

NEW BELIEVERS TRAINING MANUAL

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible is the world's best seller. It consistently outsells any other book. Yet millions have never read it.

The Bible has been translated into more languages than any other book in the world. It was originally written in three languages - Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. This Bible has been translated by dedicated people so that you can know about Someone Who cares for you so much, He gave His life for you.

This One Who loves you very much has a special plan for you and your nation. This person is the Creator - God of Heaven, Who made the world, the moon, the planets, the sun and stars and all that is upon them. This Book (the Bible) explains how you can know Him and be blessed. It also explains how you can bless your nation and other nations.

Doing what this Book says, and teaching these things to others, can make nations prosperous progressive, wonderful places to live. If you teach others what is in this Book, everybody will be well cared for in your nation.

Poverty will be replaced with prosperity. Hunger will be replaced with plenty of food. Sickness will be replaced with health. Sin will be replaced with righteousness. Greed, lust and pride will be replaced with generosity, thoughtfulness and humility.

These facts make this the most important book ever written.

Chapter I

The Bible Is The Word Of God

A. GOD'S SPECIAL BOOK

The Word of God - the Holy Bible is God's special Book. It is not like other books, but is a supernatural Book. It was written by many different people, who wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible is the world's best seller. It consistently outsells any other book.

The Bible has been translated into more languages than any other book in the world. It was originally written in three languages - Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. The Bible you have has been translated by dedicated people so that you can have God's words, thoughts and plans.

The Bible is also one of the oldest books in the world. The most ancient portions of the Bible date back almost 4,000 years. Yet it is still the most modern book in the world today; for in it we find the answers to life's greatest questions:

"Where did I come from?"

"Why am I here?"

"Where will I go?"

Even though the Bible is made up of 66 smaller books, it has only one central theme: God's loving plan to rescue mankind.

At the front of the Bible you will find a list of the 66 books that can be found in the Bible.

The Bible is divided into two sections: The Old Testament and The New Testament.

The Old Testament tells us about God's work with His people before the birth of Jesus.

The New Testament tells us about Jesus' birth, His life, His great ministry of healing and forgiveness for sick and sinful people, His death on a cross, His being raised from the dead and His ascension (going back to Heaven).

It also tells us about the continuation of His healing, forgiving ministry through those who saw Him after His resurrection. Those who follow Jesus' teaching do many miraculous works just as He said they would (see John 14:12).

The teaching of those who saw Him after He was raised from the dead is contained in the Epistles (Letters). These were written within the first fifty years after Jesus' resurrection. These make up about half the New Testament.

B. STUDY THE BIBLE

The most important relationship you can have in this life is with God. Through reading the Bible you come to understand what God is like - His thoughts, His plans and His promises for you.

The list (index) in the front of the Bible will help you find the page number of the part of the Bible you may wish to study.

To help you find specific parts of the Bible, the translators organized the text into: Books, Chapters within the Books, and Verses within the Chapters.

For instance, if you see a reference like "Genesis 3:15", this would mean ; The BOOK of Genesis, CHAPTER three, and VERSE fifteen.

C. HERE IS THE WORLD'S GREATEST PROMISE

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life " (John 3:16).

D. THE PURPOSE OF THE WORD OF GOD

"...the holy Scriptures...are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness " (2 Tim 3:15,16).

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

"Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires " (2 Pet 1: 3,4).

E. THE WORD OF GOD PRODUCES LIFE

"... The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life " (John 6:63).

1. It Is Creative

"By the WORD OF THE LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth... For he spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm " (Ps 33:6,9). See also Hebrews 11:3

F. THE WORD OF GOD IS LIKE WATER

1. It Cleanses

We start life in the Kingdom of God totally 'washed clean" by the Word of God.

"You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you" (John 15:3). See also Ephesians 5:25-27

2. It Keeps Clean The Word of God, planted in our hearts, keeps us free from sin.

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Ps 119:9,11).

G. THE WORD OF GOD IS LIGHT FOR OUR LIVES

'And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts' (2 Pet 1: 19).

1. It Gives Understanding In A Dark World

"...The commands OF THE Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes " (Ps 19:8). *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.... The entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple "* (Ps 119:105,130).

H THE WORD OF GOD IS SPIRITUAL FOOD

'Jesus answered, It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Matt 4:4).

1. It Causes Spiritual Growth

"Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly - mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk not solid food for you were not ready for it... " (1 Cor 3:1,2) (1 Pet 2:2).

2. God's aim for each of us is expressed in Ephesians 4:12-15: *"...that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. "*

I THE WORD OF GOD IS SEED

In Luke 8:14,15, Jesus told His disciples the parable of the sower.

In verse 11 He said: *"The seed is the word of God"* God's will for our lives is fruitfulness (Ps 1:3).

"Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness " (2 Cor 9: 1 0).

J THE WORD OF GOD IS LIKE A SWORD

"Take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17). See also Hebrews 4:12.

Note how Jesus used the "sword" against Satan in His temptation in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-14).

K THE WORD OF GOD HELPS US TO PRAY

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

'Ask whatever you wish' literally means to 'ask as one who has the right with authority (to command)'. Now the creative word is in OUR MOUTH!

L THE WORD OF GOD IS STRONG IN US

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain come down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against the house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundations on the rock" (Matt 7:24,25). See also verses 26,27.

Jesus said that the wise man who built his house on the rock was a picture of those who hear His Word and obey it. The Word of God builds inner concrete within our lives so that no matter what may come against us we will stand strong.

Chapter 2 GOD

God is far too great for us to fully understