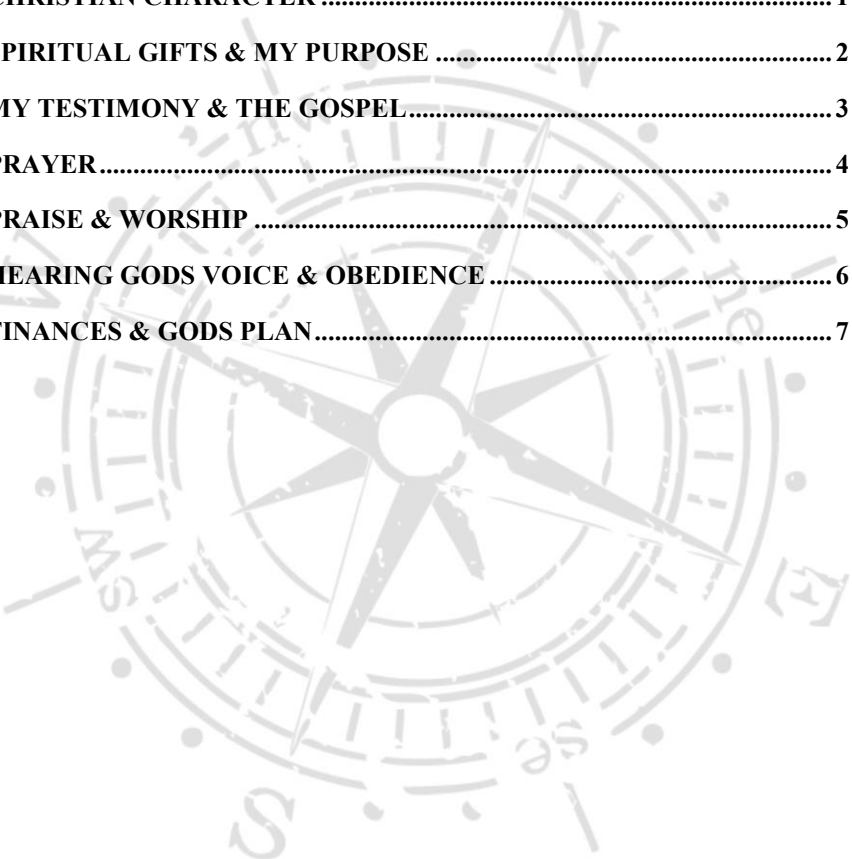
By:

Lee & Elzari Cronje

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Chapter One

Christian Character

One of the most amazing attributes of mature believers is the fact that they carry their testimony and lifestyle very close to the life and character of Jesus Christ. What makes the life of Jesus on earth so amazing is that He lived by example and practised what He preached. He left us a clear indication of how to act, treat others, and deal with issues and especially how to deal with those who don't have good character. So let's dive into some areas where we can sharpen and grow our character to be the person that lives above reproach.

What is Christian Character?

Proverbs 27:19 *As a face reflected in water, so the heart reflects the real person.*

It is important to know that one's character is the basis from which you operate and respond to every situation. It is a true reflection of one's maturity and integrity.

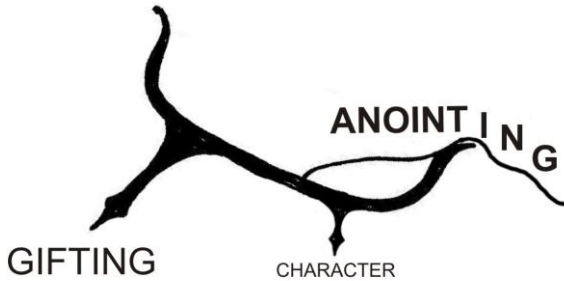
With that in mind, it is important to note that no one is born full grown. It is a process, but a process where one needs to be deliberate and on purpose for growth.

In **Judges 13-16** We see in the story of Samson where he has an amazing gifting and talent, but lacks the character to sustain it. And we see how it ended for him.

In the same breath in the book of **Jonah** we see Jonah a prophet of the Lord with a wonderful gifting, but lacking the character to sustain the gifting. We see that his journey was not a glamorous one at all, in fact his bad attitude revealed his weak character.

Both of these men squandered the anointing of the Lord upon their lives, they played with the favour of the Lord.

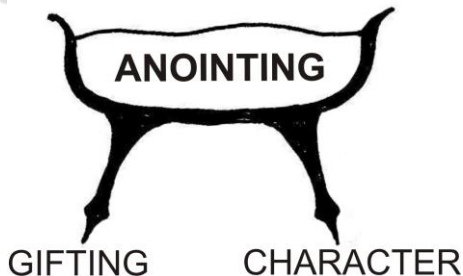
The anointing and the favour of the Lord which is housed in the vessel of your heart stands upon 2 legs, gifting and character.



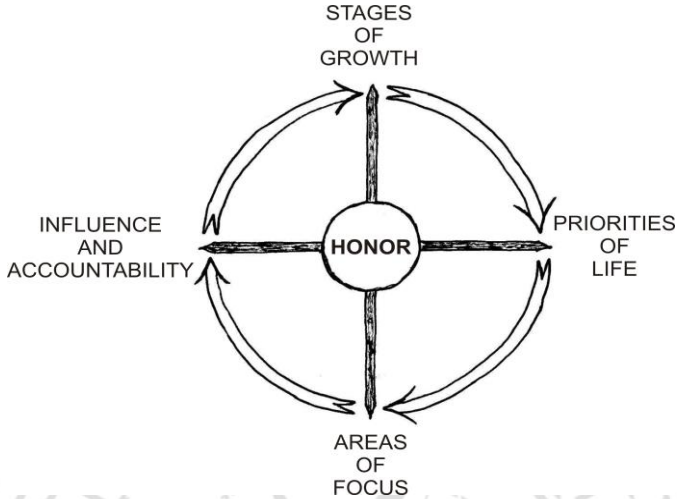
If you do not have the character to sustain your gifting or passion, you squander the anointing and favour of God upon your life.

Proverbs 19:2 *Enthusiasm without knowledge is no good; haste makes mistakes.*

In **1 Samuel 16** when we look at the life of David, we see another man with incredible gifting and talent, but he had the character to sustain it. But we also see in the story of his life that it was a process. From his anointing as king, until he actually sat on the throne was roughly 15 years. It was this process that formed his character to sustain his gifting, and it was this process that he gladly embraced.



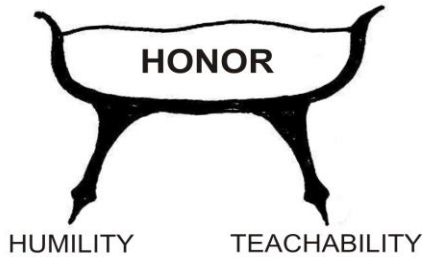
LETS LOOK AT THE PROCESS OF CHARACTER GROWTH:



The cycle or wheel of character is all built around the centre hub which is **HONOR**. Honor is the basis upon which good character is formed. Without a centre hub there cannot be a functioning wheel, without honor there cannot be good character. From this hub of honor the spokes that gives our lives substance follows. Firstly with the stages of growth, secondly by the priorities of life, thirdly the areas of focus and lastly ones influence and accountability. Let's start with the hub.

Honor is formed in a **humble**, and **teachable** heart, they are coherent. It is a place of respect, true regard for the authority or person whether deserved or not.

2 Timothy 2:20-22 *A large house contains not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some indeed are for honorable use, but others are for common use. So if anyone cleanses himself of what is unfit, he will be a vessel for honor: sanctified, useful to the Master, and prepared for every good work. Flee from youthful (immature, selfish) passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*



You cannot have true humility if you are not teachable, and you cannot be teachable if you are not humble.

We see in the story where David cuts Saul's cloak, his men encourage him to take the king's life, but then his conscience (which is based upon his character) keeps him from injustice, and he retains the honor in his heart. Hence one of the most profound scriptures, where God affirms David to be a man after His own heart.

1 Samuel 24:4-6 "Now's your opportunity!" David's men whispered to him. "Today the Lord is telling you, 'I will certainly put your enemy into your power, to do with as you wish.'" So David crept forward and cut off a piece of the hem of Saul's robe.

But then David's conscience began bothering him because he had cut Saul's robe. He said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this to my lord the king. I shouldn't attack the Lord's anointed one, for the Lord himself has chosen him." So David restrained his men and did not let them kill Saul.

1 Samuel 13:14 But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.

We have the power to be common vessels or vessels of honor, by which one can be used by God. And one cannot fake or cover the true intentions of the heart. God sees through the pretensions and knows all. So to embrace the process of a good character will start with working on the condition of your heart, removing the

clutter of pride, knowledge and experiences that we have made obsolete, and allow for the Holy Spirit to shape a new work space within us to build a godly character upon.

Now that we have the hub in place, we can step forward in the journey of character growth. Note that as each area grows and develops, so your character wheel gets bigger and stronger, which ultimately has an effect on the last factor, which is your level of influence.

1. STAGES OF GROWTH

With the stages of growth, it's important to know that you are made spiritually complete at rebirth. You are not half a child of God, but fully His child. But at rebirth you are not spiritually mature. And that is the area that needs to grow, and is a process. You have to understand that the stages of growth are not linked to one's age, but rather to your obedience to Gods word, which leads to growth. You can get a baby Christian at the age of 75, and an adult Christian at the age of 15. Let's not equate maturity to the colour of one's hair ;-)

There is nothing that can force growth. Maturity comes as a result of experience and of the learning process.

So lets look at the 4 stages of growth and how it affects our character.

Babies (enter into Gods family) the awakening

1 Peter 2:2 *Like new born babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation*

Nobody is born full grown, and this is a very special stage. People in this stage have accepted Christ, but haven't moved much past that point. It is possible to stay in this stage for many years if there is no active growth taking place.

Life is generally all about them and their needs and desires. They cannot handle discipline, circumstance and trials.

Hebrews 12:7,8,11 *Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.*

¹¹No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Discipline produces maturity, baby Christians need to be encouraged to endure and stand in the tough times of discipline, trials and tough relationships. They will never grow up if they throw a tantrum, sulk or run away.

Children (learn to do life with God) believing and belonging

Ephesians 4:22-24 *that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

People in this stage are growing in their relationship with God and are also beginning to grow in their relationship with other Christians. They are teachable, ask questions, and are hungry for knowledge. They are applying God's Word in their life and allowing others to walk beside them in their journey following Christ. However, it's still mostly about them – their needs, comfort, personal well-being etc.

Children are inconsistent. And inconsistency is due to inexperience and lack of practice. In this stage most of the journey with God is based upon their emotions. Which as we know can be as unpredictable as the sea. And many times these people are easily discouraged, and also need to be encouraged to stay consistent.

Luke 9:62 *But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

Young men (imitate) serving and leading

1 John 2:13-14 *I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.*

People in this stage are making a big shift from being self-centered to more others-centered. They're beginning to understand their role as a giver, rather than a taker – ministering to others, putting others first – being doers of the Word. The flip side of this coin is that there is often an ego connected to this stage. Very opinionated, based upon all the knowledge they have, but lack putting it in practice.

Romans 12:3 *Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought.*

A baby has no opinion of himself, while a child has humble opinions of himself. A teen has quite an inflated opinion of himself, they think they know more, can do it better, or are greater. The problem is that this can be a very deceptive stage if one is not careful.

James 1:22 *Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourself.*

They like to brag and boast about what they know and can do. Pray longer, quote every scripture they know, often drawing attention toward themselves, seeking every opportunity to shine. They are also highly competitive and often struggle with the unnoticeable sin of PRIDE.

It's imperative at this stage to work hard on staying humble and teachable, in order to avoid hitting your head consistently against wall after wall, losing credibility and favour. Harness the energy for productive growth and stirring change with great humility and practise.

1 Timothy 4:12 *Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

Fathers (mentor) deeper growth

1 Corinthians 4:14-16 *I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.*

It is clear by this scripture that there is often in society an influx of teenage and even adult Christians, but very few fathers. People in this stage have a solid understanding of God's Word and a deep, abiding relationship with the Father. They are living out God's Word in their daily life and living a life above reproach. But what makes them fathers is that they are focused on seeing others grow, giving opportunity and also guidance, and are fully dependent on God. They are able to reproduce mature disciples of Jesus by inviting others to follow them as they follow Christ. Being a father is not something you can create for yourself, it is formed organically through credibility, maturity and influence. Being a father is one who talks with authority, walks in authority and expresses through demonstration. We see Jesus being the ultimate expression of this.

At this stage there is a high level of selflessness, and a deep focus on development and mentoring. The stage of fathering comes from a place of deep experience and breakthrough in many facets of the Christian journey. It is also at this stage that one realizes how little we actually know, and a deep sense of humility sets in that encourages one to grow even more and discover more of God and His kingdom in our lives.

2. PRIORITIES OF LIFE

As one grows and adjusts as a believer, so too should your priorities adjust towards the principles of God's word. It is vital that we get them right, and work on keeping it in place for a healthy character to be formed and established.

Mark 12:29-31 *Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with **all** your heart, **all** your soul, **all** your mind, and **all** your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these.*

Matthew 6:33 *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.*

We see that there is basically 2 Major priorities; God and His Kingdom, and our neighbour.



It's very simple that God should be first, as He is the creator of all things, and we as created beings should above all else relate to our creator first. We need to remember that creation was made for man, but man was made for the creator.

“Love the Lord your God”. Love-agape love(to value and prize above all other things unselfishly). Real love is motivated to please and bless the object of that love.

Love the Lord your God with ‘**all**’ – a complete active involvement of that entire area. Not just a partial representation of the area.

Love is always evident, so by putting God first we should have visible attributes and evidence that He is the Lord of our entire lives.

The kingdom of God is where He rules and reigns as the King. So we are required to put God first by submitting to His word, rule and authority.

Mark 12:31 Love your neighbour as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these.

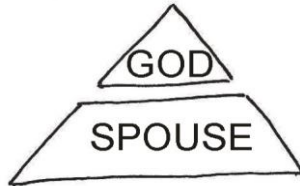
The second command, which Jesus states is of great value needs to be viewed in the same light as the first. They are both bound by Love.

If our fellowship is broken with God, it will be broken with man.

I cannot love my neighbour as I love myself, if I don't have a clear Godly revelation of who I am. And I can only get that revelation in a relationship with God the Father, where He affirms my worth and value through the image of His son Jesus.

The love that you need to have for your neighbour is also based on Agape love - to value and prize above all other things unselfishly, which can only flow from a heart connected to God first.

Once married, your spouse becomes your immediate "neighbour".

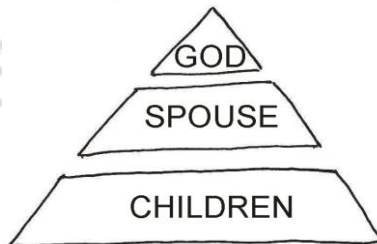


Proverbs 18:22 *He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the Lord.*

We need to remember that at marriage a covenant is made between man and woman that makes them one before God. The marriage covenant falls second to the new covenant.

So second to God will come our marriage partner. It is vital that you serve one another spiritually, mentally and physically.

Its vital to keep your relationship with your spouse in the right order of honor. If done right, there will be mutual respect and fulfilment in your relationship. If your spouse drops down the list, there is a common experience of rejection and frustration in the relationship that will lead to friction and unnecessary conflict situations.



Psalms 127:3-5 *Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth.*

The Lord seeks a godly offspring. For this to happen, you as parents cannot leave it up to chance for your children to become godly.

You need to get involved to install godly values and principles in your home.

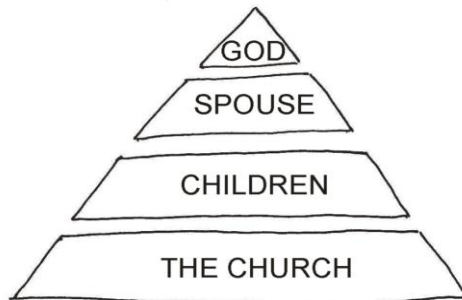
Deuteronomy 11:18-19 *“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*

Ephesians 6:4 *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.*

The key training method for your children is simply your life example. Being a role model of a godly character to them.

Proverbs 22:6 *train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

Remember that you only have one life, one chance to do life right with your family. There will always friends, and many social events etc. but you only have one chance to get it right with your kids. If they are not a priority, before you know it there is a great divide formed between you and them. They live their own lives and many times there is not an opportunity to redeem what is lost.



Hebrews 10:24-25 *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.*

The next priority after God, Spouse, and children will be the church. Your relationship with the household of God.

1 Timothy 3:15 *you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth.*

The church is the place where you learn to become and live a life worthy of your rebirth. It is a place where relationships are forged that lead to growth, support, and encouragement on all levels. As Paul writes that the church is the pillar and foundation of the truth, it is the safest place to be accountable where men and woman of God can through the word of God, instruct admonish and correct you where needed.

If you separate yourself from the body of believers, you are an easy target for the enemy to draw you away, isolate you and you are then easily led astray by many different teachings. It is at the place of separation that one is susceptible to becoming luke warm and fall prey to the lies of rejection and offence.

God knew that man needs fellowship and therefore instituted the church. The church was never designed by man. God called for the fellowship of the believers.

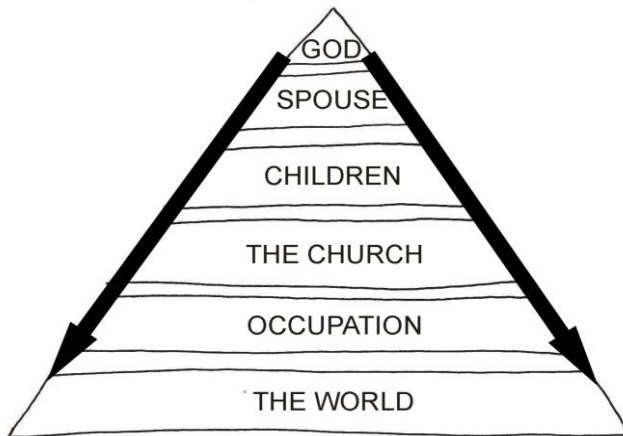


Deuteronomy 28:1,8 *If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully keep all his commands that I am giving you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the world. ⁸“The Lord will guarantee a blessing on everything you do and will fill your storehouses with grain. The Lord your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.*

If we have our priorities in order then we will see blessing and purpose on what we do. Where work is a bad or mundane experience for many, if you have it in the right place of Gods order, then you will see the blessing and excitement upon what your hand touches.

As children of the Lord we need to realise that we are blessed and highly favoured. With that said, as children in the kingdom of God, we cannot simply see the work of our hands as a mundane task, but rather an opportunity to represent and invest Gods goodness in all that I do and touch. We saw the fruit of Josephs labour in Egypt that led the country through years of drought. Become aware of the godly influence your hands can have upon your workplace.

Colossians 3:17 *And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.*



We see in the list of priorities that it starts with the first commandment of Love the Lord your God, and we want to end the list with Jesus final command of: GO!

Matthew 28:19-20 *Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

The last priority on our list is the world around us, friends, family, work mates, and the stranger on the street.

Please take note of this: when we have the priorities of Gods order in place, there is favour and blessing upon what we do. We become people of influence, people of character that the world out there can see and trust as solid. The world out there, our immediate relationships need to see the worth of order and consistency in our walk with God.

When you walk in the order of priority then you will have the flavour of God's presence and blessing on all other areas and you will have the ability to walk with confidence the road of the great commission in Matthew 28:19.

3. AREAS OF FOCUS

Now that we understand the stages of growth and what the priorities of life are, we need to hone into the areas of character that either give the vehicle of your life a nice glossy shine or a dull rusted appearance and experience. Here is a list of things to consider and to evaluate on a consistent basis.

Integrity – Do you honor your word? Is your yes truly your yes, or is it sometimes slightly twisted to your favour? Do you complete and follow through on your commitments? Do you get back to someone when you cannot follow through? Do you easily speak of others behind their backs? Is your work done to the best of your ability, or do you take short cuts?

Integrity in its essence is dealing with hard issues the right way. When you have made a mistake, to own up to it, no matter the consequences. It is making sure that you hold up your end of the

bargain no matter the cost or time. Integrity is doing your part without complaining and arguing. It is holding your tongue, when you are so tempted to speak of someone else. Its working really hard to make sure you've done your best.

Manners – Sir how do you treat the ladies? How do you treat your wife? Do you answer your phone when you are in a meeting or conversation with someone? Do you chip in when someone is talking? Manners is opening the car door for a lady. Waiting for someone else to go through the doorway first. It is prioritising your conversation with a person in front of you above a “no number” phone call. It's switching your phone off in a meeting. It is waiting your turn if you see people are in conversation. It is helping someone lighten their load, even if it is not your responsibility. Its addressing people with respect, and also being considerate of others, by not just forcing your way through a conversation or event.

Conduct – Conduct is more than 70% of your life language that speaks to the world. How do you act in public? How do you present yourself in public? Do you even care? It's important to care about the way you act, speak and present yourself in public, as you represent yourself, your family, but more importantly you represent your God. If you are a clown, you will be respected as a clown, if you are overbearing, then you will be avoided quite often, if you are respectable, then you will have respect. If you walk maturely, you will have influence. As Christians we need to know that our conduct plays a huge role in our message and influence in the world. Remember we are in the world but not of this world. Actions speak louder than words.

Dealing with conflict – Do you run from conflict? Do you avoid an argument at all costs? Do you freeze when you are confronted? It is never a nice thing to face, but can determine the life or death of a relationship if one simply avoids it. The key to conflict is to confront it as soon as possible in a respectable manner. Become vulnerable, transparent and flexible to change. To allow both parties to state each case and then to trust the Holy Spirit for wisdom, so that both can come to a place of resolution and restitution.

Consistency – Are you unpredictable? Are you often like the waves of the sea, up and down, left and right in the same day? Do you have lots of passion and drive in one day, then totally fade the next? It is very difficult to work with, or even rely on someone

who is inconsistent. It brings a sense of mistrust and unreliability. It makes people feel unsafe, and leads to a sense of insecurity. This is an area that needs lots of attention as it affects almost every area and relationship in your life. It is also based upon practising what you preach. It is to stick to the rules, values and standards that you set for yourself, or household.

Protocol – Do you understand the structure and relating to leadership? Do you follow it or slip past the ranks to the top to suite your own needs? Simply push through the crowds to make your voice known, or place your own stamp or demand on people, leaders? In essence it is respecting the position, the office that one carries, the structure and flow of a meeting or gathering. It is being sensitive to know when to share, or not too, when to suggest (not demand) an idea or thought. To respect leadership by dealing with things appropriately and timely. For e.g. If you want to do something, to run it past your leadership before just doing it. It is polite to ask if you can do it, and it is rude to just inform that you are going to do it. If you have an issue with someone in your congregation or leadership to deal with it between you and them in private. Not to run to everyone around you first. Or to shout it from the rooftops in a meeting or gathering.

Treating people of the opposite sex – Do you respect the boundaries of a person of the opposite sex? It is so important for both men and woman to increase their levels of sensitivity and respect for one another. Our conduct in this regard is a testimony of the level of respect that I have for the image of God in each person. It sets an example to the world of how one should treat the opposite sex. For e.g. steer away from any suggestive conversations, or remarks. Men, set strict boundaries for your eyes. Ladies, always consider your dress code as this shows the levels of respect for yourself and for men.

Being personal – When you relate to people do you always cover your life with the masks of “im fine”, “im gr8, how are you?” “never been better”. Being impersonal or “plastic” brings a distasteful experience in the hearts of others, something one is not even conscious of. And more often than not, will keep your relationship very shallow, and on a superficial level. And those relationships rarely bare good fruit. You don't have to wear your emotions on your sleeve, but be encouraged to be REAL. It's in vulnerability that life is formed and depth established.

Familiarity – How much respect do you have for those around you? How much respect do you have for leaders? Or yourself? Your level of respect will determine your level of familiarity. Familiarity is a very dangerous trait as it destroys the levels of trust, influence and security.

If someone just casually walks into your house without ringing the doorbell, instantaneously you feel your privacy was altered and disrespected, and you will struggle to trust that person in future.

In the same way that you relate towards a leader, you will either expose a heart of honor or dishonour towards them, all based upon your level of familiarity. Familiarity is based upon respect. In essence, the more familiar you are, the closer you step to being disrespectful. Become sensitive to your levels of familiarity with others, and opt for a more conservative approach of respect and honor. It is far safer than to be too “buddy buddy” with someone.

Here are some things that don't require any form of talent that will boost your character if you are on purpose with it.

1. **Being on time.** Work on punctuality. If your meeting is at 6, make sure you are at least 10 mins early. It shows respect, commitment and interest.
2. **Work ethic and quality.** Your work speaks louder than your words. Work with excellence and leave a good mark. Not only when someone is watching.
3. **Be kind and helpful.** It is not weakness to be kind or to help someone. In fact it is a strength to serve someone. “Laziness keeps a man's hand away from help”.
4. **Body language.** Work on being inviting and encouraging, not domineering or rejecting. When speaking to someone keep eye contact constant and clear.
5. **Energy.** Be enthusiastic, even if it is not your dream. Come along side others and spur them on. Take part and help make the picture work.
6. **Attitude.** “*too many cooks spoil the broth*” keep a good heart around you even if it doesn't go according to your liking. Your attitude can determine the outcome of any event to either be a pleasant process or a straining tense experience.
7. **Respect.** Respect those around you, treat others as you would treat someone of great value.
8. **Being teachable.** It's great to know allot, or to even think you know it all. But by being quite you might just learn something new.

9. **Doing more.** Go beyond what is expected of you. Look for opportunities to help or serve someone beyond request.
10. **Being prepared.** Do your homework, learn for the test, plan for the meeting, work on your heart, and prepare your part. Being prepared keeps you on target and you don't float like a boat without a heading. It also keeps the peace in a team.

4. **INFLUENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Influence is a powerful tool. Influence is most often and easily carried through trust. It is when someone trusts you that you have influence in their lives, either good or bad. And one's character plays a great role in this.

Romans 14:13 *Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.*

One of the greatest results of a good Christian character is the ability to influence someone for the good. It is imperative that you are very careful at this stage, as your influence can change the course and direction of someone's thoughts and actions in their lives. When one's character is still weak and immature, be very careful to what you say and to whom, as it could become a stumbling block for someone. It is wise to speak only when prompted by the Holy Spirit. And as you grow in your character, so your level of input to others can and will increase.

Proverbs 10:19 *Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut.*

Psalms 141:3 *Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!*

Matthew 12:36 *I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak*

What walks hand in hand with being an accurate person of influence is also being a person of accountability. It is a wise person that holds himself accountable to someone for input correction and guidance.

In the world as we know it today we see that there are many Christians that are sadly lead or even leading others with a not so straight gospel message, and even the conduct of their lives are questionable.

Many people when growing in knowledge think that they don't need support or guidance, but being a person of character, I believe it is of vital importance to have support and guidance, and that can happen when you stand in an accountable relationship.

Ecclesiastes 4:10 *If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble.*

A good accountable relationship is being responsible to someone who is of good spiritual reputation and maturity. And it is your responsibility to reach to them for healthy accountability.

In conclusion:

Christian character is a world of its own. In this chapter we have merely scratched the surface. There are many areas that one can work on to lift the level and quality of one's character. Just remember that it is a journey, but a journey that requires one to be on purpose and deliberate. But it is very encouraging to know that we can grow and grow and grow. Keep the heart attitude of humility and teach ability which is locked together in honor. It is one of the greatest foundations for character to grow at a healthy pace. Remember that your gifting will make way for you, but it is only your character that will keep you standing in the end.

Chapter Two

Spiritual Gifts & My Purpose

In this next chapter we explore the wonderful gifts of the Spirit and how it relates to our lives as believers. It is such an integral part of a Christians life, however it needs to be understood and used effectively. Within this chapter we will explore the wonderful diversity of the gifts and where we as individuals can operate effectively.

Romans 1:11-12 *I long to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.*

Romans 1:11 is the first reference made in the New Testament towards spiritual gifts. Paul is traveling to Rome to use one of **his** spiritual gifts, to strengthen the faith of the people.

We have to take note that he could not give them a gift but rather strengthen and encourage the saints with his own gift.

A spiritual gift is an expression of faith that aims to strengthen faith.

A spiritual gift can only flow from a place of FAITH. If it is not done in faith, it is merely based upon human ability.

Spiritual gifts are here for us to strengthen other people. The gifts of the Spirit are given to be given.

It's critical that one does not get stuck on being able to name and claim your spiritual gifts. Being bogged down by trying to figure out what your gifting is will distract you from its true purpose. But rather to hold to the conviction that God gives spiritual gifts so that we may strengthen somebody else's faith.

We should really get stuck on having a desire to strengthen others, instead of just trying to fill our tool box with the next fancy tool that we don't even use effectively.

Romans 12:3+6-8 *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁶Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

The gifted are always in danger of pride, therefore Paul speaks strongly in verse 3 that we should never think more highly of ourselves, and to realise that it is God who gives the gifts, they are not earned or deserved. It is given by God and by His measure of grace.

1 Peter 4:10-11 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, *let him speak as the oracles of God*. If anyone ministers (renders service), *let him do it as with the ability (strength) which God supplies*, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Each and every one of us, has at least 1 gift from the Lord, the problem is that we are stuck on accumulation instead of sharing and giving what we already have received. We always want to see what gift the other child has received, instead of celebrating that which our Father has given us. If we are caught up by the amount of gifts we have and not on applying them in the lives of

others, pride is standing dangerously close to the door of our hearts.

Acts 20:35 *In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

It's vital to remember that we are stewards of the grace of God. Not to hold it to our chest but to express God's grace to others. We need to desire the awareness of God's grace and then how we can share and disperse it to others.

If you minister share or serve from your own strength then your gift is no longer SPIRITUAL, but you rather just fall back into your natural ability. So therefore we all need to make our dependence on the Holy Spirit known, and appreciate the grace of God that is given to us.

Steer clear from the temptation to fall back into human effort and ability. If you function from the gifting with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you will be extremely effective and efficient. If you function from the flesh, the same acts can be hurtful, insensitive, and point to you rather than to God.

1 Corinthians 12:4-10 *There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the **word of wisdom** through the Spirit, to another the **word of knowledge** through the same Spirit, to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another **gifts of healings** by the same Spirit, to another the **working of miracles**, to another **prophecy**, to another **discerning of spirits**, to another **different kinds of tongues**, to another the **interpretation of tongues**. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.*

Here we see the 9 gifts of the Spirit, but what is clear is that not one is elevated above another, in fact in verse 11 we see that Paul

affirms that it is the same Spirit that works in all the gifts and shares them to each one as He sees fit.

Further on in chapter 12 we see Paul state the order of some of the functions and gifts in the church.

1 Corinthians 12:28 *And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.*

Romans 12:6-8 *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them; if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Ephesians 4:11-14 *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*

Here we see the list of the 5 fold ministry, and it is also made clear that its purpose is to equip and edify (build up) the body of Christ. So let's look at a list of some of the gifts and their descriptions. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. There are many gifts that the Spirit gives. This list will strengthen your view on some of the gifts and functions within the body as well as within yourself.

WISDOM: **1 Cor. 12:8** - May be defined as God's practical application of His knowledge to a situation in which a person may find himself; so this is God's solution to a problem.

KNOWLEDGE: **1 Cor. 12:8** - This is God's impartation to man of a small piece of His infinite knowledge; knowledge which man could not have attained in any natural way whatsoever.

FAITH: 1 Cor. 12:8-10 - To be firmly persuaded of God's power and promises to accomplish His will and purpose and to display such a confidence in Him and His Word that circumstances and obstacles do not shake that conviction.

HEALINGS: 1 Cor. 12:9,28,30 - To be used as a means through which God makes people whole either physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually.

MIRACLES: 1 Cor. 12:10,28 - To be enabled by God to perform mighty deeds which people acknowledge that can only be from God.

PROPHECY: Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; Eph. 4:11 - Is words that are inspired and given by the Holy Spirit. It is to for tell the message of God to His people.

DISCERNMENT: 1 Cor. 12:10 - To clearly distinguish truth from error by judging whether the spirit behind the behavior or speech is from God or satan.

TONGUES: 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:27-28 - To speak in a language not previously learned so unbelievers can hear God's message in their own language or for the body to be edified.

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES: 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:27, 28 - To translate the message of someone who has spoken in tongues.

APOSTLE: Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28 - To be sent forth to new frontiers with the gospel, providing leadership over church bodies and maintaining authority and insight over spiritual matters pertaining to the church, leading churches with oversight and wisdom.

TEACHING: Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11 - To instruct others in the Bible in a logical, systematic way, so as to communicate important information for true understanding and growth through the Spirit.

HELPS: 1 Cor. 12:28 - To give support or assistance to others in the body so as to free them up for ministry.

ADMINISTRATION: 1 Cor. 12:28 - To steer the body toward the accomplishment of God-given goals and directives by planning, organizing, and keeping key elements in place.

LEADERSHIP: Rom. 12:8 - To guide the body with such care and diligence so as to motivate others to get involved in the accomplishment of Gods will for their lives and as a corporate

body.

EXHORTATION: Rom. 12:8 - To come along side of someone with words of encouragement, comfort, consolation, and counsel to help them be all God wants them to be.

EVANGELISM: Eph. 4:11 - To be a messenger of the good news of the Gospel to all nations, ministering a word of power that builds the church and convicts the lost.

MERCY: Rom. 12:8 - To be sensitive toward those who are suffering, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally, so as to feel genuine sympathy with their misery, speaking words of compassion but more so caring for them with deeds of love to help alleviate their distress.

GIVING: Rom. 12:8 - To give and share what material resources you have with liberality and cheerfulness without thought of return. Seeing the need and filling the need, to see His kingdom come.

HOSPITALITY: 1 Pet. 4:9,10 - To warmly welcome people, even strangers, into one's home or church as a means of serving those in need of food or lodging.

Now that we have a list and description of the gifts, let's do a survey that will give you a **guideline** of where you are with regards to the gifts. It is very important to know that this is not a test, but merely a survey. It will highlight what God has placed within you, and so be encouraged to embrace and grow in the gifts the Lord has given to you.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS SURVEY

DIRECTIONS

This is not a test, so there are no wrong answers.

The ***Spiritual Gifts Survey*** consists of 80 statements. Some items reflect concrete actions, other items are descriptive traits, and still others are statements of belief.

- Select the one response you feel best characterizes yourself and record that number in the blank space provided next to each item.
- Do not spend too much time on any one item. Remember, it is not a test. Usually your immediate response is the best.
- Please give an answer for each item. Do not skip any items.
- Do not ask others to help you answer.
- Work at your own pace.

Your response choices are:

- 5**—Highly characteristic of me/definitely true for me
- 4**—Most of the time this would describe me/be true for me
- 3**—Frequently characteristic of me/true for me—about 50 percent of the time
- 2**—Occasionally characteristic of me/true for me—about 25 percent of the time
- 1**—Not at all characteristic of me/definitely untrue for me

- _____ 1. I have the ability to organize ideas, resources, time, and people effectively.
- _____ 2. I am willing to study and prepare for the task of teaching.
- _____ 3. I am able to relate the truths of God to specific situations.
- _____ 4. I have a God-given ability to help others grow in their faith.
- _____ 5. I possess a special ability to communicate the truth of salvation.
- _____ 6. I have the ability to make critical decisions when necessary.
- _____ 7. I am sensitive to the hurts of people.
- _____ 8. I experience joy in meeting needs through sharing possessions.
- _____ 9. I enjoy studying.
- _____ 10. I have delivered God's message of warning and judgment.
- _____ 11. I am able to sense the true motivation of persons and movements.
- _____ 12. I have a special ability to trust God in difficult situations.
- _____ 13. I have a strong desire to contribute to the establishment of new churches.
- _____ 14. I take action to meet physical and practical needs rather than merely talking about or planning to help.
- _____ 15. I enjoy entertaining guests in my home.
- _____ 16. I can adapt my guidance to fit the maturity of those working with me.
- _____ 17. I can delegate and assign meaningful work.
- _____ 18. I have an ability and desire to teach.
- _____ 19. I am usually able to analyze a situation correctly.
- _____ 20. I have a natural tendency to encourage others.
- _____ 21. I am willing to take the initiative in helping other Christians grow in their faith.
- _____ 22. I have an acute awareness of the emotions of other people, such as loneliness, pain, fear, and anger.
- _____ 23. I am a cheerful giver.
- _____ 24. I spend time digging into facts.
- _____ 25. I feel that I have a message from God to deliver to others.
- _____ 26. I can recognize when a person is genuine/honest.
- _____ 27. I am a person of vision (a clear mental portrait of a preferable future given by God). I am able to communicate vision in such a way that others commit to making the vision a reality.
- _____ 28. I am willing to yield to God's will rather than question and waver.
- _____ 29. I would like to be more active in getting the gospel to people in other lands.
- _____ 30. It makes me happy to do things for people in need.

- _____ 31. I am successful in getting a group to do its work joyfully.
- _____ 32. I am able to make strangers feel at ease.
- _____ 33. I have the ability to plan learning approaches.
- _____ 34. I can identify those who need encouragement.
- _____ 35. I have trained Christians to be more obedient disciples of Christ.
- _____ 36. I am willing to do whatever it takes to see others come to Christ.
- _____ 37. I am attracted to people who are hurting.
- _____ 38. I am a generous giver.
- _____ 39. I am able to discover new truths.
- _____ 40. I have spiritual insights from Scripture concerning issues and people that compel me to speak out.
- _____ 41. I can sense when a person is acting in accord with God's will.
- _____ 42. I can trust in God even when things look dark.
- _____ 43. I can determine where God wants a group to go and help it get there.
- _____ 44. I have a strong desire to take the gospel to places where it has never been heard.
- _____ 45. I enjoy reaching out to new people in my church and community.
- _____ 46. I am sensitive to the needs of people.
- _____ 47. I have been able to make effective and efficient plans for accomplishing the goals of a group.
- _____ 48. I often am consulted when fellow Christians are struggling to make difficult decisions.
- _____ 49. I think about how I can comfort and encourage others in my congregation.
- _____ 50. I am able to give spiritual direction to others.
- _____ 51. I am able to present the gospel to lost persons in such a way that they accept the Lord and His salvation.
- _____ 52. I possess an unusual capacity to understand the feelings of those in distress.
- _____ 53. I have a strong sense of stewardship based on the recognition that God owns all things.
- _____ 54. I have delivered to other persons messages that have come directly from God.
- _____ 55. I can sense when a person is acting under God's leadership.
- _____ 56. I try to be in God's will continually and be available for His use.
- _____ 57. I feel that I should take the gospel to people who have different beliefs from me.
- _____ 58. I have an acute awareness of the physical needs of others.
- _____ 59. I am skilled in setting forth positive and precise steps of action.
- _____ 60. I like to meet visitors at church and make them feel welcome.

PHASE 2 – LIVE THE JOURNEY

- _____ 61. I explain Scripture in such a way that others understand it.
- _____ 62. I can usually see spiritual solutions to problems.
- _____ 63. I welcome opportunities to help people who need comfort, consolation, encouragement, and counseling.
- _____ 64. I feel at ease in sharing Christ with nonbelievers.
- _____ 65. I can influence others to perform to their highest God-given potential.
- _____ 66. I recognize the signs of stress and distress in others.
- _____ 67. I desire to give generously and unpretentiously to worthwhile projects and ministries.
- _____ 68. I can organize facts into meaningful relationships.
- _____ 69. God gives me messages to deliver to His people.
- _____ 70. I am able to sense whether people are being honest when they tell of their religious experiences.
- _____ 71. I enjoy presenting the gospel to persons of other cultures and backgrounds.
- _____ 72. I enjoy doing little things that help people.
- _____ 73. I can give a clear, uncomplicated presentation.
- _____ 74. I have been able to apply biblical truth to the specific needs of my church.
- _____ 75. God has used me to encourage others to live Christ like lives.
- _____ 76. I have sensed the need to help other people become more effective in their ministries.
- _____ 77. I like to talk about Jesus to those who do not know Him.
- _____ 78. I have the ability to make strangers feel comfortable in my home.
- _____ 79. I have a wide range of study resources and know how to secure information.
- _____ 80. I feel assured that a situation will change for the glory of God even when the situation seems impossible.

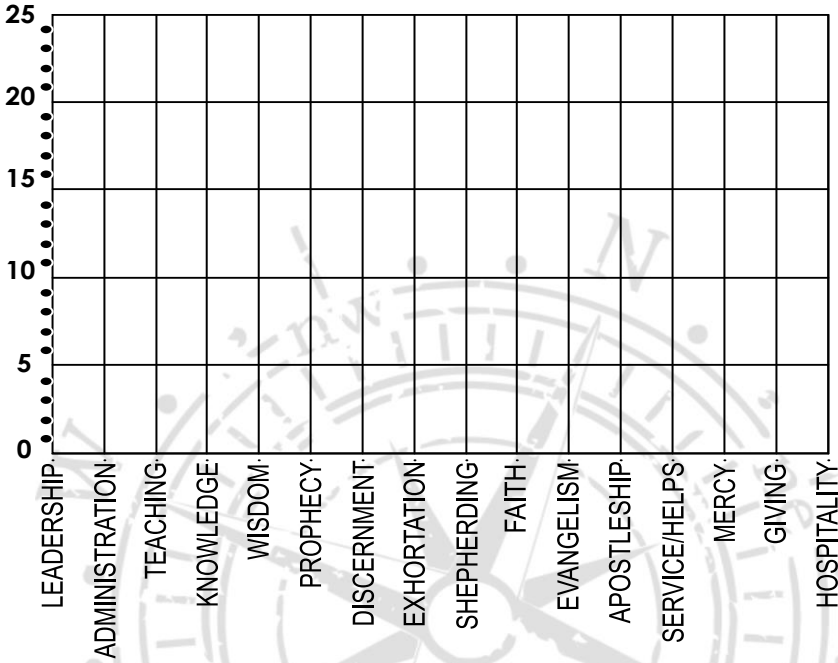
SCORING YOUR SURVEY

Follow these directions to figure your score for each spiritual gift.

1. Place in each box your numerical response (1-5) to the item number which is indicated below the box.
2. For each gift, add up the numbers in the boxes and put the total in the TOTAL box.

LEADERSHIP	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 6	Item 16	Item 27	Item 43	Item 65	
ADMINISTRATION	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 1	Item 17	Item 31	Item 47	Item 59	
TEACHING	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 2	Item 18	Item 33	Item 61	Item 73	
KNOWLEDGE	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 9	Item 24	Item 39	Item 68	Item 79	
WISDOM	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 3	Item 19	Item 48	Item 62	Item 74	
PROPHECY	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 10	Item 25	Item 40	Item 54	Item 69	
DISCERNMENT	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 11	Item 26	Item 41	Item 55	Item 70	
EXHORTATION	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 20	Item 34	Item 49	Item 63	Item 75	
SHEPHERDING	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 4	Item 21	Item 35	Item 50	Item 76	
FAITH	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 12	Item 28	Item 42	Item 56	Item 80	
EVANGELISM	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 5	Item 36	Item 51	Item 64	Item 77	
APOSTLESHIP	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 13	Item 29	Item 44	Item 57	Item 71	
SERVICE/HELPS	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 14	Item 30	Item 46	Item 58	Item 72	
MERCY	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 7	Item 22	Item 37	Item 52	Item 66	
GIVING	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 8	Item 23	Item 38	Item 53	Item 67	
HOSPITALITY	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> +	<u> </u> =	TOTAL
	Item 15	Item 32	Item 45	Item 60	Item 78	

GRAPHING YOUR PROFILE



1. For each gift place a mark across the bar at the point that corresponds to your TOTAL for that gift.
2. For each gift shade the bar below the mark that you have drawn, or link the dots to create a line graph.
3. The graph will give you a picture of your gifts. The higher ones you will be stronger in, and the lower ones you will be weaker in.

Now thoughtfully answer the following questions.

The gifts I have begun to discover in my life are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now that you have completed the survey, I'm sure your mind is exploding with WOW factors of how amazing God has made you, and what He has placed within you.

However, it is important to remember that we are all different and at different stages in our lives and walk with God. This survey is not to discourage you, but rather to encourage you with what you already have received, and as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:31 to earnestly desire the best gifts. BUT, and I say with a big BUT, he then goes on to say "And yet I show you a more excellent way.

Please be reminded that this whole exercise is for us to take every gift that God has given us, and to use it for the purpose of encouragement and strengthening of others faith, within the church and beyond the church walls.

1 Corinthians 12:29-31 *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. **And yet I show you a more excellent way.***

And in the next chapter of Corinthians Paul expresses the more excellent way, that being **LOVE**. And without Love no gift can work as God intended it to work. Without love the only thing that drives us is limited human passion. Without love we will be partial and selective in what we do, share, and with whom.

Now that you have a clear view of your spiritual gifts, ask God to help you know how He has gifted you for service, and how you can begin to use these gifts in ministry to others. Quite often our purpose walks hand in hand with the gifts God has given us. Allow the Holy Spirit to illuminate areas where you can step forward and be effective with your gifting.

In Conclusion:

With all that we have learned and discovered in this chapter, take some time to cherish and also become aware of what God has given you. And as amazing as every spiritual gift is, and all its powerful attributes, let us always keep the main thing in sight. And that is to carry the message of the Cross and the love of the Father in love to a dying world. And as good stewards of God's grace, use the precious gifts that He has graciously given each of us according to His will to bring that purpose to fulfilment.



Chapter Three

My Testimony & The Gospel

One of the most amazing miracles ever is the salvation of one's soul, the day when Jesus Christ saved and transformed your life. In this chapter we step into the journey of taking the story of your salvation and connecting it with the gospel message of Christ, so as to walk with an amazing weapon to bring freedom and deliverance to those around you.

Romans 1:16-17 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed(how God brings man back to Himself) from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

Revelation 12:10-11 *Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb(the gospel of Christ) and because of the word of their testimony(personal testimony), and they did not love their life even when faced with death."*

Within these 2 scriptures we need to recognize a couple of very important points related to the gospel and our testimony. Firstly we need to know that according to Romans 1 the gospel of Christ is the POWER OF GOD to salvation. The very strength that breaks the chains that binds the sinner to eternal damnation is within the gospel of Christ. And within it the very clear plan and work of the Father to restore His relationship with mankind.

Secondly in Revelation 12 we see that the enemy that accuses us before the Father is overcome by the blood of the lamb, which is one that walks into the salvation through the gospel of Christ, and by the word of our testimony, which is a constant reminder of what God has done for us.

With the knowledge of how powerful the gospel and our testimony is, let's look at how we can implement it as part of our lives and how to walk boldly with the message of hope to all around us.

Maybe you're afraid to share your faith because you don't know what to say. Remember this; you can't open someone's heart to the truth of the Gospel, only God can, by His Spirit. Remember that God does not call the equipped; He equips the called, and as Christians, we are all called to share what Christ has done for the world and for us. Jesus' last instructions on earth were, **Matthew 28:19** "Go and make disciples of all nations". Sharing our faith isn't just a suggestion, it's a clear command. But we are not alone in doing it, as Jesus said in verse **20** "I am with you always, even to the end."

Romans 10:13-14 For "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

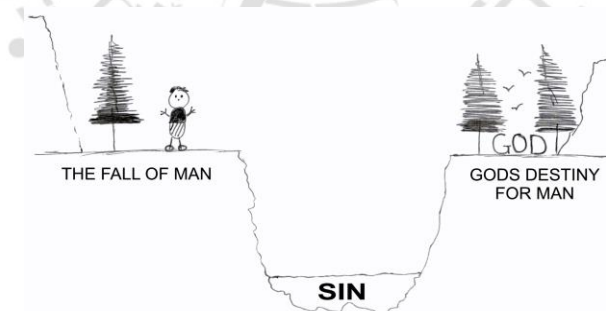
Firstly before we can share the gospel we need to KNOW the gospel message in order to share it clearly. If we do not know it, we will share a "cloudy" message and so potentially miss the elements needed to be shared. Sharing a clear message will not only be powerful, but also get people off to a good start in their Christian walk. So let's look at a simple break down of the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

The gospel: the word gospel means "good news", which is the message of forgiveness for sin through the atonement of the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is God's plan to rescue mankind, and for us to be reconciled with Him through the redemptive power of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:1-6 *Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it. It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you— unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place. I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.*

To share the good news, we need to make it clear that there is bad news.

The bad news is that our sin has separated us from God, and that without a solution that man cannot achieve we are forever separated from God.



The bible says in

Romans 3:23 *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*

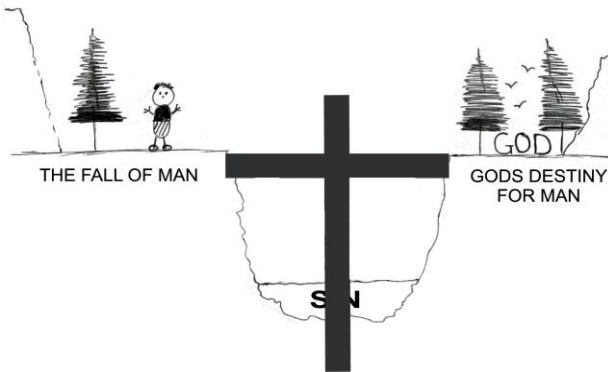
Isaiah 53:6 *All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.*

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Knowing that we are on a collision course with Hell itself, and that our sin keeps us away from God, and that we choose to walk away from Him, how relieved one can be that there is a wonderful way out of this dark scenario. And the key is not hard work, good deeds, or many religious prayers, but the only way is through Jesus Christ.

The bible says in

Romans 5:8 *But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*



1 Peter 3:18 *Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but He died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but He was raised to life in the Spirit.*

Titus 3:5 *He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.*

So it's true, we cannot do anything to make right with God except to totally surrender to Him through the sacrifice of His son Jesus, not because we deserve it, but because of His amazing grace and mercy over us. Wow.

Furthermore we read in

John 1:12 *But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Revelation 3:20 *"Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.*

What an incredible invitation, and we notice that there is no judgment or ridicule, or condemnation, but rather an invitation to a wonderful relationship between a Father and His children. All He asks is Faith in Him, and an open heart for change. Epic indeed. But is this enough?

We read in

John 5:24 *"I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.*

Wow, what a promise from Jesus himself, the good news is true, and everlasting. We can be encouraged that we have a full assurance of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

Now, I have put this in a simple story form for you to remember with key scriptures, and even some pictures to explain the story. There is no reason to complicate the good news, to make it sound so extravagant by adding so much too it. It is a simple love story, and we should all remember, that it is the Holy Spirit that does the convincing, not us.

To compress the gospel story for your own clarity is to see it in this way:

1. WHY DO WE NEED JESUS?

Sin, death, hell and wrath, we are eternally separated from God.

2. WHAT DID JESUS DO FOR US?

He became a man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross, took our punishment, and was resurrected from the dead.

3. HOW CAN WE BE RESTORED TO GOD?

Through repentance of sin, accepting Jesus Christ by faith, living a life pleasing to God.

Before we look at sharing the gospel message, let's look into the dynamics of our testimony and the relationship it has with the gospel message.

In essence, your testimony is your own personal story of how you came to meet Jesus Christ as your Lord and saviour. It's your story of miraculously been saved from eternal death by the amazing Father God.

But we shouldn't confuse our personal testimonies with the gospel. Sharing our personal testimonies is not evangelism. It's merely a pre-evangelism tool, an opportunity to share how powerful the gospel of Jesus is in your life.

But here's an article I've recently read that sheds light of this challenge we currently face, and I want you to read this to stretch your view, approach and understanding of your testimony in our modern day circles.

We live in an age of narcissism. It is the era of self-actualization, the relentless race to perfect the self. Time magazine reported in 2013 that “Narcissistic personality disorder is nearly three times as high for people in their twenties as for the generation that’s now 65 or older. . . . 58% more college students scored higher on a narcissism scale in 2009 than in 1982.”

As the West has become more narcissistic, so have the people in our churches. We see it on social media. We hear it over coffee. We see it when young people break away from living and breathing social groups to snap a selfie.

We also see it in our evangelism. A decade or two ago our evangelism still pointed outward. We spoke of the existence of God, objective truth, and the historical reliability of the resurrection. Now, many churches have moved on to leading with personal testimonies.

This contextualization isn’t necessarily wrong. In a postmodern era, stories are often more powerful than objective truth claims. Testimonies can be a valuable way to share the good news about Jesus. But in a society where even Christians are steeped in rampant individualism and self-idolatry, our testimonies can easily sound like another story of self-congratulation.

Though some personal testimonies are on the mark, many boil down to this: “Look! God is great because me me me.” These are not road-to-Damascus stories, but spiritually tinted selfies.

Selfie Testimonies

This example below is — sadly — only slightly exaggerated.

My life used to be in shambles. I was a wreck. I used to do X, Y, and Z. You wouldn’t believe some of the stuff I did. I found my meaning in the opposite sex.

But Jesus died on the cross to change my life. Now, I thank God that I’m not like those old friends. I live a good life. I wake up with purpose every day. I volunteer. I sponsor a child in Africa.

Oh, and did I mention? I have a smokin’ hot Christian spouse.

The good news is you can have this life, too.

This isn’t the gospel. It’s the kind of Self-help Narcissism 101 you’ll find in any Barnes & Noble. Just add a twist of God.

Narcissism, Meet Postmodernism

So, how did this happen?

As the West began to respond more to story rather than reason, the church adapted, which was good. But the stories we told began to centre less and less around Jesus. In order to avoid debate, our witness focused less on the existence and glory of God — which can be argued with — and more on our changed lives — which cannot. The problem is the systematic shift in focus away from God and toward ourselves and our “changed lives.”

God is great because . . . xyz happened to me — so these stories go.

No. God is great because God is God.

One Gospel Please, Decaf

This new gospel of changed lives is a small gospel. It’s decaf. It’s human-centred, like a planet without a sun.

We hear it encouraged like this: “Sharing your faith is easy! Just tell your story. You don’t need to know much about the Bible, or even the gospel story. God’s in the business of changing lives. Jesus came to change lives.”

This is dangerous because it’s only partially true, and it makes us the centre of the gospel. None of

the statements above is necessarily wrong, but repeated ad nauseam, cut off from the glory of God and the fuller gospel, it replaces God's gospel with a man-centred, I've-arrived, changed-life kind of news.

The sad reality is that we're not the only ones evangelizing based on our changed lives.

True Testimonies to False Gods

We were born to worship. If not God, then we worship someone or something else, like a cause. Or in a lot of cases, we worship ourselves pursuing a cause. It gives us a sense of purpose till we tire and move on to the next thing. We testify to the world about how this or that lifestyle has changed us and engulfed our entire selves. This is everywhere today.

It seems many people have a story to tell about their changed lives — even non-Christians. They select and edit their desired details, cut the rest, and paint the narrative they want you to hear — the Facebook wall version.

Do we want our witness to ape the world or reach the world? Then why do we play their game? Why do we diminish the true gospel down to the gospel of changed lives, and then try to sell it at the world's market?

Changed Lives Are a Dime a Dozen

Many religions, philosophies, and even health crazes will change you. If you want evidence of this, just head to your nearest CrossFit gym, yoga studio, or health food store. Those lives have been transformed by whatever flavour of self-actualization they idolize most.

If changed lives are all we got, it ain't much.

But that isn't all we have. We have the glory of the living God. And that glory should create a great chasm between a secular testimony of a changed life and a Christian testifying about Jesus Christ.

The secular testimony is focused on the self — how it arrived despite the obstacles on the road. The Christian testimony is focused on the Person of Jesus Christ, that Great Obstacle in our wandering path — that Brilliant Light who kicks us off our horse and blinds us, and calls us to repent and be baptized, and commissions us on his great work, and even tells us we will suffer for his sake. That's a Christian testimony. We were never called to reach the world with worldly standards or approaches, rather to be the light of truth to the world.

Quite an insightful view if you ask me. We have become so used to the way we do things, that we don't even ask if it is the right way, if God is pleased by it, or if my story truly gives Him glory or slightly deviates to me being so special. It's painful to see, and one can recognise it by the way that people connect to the man rather than to God. Your testimony should encourage and lead people to see the Lord and never draw the focus to you as a person.

REMEMBER YOUR TESTIMONY IS **NOT ABOUT YOU**. AND YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT YOUR TESTIMONY IS **NOT THE GOSPEL**.

The gospel is not about me. The gospel is about Jesus. It is the proclamation of the person and work of Christ, and of how a person can step into the benefits of the work of Christ by faith alone. Not by works or personal charm.

Some tips for sharing your testimony:

Keep your story short and limited with few facts of your sinful past. The bulk of one's testimony should revolve around the story of Jesus and His grace in your life. Spending too much time on the gory details of your past will keep people focused on those elements, by which they can potentially miss the truth.

We can view it like this. Actually, my testimony is not my story, but God's story of saving my life. Sharing it from His view and plan to save you. This view always encourages a humble approach and will keep the main thing in sight, His sacrifice, not yours.

God's heart with your testimony is for you to remain in victory as stated in Revelation 12:11, and to use it as a tool to enlighten others to the gospel message of His redemptive plan.

Now that we have a basic view on the gospel message and on the importance of sharing our testimony with wisdom, let's explore our approach.

Firstly before we start "speaking", it's so much more important to have a good "listening" ability.

Imagine walking into your doctor's practise and he simply starts feeding you pills and wrapping bandages around your leg or arm without hearing from you why you are actually there. I doubt you'd go back.

Well in the same way, we can't just rehearse a story and dump it on every person we meet. We need to be sensitive and have a good listening ability, to hear where people are at, and then you can choose your approach wisely, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit speak truth in love, and not just from a rehearsed mind.

James 1:19 *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*

It's so important to listen where people are at. If you truly listen, you will know which approach of the gospel you can take to encourage and lead them to an option of freedom.

So here are some approaches that can help you in certain circumstances.

There are many struggles, hopes, fears and dreams that sit on the surface of people's stories. If we listen well, with dependence on the Holy Spirit, we can discern which approach people need to hear most. For e.g.

- To those searching for acceptance in all the wrong places, we can point them to perfect acceptance in sharing the gospel from a place of being made worthy through Christ.
- To those searching for fulfilling relationships, we can point them to a profound, personal union with Jesus Christ.
- To those who struggle with bitterness and resentment, we can show them the love of Christ in the gospel of redemption. That He died for all, and His grace and forgiveness is for all, no matter who or what that person is.
- To those who fear disapproval or demand the applause from others, we can share the gospel of adoption, where we have been adopted into Gods family, which is the ultimate approval and produces humble confidence.
- To anyone longing for a new start, we can share the gospel of Hope. The hope of being a new creation in Christ Jesus.

With these different approaches quite often you might be able to relate to what that person is going through. And that's a good place to share your testimony of freedom. If you cannot relate to the persons situation, then the Holy Spirit will guide you to share the truth with that person.

There is an ungodly view out there that only an ex drug addict can reach a drug addict, or an ex alcoholic can reach an alcoholic, and so on. That is an absolute lie. For if that is true, then Jesus could reach no one, for He was a sinless man, yet He reached prostitutes, thieves, and all sorts of people and powerfully led them to redemption. So never be intimidated by a person's culture, history or even belief system. Remember you have the Holy Spirit, and He will guide you. As long as your attitude is one of love and humility, you can reach ANYBODY, from any walk of life. You don't need to have been the worst sinner, to reach the worst sinners.

Luke 12:12 *for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very moment what needs to be said.*

4 Simple Steps in sharing the gospel

To share the Gospel, you can follow these 4 simple steps, but once again it is important that this is simply a guideline, and not set in stone. It's vital that you follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in each situation, but keeping these steps in mind will help you in keeping the message clear and direct.

1. Tell them about God's plan - God loves you and wants you to experience the peace and life He offers.

John 3:16 *"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

He has a plan for you. He created you with a purpose and to walk with you in that purpose as a loving Father.

2. Share the problem – That we have been separated from God. Being at peace with God doesn't come automatically. By nature, we are all separated from Him through the fall of man.

Romans 3:23 *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*

God is holy, but we are human and don't measure up to His perfect standard.

3. Talk about God's solution – Jesus and the cross. God's love bridges the gap of separation between you and Him. When Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave, He paid the penalty for your sins.

1 Peter 2:24 *He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By His wounds you are healed.*

4. Our response – To receive and Christ. You cross the bridge into God's family when you accept Christ's free gift of salvation.

John 1:12 *But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God.*

To receive Christ, a person needs to walk the road of salvation:

- Admit you're a sinner.
- Ask forgiveness and be willing to turn away from your sins.
- Believe that Christ died for you on the cross.
- Receive Christ into your heart and life.
- Follow Him and walk away from your past ways.

Now that we see how simple it actually is, lets remind ourselves that there is no formula to salvation, as the price was paid once and for all on the cross of Calvary. But you and I have a responsibility to take our freedom, and share it with the world.

Conclusion:

This is a wonderful aspect of Christianity, but often overlooked as “everyone should just know how to”. I hope that you are encouraged that sharing your faith and your story of salvation should never be a daunting scary task, or seem so overwhelming that you simply never do it. It should be so natural and exciting to share the freedom you now have and to share with others the way to find that same path. May these simple tools help you in this journey. Go out there with boldness, and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with freedom and excitement, and watch what God will do.



Chapter Four

Prayer

What a wonderful privilege we have to communicate with the living God, with our Lord and King. Prayer is the one way that we get to share our hearts with the Lord and receive His counsel for our lives. However as simple as prayer can be, there are principles that we need to be aware of and abide to, especially if we are walking in a living relationship with the Lord, and if we want our prayers to be effective. In this chapter we explore the basic elementary principles of prayer. So let's take this journey into the topic of prayer.

Philippians 4:6-7 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

In Philippians 4 we see the elementary effects of prayer unfold for us, so let's explore.

Firstly take note that prayer is the first step in the establishing and maintaining of a relationship with God.

What is prayer?

Prayer - A solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God. A spiritual communion with God, as in supplication, thanksgiving, adoration, or confession.

Supplication – the action of asking or begging for something earnestly or humbly. It is the deep passionate expression of prayer.

So in its essence:

1. Prayer is talking with God. Two way communication.
2. Prayer is an exercise of your faith.
3. Prayer is having communion with God.
4. Prayer is admitting our need and dependence on God.

How should we pray?

Matthew 6:5-15 MSG *"And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat?"*

"Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace."

"The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:"

Our Father in heaven,

May Your holy name be honored;

May Your Kingdom come;

May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today the food we need.

Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us.

Do not bring us to hard testing,

But keep us safe from the Evil One.

Learning from this prayer that Jesus prayed to the Father in order to teach us, it's profoundly noticeable that He leads us in a simple

and uncomplicated prayer. Making it clear that it is not by all our clever words that we can have a powerful and clear prayer. In Matthew 26 He gives us another incredible key for us to not lose sight of;

Matthew 26:39 *He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want **Your will** to be done, not mine."*

And in:

1 Thessalonians 5:17 *Never stop praying.*

So we learn from these scriptures to keep our prayers:

Simple.
Without worry.
Not hypocritical.
To the Father.
Praying always in all situations.
Desiring His will not ours.

By doing this we can see the promise of Philipians 4 come to pass:

Philipians 4:7 *And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will **guard your hearts** and your **minds** in Christ Jesus.*

Why should we pray?

Matthew 26:41 *Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

Prayer keeps you sharp and vigilant and you become aware of the traps of the enemy.

Matthew 9:38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

Prayer awakens the desire for the will of the Lord to be fulfilled in the hearts of believers.

Romans 15:30-31 I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may be favorably received by the Lord's people there

Prayer delivers others and sets a hedge of protection around them. As well as opening peoples hearts for the ministry of the word.

James 5:13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.

Personal prayer in a tough time becomes a lifeline for your rescue. As well as reflecting all the glory towards God in times of victory.

James 5:15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.

Prayer releases the miracles of God in the lives of those who need it. We can see the full manifestation of our prayers if we pray it in faith.

Now that we know what prayer is and how and why we should pray, we need to be aware of the areas that block our prayer life from being effective and fruitful.

3 basic areas that block our prayers:

Self – that's when our old nature takes control again, and in this scripture we see that it is a sure constant struggle.

Romans 7:18-25 *For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. 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, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.*

So I find this law at work: Although 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 me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Sin – sin separates us from God and breaks our connection with Him

1 John 1:7-8 *If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.*

Satan – he will always oppose our prayers.

Ephesians 6:12 *For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

Even though we want our prayers to be effective, we often experience frustration. We need to take our prayer lives seriously and start expecting answers. God judges our deeds, and also our prayers according to the attitude of our hearts. If we are earnest and sincere, He WILL answer our prayers.

Secondly we must not give Satan a gap to block our communication with God. Every thought must be taken captive in obedience to God.

When you pray within the boundaries of the Bible, you are praying according to the will of God, and your prayers WILL be answered.

However our prayers can be hindered. Yes it's hard to hear but true, we can pray to God and have no answer from Him. But it is under certain circumstances, and we need to be aware of them. As we see in the sketch that through certain circumstances the heavens can be closed to our prayers, therefore it's vital that we take our walk with God seriously.



James 4:3 *You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

Psalm 66:18 *If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;*

Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

Proverbs 28:9 He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination.

Proverbs 21:13 He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered.

James 1:6-7 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord.

Job 35:12-13 "There they cry out, but He does not answer Because of the pride of evil men. "Surely God will not listen to an empty cry, Nor will the Almighty regard it

1 Peter 3:7 In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.

These hindrances are not put in scripture to scare us, but rather to warn us and guide us in our walk, knowing that our relationship with God is a living one and needs to be treated with respect and honor.

So what can we do to function in an effective prayer life? Let's look at some conditions that encourage an effective prayer life:

James 5:16 *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The **effective, fervent** prayer of a **righteous** man avails much.*

The first key is to live a life of righteousness, in this key we can nullify almost all of the areas that hinders an effective prayer life. However let's look at some more points that assist in us being effective in our prayer life.

Forgiving attitude

Matt 6:14 *If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you.*

Faithfulness

Mark 11:24 *I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours.*

Humility

Luke 18:14 *I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

Correct family relations

1 Peter 3:7 *In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.*

Clean lives from sin

James 5:16 *The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.*

Clear uncontrolled mind

1 Peter 4:7 *The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers.*

In Gods will

1 John 5:14 *And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases Him.*

Lack of anger

1 Timothy 2:8 *In every place of worship, I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God, free from anger and controversy.*

Submission

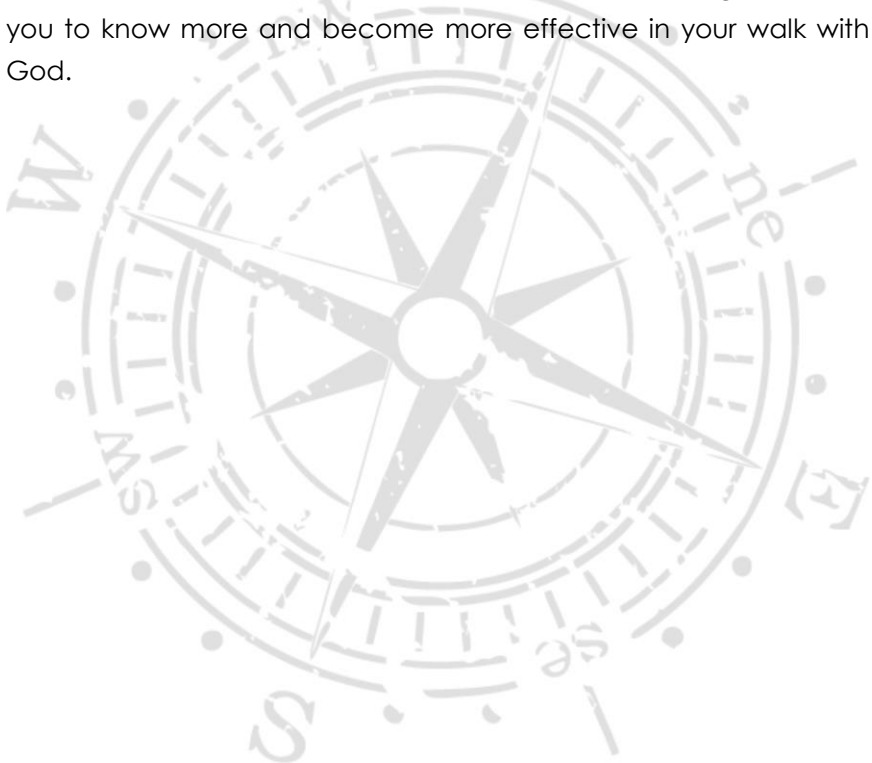
2 Chronicles 7:14 *Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.*

If we step boldly into prayer with our hearts in the right place we can expect nothing less than power from on high.

Remember that the enemy wants to keep you from communicating with God as he knows that you are strengthened even through prayer. So if he can keep you away from an effective prayer life, he can keep you powerless, weak, insecure, and questionable.

Conclusion:

This is just scraping the iceberg of the dynamic world of prayer. However within the tip of this iceberg you have some tools that will strengthen and sharpen your prayer life significantly. In essence it's vital that we realise that we do not know it all, and that we should desire and long to know more of the depths of communicating with God and what the effects and authority is that we have in prayer. I encourage you to grow from strength to strength as you communicate with your Father, and may the desire grow within you to know more and become more effective in your walk with God.



Chapter Five

Praise and Worship

Melodies of love to the King and Lord of your heart, the sound of thundering voices in the heavens that declare His praises, and make His name great, and the whisper of a gentle love song in worship to adore His presence and touch. To praise and worship God is built within our DNA, a strong desire to worship. Within this chapter we explore the heart and diversities of praising and worshipping God.

1 Chronicles 16:23-29 *"Let the whole earth sing to the Lord! Each day proclaim the good news that he saves. Publish His glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things He does. Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! He is to be feared above all gods. The gods of other nations are mere idols but the Lord made the heavens! Honor and majesty surround him; strength and joy fill his dwelling. O nations of the world, recognize the Lord, recognize that the Lord is glorious and strong. Give to the Lord the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come to worship him. Worship the Lord in all His holy splendor."*

Wow wow and again wow at the incredible encouragement and expression of worship in this portion of scripture. The passion and urgency to worship is so clear, but yet why do we struggle to worship God in such an expressive manner? Why do we admire the passion of others, when we have the same DNA within us?

I believe the key to this lies in understanding the heart of worship. So before we become technical in the expressions, lets see whats required from our hearts.

John 4:23-24 *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*

We see in the above mentioned scripture a couple of clear directives for us to be aware of.

Firstly is that He said the **TRUE** worshippers will worship God in spirit and truth. What does this mean? Well is obviously clear that there are also false worshippers who claim to be Christians. But the way they live and "worship" shows that they are not true followers of Christ.

True worshippers do not merely worship God with lip service on a given Sunday or church event, but rather have an habitual lifestyle of worship and honoring God in all that they do, say, think, desire.

Secondly we see Jesus say that we **MUST** worship God in spirit and truth, which shows me that any other form of worship to God is unacceptable.

Can we worship God in any way that we like? Will God accept any form of worship? This is something to think about as satan is very cunning and active within the church and has deceived many professing Christians into thinking that they can worship God any way they like. There is allot of profane fleshly acts that people declare to be worship, but rather is a mockery and disrespectful to the Lord.

I don't think this kind of thinking falls in line with what Jesus said in John 4:23-24. "TRUE worshippers will worship in **SPIRIT and TRUTH**, and not only that, He also said we **MUST** worship this way. He didn't say we could worship God any way we like. He said we **MUST** worship a **CERTAIN** way.

We need to look at what it is to worship in spirit and in truth. It is important to note that we do these two simultaneously. We do not worship in spirit in one setting and in truth in another. It's vital that we have these two aspects in a close relationship with each other.

Worshipping God in spirit means to worship Him from the heart with all we have, just as the greatest commandment that Jesus gave tells us to do.

Mark 12:30 *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment*

Our spirit is the core of who we are. We also know that God is a spiritual being. To worship in spirit, then, is to do something that is beyond the physical. We reach from the deep places of our beings to worship.

Psalms 42:7 *Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; All Your waves and billows have gone over me.*

We do not worship by simply bowing our knees; we worship through a heart posture. The bowing of our hearts.

Psalms 51:17 *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart These, O God, You will not despise.*

And by worshiping in spirit our worship is in line with the worship going on in heaven.

True worship is not about us at all, but it's all about God. We cannot worship God in truth with sin in our lives or if there is self-will in our hearts, because it is about God's will for us and not the other way around.

Easier said than does isn't it? If we look at a lot of our modern day worship settings, we are almost always concerned more for the experience of the people that attend than the creator of the universe. Sometimes placing so much emphasis on the experiential element of worship rather than upon the object of our worship which is God Himself.

The Bible warns us not to worship anyone or anything else. We are not to worship, saints, statues, angels, money, celebrities or ourselves.

Anyone or anything that becomes more important than God, and turns our hearts away from Him is an idol or a false god, and that includes our pride.

God says in

Exodus 20:2-3 *I am the LORD your GodYou shall have no other gods before me.*

When the devil tried to tempt Jesus, Jesus rebuked him and said,

Matthew 4:10 *Then Jesus said to him, Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'*

If we choose to worship false gods, God's word says in

Jonah 2:8 *"Those who worship false gods turn their backs on all God's mercies."*

That's choosing your will above His. And I certainly don't want to live my life without God's mercy!

To worship in truth is to keep Jesus Christ at the centre of every part of your life. It is engaging in relationships with Jesus at the forefront. It's making a business deal with Jesus at the forefront. It's even placing Jesus at the forefront of the deepest thoughts of your heart.

When worshipping God in a worship setting like a church service, quite often the way you respond is a reflection of your intimate worship to God. It is either existent or non-existent.

Do you care about what the people around you think? Are you afraid to raise your hands or bow down to the ground? Or does it make you feel uneasy when somebody else is expressive in their worship to God? All of these emotions are tell-tale signs of where your heart is. It shows you where your primary focus and concern lies, either with man or with God.

One of the greatest attacks upon the church as we know it, is the attack on the truth. If the enemy can get you and me a mere 1° off course, then we miss the mark. Satan knows that if we worship in truth there will be results, like breakthroughs, healing, deliverance, answered prayer. When we worship in truth, we hit the mark God has for us and we care only about Gods approval. But when we don't worship in truth, the enemy is ecstatic, because he knows it will merely be lip service with little to no results.

We need to breakthrough in this regard in order to experience the breakthroughs God wants for us. Just imagine for a moment that the Israelites were afraid to worship God expressively whilst walking around the walls of Jericho, caring more about what Jericho thought of their worship than what God thought. THEY HAD THE VICTORY BECAUSE THEIR FOCUS WAS ON GOD AND THEY WORSHIPED IN TRUTH.

In the same way there are "Jericho Cities" in our lives, and they will only fall if we worship in spirit and in truth.

Here are some elements to help you gauge your heart in true worship.

To worship in truth we must:

- Have purity of heart.
- Worship from the heart, not our heads.
- Deal with any sin in our hearts and repent.
- Have a spirit of humility and teachability.
- Have a spirit of submission to the will of God.
- Have a spirit of obedience to Gods word.
- Have a spirit of commitment in your relationship with God.
- Have a boldness to worship Him in every area of your life.
- Have an awareness of God's presence and sensitivty to His leading.

Ok now that we have the importance of our hearts down. Let's explore the entities of Praise and Worship individually, and how we can Praise and worship in a manner that brings honor to God.

When discussing the difference between praise and worship we shouldn't assume that praise is exclusively one thing and worship is another. If anything, praise seems to lead to the baseline of worship. When we praise God for what He has done, this leads to praising Him for who He is. So there is a very important relationship with praise and worship, however we should also understand the differences and focus points of each one.

Praise is simply lavishing encouragement upon someone for what they have accomplished, it means to boast or rave about, to comment, to speak well of someone.

Praise is about God	Worship is to God
Praise is opening up	Worship is entering in
Praise is boldly declaring	Worship is humbly bowing
Praise applauses Gods work	Worship is honoring who He is

The biblical definition of the word “worship” in Greek (proskuneo) is “to fall down before” or “bow down before.”

It speaks of an incredible amount of honor and reverence as well as the denying of self and the uplifting of God.

The English word “worship” comes from two Old English words: *weorth*, which means worth, and *scipe* (or ship), which means quality or condition. So, worth-ship is the quality of having worth, the acknowledgement of something or someone’s worth.

When we worship God, we are ascribing worth to Him and proclaiming that He alone is worthy. Worship is not always quiet and contemplative. Whether we think, imagine, sing, dance, clap, speak, whisper or shout about how awesome our God is, worship should be reserved exclusively for Him.

Psalm 29:2 *Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*

And when we praise, we should be extravagant in our adoration. When David danced before the Lord he did so with all his might.

2 Samuel 6:14 *Then David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod.*

It was in a public setting, it was boisterous and loud, and probably to a fast song. So, was David worshipping or praising? I would say it was both, as His body was expressing the condition of his heart.

In the Old Testament there are several Hebrew words for ‘praise’ that include elements you may have thought applied exclusively to worship:

Barak- To kneel and bless God as an act of adoration, implies a continual conscious giving place to God, to be in tuned with His presence.

Psalm 95:6 *Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker.*

Yadah-To throw out, to worship with an extended hand.

Psalm 63:4 *I will praise you as long as I live, lifting up my hands to you in prayer.*

Karar- To dance.

2 Samuel 6:14 *And David was dancing before the LORD with all his might,*

Halal- The root for our word hallelujah. It means to rave about, to boast, to celebrate, to be clamorously(loudly) foolish. The literal translation is to spin like a top.

Psalm 113:1 *Hallelujah! You who serve God, praise God! Just to speak his name is praise!*

Shabach- A shout or command; to address in a loud tone.

Psalm 47:1 *O clap your hands, all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.*

Taga- To clap hands.

Psalm 47:1 *O clap your hands, all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.*

Todah- Same root as yadah, but literally means an extension of the hands in adoration.

Psalm 26:7 *proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds.*

Zamar- To touch strings, play an instrument in worship.

Psalm 150:4 Praise him with the tambourine and dancing; praise him with strings and flutes!

Tehillah- To sing a spontaneous song.

Psalm 40:3 He has put a new song in my mouth Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the Lord.

Lets look at some expression of worship:

Worshiping with your voice

Speaking

Psalm 34:1 I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.

Shouting

Psalm 27:6 Then I will hold my head high above my enemies who surround me. At his sanctuary I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy, singing and praising the Lord with music

Singing

Psalm 47:6 Sing praises to God, sing praises to our King, sing praises.

Worshiping with your body

Bowing

Psalm 95:6 Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker

Standing

Psalm 119:120 I tremble in fear of you; I stand in awe of your regulations

Dancing

Psalm 149:3 Praise His name with dancing, accompanied by tambourine and harp.

Worshiping with your hands

Playing Instruments

Psalm 33:2-3 Praise the Lord with melodies on the lyre; make music for Him on the ten-stringed harp. Sing a new song of praise to Him; play skilfully on the harp, and sing with joy.

Clapping

Psalm 47 Come, everyone! Clap your hands! Shout to God with joyful praise!

Lifting Hands

Psalm 63:4 I will praise you as long as I live, lifting up my hands to you in prayer.

Worship is more than what you do, it is a way of life. It's not locked to singing a song or even going to church, or doing a daily devotion. It's based upon a separated and surrendered heart.

Romans 12:1-2 Present yourselves a living sacrifice.

Psalm 150:1-6

Hallelujah!

Praise God in His holy house of worship,

Praise Him under the open skies;

Praise Him for His acts of power,

praise Him for His magnificent greatness;

Praise with a blast on the trumpet,

Praise by strumming soft strings;

Praise Him with castanets and dance,

Praise Him with banjo and flute;

Praise Him with cymbals and a big bass drum,

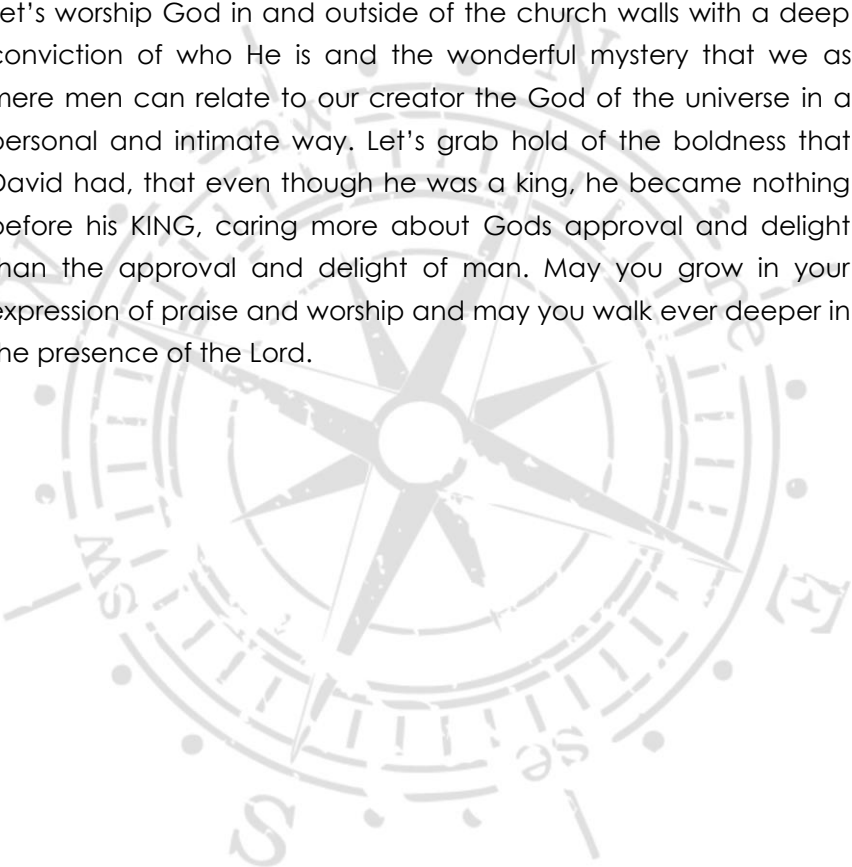
Praise Him with fiddles and mandolin.

Let every living, breathing creature praise God!

Hallelujah!

Conclusion:

What a wonderful chapter yet so powerfully led by the condition of our hearts. May Psalm 150 never get old or blunt in our hearts. In a generation where we are so aware of the views and opinions of man, may we break free from this bondage and worship God without any strings attached or chains of resistance in our hearts. Let's worship God in and outside of the church walls with a deep conviction of who He is and the wonderful mystery that we as mere men can relate to our creator the God of the universe in a personal and intimate way. Let's grab hold of the boldness that David had, that even though he was a king, he became nothing before his KING, caring more about Gods approval and delight than the approval and delight of man. May you grow in your expression of praise and worship and may you walk ever deeper in the presence of the Lord.



Chapter Six

Hearing Gods Voice & Obedience

The voice of God, the most powerful majestic voice in all eternity, the voice that creates life, which carries the power of all our existence within it. The voice that causes the heavens to shudder, causes all creation to magnify His holy name, and every demon trembles at His voice. And yet with all that in mind, we struggle to hear His voice, to identify His voice and worst of all obey His instructions. In this chapter we will walk through the journey of hearing Gods voice, what we can do to hear clearer, like removing the “wax” from our ears and heart, and then to walk into a place of honouring His words through obedience. So let's go.

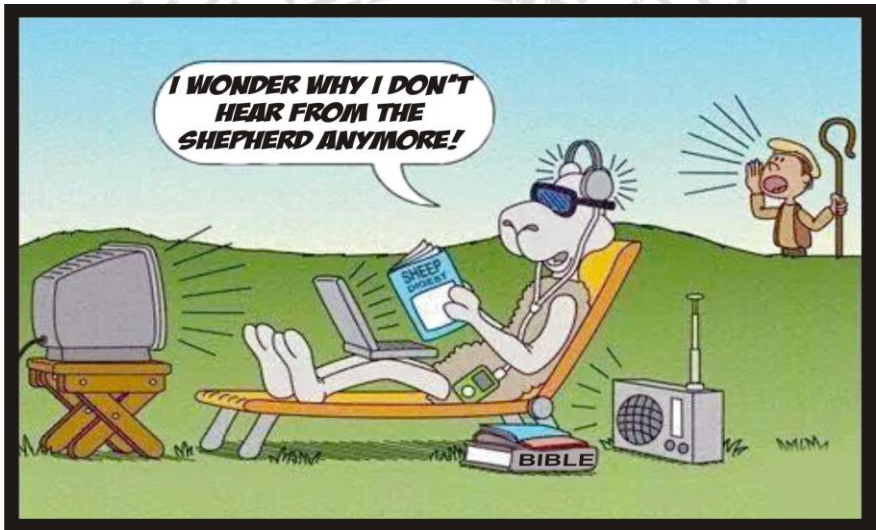
Have you ever wondered how to hear God's voice above the noise of your daily life?

We battle busyness and distractions as well as emotional stresses, such as exhaustion, depression, fear, anger, grief, and anxiety. All tactics the enemy uses to distract us from God. Satan loves to set up the emotional chaos in our lives to keep us from walking in fellowship with God. He jam-packs our days with noisy distractions in his efforts to get us to tune God out.

If you've never heard God speak to you, don't worry. Let's trust the Holy Spirit to work in us to identify the voice of the Lord in our lives. The development of active listening skills and a quiet, expectant spirit are keys to hearing from the Lord.

I believe that in our modern day society and culture for many of us we have become addicted to the rush of life, to the “busyness” in and around us, and to the noise that keeps our heads full from all angles at all times. It is a rush. For many of us we are afraid to live without it, we are afraid of silence.....SELAH.....

If it's too quiet in the office we put on the radio, if we feel lonely, we chat online or take a walk in the mall, if it's too silent at home, on goes the TV or iPod. There is no longer a sense of peace, silence serenity and the space to just breathe, not to mention giving God space and time to speak to us. The outside world has got it right to invade even the most inner parts of our lives and homes. Social media is now latched onto us like a leach and sucks all our attention and focus no matter where we are, even in our bedrooms, which should be a place of peace for us. The bombardment of noise has become a drug to many and is killing the souls of men at an alarming rate.



Why are we so addicted to activity and noise?

Because we're afraid to be alone with our own thoughts. We're afraid of quiet and solitude. We avoid peaceful fellowship with our Savior because we fear that we might not be good enough without all our "stuff." We project our focus away from ourselves, rather building an interest or a "following" of someone else's life, gaining a false sense of satisfaction and fulfillment from their lives and deeds. We're afraid of what God might say to us or ask us to

do if we sit still long enough to hear Him speak. We're not quite sure how to handle Gods call of being still and knowing that He is God.

Psalm 46:10 *He says, "Be still, and know that I am God."*

Discerning Gods voice amidst the noise of life and the voice of the enemy.

God's voice is not the only voice that speaks. Self and Satan can both wreak havoc in the lives of Christians who are unable to distinguish the difference between the three.

There was a reason that God spoke through few prophets in the Old Testament.

God asked Jeremiah, **"Do you want to hear me speak?"**

"God, I'm too young to be a prophet; **but, I'd love to hear you speak.**"

So God spoke to Jeremiah. But the price of hearing God's message was high.

The people cursed him, mocked him, tossed him in jail, and bound him in chains. They threw him in cisterns and beat him senseless. They humiliated him in stocks in the market places. Worst of all, the people never believed a single word he said.

Hearing God speak carries a high price tag.

Exodus 20:18-19 *When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."*

When we hear the voice of God nothing is ever the same again. Hearing from God produces a clear challenging calling which may well alter our choices, lives, values, focuses, and behaviours.

While hearing from God might cost us our lives, the voice of God opens the floodgates so that the Living Water of the Holy Spirit might flow from our inner most beings and open the door to abundant life. Full love and intimacy with Jesus can occur only when we hear Him speak.

So can we identify what Gods voice sounds like?

Let me start by stressing this point. Instead of focusing on the tone of voice that is used, focus should be on the words that are spoken, and weighing them to what we know to be God's words in the Bible.

Many feel that God's voice merely calms, comforts, convicts, encourages, enlightens, reassures, and stills. All of these descriptions are true, positive and produce feelings of safety and peace. However it is only a partial view of Gods voice.

People can say things that calm, comfort, and convict. Does that mean the words they use are of God? Of course not! Even the devil can speak calmly, encourage and lead people.

Did not the Devil reassure Eve in the garden that she would not die?

Gen 3:4 *You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman.*

Did he not promise enlightenment if she ate the forbidden fruit?

Gen 3:5 *For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*

It is possible to be encouraged in an evil thing.

Psalms 64:5 *They encourage each other in evil plans, they talk about hiding their snares; they say, "Who will see it?"*

This is called temptation and it was how the Devil spoke to Christ in **Matthew 4**. Softly trying to persuade Him.

In **Jeremiah 23** false prophets were leading men in a vision to stay calm and be still as "no evil shall come upon you". These false prophets were desperately wrong, just as those who cry "Peace!" when there is no peace offered by God.

At that time, in that context, God told Israel to give no heed to those who speak this way

Jeremiah 23:16-18 *This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They keep saying to those who despise me, 'The Lord says: You will have peace.' And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, 'No harm will come to you.' But which of them has stood in the council of the Lord to see or to hear His word? Who has listened and heard His word?"*

What if it is the Lord that discourages you from doing something? Shouldn't you listen?

Moses discouraged the children of Israel very sharply and strongly from going into the promised land at one point, and we see the strength of Gods heart in **Numbers 14**. **What? But it's the promised Land.....**

Numbers 14:41-44 *But Moses said, "Why are you disobeying the Lord's command? This will not succeed! Do not go up, because the Lord is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies,*

44 Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the highest point in the hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the Lord's covenant moved from the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down

Those people died who would not heed the warning of the Lord.

In the Bible we see God condemns

Jesus condemns the Pharisees and the teachers of the law in

Matthew 23

God strikes fear into men's hearts

Matt 10:28 *Don't be afraid of people. They can kill you, but they cannot harm your soul. Instead, you should fear God who can destroy both your body and your soul in hell.*

The original meaning of this specific word fear in Matthew 10 literally means: to dread, be afraid and terrified.

Do you realize by hearing these scriptures that we possibly have been putting God into our own little cotton box, and only made Him to be soft and mild, when His character is actually strong and in my lack of English words purely **INDESCRIBABLE**.

Satan often speaks God's words from portions of scripture, but out of context! It is called deception and lying. Besides, your flesh will always be at peace to follow its fallen desires. That doesn't mean its Gods leading. We can't trust our own desires at all. There must be more to knowing God's voice beyond what we feel and experience. After all, the truth can hurt.

In essence the trap we have stepped into is devaluing Gods character by only highlighting certain gentle elements and avoiding the stronger elements of Gods character, and this keeps the children of God in bondage, confused and often rejecting Gods correction and instructions when they are strong, believing that God would not speak in that way. We really need to be cautious of that.

Yes God does speak gently, calmly, He does comfort, convict, encourage, and enlighten us, leading us with His reassuring words of truth. But at the same time, He is strong and direct and is the Lion of Judah, that will roar when needed. So it's crucial that we take our view of Gods voice in a complete manner of being a good Father. That is a Father that will comfort when needed, as well as instruct sharply when needed.

There are many different ways in the Bible that God speaks into the lives of His people. It's important to always ground whatever you hear in the word of God. All other voices, experiences or unction's that we might have needs to be supported by the umbrella of the word of God. God will never instruct, or speak to you in contradiction to His written word. Any other voice that cannot be grounded in the word of God is highly questionable and can either be self or satan speaking.

So let's look into some ways that the Lord speaks to us:

The Bible

Psalms 119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.*

Jesus Christ

Hebrews 1:1-3 *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,*

The Holy Spirit

John 16:13 *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come*

Preachers and Prophets

2 Peter 1:21 *for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

Signs and Wonders

Acts 3:6-7 *But Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!" Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.*

Dreams and Visions

Joel 2:28 *Then, after doing all those things, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions.*

Children At Bedtime

1 Samuel 3:8-9 *So the Lord called a third time, and once more Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?" Then Eli realized it was the Lord who was calling the boy. So he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed.*

The Creation

Romans 1:20 *For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.*

Donkeys

Numbers 22:30 *But I am the same donkey you have ridden all your life," the donkey answered. "Have I ever done anything like this before?"*

Bushes

Exodus 3:1-4 He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it." When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

Angels

Luke 1:26-28 *In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!*

Circumstances

Acts 16:6-8 *Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there. So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas.*

Reason

Isaiah 1:18 *Come now, and let us reason together, "Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.*

Failures

Matthew 26:75 *And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly.*

I'm sure there are more examples of how God speaks to us, but through these you will get a pretty clear picture that God is God and obviously loves to speak to His children, even if He must find a strange way to communicate with us.

What a wonderful reality that God can speak to us in any way or form that He pleases. Let's keep our ear attentive to His words, and subject everything we hear to His written word, The Bible.

The best part about hearing God's voice?

You won't just avoid counterfeit voices, but you'll be given access to secrets and revelation knowledge that will make you the head and not the tail. A son that knows his Father's heart and will.

Deuteronomy 28:13 *If you listen to these commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today, and if you carefully obey them, the Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you will always be on top and never at the bottom.*

Jeremiah 33:3 *"Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know".*

All you have to do is pursue a life in which you hear the voice of God, heed it and walk into a victory you never thought possible.

When you learn to tune in to God's voice, it won't be an occasional event but an everyday part of life. That's why, in the New Testament, Jesus said:

Matthew 11:15 *He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*

If you want to get to a place where you don't have to wonder whose voice you're hearing, yours, the devils or God's, you need to spend time with the Lord. A lot of time. But, if you keep your mind and your heart full of the things of this world, it will be difficult for you to differentiate between the Spirit of God and your own thoughts. That is the definition of a carnal mind, one that has not been renewed by the Word of God.

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.*

THE GREATEST KEY TO KNOWING GODS VOICE IS READING HIS WORD. READING HIS WORD IS LIKE USING A SHARPENING STONE TO SHARPEN A BLADE. IN THE SAME WAY MAKING HIS WORDS AND VOICE CLEARER IN OUR EARS AND HEART.

The more time you spend with Him, His word, the more certain you'll become about hearing God's voice. It isn't just time talking to Him. We learn His voice when we listen to His voice. That's why in

Matthew 17:5 *He said, "This is My beloved Son...listen to Him!"*

Something to think about is that quite possibly a child doesn't have the ability to speak from birth in order for the voice of its parents to become clear and distinctive to them. And in time learn how to relate and communicate with its parents.

In the same way we often say SO much, but never give God chance to speak, in order for us to know His voice. SELAH

Obedience to Gods instructions

Once a person can identify, hear and understand Gods voice, we need to obey His instructions and guidance for our lives.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible has a lot to say about obedience. In the story of the Ten Commandments, we see just how important the concept of obedience is to God. See how this scripture sums it up for us.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28 *See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse, the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today.....*

In the New Testament, we learn through the example of Jesus Christ that believers are called to a life of obedience. As He only did what His Father did and said to Him.

So what is obedience?

The general concept of obedience both in the Old and New Testament relates to hearing or listening to a higher authority.

In the Greek it's expressed: positioning oneself under someone by submitting to their authority and command.

According to the Holman's Bible Dictionary obedience is "to hear God's Word and act accordingly."

So, biblical obedience to God means, simply, to hear, trust, submit and surrender to God, His word and instruction.

Why is it important to obey Gods instructions?

1. Jesus calls us to obedience

In Jesus Christ we find the perfect model of obedience. As his disciples, we follow Christ's example as well as his commands. Our motivation for obedience is love:

John 14:15 *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*

2. Obedience is an act of worship

While the Bible places strong emphasis on obedience, it's important to remember that true obedience flows from a heart of gratitude for the grace we have received from the Lord:

Romans 12:1 *And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship Him.*

3. God rewards obedience

We see throughout the Bible that God blesses and rewards us if we live in obedience:

Genesis 22:18 *And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed, all because you have obeyed me."*

Luke 11:28

Jesus replied, "But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice."

4. Obedience to God proves our love

It is through our obedience to the word of the Lord that not just our commitment is shown to Him, but also our love for Him. As it is love that causes us to go beyond what is required from us.

1 John 5:2-3 *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*

5. Obedience to God demonstrates our faith

We act upon what we believe in. In the same way our belief and faith in God leads us to act upon His words.

1 John 2:3–6 *And we can be sure that we know Him if we obey His commandments. If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love Him. That is how we know we are living in Him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.*

6. Obedience is better than sacrifice

We are often caught up in "acts of worship", rather than obeying His instructions. For many times His instructions are hard and unpleasant, but He delights more in our obedience than our "acts of surrender or sacrifices". Disobedience to His word amidst your "sacrifices" makes you a hypocrite.

1 Samuel 15:22–23 *But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to His voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, He has rejected you as king."*

7. Disobedience leads to sin and death

The disobedience of Adam brought sin and death into the world. But Christ's perfect obedience restores our fellowship with God, for everyone who believes in Him.

Romans 5:19 *For as by the one man's [Adam's] disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's [Christ's] obedience the many will be made righteous.*

8. Through obedience we experience the blessings of holy living

Only Jesus Christ is perfect, therefore, only He could walk in sinless obedience. But as we allow the Holy Spirit to transform us from

within, we grow in holiness.

Psalm 119:1-2 *Joyful* are people of *integrity*, who *follow* the instructions of the LORD. *Joyful* are those who *obey* His laws and *search* for Him with all their hearts. They do not compromise with evil, and they walk only in His paths.

2 Corinthians 7:1 *Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.*

Through out these descriptions we see that hearing Gods voice and obedience to His voice walk in relation with each other. We cannot say that we hear Gods voice, but disobey His instruction. The wonder of hearing Gods voice should be accompanied by much passion and diligence to seek and to obey His every word.

In conclusion:

Amidst the sinful nature of this world, amidst the trials, temptations, persecutions, obstacles, and challenges, He is there. He is calling you and me by name. By your name you are being called upon. What wonderful mysteries we can discover in Him. How exciting our relationship can be if we will merely engage on a deeper level of LISTENING to Him, OBEYING Him. We have such a wonderful opportunity to become so secure in Him, to run boldly to His throne, to just embrace His comforting words in a time of need. And to even feel safe under His direct correction when we are wrong, knowing that He corrects us in Love. For God is LOVE. Oh what a mighty God we serve. May we grow in our journey of pursuing His presence with all diligence and perseverance.

Chapter Seven

Finances and Gods Plan

Money, one of the most powerful resources in our lives, although it has no soul, it has such power over man, the power to bring joy and the power to bring pain. It is part of our lives whether we want it to or not. We were born into the system of trade, and therefore finances will always be a part of our lives. But it doesn't have to have such power over us. Instead, it is us that need to set the terms for our finances and not the other way around. In this chapter we will be sharing the values that can cause your financial life to change if you are willing to take your finances into the dimension of kingdom finances. So let's explore.

Life has a funny way of springing certain surprises onto us that affects our finances. A burst tyre, a crazy medical bill, price hikes, you name it, of which all is out of our control.

However we do have control over how we allow these things to affect us, and if we take on the promises in the word of God we can step into FINANCIAL FREEDOM.

If we are bound financially we cannot serve God wholeheartedly. We are distracted and we have divided loyalties. God wants our wholehearted affection because our salvation, and the salvation of the world depends on it. God has made the way to set us free financially. We just need to take hold of it.

The fullness of kingdom finances is based in an honourable relationship with the living God.

Genesis 1:26-28 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have **dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have **dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

Let's not get confused that in Gods original plan, God wanted His people to prosper. And certainly still does. However sin has kept us from that fullness. The fall of man has distorted Gods plan in our hearts. For where God was Adam and Eve's fullness, and the earth merely a by-product, now having eaten from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the desire of self-satisfaction has crept in. And instead of having great fellowship with God in the midst of the earth that we should have dominion over, we are led by the lust of the flesh and selfish desires. This is keeping us in bondage and away from freedom. For now instead of being driven after God, we are driven after money.

Matthew 6:24 *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*

Let's challenge our human pride a bit. The way we think things are.

One of the most fundamental and crucial elements we have to realise is that we don't have ownership of our finances or anything for that matter, but rather stewardship.

We also have to realise that we cannot just do whatever we want to with our finances, as this principle of stewardship goes beyond just what we own, but how we manage it as well.

We are responsible for the management of the Lords property and resources that He has entrusted to us.

Matthew 25:14-19 *“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.”*

Note is states that he gave to “each according to his ability”, clearly we will not all have the same amounts in life, but what stands out for me is that he gave to “each one”. So God also gives to every one of us all that we need. The trouble doesn't lie with what God has given to us, for He gives us more than enough, but rather with the way that we work it or not.

You see, the one who had the least, actually had the ability to multiply it, for that is what the word said “according to his ability” but rather if we look at it from our modern day perspective, he is the man that is constantly found complaining about what he doesn't have, and how he is on the short end of the stick, and that he cannot get out of his pit, and so on and so on.....

That is the man that needs to revisit his stewardship of what God has given him, and I believe that so do many of us.

Before we can look into principles of financial freedom, you need

to decide who has the power in your life, God or money. Some of us might argue indefinitely that it is God, but yet in the fruit of our lives we often see it's actually the other way round. Who has the stronger voice, the stronger decision and motivational factor?

If money is the stronger one, you will be restricted by its availability, and bound by its endless web of wanting more. If God is the stronger one, you will be challenged to move in faith, beyond what you have or can see. But the fruit is priceless.

And that I believe is the main challenge we all face with regards to our financial freedom.

1 Timothy 6:10 *For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.*

So let's look at some principles that we can apply to be good stewards of our finances and to see the fruitfulness on it.

We are going to discuss two primary elements.

VALUES and **MANAGEMENT**. I see it like this diagram:



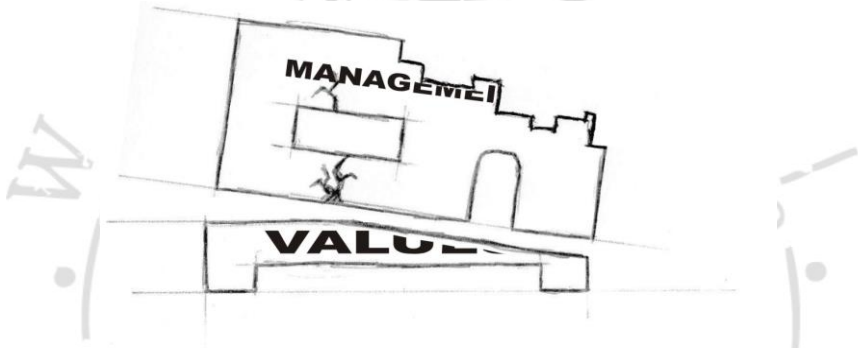
No one starts building a house with the roof first right? Yet it is the roof that we long for, the covering, the blessing of protection from the elements and containing and maintaining the warmth and internal measures within the structure. And it is the same with our

finances. Our financial values represents the foundation, our financial management represents the walls, and if we build well, then God is the one that blesses our “building” with the roof, just as the rich man blessed the good stewards in Matthew 25. The roof representing Gods favour and covering upon what we do.

But let me ask you this;

Can we expect God to put His roof of blessing upon this structure?

Would you?



And yet we wonder why we don't see the blessings upon our lives. Is it possible that we might be missing out greatly on what God wants to bestow upon us simply because our “house” is not in order? So let's break it down.

FINANCIAL VALUES:

It's important to note that without financial values, you are like a boat without a rudder, any direction the wind blows you will go. And you will see that in the condition of your bank account and the debts you owe. It's like buying some new gadget or some unneeded special, but missing a payment on school fees, or ducking an account you promised to pay.

So here is a couple of values that you can implement that will help you in your financial health.

Stewardship – This value is key to a healthy financial state, as we embrace the fact that everything we own belongs to the Lord first, and with this value in place we will wisely decide how we manage our finances based upon this fact.

1 Corinthians 10:26 For *"the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.*

A steward's main job is to be faithful with what he has been entrusted with. As we read in Matthew 25 the heart of God is for us to treat His wealth with respect and do all we can to create growth. A good steward is driven by the master's instructions; a bad steward is driven by fear.

1 Corinthians 4:2 *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

Honesty – A value that every Christian should hold dear to our hearts. That no matter what situation we are in, we will choose to be truthful and honest, honest in our work, honest in making deals, honest with our debtors. Honest in our financial management and budgeting. Honest in the reality of our affordable living, not to live higher than we truly can afford to.

Romans 13:9 *If you love your neighbour as much as you love yourself you will not want to harm or cheat him, or kill him or steal from him.*

Philippians 2:15 *so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.*

Wisdom – The core of this value is to not make decisions foolishly but in all decisions to count the cost, ask advice, and think it through. Seek the counsel of God's Spirit and timing.

Luke 14:28 *“But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it?”*

Proverbs 15:22 *Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success.*

Self-control – Keeping your own desires in check. We all love spending money on nice things, but is it necessary? We need self-control in our savings, and walking away from impulsive spending.

Galatians 5:22-23 *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*

Generosity – This value keeps our feet and hearts on the ground. When we are generous we step out of our own worlds that can be so consuming and into the worlds of others around us. And generosity is the doorway that keeps your giving/sowing alive. In essence it is like the farmer keeping the buckets of the sowers full at all times.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 *The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

Luke 6:38 *Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”*

Remember that it is God who makes us able to be generous, he provides, we need to be faithful, and not eat all our seed.

2 Corinthians 9:10 For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, He will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.

Integrity – Apart from honesty, integrity is a crucial value in the life of a Christian. Integrity is a value that encourages a person to live above reproach. Where your word is your word, when you say you will pay something that you will, no matter what. That you treat your finances with respect, if you say you honor God, then you do it financially as well. Integrity walks in strong relationship with stewardship.

Romans 13:8 Owe *nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbour, you will fulfil the requirements of God's law.*

1 Timothy 4:16 Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.

Communication – Communication is a value that is critical when it comes to our finances. Firstly it's vital that married couples are in complete agreement with regards to their finances, although it might be managed by one, there needs to be unity in the decision making process.

Amos 3:3 Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?

Contentment – Being satisfied with each season in your life. Being content is a heart attitude, however it's this very attitude that will keep you objective to the balance needed in your finances. A discontented spirit produces greed and covetousness.

Hebrews 13:5 Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."

Being discontent will block you from being a blessing and an open vessel that is full. Discontentment will always keep your wallet empty or in debt.

Acts 20:35 *And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

Contentment results from a proper relationship with God, based on accepting the lifestyle that He has made provision for in your life. This is the attitude of a heart filled with contentment, when you are fully filled with Christ:

2 Corinthians 6:10 *Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything.*

Becoming content is a process, and we can grow into it, but have to keep working on it. It stretches like a rubber band.

Philippians 4:11-13 *Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*

Patience - Refuse temptations to make hasty financial decisions. Don't buy into get-rich-quick schemes or be pressured to make quick decisions based on incomplete information.

Proverbs 21:5 *"The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty."*

Accountability – Accountability is the value that will keep you on your toes, and always aware of the condition of your finances. It is the ability to be wilfully transparent and responsible for your finances. Being liable and answerable to your financial affairs.

Proverbs 27:23 Know well the condition of your flocks, And pay attention to your herds;

Being accountable is living within a budget, doing all deals on top of the table with respect of keeping account, taking full responsibility for all obligations and financial actions that you have taken.

Luke 16:10-12 "If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? And if you are not faithful with other people's things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?"

Faithfulness – What makes faithfulness a core value is the fact that we as children of the living God shouldn't be partial in any way.

A pastor was asked to define "faithful church involvement." He replied: All I ask is that we apply the same standards to our church activities that we apply to other areas of life. If your car started three out of four times, would you call it a faithful car? If you didn't show up at work two or three times a month, would your boss call you faithful? If your refrigerator quit a day every now and then, would you say, "Oh well, it works most of the time"? If your geyser greeted you with cold water one or two mornings a week when you were in the shower, would you say it was faithful? And yet we're bit and miss about our giving, our involvement in ministry and worship toward God, and we somehow think we're being faithful!

Ezekiel 18:9 If he walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as to deal faithfully--he is righteous and will surely live," declares the Lord GOD.

As we read all of these values I believe it all boils down to being faithful. Taking responsibility for what we have been given and working well with it. Then you will see the increase. Having a good financial value system will create a strong foundation upon which you can now manage your finances.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT:

The health of our finances rises and falls at how we manage our finances. Managing your finances is like building the walls of your house. Even if you have a wonderfully strong foundation “values” but no idea how or what to build, it’s going to go horribly wrong, and you will feel defeated no sooner than when you started. So it’s vital to have a vision, a plan, tools and materials to build with.

No two houses look the same, and so too with peoples finances, however it is important to have structure to your finances. Here are some suggestions that could radically strengthen your finances.

So let’s start with our vision. The bible says that without vision we perish.

Proverbs 29:18 *Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keeps the law, happy is he.*

When one builds a house, he has a dream “a vision” which then becomes the plan from which you build. That vision is often built up from the desires of the heart. So if we align our desires to honor God in our finances, it’s crucial that our vision is based upon the will and kingdom of God, for then our planning will go accordingly and then there will be less of a margin for error in our building.

Matthew 6:21 *Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.*

And where the desires of your heart is, that's where you will focus, invest, and be drawn towards.

So the first point in your management structure is to have a vision.

Vision – A plan from which you will work. So for example, if you are not using a budget, it is to set up a budget. If you desire to live debt free, it is to work out a plan to get debt free.

Now after you have a vision and a plan to work towards, next is to prioritise your financial movement.

Priorities – When you have a list of priorities, you will find balance in your finances, and you will see fruit upon your farm land, and eliminate distractions. Having priorities is like a farmer preparing the land before he sows the seed. Following a process that produces a harvest is the most obvious choice for a farmer. No farmer simply scatters his seed randomly on any soil hoping it will produce a harvest. And we should reason in the same manner.

Here is a principle of prioritising your finances:

1. **God** – tithing, offerings.
2. **Debt** – accounts, monthly instalments.
3. **Saving** – annuities, holiday funds etc.
4. **Living** – day to day living.
5. **Spending** – luxuries.

Budgeting - Once you have priorities in place then you need to put it down on paper and put together a budget, the key to a budget is not writing one, but sticking to it. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. There are various free budget templates available online that you can download and tweak for your needs. Quite a favourable and very user friendly personal or household budget can be found at www.vertex42.com. These templates adjust and calculates all figures automatically for your convenience:

Debt management – Apart from managing our debt well we should strive to get out of debt as far as possible. Debt should not be your first option when purchasing something. In fact debt should be right at the back of our option list. There are areas that are to the majority of us unavoidable like property debt, or a well calculated business loan. But we need to avoid all bad debts like clothing accounts, furniture accounts, credit cards, etc.

Romans 13:8 *Owe nothing to anyone, except for your obligation to love one another.*

Break the habits that keep you in debt – like spending more than you earn and borrowing, being led by impulse and not sound reason. It's much better to save so that you don't have to borrow.

Proverbs 15:16 *"Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and turmoil with it."*

So if we manage our finances well, then God can seal this house with the roof of His blessings. Now that we have some management down I would like to share some insight into 2 Kingdom principles that we as Gods children should abide in when it comes to finances.

2 PRIMARY PRINCIPLES IN KINGDOM FINANCES.

TITHING and GIVING.

Before we delve into these principles I would like to encourage you to drop all preconceived ideas and uneasy emotions connected to tithing and giving. You have to take it from the view of firstly honouring God, and as obvious as it is, as with any farmer he would be foolish to eat all the seed that comes from his land. He re invests a portion of it to the land for the next harvest. And so with our tithing and giving it has the same principle attached to it. Simply doing the obviously wise action of taking the best seeds

and replanting them into our kingdom account, thanking God for His amazing provision and expressing our trust in His incredibly fruitful "farm land". And I'm pretty sure God is the best farmer around anyway. But here's the snag, the enemy knows that if he can get Gods people to walk away from faithful giving, he gets them to eat all their seed. Now you might not see the effect of it now, or in this season, but you will for sure see it in the next harvest, for you can only reap what you have sown.

Galatians 6:7 *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.*

2 Corinthians 9:6 *Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*

1. TITHING

Malachi 3:10 *Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!*

One of the most powerful scriptures with regards to tithing, and it has a challenge from God Himself. He says "TEST ME IN THIS" What???? That's beyond words, God is so confident in His own promise that He calls us out on it. But I believe the reason He did that was because He knew how we would struggle to be faithful in this regard. And there are often people blowing off this scripture stating it to be under the law and irrelevant as well as "old testament", however please take note that tithing was there long before any law was instituted. And is strongly taught in the New Testament as well.

Genesis 4:3 *In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.*

Genesis 14:18-20 *Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he(Abram) gave him a tithe of all.*

Genesis 28:22 *And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”*

In the words of Jesus Himself:

Matthew 23:23 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done(tithe), without leaving the others undone.*

Firstly we need to understand the reason for tithing – as in Malachi 3 God states; “so that there will be enough food in my temple”. If we are faithful in tithing, then the work of HIS ministry can flow without resistance financially. It teaches us to put God first in all that we do, and gives us the perspective that it doesn't come from us, but all comes from Him. And it has a promise connected to it, that God will “open the floodgates of heaven” over us.

So let's answer this question; where should we tithe? Malachi 3 says: “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse”. The storehouse is your local congregation, not an individual or even a ministry

abroad. You can give an offering to a person or another ministry, but should remain faithful in tithing in your local store house.

1 Corinthians 9:13-14 *Don't you realize that those who work in the temple get their meals from the offerings brought to the temple? And those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrificial offerings. In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it.*

Some folks say that they cannot afford to tithe. However if your salary was cut by 10% you would simply adjust and live accordingly, but yet we struggle to give into the bank account of heaven. I'm truly puzzled by that. I believe we need to ask ourselves; can we afford not to tithe? Are we ok to wilfully live in disobedience to Gods word?

Malachi 3:8-9 *Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse, your whole nation, because you are robbing me.*

It's as simple as this. If you want financial freedom, start by obeying Gods word. If we want the blessing of tithing or giving, let us not be guilty of splitting hairs. Let us get on with it. Spontaneously, cheerfully, regularly, and generously. Let's be part of the great commission and support those who are sent.

2. GIVING

GOD EXPECTS US TO GIVE

The reason for this is that we have been made in His nature, but because of the fall of man, we are strongly urged by the nature of self, and God wants us to be free in this regard, to come back to our creative purpose.

Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Proverbs 3:9-10 Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

Proverbs 11:24 One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.

We need to give In faith – In all our giving, we must do it by faith, for it is faith that pleases God.

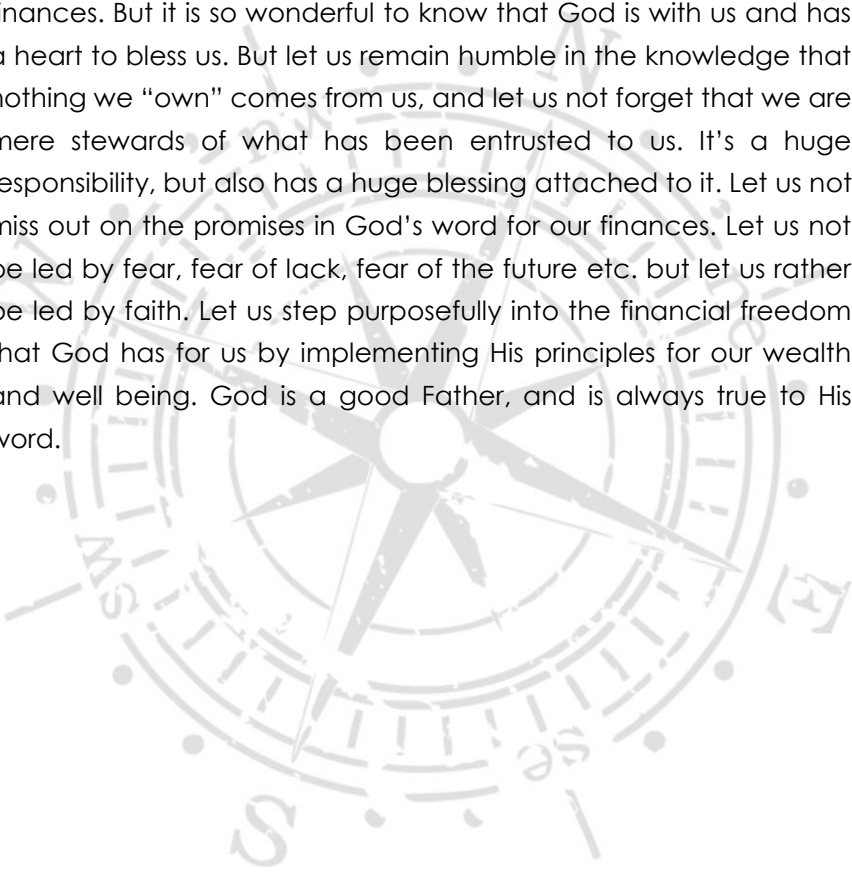
Luke 16:10-13 "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much;.....You cannot serve God and Money.

We need to give regularly - This creates a consistency and regularity that translates good intentions into actions and also keeps the seed alive and functional in our wallets. Not just being a dam with an inflow for self-fulfilment, but also a wilful outflow of blessing.

1 Corinthians 16:2 *On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.*

In conclusion:

Well we certainly have allot to chew on when it comes to our finances. But it is so wonderful to know that God is with us and has a heart to bless us. But let us remain humble in the knowledge that nothing we “own” comes from us, and let us not forget that we are mere stewards of what has been entrusted to us. It's a huge responsibility, but also has a huge blessing attached to it. Let us not miss out on the promises in God's word for our finances. Let us not be led by fear, fear of lack, fear of the future etc. but let us rather be led by faith. Let us step purposefully into the financial freedom that God has for us by implementing His principles for our wealth and well being. God is a good Father, and is always true to His word.





PHASE 3

SHARE THE JOURNEY

DTC

Discipleship Training Course

Phase 3

Share the journey

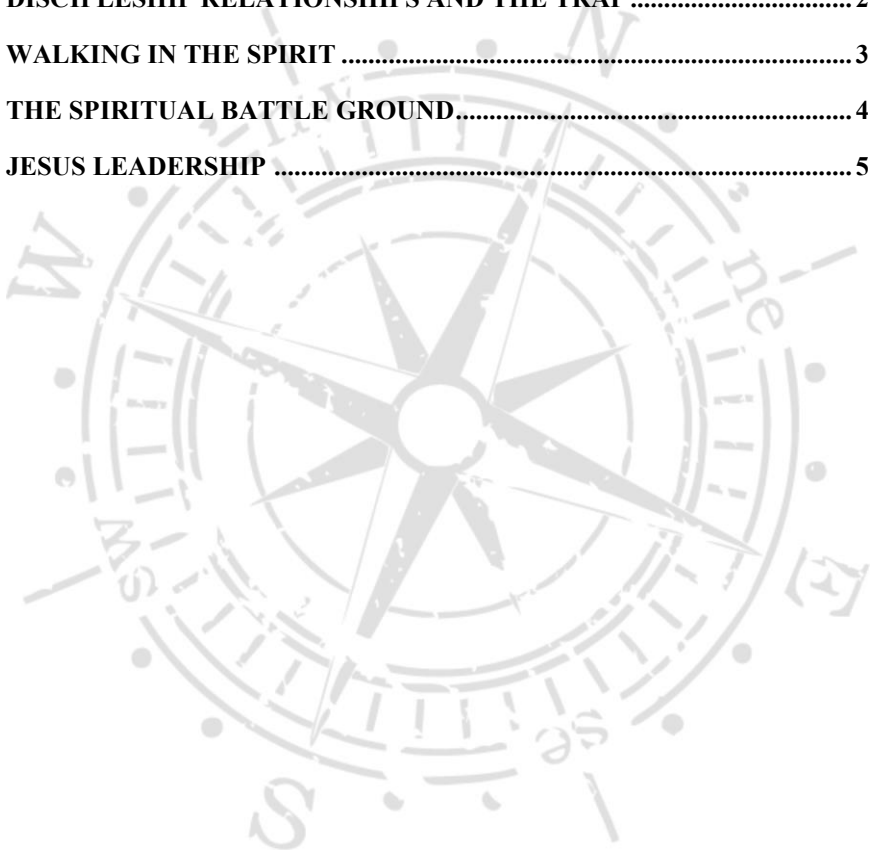
By:

Lee & Elzari Cronje

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Chapter One

My Part In The New Testament Church

What a wonderful thought that we are part of the New Testament church, living and breathing through the life and lessons of Jesus Christ, and sharing in the gospel message through a life surrendered and offered unto Him as a living sacrifice. Being a part and doing my part in His church requires for me to understand His plan and will for His church as well as for my life within it. In so doing I can walk with a clear mandate, purpose and with much impact, without creating an imbalance through my partial views and understanding. So let's dive into understanding the New Testament church and our function within it so that we can be beneficial to its health and growth.

What is the New Testament Church?

In a simple explanation it is this; after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we see in the book of Acts the birthing of the NT church, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the anointed message of the gospel through the apostles, signs and wonders. All the believers were devoted to the apostles teaching, fellowship breaking of bread and sharing in all things. And since then the NT church was born and ever growing.

Acts 2:38-44 *Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away all who have been called by the Lord our God." Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!" Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.*

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had.

The book of Acts begins with the birth of the New Testament Church. Notice how the Church was described for the first time after 3,000 people were baptized in one day.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Why is this so significant? In this we see the defining features of God's Church:

Steadfast continuation in **the apostles' teachings**, and **fellowship**.

Within these 2 points there is a lot of wealth, health and growth within His church.

Acts 2:43,44,46 Then fear(fear of God) came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together(separated), and had all things in common. *So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness(joyful and thankful) and simplicity of heart(not complicating life)

In these verses we see the first fruits of the NT church. Setting a benchmark of how we as the church should operate in heart and deed.

Let's look at some of the characteristics of the New Testament Church and its impact upon society.

Characteristics of the early church as seen in Acts 2

1. Holy Spirit empowerment

Everything the early church did was done by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

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

2. Holy Spirit anointed preaching

Acts 2:37 *When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, brothers what shall we do?*

3. Radical salvations

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.*

4. Radical obedience – immediate water baptisms

Acts 2:41 *Those who accepted his message were baptized and about 3000 were added to their number that day*

5. True discipleship - a devoted lifestyle

The believers laid down their entire lives even what they owned for the Lord and His church.

Acts 2:42 *They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching (Word of God), fellowship and breaking of bread and to prayer.*

6. Signs and Wonders – Miracles

The Church in Acts had faith and power, and they expected miracles.

Acts 2:43 *Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.*

7. Walks in Favour

Acts 2:47 *praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

8. A Loving Church that Cares For one Another

Caring for each other is one of the greatest commands of the New Testament. In the Acts, evidence of the believers caring for each other is found in their willingness to sell their possessions and give to those in need. If we desire to be the Church Christ desires us to be, then we must care for each other.

Acts 2:44-45 *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*

When functioning properly, the Church of Jesus Christ is the hope of the world. It is the vehicle that the Lord uses to establish His kingdom, to heal broken lives, pointing people to God the father, and fulfilling the deepest longings of our souls. It is in the Church that the rejected find acceptance, that sinners receive forgiveness and the lonely experience love, care and family.

1. It is in the Church that we discover and live out our true life-purpose. **To worship God**

2. It is in the Church that we receive teaching and training for how we can be the people that God has called us to be. **Discipleship**

3. When the Church of Jesus Christ is functioning properly, each member is using his or her God-given gifts and talents and abilities to serve one another and the world beyond. **Ministry**

4. And there is community and fellowship, with in the Church of Jesus Christ, that fulfils our longing for friendship and intimacy with others. **Fellowship**

5. When the Church is functioning properly, the lost in the world - those without a relationship with Jesus Christ - have the Gospel preached to them, and receive the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and saviour and come in the family of the Church and experience everything we have just talked about.

Evangelism

This is how the church of Jesus Christ, the New Testament church becomes the hope to the world. Yes it is true, we have a massive mandate and responsibility to be the church that Jesus wants us to be. In the words of Jesus himself we read:

Matthew 5:14-16 *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Now let's make this a little more personal. Often when we hear the things that we have just dealt with so far, we tend to think that it hardly relates to us in person, and so we keep ourselves on the outskirts of the church looking in. Thinking that "it" "the church" or its "leadership" should change or adjust in order to become more like Acts 2. But let me enlighten you on an interesting fact:

YOU ARE THE CHURCH.

Yes indeed you and I make up the body called the church. You and I are each a vital part in the glorious design of Gods church, and yes the way that we think, speak and act influences the church, either building and promoting life within, or causing strife and conflict.

As much as the church is a global entity, even represented through individual congregations, so each of us make up a part of it, and so all principles and pre requisites applies to us on a

personal level as much as it does to a congregational level when it comes to living up to the design shown to us in the early church of Acts. Out in the market place, amidst your family and friends **YOU** represent the church, not just your local congregation's name, but the very body of Jesus Christ.

You might ask: If I am the church, then why can I not function on my own? Why do I need to be connected to the congregation?

Hebrews 10:25 *And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.*

We were never designed for isolation or individualism. Being part of the broader body of Christ sets us into a family where we are held accountable for our lives as well as our life in Jesus Christ. And it is a place where we are refreshed, encouraged and instructed as we see in the early church of Acts. It's also a place of safety, when you are connected in the unity of the body it's harder for the enemy to single you out. It can be related to the wild, where a predator singles out a weak often young animal separated from the herd, and then is overcome by the predator because of its weak and separated stance. It's the same in our walk with Jesus. Many fall to the wayside as a result of pride, offences or selfish desires and in that place are broken and bruised by the devil. God designed the fold for you and me. So it's crucial that we buy into God's designed plan.

When we start to realize the extreme enormity of this fact I'm convinced we will see more fruit of the early Church back in action in our daily lives.

When we take up our responsibility, seek the face of God, spend time in His word, commit to the body and teachings, breaking of bread, fellowship and prayer, we will see signs and wonders at our hands through His glorious name.

Here is one of the strategies the enemy has been deploying amongst the children of God; by keeping many of us in a place of judgment, criticism and condemnation towards the church. he knows that this heart condition and poison within the heart of a Christian will simply kill the godly fruit vision and purpose within the individual. And so doing keeping us dormant and ineffective as Gods children, hurting and breaking the church which includes you, instead of building and contributing to its growth and health.

When we start to realize that we are not on the outside looking in, or detached in our own little faith bubble, but that we are in actual fact woven into this body, we will reconsider what we say about it, and do to it, what we bring to the table and what we keep away.

Now that we have an understanding of the church. Let's look at Gods Kingdom. For the church and His kingdom walk hand in hand, but are not the same thing, but yet there is an inseparable relationship between the two. And once we understand this, then we can understand our individual purpose within the church and Gods kingdom.

In a simple definition the kingdom of God can be understood as this:

Gods supreme rule and reign in and through every area of my life.

Romans 14:17 *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

When God has the true rule and reign in our lives we live righteously, we have the fullness of peace and are overwhelmed by the joy of the Holy Spirit.

It's important that we realize that the kingdom of God cannot be realized outside of the church, and the church has no mandate or purpose other than the establishing of the kingdom of God in and through us.

If we look at the word **“kingdom”** it points to the purpose of God, an extension of His reign here on earth, as it is in heaven.

If we look at the word **“church”** it points to the vehicle through which Gods kingdom will be established.



As we see in this sketch that the church is Gods vehicle that carries the kingdom to the world.

Matthew 16:18 *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*

Matthew 10:7-8 *And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.*

Thus the **church** is the **instrumental plan of God** to establish His **kingdom**. So it is through you and me that His kingdom will come if we are faithful and obedient. A massive responsibility lies with us as the Lord builds His kingdom on the condition of our hearts. SELAH.

Many in the past generations even in biblical generations have tried to establish the church and the kingdom apart from one another, yet to find that it only warps the picture and misses the mark, often building man's agenda instead of Gods, and causing people to stumble. Hence we see throughout history and even in the current age a strong sense of religious laws and a works based salvation plan that often stands in contrast to Gods word.



We as the church are not meant to carry our own little pet beliefs and personally preferred doctrines and teachings to the world. We are to carry the gospel of the kingdom through the cross of Jesus Christ and nothing else. Anything else will distort people's views, hurt and confuse them to what is true and to what is required from them.

We need to be very careful what we believe as absolutes and that we are really teaching people Gods honest untainted word.

Galatians 2:21 *I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.*

Romans 11:6 *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.*

Galatians 3:21 *Is there a conflict, then, between God's law and God's promises? Absolutely not! If the law could give us new life, we could be made right with God by obeying it.*

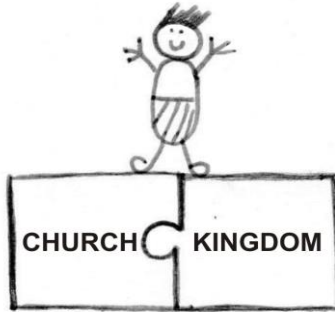
That's the very point, that Christ had come to give us life and He fulfilled the law and lead us into Gods kingdom. So why would we even dare to challenge Christ's sacrifice by trying to re institute the law in any way or form?

Mark 7:9 Then he said, "You skillfully sidestep God's law in order to hold on to your own tradition."

Do we carry Gods kingdom in our hearts, or our own traditions????

As a believer and child of the living God we need to function from His body "the church" to establish "Gods Kingdom" we cannot just stand on one box and ignore the other. God designed the church on purpose, not for us to just have a good time, but to live on purpose in our calling as believers to share the good news and take part in the establishment of the kingdom. The church which includes you is not complete if we don't live and function within Gods Kingdom. We cannot and should not separate them, it is when the church is in unity with Gods kingdom "His rule" that there is a perfect balance and clarity of where to go.





Here is the mystery of it all. You see the very purpose of the kingdom "Gods rule and reign in our lives" is to take the church "Gods chosen vehicle" "the ecclesia - Gods chosen people" to those who are still stuck in the trap of darkness in the world so that they may partake in His kingdom. The church is called to overcome the kingdom of darkness and to take back that which the enemy has stolen and to resist his onslaughts.

We can only take authority in the name of the KING if we are submitted to His KINGDOM. Otherwise we are a fraud and play a dangerous game, and the enemy knows this.

You see, how can the lost in this world taste the kingdom of God without it coming to them through the church which is you and me? That's why you cannot separate the relationship between the two.

Lets share some characteristics of Gods Kingdom.

1. The kingdom is characterised by righteousness.

Romans 14:17 *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

When I decide to allow Jesus Christ to reign in my life in every area, I step into Gods kingdom. For then I live righteously, in peace and in joy. When I pray "let your kingdom come" in fact I am asking

that God's rule and reign in my life is established in and through every area of my life. In my thoughts, deeds, marriage, family, finances, relationships, etc. I have to step into it in a practical way.

2. The kingdom is entered into through repentance and is manifested in the transformation of the life of the believer.

Mark 1:14-15 *Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. The time promised by God has come at last! he announced: The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!*

The kingdom-God's rule doesn't just happen by accident, we need to wilfully step into it by the repentance of our sins and the transformation of our lives, no longer living in the flesh for its satisfaction, but living for the will of God to be evident in and through our lives.

3. The kingdom is built upon a humble heart.

Matthew 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

When we look at the word "poor" it means "empty" or "humble". It's an attitude of need, and dependency. It states that "Lord I need you in everything in my life" **all the time**.

Dependency opens the door to receive more from God, where pride chokes God's rule in our lives.

4. The kingdom is revealed to the saints and is spread by preaching and sharing.

Mark 4:10-12 *Later, when Jesus was alone with the twelve disciples and with the others who were gathered around, they asked him what the parables meant. He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders, so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled*

Luke 9:60 *But Jesus told him, "Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead! Your duty is to go and preach about the Kingdom of God.*

Matthew 24:14 *And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.*

5. The kingdom is manifested by the power of God.

Luke 9:2 *Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.*

Luke 10:9 *Heal the sick, and tell them, 'The Kingdom of God is near you now.*

Jesus said to those questioning His authority and power:

Luke 11:20 *But if I am casting out demons by the power of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.*

The kingdom of God is manifested by His rule and reign. Where God rules and reigns there is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, freedom from darkness, sin and shame. So He will clean out anything that stands in the way of His rule. So where His kingdom is we will see the mighty manifestation of Gods hand.

6. The kingdom must have first priority.

Matthew 6:33 *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.*

It speaks of searching desperately for Gods rule in your life, for in that place He will guide you in the correct priorities and constantly guide you on this path of life, in that you will make wise decisions and pick the fruit of that.

The kingdom of God is a mystery indeed, complex, yet simple if we remain like children in our approach, and the same counts for the church, its complex yet simple if we just remain faithful in our contributions and calling.

My role in the Church

Now with a bit of background around the church and Gods kingdom, what is my responsibility in all of this??

You and I have a crucial role to play in the New Testament church. Being part of the church leads me to take up my responsibility as a believer to grow, become healthy spiritually and then to share what the Lord has given to my life through His kingdom. Before you even desire to step into any form of ministry, start by getting the following right.

There are basically 3 areas where we need to focus on to be effective in His body.

1. **Personally** – You need to take responsibility for your own soul and grow in your walk with Jesus and to make it a lifestyle s to become more like Him. A healthy spiritual condition keeps you humble and teachable. A wonderful place to be as a Christian.

Philippians 2:12 *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*

2. **Family/Church Family** – God has planted you in your family with a purpose. What does it help we have all the grace for the world, but we have little to nothing for those closest to us. No family is perfect, in the same way there is no perfect church congregation. However you and I can carry the seasoning of God's presence with us even in our local congregation. For many the church family is simply like a fast food store, to see how quick I can get fed, and it better be good. When the attitude should be; where can I serve and assist to bring my part in the church. With this attitude you are destined to see Gods heart for His church.

Matthew 20:28 *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

Matthew 5:16 *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

3. **Community** – Looking at the life of Jesus, we see how He instructed His disciples which includes us to go beyond the comfort of our own walls, climb into the lives of other people and bear witness of His love for them.

Matthew 28:19-20 *Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

It is clear that God never called us to be static in our faith or even selfish in our spiritual walk, but indeed challenges us to go and share as the church the gospel of the kingdom to the world “all nations”- people that we hardly relate to, or even want to relate to.

So why would these 3 areas carry importance with regards to the church and Gods kingdom?

If we can have the courage to be transparent and honest with where we are in our own lives, and adjust and grow accordingly we will be filled with grace for our immediate family and church family on all levels, and that would lead us to become great servants, seeking to honor God beyond what we can receive. And lastly through constantly challenging the condition of your own heart and stretching your hearts capacity towards your brothers and sisters will make it easy for you to connect with the world that is merely one touch away.

Conclusion

Well to sum this all up, we need to simply acknowledge that the church is a vital part in the establishment of Gods kingdom on this earth. And for that to happen we need to take our responsibility as the church to walk in righteousness and carry the mandate of the kingdom of God to the world. An absolutely wonderful adventure and calling on us all. Stepping into this position requires of us to become true disciples of the Lord. In the next chapter we will deal with discipleship and how it will impact the body of Christ. Allow the Holy Spirit to enlighten your heart with regards to the church and the kingdom. And remember, remain as a child.



Chapter Two

Discipleship Relationships and the Trap

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ has its ups and its downs. Its super exciting to see your life change and become more like Jesus, the challenge though is that you will face persecution and resistance for your stance in the Lord. However there is no sacrifice we could ever give that could outweigh Christ's sacrifice for us. In this chapter we will deal with the ins and outs of discipleship, how important relationships are, and the trap that is lurking in all our hearts if we are not vigilant and aware. So let's suite up and dive into this amazing world of discipleship.

What is a disciple?

Disciple – someone who adheres to the teachings of another.
A personal follower of Jesus Christ and His life.

Simply put; for me to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, I need to be a
A worshiper, A servant, A witness.

A worshiper – A life that breathes glory to God. Every thought, every action, every word that proceeds from the mouth should bring glory to God.

A servant – A humble heart willing to go beyond any personal comfort or personal gain. Laying down one's own life to see another prosper and grow in the Lord, where nothing is too much. And a continuous joyful heart in serving the Lord and Man in Gods Kingdom.

A witness – A passionately bold approach from a desire to see people come to Jesus, no matter the resistance or the cost. A life surrendered to taking the gospel beyond your own soul. A heart fully aware and obedient to the unction of the Holy Spirit to go and share the good news of the Kingdom.

Matthew 28:19-20 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

A very clear instruction that Jesus wants us to go and make disciples of all people, not just those who we fancy, and at the same time teach them the very instructions we have received as disciples of Jesus, keeping us at a constant place of obedience in our own walk.

For you and me to be and effective disciple of the Lord, and become an effective disciple maker we need to accept the truth of the word and be prepared to change accordingly.

And it all starts with your own heart.

Romans 12:1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies (your whole being, your eating, sleeping, working, and walking around life) to God because of all He has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice(deliberate) the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship Him.

To live a victorious and abundant life, I must become a disciple of the Lord living by kingdom principles.

How?

1. By doing the will of the father.

Matthew 7:21-23 Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'

If we call Him Lord Lord, then we will change the way we live, our lifestyles, we will forgive those who have wronged us, and not hold it against them. We will be peace makers amongst one another, we will speak life, and not death and we will obey the simple instructions in His word, like love your neighbour as yourself.

2. By removing stumbling blocks.

Romans 14:13 *Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.*

1 Corinthians 8:9 *But you must be careful so that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble.*

Isaiah 57:14 *And it will be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, Remove every obstacle out of the way of My people."*

Quite often we are more of a stumbling block to people than what we would admit. And that is purely because we operate out of the flesh and not the Spirit. If we consider our deeds and speech and are aware of where people are at, then we can become more effective disciples. We often lose our sensitivity because we have victory over a certain area, or strong in certain views, and end up bulldozing over those who are weaker or who haven't received victory yet. All that happens is people then withdraw and fade away. In the same breathe its crucial to remove anything in your life that is a stumbling block to your own faith.

3. By adding to your faith.

2 Peter 1:5-7 *giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*

We cannot merely be devoted believer, we need to be a devoted follower, and a devoted follower grows in their faith and makes every effort to become like the master. So it is imperative to stay teachable and learn as much as you can.

Characteristics of a Disciple and a Disciple maker:

Matthew 16:24-27 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me(Christ's way and example). For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

This is not an exhaustive list, but can be a great guide for your life.

1. A disciple is sincerely dedicated to follow Jesus Christ.
2. Loves Jesus above everybody and everything.
3. Lives by faith and in sacrificial living, not living for oneself.
4. Boldly shares Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God.
5. Committed to relationships, invests in people, relationships is priority.
6. Lives accountable and expects to be held accountable.
7. Teachable and prepared to change.
8. Humble and modest not taking credit.
9. Lives joyfully amidst challenging times.
10. Makes the word of God a priority in life, decisions, advice.
11. Dedicated to the study of the word of God.
12. Lives a dedicated life of prayer.
13. Lives a life above reproach.
14. Loves people as Jesus did and demonstrates it.
15. Recognizes the need for Gods strength.
16. Builds and encourages all. Has the heart of a servant.
17. Is sensitive and submitted to the Holy Spirits guidance and walks in His power.
18. Strives for holiness and purity.
19. Evangelistically bold stirring the gift within constantly.
20. Lives in Integrity and good Character.
21. Is generous in all things. Is bound by nothing on earth.

Do's and Don'ts of Discipleship

There are certain things that we should do and certain that we shouldn't in our journey with people. And by being aware of them will only add to the influence you have in people's lives. Let's have a look at a few.

Titus 2:7-9 *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.*

Do's

1. Keep it real and bring humanity back into conversations. Keep chats grounded and relevant to life.
2. Listen more, and be slow to speak. You cannot hear where someone's heart is if you are overwhelming in speech.
3. Share your true life journey, wins and losses. Be real and transparent. It encourages authenticity.
4. Admit when you don't know the answers to questions.
5. Have fun in your journey of bonding in the relationship.
6. Encourage them through hard actions and decisions. To take responsibility to break through tough areas.
7. Pray and read the word together.
8. Challenge the blind spots in their lives.
9. Help them step out in faith actively and allow them to make mistakes.
10. Do active kingdom work for them to shadow and observe.

Mark 9:42 *If anyone causes one of these little ones (young in the Lord) those who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea.*

Don'ts

1. Don't think or act like you know it all.
2. Don't pretend that you have it all together.
3. Don't block your vulnerabilities.
4. Don't hold back honesty.
5. Don't expect them to be just like you.
6. Don't put your experiences on them, forcing them to do the same.
7. Don't make your voice louder than Gods.
8. Don't forget about grace, gentleness, compassion and respect.
9. Don't ignore or avoid difficult truths.
10. Don't stop learning for yourself.

And a bonus point: Don't give up on someone who is not perfect or not growing at your expected pace.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are the very basis from which we grow in the Lord and in community influence. Jesus came and walked with His disciples on a daily basis, and what they did, they did in relationship. Jesus showed us the perfect model for the Fathers heart to be downloaded to us is through His word in a person.

1 Corinthians 11:1 *And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.*

Proverbs 13:20 *Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.*

Relationships opens ones heart to the deep place of trust, friendship, companionship and impartation.

John 15:13 *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.*

Relationships are so valuable and God intended that they become a safe place for a person. Healthy relationships form a safety net filled with grace and support for when one is in trouble.

Ecclesiastes 4:10-14 *If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.*

One has to be deliberate in the building of relationships as they don't just happen. There is much work needed for good strong relationships.

Hebrews 10:24-25 *let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

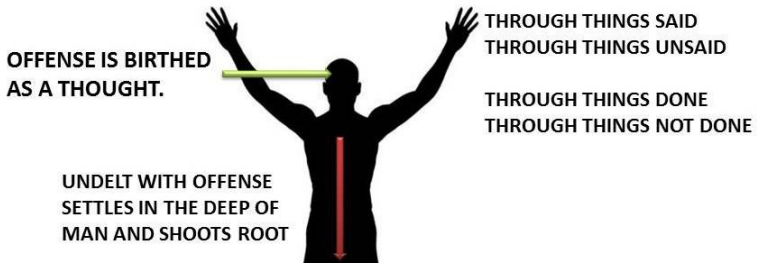
Having relationships as a core value in your life, requires that your heart is always open to new relationships. Many block off from new relationships due to bad experiences. But we need to keep our hearts pure, for the only way we can remain effective disciples is if we walk in relationship with people without resistance and reservations in our hearts. We have to risk our hearts to touch the hearts of others. Jesus did it for you and for me.

John 10:15-30 *just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also.*

THE TRAP

There is a trap that destroys relationships and utterly blocks any form of discipleship in a person's life and that is "**OFFENSE**". Offense is one of the enemy's greatest weapons that he uses to break Christians and keep them in bondage. We have to realize that to be effective disciples and disciple makers requires good healthy relationships. But if we are caught unaware, then it is easy for offense to creep in and cripple a relationship, and block the processes of discipleship on either side, all the way from receiving through to giving. If offense is allowed to set in, it is no different to a dam that no longer has an outflow, the water rots, and there is no more life, and whoever encounters it or drinks from it is poisoned.

Let me briefly explain how it works.



Proverbs 4:23 *Guard your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.*

We cannot always control what comes into our ears or eyes, but we can control whether it goes further down into our hearts or not.

If we don't guard our hearts, the seeds of offense will go down into your belly and start to grow.

Once an offense takes root, it gives birth to bitterness, and we all know that you cannot have bitter and sweet water flow from the same well.

James 3:11-14 Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? **No**, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring.

HEBREWS 12:15

Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.

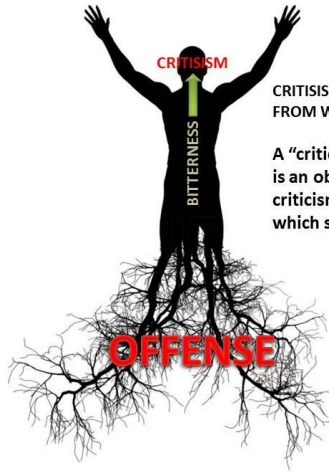
PROVERBS 18:19

A BROTHER OFFENDED IS HARDER TO WIN THAN A FORTIFIED CITY.



The interesting fact about bitterness is that it acts like vomit. It always wants to come out, and it's always a mess. That's when a person is very critical, strongly opinionated, and very judgemental towards others, and there is usually the assumption that there is nothing wrong with yourself.

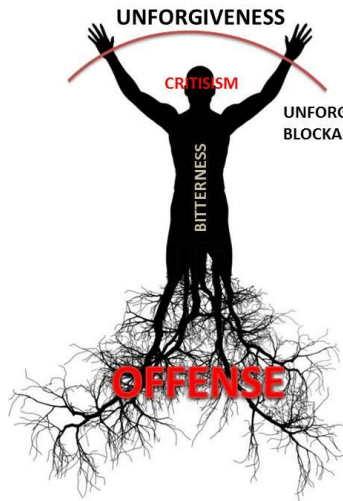
Bitterness leads to criticism and criticism leads to blindness where you no longer see your own faults and unaligned heart.



CRITICISM LEADS TO BLINDNESS FROM WHAT IS TRUE.

A "critical spirit" is an obsessive attitude of criticism and fault-finding, which seeks to tear others down.

When you are blinded by a critical spirit then unforgiveness settles in your heart. And when you allow for this to happen you block off your heart from Gods forgiveness.

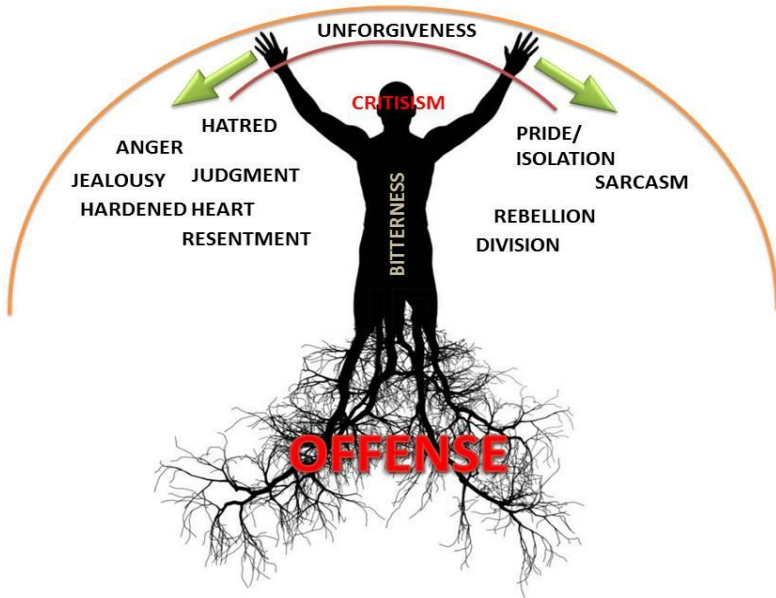


UNFORGIVENESS LEADS TO A BLOCKAGE BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

When you have allowed offense to settle in your heart, and holding it against the person, church or group, you deliberately block off God's forgiveness over your life, which in turn blocks off His flow of goodness. The sad thing is that many people at this stage even blame God for their condition that was self-inflicted.

Matthew 6:15 *But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

And you will see the following fruit rise up in your heart. And cutting yourself off from God in this way, you put your salvation at stake.



Philippians 2:12 *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*

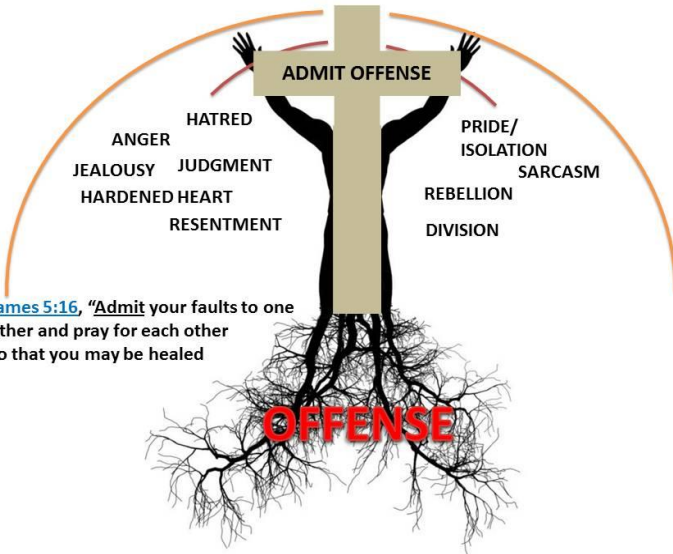
When the heart is enlightened, but not fully convicted this is when people merely cut off the tree, thinking that it has destroyed the offense, but in actual fact by simply cutting it off on the surface one never truly deals with it and it springs forth again.

[Job 14:7-9](#)

For there is hope for a tree,
When it is cut down, that it will
sprout again. And its shoots will not fail.
Though its roots grow old in the ground
And its stump dies in the dry soil,
At the scent of water it will bud
And put forth branches like a plant.

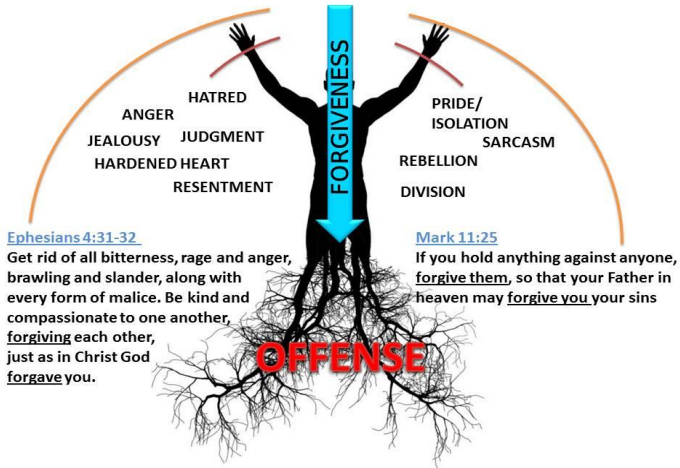


In order to deal with offence we need to deal with it like a weed, go deep into the ground and the first step is to admit that you are offended. and as far as possible to the very person that you are offendebey.

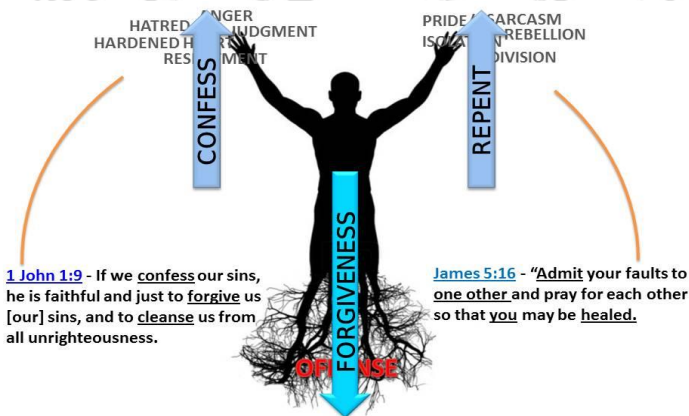


[James 5:16](#), "Admit your faults to one other and pray for each other so that you may be healed"

When you humble yourself in such a way, it breaks open the hard crust of the heart and the forgiveness of God can re-enter your life. But it is still a process, as you need to be deliberate in destroying all traces of the offense.



Once Gods forgiveness has re-entered our hearts, we need to confess the offense, forgive the offender, and repent from the offense and the fruit. Which means there is a deliberate turning from the offense, an effort to rebuild from your side.



2 Chron 7:14 - if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Only then can the truth be restored within ones soul. And a healthy being can grow again.

Col 2:7 - Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. **Then** your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.



**TRUTH RESTORED
ROOTED IN CHRIST**

The beauty of an unoffended soul is that you will be open for the instruction from the word of God. And from your belly will flow rivers of living waters and you will carry the fruit of the Spirit. You will be an open vessel for discipleship through relationship.



LOVE **FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** GOODNESS
JOY
PEACE **WORD OF GOD** FAITHFULNESS
PATIENCE
KINDNESS SELF CONTROL

Col 2:7 - Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. **Then** your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

John 7:38 - He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'

**TRUTH RESTORED
ROOTED IN CHRIST**

Conclusion:

Oh what a wonderful world, the world of discipleship. The privilege to walk in the footsteps of the Master Himself Jesus Christ, and to encourage brothers and sisters to do the same. It's an incredible journey with an eternal reward. May each of us desire to be more like Jesus every day, and may we place a guard in our hearts against the offenses that come. Jesus said that offense would come, the key however is what we do with it. May your journey as a disciple of Jesus inspire and challenge all around you to be more like Him.



Chapter Three

Walking In The Spirit

As followers of Jesus Christ we have been called to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Gospel brings restoration, and we are responsible for proclaiming the truth to the lost and broken. We are called to walk in relationship with the Holy Spirit, who is within us, giving us the authority and the power to do the will of God. Now this might seem obvious that we should all walk with the Holy Spirit, but in actual fact many believers don't. Walking out in the power of the Holy Spirit may seem difficult or even confusing to many, but it isn't meant to be that way. It is something we are made for. We need the power of God's Spirit, not only for ourselves, but to also see others set free. Join me as we briefly discuss walking in the Spirit.

But first a quick recap on the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

One cannot walk in the fullness of what God has planned for us without the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Therefore being baptised in the Holy Spirit is crucial to our lives as believers.

The primary purpose of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is to give us **power for service**. It's where the Holy Spirit begins to equip us and fill us to be ready and useful servants who can carry on the work of Jesus Christ in and through the church and world around us.

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

He fills you with a supernatural power and boldness to go forth not in your own strength or reason but in His power. And all for the glory and revelation of the Father.

It is therefore incredibly important that we have a living relationship with the Holy Spirit and walk with Him daily.

So How Do We Walk in the Spirit?

Galatians 5:25 *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

To “Walk in the Spirit” means do what you do each day by the Holy Spirit. SELAH. To live your life in all its details from waking up in the morning until going to sleep at night by the enabling power of the Spirit. But what does that mean, practically speaking? How do we walk in the Spirit?

Galatians 5:16-17 *I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.*

So here we see what the opposite of walking by the Spirit is, namely, giving in to the desires of the flesh. Remember, “flesh” is the old human nature that does not enjoy the things of God and prefers to get satisfaction from independence, power, and worldly pleasures. When we walk in the Spirit, we are not controlled by those drives.

Walking by the Spirit is what we do when the desires produced by the Spirit are stronger than the desires produced by the flesh.

Therefore, walking in the Spirit is something the Holy Spirit enables us to do by producing in us strong desires that are in accordance with God's will.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 *I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put My Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.*

When we walk in the Spirit this prophecy is fulfilled. The Holy Spirit produces godly desires within us and He causes us to walk in God's statutes.

Galatians 5:19-24 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

In these verses we see how Paul contrasts the "**works** of the flesh" with the "**fruit** of the Spirit. Very important. The opposite of doing the "works of the flesh" is bearing the "fruit of the Spirit."

Why does Paul refer to the **fruit** of the Spirit instead of the **works** of the Spirit? I believe the reason for this is that we should avoid having an impression that what the Spirit produces in us is our work. But rather through an intimate relationship, He influences our hearts and minds, and through our works we bear HIS FRUIT.

What we do when we walk in the Spirit is simply fulfil the desires produced by the Spirit, and that will lead to a fruitful life, the fruit of the Spirit. And the key in all of this is our hearts.

Galatians 5:13 For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord who is the Spirit makes us more and more like Him as we are changed into His glorious image.

The problem with contemporary Christian living is not learning how to do things right, but how to do the right things.

The problem is not how to discover what love looks like, but how to love by the Spirit. This is absolutely crucial that, if we came to life by the Spirit, then we need to learn how to walk by the Spirit and in doing that, it is inseparable from loving in the Spirit. For many a believer there has been a separation of their walk with God and their love for man kind. How can you walk in the Spirit and not love in the Spirit. Is God confused? Surely not. It is us, we need to conform to the will of God through His Holy Spirit.

Walking in the Spirit is being relevant all the way to ground roots. Not walking with our spiritual noses in the air and tripping over those who God loves. NO.

Even Jesus being led by the Holy Spirit was relevant all the way from kings to peasants.

Some guidelines on how to walk in the Spirit.

1. **Set your minds** on the things of the Spirit

Romans 8:5 *Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.*

Remember that it is ones thoughts that leads you to action. So consider what fills your mind.

2. **Put to death** the deeds of the body by the Spirit

Romans 8:13 *For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live.*

The person who has been regenerated by the Spirit is not stuck in sin. By through the Spirit one can resist the pull of the flesh.

3. **Trust His guidance.** We have to walk by faith.

2 Corinthians 5:7 *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

We must believe that since we have come under the gracious way of God's Spirit, sin will no longer have dominion over us and that we can now be led in a life of victory and encourage those around us in the same manner.

4. **Act on the Holy Spirits leading.**

Romans 8:14-16 *For as many as are led(functioning) by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

Notice that this was not the first step to take. If this was the first step, quite possibly all our actions would be grounded in the works of the flesh, our own human efforts and not the fruit of the Spirit. It is only after we have completely submitted to His authority, by transforming the way we think, cutting sin from our lives, and trusting Him fully in the fact that we cannot do it in our own strength. It is then that we can act accurately upon His guidance and leading.

Only when we act with that spiritual preparation, will we be able to say these words:

Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

And when we have reached this place, we will be fruitful, not only on sporadic occasions, but in all the seasons of our lives. Carrying the very essence of Jesus Himself to the world through the Holy Spirit. Denying self will no longer be a difficult thing to do, in fact an honor and privilege to lay all of ones life down for the Lord.

5. **Embrace your Godly identity.**

Romans 8:15-17 *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

Know the Fatherhood of God by the Spirit. With a stable identity in the Father we will be drawn to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Knowing who you are affirms your purpose and you won't waver and falter for every storm.

6. **Pray in the Spirit.**

Romans 8:26-28 *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

Make it a daily habit to pray in the Spirit. Pray in tongues daily as in this way you edify your spirit and pray accurately through the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 6:18 *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints*

Jude 20 *But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,*

1 Corinthians 14:15 *What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.*

Accepting the Holy Spirit and walking in the Spirit means that we allow Him to fill our spirits with His presence, allowing Him to control our lives, so that every step we take in life will truly be a reflection of godly character. We cannot be an effective disciple of Jesus without the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9-11 *But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to Him at all. And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.*

How to keep the Fire of the Holy Spirit burning:

Hunger. A hunger is formed when a stomach is empty. Ask God to cultivate a hunger within your belly for His power to be released in your life. That will mean that you will have to concisely stop filling yourself with ungodly things. For it is the things of this world that stills the hunger for the Lord.

Renew your mind with the Word. Having the Word of God ingrained in your heart daily restores and refreshes you in your confidence in God and understanding of all Jesus has done for you and for the world. Filling our minds with all that is around us even religious activities clouds the very core of our sight from what is true. Guarding your mind is like keeping the wood that you have collected for the fire dry.

Cultivate a friendship with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a person. We need the presence of God in our lives, so we need to spend time with Him. As we make it a habit to spend time with the Holy Spirit every day, we will learn to hear and see what the Father is saying and doing.

Risk. Don't be afraid to step out boldly for the Lord. As long as you go out in love and humility. There is many expecting a touch from God, and it could be through you. Don't let your disobedience

delay the work of God in another's life. Walking in the Spirit is quite often equated to when Peter took a step on the water. He calls you into the unknown, not to humiliate you, but to empower and do majestic things through you.

Fellowship with other disciples of Jesus Christ. Be intentional to build relationships with those who are walking closely with the Spirit. It ignites something in our own hearts when we relate around the Lord and all that He is doing. Stir up the gift within each other and share of Gods goodness all the time. Keep Him at the centre of all fellowship.

Now that we have a brief understanding of walking in the Spirit, there is a warning to which we all should heed.

There is a great resistance and opposition to the working of the Holy Spirit that has crept into the Church like a cancer and causing such confusion disillusionment, and separation in many. It has become very prevalent in our current generation and we need to address and deal with it, but especially if it rises in our own hearts. It seems noble, even often mistaken for the truth as it comes with a very "spiritual" backdrop, and that is the:

Individual spirit - One who walks in isolation and separation from the body in their hearts. With the motivation or attitude saying that I will do Gods will my way.

Galatians 5:13 *For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

Apart from functioning outside of the church, you will find people even in the church with an individual spirit, and the motive is to build around themselves rather than for the Lord. Its very subtle and quite hard to pin down as it often hides behind a spiritual backdrop.

To give you an example of this, if you read in the book of **1Samuel 15** you will find that Saul was instructed by the prophet Samuel that he was to utterly destroy the Amalekites, however Saul felt it better

to keep the king and all the best livestock alive. He disobeyed God and rose up in an independent spirit.

Some Characters of an independent spirit:

- Walks in Partial obedience to suit oneself.
- Always moving around, never planted.
- Building altars for yourself, self-praise.
- Always blame shifting, never taking responsibility.
- Has a willingness to compromise Gods direction under pressure.
- Always struggles to walk with the vision, dreams and desires of others.
- Will always be the exception (*not included in the rule, group, does not behave in the expected way*). No matter what's expected you will do it your way anyway.
- Always threatened by authority.
- Won't receive counsel.
- Quick to escape from a difficult situation.
- They will always build little followings around themselves.
- Will often misuse the gifting's of God for selfish gain.
- They always want to be in control, and have an issue with submission.

Dear friend, please inspect your heart in this matter. Do not simply brush past this point. Be reminded of what Paul wrote to the Galatians and be mindful that we are not above it, but should humbly guard and protect our hearts in this matter.

Galatians 5:16-17 *I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.*

What we don't realise when we walk in this spirit is what happens within us.

An individual spirit stunts your personal growth

You would think that someone who focuses solely on their own self-development, worth, dreams and desires would be a stable, healthy, and growing person, but it just isn't the case.

The Bible continuously reminds us to value others and consider their interests above our own.

Philippians 2:3 *Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.*

Although sin tempts us to do otherwise, this is what it means to be a good, moral human being, and how to function as the church. It's in us to care, and when we violate this need, we violate in essence who we are.

An individual spirit destroys personal meaning

One of the most important questions that you can ever ask yourself is "What is my purpose in life." I know it sounds like a question that focuses on self. However, there is nothing wrong with having individuality. The problem comes when we think of ourselves as the centre of the universe, but this takes away all meaning in life. There is no sense in growing as an individual if you have no way to help others through your growth.

Community gives us a reason to excel in life. Think about a parent who sacrifices their own goals for the sake of their children. Considering the needs of others helps us find meaning in life.

For Christians, our meaning comes from Christ and living out his mission on this earth, and through this lens we can figure out what that means for us as individuals.

An individual spirit takes away from the image of God

God has given each of us different talents, personalities, and insights that all represent a unique part of who God is, which means we individually and holistically represents Him. As image bearers of God, when a person removes oneself from the church whether physically or simply in the heart, a piece of that image goes with you along with the talents that God has given you. And you end up distorting Gods image in and through your life.

An individual spirit works against the mandate of the church

As the church Jesus commissioned us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all. But when I think that my needs, desires, and well-being is all that matters, it stands in conflicts with the mandate of the church to reach the world. We are all like puzzle pieces. We each have a unique shape and unique colours that when left alone offer no clear picture at all, but when placed together can offer a beautiful image an image of Christ. When we resist selfish individualistic thinking and keep Jesus and the mandate at the centre then we will fully come alive.

I'm sure you can see how sly the enemy is, and how he wants to pervert Gods plan and ways within us

If you want to make absolutely certain that your heart is pure in this regard, then simply submit to the body and serve. For it is in service especially in the places of no public honor or bright shiny lights that the heart is truly revealed. You see from the heart flows the issues of life, so turn open the right tap and you will see what comes out.

Conclusion:

Walking in the Spirit is crucial if we want to be effective disciples and ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A daily awareness of His presence and a daily reliance on His guidance and instructions will keep us humble and in touch with Gods will for our lives. Search Him out, and grow in your relationship with the Spirit, but above all, learn to obey Him. We serve a mighty and wonderful God, and what an honor and privilege to know that He sent us His Holy Spirit for this time.



Chapter Four

The Spiritual Battle Ground

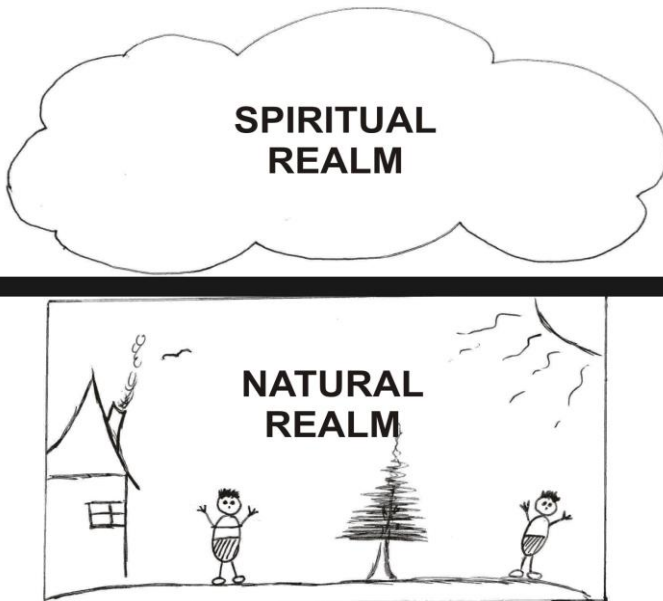
There is an undeniable war between good and evil, light and darkness. Spiritual warfare exists in the unseen, supernatural dimension, where God is all powerful and Satan is in revolt. As any Christian soon discovers, although spiritual warfare is unseen, it's absolutely real. To understand the spiritual battle ground, we need to begin with acknowledging that we are in a war. As Christians, we are in a spiritual battle of some sort on a daily basis. In warfare, battles are fought on different fronts, for different reasons, and with varying degrees of intensity. The same is true in the spiritual battle ground. Our spiritual battles and warfare are real, even though we cannot physically see the enemy. But, we can learn how the battles are fought and how they impact our lives on a daily basis. And with that, live with godly strategy on how to live a victorious life in Christ and stand together with others in time of war. So let's explore this often unknown territory of the spiritual battle ground.

1 Peter 5:8-9 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

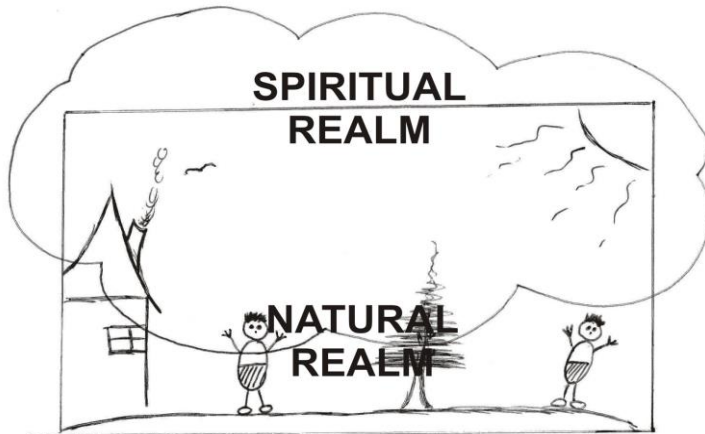
It is simply so clear by this scripture that we are facing an enemy that is against us, and we need to be deliberate in standing against his onslaughts.

We have to ask ourselves, "Why should we fight?" It will do us no good to educate ourselves on the battle if we see no reason for the fight. War is very controversial today in the physical realm. So those attitudes, beliefs and convictions will transfer over to the way you approach the spiritual battle if we are not careful and enlightened.

To start off we need to have an understanding for the spiritual realm. It is a MASSIVE subject, however I will share only what we need to know for this subject. There are 2 obvious dimensions; the natural which is earth water sky where we live, and the supernatural where God resides as well as the enemy. Now for many we often think there is a clear divide between the two. Earth down here, the spiritual realm far up in the sky, and the two operate independent from each other.



This view is incorrect, for the simple reason if you look at the make up of man, we are spirits in bodies. What a close relation between the natural and spiritual. It is the same for the natural and spiritual realms. The spiritual realm is not bound by the boundaries of earth, however is in close relation with the natural. And we see throughout scripture many references where the spiritual dimension is closely related to earth and not merely billions of light years away in our measuring stick. eg. Jacobs dream of the ladder to heaven, Jesus on the mount of configuration, Steven seeing the Fathers throne as he is being stoned. And many more.



Understanding that these realms are in each other's space helps us realise that there is a battle going on regardless of our opinion. So we are either going to be victors or victims.

Ephesians 6:12 *For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

Wow, now that sounds super intimidating maybe even a bit scary, however take courage for we are on the victorious side, for through the blood of Jesus Christ we have victory over sin and death, and can withstand the enemies perils.

To fight an enemy you need to know what and who you are dealing with.

Who is our enemy?

Spiritual warfare is a reality of the Christian life. But remember, we know the ending – our side wins. Since the Devil has already lost, he has nothing to lose in trying to take as many people with him in defeat.

The devil “lucifer” who was a fallen angel from heaven, a cherub “the highest of angels”, he was jealous of the living God and was overtaken with pride because of his beauty, position, and the desire to be like God.

Ezekiel 28:12-17 *This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.*

Isaiah 14:12-15 *How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit.*

Revelation 12:9 *The great dragon was hurled down that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*

He is called:

Satan **1 Corinthians 7:5**

The Devil – slanderer **1 John 3:8**

Lucifer - son of the morning **Isaiah 14:12**

Beelzebub - Lord of demons **Matthew 12:24**

Belial - lawless **2 Corinthians 6:15**

The evil one **1 John 5:19**

The tempter **1 Thessalonians 3:5**

The prince of this world **John 12:31**

The god of this age **2 Corinthians 4:4**

The prince of the power of the air **Ephesians 2:2**

The accuser of the brethren **Revelation 12:10**

The angel of light - false light **2 Corinthians 11:14**

A serpent **Revelation 12:9**

A dragon **Revelation 12:3**

The Nature of Satan

1. He is a created angelic being. He was created as part of the angelic realm and was in the highest in rank of them all.
2. He is an enemy of righteousness. He is a murderer a liar and accuser and our adversary
3. He is a limited creature. He is limited by God. He is not God's equal. He is not omnipresent (everywhere at once) omniscient (knows all), omnipotent (has unlimited power) or infinite in any way.

What is his strategy and how does he work?

Satan wants nothing more than to enter certain areas of your life so he can gain a stronghold. When he gains a stronghold in your life he can cause chaos and bring much damage to your life as a believer. He'll try anything to throw you off center, distract you from your focus, and render you ineffective for the Kingdom of God.

Satan has many ways that he comes at us, and we need to be aware of them and ready to counter them.

1. Satan is a liar and is the father of lies.

John 8:44 *He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

When he speaks he lies, since the beginning of time he has twisted the truth and deceived many. He often will adjust the truth with a minor falsehood in order for you to think that it might still pass as truth. But it is in that 1^o alteration on the compass of truth that one loses course.

2. He blinds the minds of unbelievers.

2 Corinthians 4:4 *Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.*

He does all he can to hide the truth from the world. Even by keeping Gods children ineffective in sharing the gospel.

3. He walks as an angel of light.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 *These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve.*

He appears as a righteous being, influencing many to do the same with unholy ungodly motives leading many astray. Appearing to do good, but with a hook of destruction

4. He does signs and wonders.

2 Thessalonians 2:9 *This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles.*

We have to realise that the devil is a master counterfeit and has had many generations to practise all his tricks. He does so many things that seem so real that it can be hard to see the difference, even for a believer. And we need to be extremely watchful and discern fake from real.

Matthew 24:24 *For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones.*

5. He tempts people to sin.

2 Corinthians 11:3 *But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

All the way from the garden of eden with Eve, even tempting Jesus whilst he was fasting in the wilderness. This is one of his favorite tools in the box, laying biscuit crumbs on your road hoping you will pick it up, to ultimately lead you astray and destroy you.

6. He pulls the seed of God word from the heart.

Mark 4:14-15 *The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts*

If one is not deliberate in nurturing the seed of the word, the enemy stands ready to pull that seed from your heart. And he often does this with distractions immediately after the word was planted, for he knows that once it takes root in the heart, it's harder for him to uproot.

7. He often causes sickness and disease.

Luke 13:16 *So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?"*

As Jesus discerned in this woman, that it was a direct effect of Satan's hand upon her body. So he often attacks people through illness and diseases. And so doing keeping many in constant bondage and defeat.

9. He fights against the spread of the word.

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 *Dear brothers and sisters, after we were separated from you for a little while, we tried very hard to come back because of our intense longing to see you again. We wanted very much to come to you, and I, Paul, tried again and again, but Satan prevented us.*

Satan hates evangelism and discipleship, and he will throw every obstacle he can in the way of people who are separated to the work of the Lords ministry.

10. Satan accuses Christians before God.

Revelation 12:10 *Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.*

He loves holding up all the evidences that states how we have failed and fall short. He is a master tittle tale. Satan's defeat is certain however his accusations haven't ceased. The wonderful thing is that Jesus is interceding for us at the right hand of the Father. Hallelujah.

These are clear indications on how the enemy works, and we can sharpen our discernment and act upon his onslaughts.

Satan is seeking to oppose God's plan by promoting evil in every way possible.

He works through the world in which he has great freedom and power

1 John 5:19 *We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one.*

I mentioned to you that satan is seeking to get a stronghold in our lives, we now know how he plans to do that, and here are some areas of our lives that he targets to get a hold:

1. Your heart

There's a reason why God's Word tells us:

Proverbs 4:23 *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*

Satan knows he has an entry point into your life if God is not first in your heart. Jesus made this clear when He was asked what is the greatest commandment and responded by saying:

Luke 10:27 *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind*

Satan's greatest desire is to prevent you from giving God all of your heart so he will constantly distract you through people, things, and desires that he places in front of you. Anything that he can use to take the focus away from God becomes an idol. He pollutes our hearts with sensual things like money, food, recreational experiences, substances etc. we need to be on guard and protect the area of of heart where the Lord needs to remain first and foremost.

2. Your thoughts

All the enemy wants is for you and me to look, act and think like the world does. It's amazing how many people profess to know God and follow Him, yet their thinking patterns are just like those of anyone else in the world. Satan loves that. He wants you to be so absorbed with the ways of the world that you are clueless about what God's Word says. And in so doing, you become ineffective as a Christian.

Romans 12:2 *Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. **Then** you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

But Satan would rather have us in mental anguish by listening to the world, rather than the word of God. Guard your everyday thinking by soaking it in Scripture and cutting out distractions . It's the only way to keep Satan and his worldly ideas from entering in.

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.*

You see if the devil has us in our thought realm then we are easily filled with worry and concern, which leads to stress and anxiety, which can result in illnesses like depression, heart problems and other physical and physiological ailments.

Philippians 4:6-7 *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. **Then** you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

3. Your speech

James 3:6 *And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.*

God wants us to use our mouths to bring life and hope to those around us. But Satan would rather have you and me blowing our testimony by the way we speak. A few critical words here, some strong opinions there, complaining, gossiping a bit of swearing here and there, and all we have done is given the enemy the permission to make us people who tear others apart and sound no different than unbelievers. Satan knows the damage it can do if we don't subject our tongues to the Lord.

Ephesians 4:29 *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.*

Are your words always an encouragement to others, spreading hope and life rather than criticizing or gossiping. We need to be vigilant in the way that we speak. Don't think that because you have a very close friend, that you can just say whatever you want. It's often where you feel most relaxed that the truth of your heart pops out of your mouth.

4. Your body

We are made in the image of God, so every time the enemy looks at us he sees the image of God, and hates it. So he does everything he possibly can to get you and me to destroy, break down, disrespect, change, pervert that image so as to taint God's image in us, trying to get back at God. And we often fall for it in many ways.

Romans 12:1 *And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship Him.*

Consider this verse intensely and ask yourself whether God will find your body acceptable, are we really glorifying God or ourselves through it?

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.*

The enemy knows our body is a temple, and if he can get us to desecrate it in any ways or form, we end up mocking God.

We know who satan is, what his strategy is, how and where he attacks, but we really need to know how to stand against these attacks.

How do we withstand him?

2 Corinthians 10:4 *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds*

Firstly be assured satan will not win.

The path to victory in this warfare is to hold fast to Christ who has already dealt the decisive blow.

1 John 3:8: *The Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil.*

Hebrews 2:14: *Christ took on human nature that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil.*

Colossians 2:15: *God disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in Him.*

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.*

Armor Armor Armor

Ephesians 6:11-18 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

The attack is real and satans weapons are real and can cause huge damage. We can't just run in with guns blazing and have no protection of our own. But God has made a way for us, by providing a package of armor for us to stand firm against the attacks.

Resist Resist Resist!

James 4:7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

How do we do that? Here is how they did it according to

Revelation 12:11 They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

We resist the enemy when we embrace the triumph of Christ by his blood on the cross. Living fully in the victory of the cross, not partially by getting stuck at the door of salvation and not walking into the fullness of Gods kingdom. When we speak the truth in faith, and declare how it has transformed our lives to all who need to hear it. By not being partial in our faith in any way.

1 Peter 5:9 *Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.*

Remember the enemy is a bully and the only way to defeat a bully is to resist his taunting by being strong in the Lord.

Pray Pray Pray

The bible highlights prayer as an integral key to every battle.

Ephesians 6:17-18 *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; **praying** always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints*

Do not be outwitted by Satan. God sees behind enemy lines and tells us through the Holy Spirit all we need to know to not be ignorant of Satan's plans.

Luke 21:36 *Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.*

Even Jesus fought against the devil on Peter's behalf with the weapon of prayer.

Luke 22:31-32 *Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.*

And He still does the same for us today.

Romans 8:34 *Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and He is sitting in the place*

of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

Holy Spirit Power

We have the Holy Spirit who through His wisdom and strength guides us in battle. It's vital that our ear is attentive to His voice and obedient to His instruction.

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

Romans 8:26 *The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*

The Word of God

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

We have the very word of God as the most powerful weapon to hold up against the enemy. The key is to remind the devil of the truth of God's word for he cannot resist or stand against God's word. Therefore we need to know the word, declare the word, live the word and take our victory through the word.

Praise Praise Praise

Praise invites God's Presence. He dwells close to us when we praise Him. And praise is a powerful weapon as well. It makes the enemy flee. It pushes back the darkness that surrounds, and blocks the attacks and hissing lies over us.

Evil will not stick around if we're praising our God, who will fight our battles for us. In the story of Jehoshaphat, we see God miraculously defeat the enemy, because of the people's obedience to praise Him.

2 Chronicles 20:22 *As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.*

We see the same power of praise manifest with Paul and Silas. Now you know why the enemy wants to block the body of Christ from praising God.

Acts 16:25-26 *But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.*

Remember and don't forget that you are a child of the Living God, the creator of the Universe, who through salvation in the redemptive power of the blood of Jesus Christ has made us His own. And therefore we have the authority of heaven to stand against the viles of the devil and live in victory.

Life on this earth is often hard, there is many things that happen to us, Jesus himself said that the last days will be perilous times, and we are part of it. Christians are not exempt of the troubles of life, we just have the solution in dealing with it. So amidst the normal challenges, pains and heart aches of life that we face, we need to somehow gauge when we are facing normal circumstance or a clear spiritual onslaught.

Here are some tips to know when you are under attack.

How do we know when there is a clear attack?

Sudden or extreme onslaughts of troubles, losses, trials on many levels

This is a ruthless attack that Satan often brings against believers. It seems to come out of nowhere, and it's just one thing after another. It's hard to even see straight, you feel your life is suddenly spinning out of control. All the way from health issues to things breaking, relationships under massive strain and the list goes on. Job's life is an example to us of what this may be like, you can

read this in **Job1-2** As we know from the book of Job, this righteous man stood strong. Though it seemed he was losing everything dear to him, he knew that God held him secure through all the loss and hardship around him.

God will never allow the enemy to have full control, he doesn't have the final say over our lives. We may face battles and attacks in this world, but we can trust in our Mighty God to be our shelter through it all. So if there is a huge amount of things hitting at once it's possible you are under attack.

Attacks on your health or life

We know from God's word that the enemy wants nothing more than to "steal, kill, and destroy" our lives and all we love

John 10:10 *The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.*

He is a thief, a roaring lion, and preys on God's people. He desires to silence our voices and take us out of this world to shut off the light of God's love and hope through Christ. Many of us may have experienced near death experiences, sudden and terrible illness, or holding loved ones who were at the brink of heaven. And yet God intervened to keep us here longer. There's many stories in the Bible of God's people under great physical attack and danger, and so many miracles that God performed to bring them safely through. Even when it didn't make sense. Even when it seemed to be the end.

Daniel faced lions in the lion's den in **Daniel 6**. His attackers thought he'd be gone by morning, but God intervened and shut the mouth of every lion. Be assured, God is still shutting mouths today. If you're facing attacks, and feel your life has been threatened by illness or even death, our God is a miracle worker. There's no reason to fear, stand strong through prayer and His word.

High levels of temptation

Though we live with daily struggles and temptations all around us, many times there are spiritual attacks on our lives that put us at greater risk to go astray. He will throw many things in your path, evil thoughts, lust, opportunities to sin, old connections, bad places, you feel like there is an overwhelming amount of temptation around you. It is a battle, a ruthless one, and the enemy will fight hard against us. He desires not only to bring us down, but also all those around us. He loves to see stories across headlines of believers who have fallen, who have made terrible choices of sin. He loves disunity among Christians and wants nothing more than to break up families and every relationship we hold dear. You must stand strong and stay aware. Don't give him a foothold into your life. He'll come in and wreak havoc and try to lead us astray faster than we even know what happened.

Often when we find ourselves weary, already weakened, we're on his radar. Jesus Himself is our greatest example of this when He faced the devil's temptation in the wilderness. He was fasting, He was hungry, he was physically weakened, and tired, and of course the enemy jumped on that time to bring on the temptations to a greater degree than ever. One slip-up is all he was looking for. One wrong move. One "yes" to sin. But Jesus stood strong and resisted his attacks, every single one. He spoke God's word out loud, He held fast to truth and stepped over Satan's vicious lies and attacks. And He leads us to the same today. When you start sensing strong pulls away from God's truth and ways, you can know who is at the bottom of it all.

Overwhelming emotions of despair, darkness, and fear

Many may struggle with anxiety and fear in this life. Many may be facing depression or mental illness. But often the attacks of spiritual forces against our lives raises the intensity to even greater degree than normal day to day struggles. It's ruthless, unrelenting, we feel alone and completely overwhelmed and stuck in deep fear and despair, often leading to the point of taking ones life, or making very rash unwise decisions. Recognize this darkness for what it is and stand strong! It's a cruel trap, but there's hope from the pit

because of Christ. He is the One who can lift us straight out of that darkness, He is the One who can calm our fears, and give us strength we didn't even know was possible.

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.*

If you find yourself running scared or stuck in the pit of despair, stop long enough to think who is the one pinning you down. Don't fall into the enemy's deceptive attacks. Make a choice to stand and resist him. He has no lasting power over you and God will help you stand firm for the road still ahead.

Dulled spirituality, deep confusion, feelings of condemnation and guilt

This last one can be difficult to see through at times. Because this attack can be so subtle and can happen slowly over time. But when we stop and look closely, we can call it out for what it is. A slow, constant pulling away from God's truth will leave us feeling confused, irritated, conflicted, and facing generalized feelings of guilt and condemnation that we just can't seem to shake off. It works just like a python constrictor, slowly squeezing the air and movement out. you've lost your desire to press in and pray. Or you're too busy, you've got too much to do, even good things, you're not in God's word. you're out of fellowship with believers somehow believing the lie that you can do this life thing all on your own. And yet feel a dark cloud of confusion and guilt that follows you around and won't go away. Bitterness sets in, conflict and broken relationships that you once cared about. You don't even know what to believe anymore and have started listening more to what the world says is right than what God says.

1 Corinthians 14:33 *For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.*

It's a trap of the devil and you need to get out now. Stir yourself to action and know that God's power is greater to break through that trap of condemnation, confusion and dullness.

Ephesians 6:10-11 *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

Jesus has come and conquered. The war is already won in the heavens. Every day victory is achieved by knowing, believing and understanding and actively dealing with the battles that we are enduring daily. Do you want all that God has for you on this earth right now, or do you want to wait until you get to heaven to receive the victory and blessings? I believe we can absolutely walk in the fullness of God's blessing for our lives right now on this earth, but it will take some active warfare, as the enemy doesn't want us to live in God's fullness.

2 Timothy 2:3-5 *Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them. And athletes cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules.*

Conclusion:

Satan is the enemy of your soul, your marriage, your family, your health, your career, your finances, and your safety. He works tirelessly against peace, justice, righteousness, and goodness. It's important to know your enemy, however don't focus on him, just know him and his strategies. We are to keep our eyes on Jesus Christ the author and finisher of our faith. Let me leave you with this; you and I have the victory through Jesus Christ, stand on it, live by it, and teach other to do the same.

Chapter Five

Jesus Leadership

I'm sure that you have heard this saying; "everything rises and falls upon leadership". Well, true it is indeed if one looks at how countries are run, wars are fought and how families either grow or crash. This too is true when it comes to the church. As it is a broad body of believers that requires leadership on all different levels for it to grow, flourish and leave a kingdom footprint. The challenging question is: How should we lead? What does godly leadership look like? Well in this chapter we will investigate the greatest example of leadership ever left for us, and that is the life and leadership of Jesus Christ Himself. So tighten your laces and let's navigate the terrain of Jesus' Leadership.

Before we start, we have to recognise that God uses all kinds of leaders with different styles and skills to get the task done. If you had to compare Moses' leadership with Jesus', Moses would fall short in many ways. However did a tremendous job in leading Israel from Egypt. But what a wonderful reality to know that God sent Jesus to the earth to show us the way to eternal life as well as how to live a godly life in the form of a man. It is vital to note that Jesus was set on the same playing field as we are, and went through what we are facing as human beings.

Jesus, the son of God left heaven and became a man. He did not pretend to be a man, he became a man. From the very beginning, the Lord intended to reproduce Himself in our lives.

Hebrews 2:10-11 *God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory. And it was only right that He should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation. So now Jesus and the ones He makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them His brothers and sisters.*

Jesus suffered the same life-events we suffer, He worked and sweat and laughed and cried and experienced life as we do. His path to holiness is our path as well, He took no shortcuts. Our ears can be trained to hear the Spirit and our eyes can be trained to read the scriptures in the same ways Jesus did.

Jesus did however constantly through word and deed reminded the disciples that the world's view of leadership was not His view.

Matthew 20:25-26 *But Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant.”*

The world loves great leaders who stand out from the crowd and are to a degree untouchable. Jesus chose to identify with us in person so as to encourage us that we can become like Him. We have to ask ourselves; “Do I really believe I can be transformed into the Master’s image? Do I want to follow His example or merely embrace Him as a Savior?”

Jesus came to show us how to live. He came to reproduce Himself in us, and He did this through raising disciples. His saving action on the cross is the work of the Son of God. We cannot pay the price for anyone’s sin, but we can teach others to live lead and be like Jesus.

John 6:38 *For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will.*

I believe this scripture sums up the heart of Christ's leadership as we move on from here, and should be the baseline for our own personal leadership. What an incredible example of someone who has full authority, but submits to His Father's will and desire above His own. It's clear that Jesus submitted His own human will, and chose to lead on the foundation of the Father's will for Him. If you can start in your leadership either first in your heart, your home, workplace, or whomever you are responsible for, to submit “your will” to God's will, you will see massive change.

With this scripture in mind, let's look at where Jesus started and progressed in His leadership.

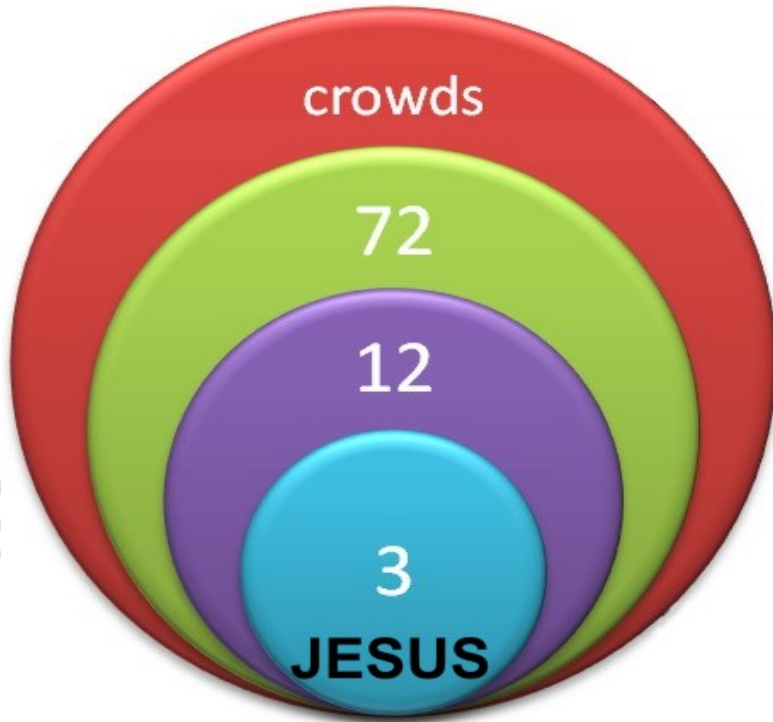
There is so much in leadership today that is focused on reaching the masses. Many feel that to be a successful leader one has to speak at big conferences, host popular events, publish bestselling books, write successful blogs, or have a massive social media following. Simply put, their goal is breadth. They want to extend their influence to as many people as possible. Now there is nothing wrong with that, but Jesus strangely had a much different approach.

His goal was not reaching the masses or popularity. In fact, as strange as it sounds to us today, He actively discouraged the publicity and all the "Facebook posts". On more than one occasion, after performing amazing miracles, he told those who witnessed or experienced it, not to tell anybody.

Luke 5:14 *Then Jesus instructed him not to tell anyone what had happened.*

What a contrast to what we are encouraged to do today. Thinking that if the world doesn't know every action or detail then there is not impact. Well we see a different version through Jesus' leadership. Instead, Jesus focused on true depth and long term impact and focused on smaller groups than we might imagine or have come to expect from Him.

Jesus had a core group of 3 disciples (close brothers) where He focused on deep transparency and accountability. He then focused on the 12 where He focused on walking together with them rubbing off His heart, principles and Gods plan in an intimate fashion. Then there was the larger group of 72 that He focused on teaching and leading them into serving within the crowds through witnessing and action. And Jesus also spent time teaching the larger crowds through stories and manifesting miracles in their midst.



1. **Jesus invested in himself.** This is where all leadership starts. Self-leadership precedes team leadership and public influence. If you can't lead yourself, you can't and shouldn't lead others.

Jesus time and time again shows us His self-discipline. From fasting for 40 days, to often withdrawing to quiet places to pray and to be strengthened by His Father.

Matthew 14:23 *After sending them home, He went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while He was there alone.*

Luke 5:16 *But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.*

The wilderness referring to a place without distractions, where He could focus solely on His Father and His will.

2. **He confided in the three.** Jesus had an inner circle that comprised of Peter, James, and John. He took them on special outings and He allowed them to witness His greatest glory and His deepest emotional challenges.

Mark 9:2-3 Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed, and His clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them.

Mark 14:33-34 He took Peter, James, and John with him, and He became deeply troubled and distressed. He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

They were His closest friends and confidants.

3. **He trained and invested in the twelve.** He chose the twelve disciples to be with Him. He taught them and also gave them assignments. However, He also shared with them His daily life, and through this fellowship He poured out His heart into them.

Mark 3:14 Then He appointed twelve of them and called them His apostles. They were to accompany Him, and He would send them out to preach,

Because of this, He entrusted them with power to do the work He Himself had done. In fact, He promised them which includes us, that we would actually do greater works.

John 14:12-14 I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

4. **He mobilized the seventy-two** Apart from the twelve Jesus had a larger group to whom He gave specific assignments. He sent them out two-by-two. He asked for a BIG commitment. He gave them virtually no resources. Yet He demanded that they perform miracles which they did.

Luke 10:1 *The Lord now chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places He planned to visit.*

17 When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to Him, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!" "Yes," He told them, "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning! Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you. But don't rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven.

5. **He taught the crowds.** Yes, Jesus had a public ministry. He occasionally spoke to the thousands. However, he didn't run to these groups or "tickled their ears". He confronted their way of life, challenged their thinking, and often taught in parables to keep it simple and understandable even for children.

Jesus' leadership strategy evidently worked well. Within a generation, His followers turned the world upside down.

Acts 17:6 *Not finding them there, they dragged out Jason and some of the other believers instead and took them before the city council. "Paul and Silas have caused trouble all over the world," they shouted, "and now they are here disturbing our city, too.*

Now we can see where Jesus focused on in His leadership was with purpose and intent and had great results. Let's take courage in our hearts, that it's not always in the quantity but rather in the quality that one builds a true heritage, and that great impact can come from even just a few.

The style that Jesus taught and modelled to us was not about status or power. He did not teach techniques, but rather grew character and hearts of integrity. He grew His disciples to be servants with good character. He modelled servant hood and challenged his disciples to follow that example to be like him.

Let's look at some of the principles that Jesus lived by as He walked on earth and lead His followers that makes His such an incredible leader.

1. Servant leadership was His baseline.

The King of kings was willing to wash feet. He left the head of the table and washed the feet of his disciples even during his most trying time.

John 13:4-5 *So He got up from the table, took off His robe, wrapped a towel around His waist, and poured water into a basin. Then He began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel He had around Him.*

Great leaders today see themselves as serving their teams, equipping, encouraging and coaching them to realize their potential. Leadership is about others, not you.

2. Jesus embraced humility.

As Jesus began his ministry, he made it very clear that there was a greater power at work. The fact that he humbled himself and placed himself under the care of John the Baptist for baptism showed that Jesus was going to teach his followers that submission does not mean weakness. Leading from a place of humility keeps your own agenda at bay and promotes the plan of the Father.

3. Jesus a team builder.

Jesus needed a Team, and so He built a team. He built a small team of 12 disciples and larger support team who helped him in his ministry. Jesus doesn't intend for your life to be a solo mission.

4. Jesus shares responsibility and authority.

Jesus fully trusted His team of disciples with the kingdom mandate.

Luke 9:1-2 *One day Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them power and authority to cast out all demons and to heal all diseases. Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick*

He very purposefully prepared the disciples to take over the ministry. He pushed people beyond what they felt they were capable of doing, and then eventually gave his mission to them to run with.

Matthew 28:18-20 *Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

5. Jesus was willing to invest in people others would have dismissed.

Consider the disciples. They were not the “religious” elite, yet Jesus used them to start His church.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 *Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world’s eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.*

Yes qualifications are important, but beyond that seek for people that have a heart of integrity, humble, teachable and willing to serve.

6. Jesus cast vision and was focused on the vision.

Jesus cast vision with clarity, simplicity, and directness.

Mark 1:15 *"The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"*

Not long after Jesus began his ministry, John was arrested. When this happened Jesus spoke these words with clarity and strength. Regardless of the persecutions or distractions, Jesus kept on the mission God had called Him to complete.

Habakkuk 2:2 *Then the Lord answered me and said:" Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.*

As a leader it's vital to have a vision, keep it simple, declare it and live by it. Write it on your heart. Visit it often and remind those around you about it often.

7. Jesus handled distractions with grace.

We see how Jesus reacts when things come at Him that was not on His "schedule". When the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years touched His garment, Jesus stopped to heal her, even though headed to a definite purpose.

In Mark 10:48 Jesus was passing through Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd. As they were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." Once again, he was not a distraction.

We need to learn to enjoy and embrace the journey of life, and not be so focused on the end goal that we miss the journey and

the beauty of the journey. Jesus showed us the people on the wayside was as important as those at his end destination.

8. Jesus values people highly.

Jesus valued people and relationship higher than rules, regulations and programs. He was willing to jeopardize Himself personally by breaking the “rules” to help someone in need, like healing people on the Sabbath. Jesus had a huge heart for people, and set his own comfort aside to serve people. He showed us the value of relationship above religious law.

9. Jesus dealt with crisis head-on.

Often a crisis will cripple many people. However, Jesus often took a crisis head-on.

Mark 1:30-31 *“Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.”*

As a leader you can't afford to ignore a crisis. Deal with it. Make yourself available and trust God for His leading in it, whether praying for the sick, dealing with relational trouble, or correcting someone who is wrong. Jesus was not afraid of doing the right thing. Jesus showed us to be peacemakers and not peace keepers.

Matthew 16:22 *Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”*

10. Jesus was all about empowering others.

Throughout His ministry we can see how Jesus taught and encouraged people to go out, healed the sick and sent them out, equipped His disciples and told them to go into the world. Jesus never held back on His gifting or boasted in His gifting compared

to others. He never downplayed the weak, but rather built them up. Jesus always saw the potential in people and encouraged that. Jesus was very secure in who He was, so that nothing or nobody threatened Him. We too as Gods children should not be threatened by anything or anybody by holding back what God has put in us, fearing that others will surpass us. Jesus celebrated the fact that we would do greater things than He did. We should rather bring all that is within us to the front, build, teach, encourage, and equip others. And celebrate when we see others stand in victory.

11. Jesus lived and walked in simplicity.

Throughout His ministry Jesus showed us to walk and live in simplicity. His teaching was simple, telling stories that even the children could relate to. His life was simple being a carpenter by trade. Even in teaching us how to pray, He kept it simple. For many of us, we feel the need to project our knowledge, sound all holier than thou, and tell everybody what we can do. Jesus never did that, lets learn from Him and keep our lives and leadership in Him simple and to the point without compromise.

12. Jesus ministered with compassion.

On numerous occasions in scripture we read where Jesus was filled with compassion and we see the miracles happened. Jesus didn't tolerate people, not even the prostitutes or tax collectors, no He celebrated people no matter who they were.

Matthew 15:32 *And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "feel compassion for the people*

You and I need to break down the distinctions that we have in our hearts towards people, break down the separation of the classes that is held in our hearts, only then will you be able to minister with compassion for the people. Jesus had the ability to look through the masks and painted faces to see the truth of the heart, it is only through the Holy Spirit we can do the same, and with love minister truth and life into peoples lives.

13. Jesus was accountable

Jesus never did anything that didn't carry His Father's blessing. In everything He did, He would consult Father God.

John 5:19 *So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does."*

The greatest protection for you and me is to be accountable, firstly to God and then to our fellow man. Open your heart and life to someone who has authority and input into your life. Even Jesus asked that the cup would pass Him by, but took God's will above His own.

Well there is certainly many aspects that we can draw from Jesus' leadership, but I trust that through these few points you will be able to adjust your life to become more like Jesus in the way that you deal with people. One of the most powerful components of Jesus' ministry was his ability to be simple, clear and direct.

Great leaders truly lead from the inside out. Jesus focused on personal leadership first, matters of character and of the heart. At the core of these matters of character is integrity. Without integrity, no one will follow you, and if no one is following you, you are not leading. Leadership is truly an inside job. Your leadership skills will only take you as far as your character will allow. Jesus had a pure heart and unfailing character. The more you work on your heart and your character, the more others will want to follow you.

Conclusion:

In essence the life and leadership of Jesus is very simple, yet tremendously effective. And it all is rooted in the heart. Don't get caught up by the flow of this world that wants to complicate the journey of leadership. Keep it simple and pure. And remember gentleness, transparency, servant hood, and care is not weakness, in fact it is strength. And we have the master of Leadership to show for it. As you grow in this journey with Jesus, embrace His character on a daily basis. Adjust and change all that you can to speak, act, and walk like Him.

A FINAL WORD

Wow you have done it. You have now completed this amazing journey with us in this short guideline in your walk with Jesus as a Christian. Well done. However the journey has only begun. You now you have a huge responsibility. The responsibility of (Matthew 28:19 go and make disciples). This book with everything in it was put together to encourage, guide and assist anyone in their journey with the Lord to get ever closer to the Father. Take this a step further. Share this with someone who you know will benefit and grow from this material. And further more dig ever deeper into the word of God for your own growth and relationship with Him. Let's all strive together to not simply start this wonderful adventure, but to reach the finish line with great strength, knowing that your journey leaves a legacy for others to follow.

All our love in Jesus Christ as you follow Him with us.

Lee & Elzari.

Throughout our years in the ministry, we have often seen so many a Christian start the journey and fall away before the finish line is even seen. It is so sad to see someone start with such passion and within a short while grow weary, stale, eventually bearing no fruit and silently wither away, often left with scars of offence, rejection and a heart filled with anger and criticism. So many believers walk around with simple questions of the faith and often struggle to find sound biblical answers. And so doing find it a challenge to navigate in the way that they should go and how to build a solid foundation for their Christian faith.

DTC is a very simple, humble tool that is designed to help you, your small group or church to lay a basic foundation and grow in the fundamentals of being and walking as a disciple of Jesus Christ. It does not simply give you the building blocks of Christianity and leave you there, but also equips and challenges you to face the hardships of life and to push through the issues we so often avoid. It teaches you to take what you have learned in Gods word and share it boldly with the world around you, so making you a life giving spring, instead of being a dam only receiving to satisfy oneself.

Fully mapped by the word of God, the purpose of this book is to stir and encourage you to walk deeper into the written word of God for yourself. Nothing can or ever will be able to replace The Bible. This is merely a guideline to help you seek a life that will bring praise and honor to our precious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus calls us to be His disciples and further more to be disciple makers. Take this journey with us and discover what God has put within you.



Lee & Elzari are pastors of a local church in the city of East London South Africa. They have been in full time ministry since 2001 and have functioned in most spheres of ministry from Children, Youth, Young Adults, Worship, Arts, Counseling and Pastoral leadership, and have a passion to see people do life right with God. They are a family of 4 with their eldest son named Levi and daughter named Paige. Together they serve the Lord and seek to enrich the lives of fellow followers of Jesus Christ.

It is our heart felt desire that you would be enriched and challenged to grow in your walk with the Lord. And to take the gospel beyond the walls of comfort. And to encourage others through your lifestyle to become more like Jesus. We trust that this book will be a blessing to you.

Much love

Lee & Elzari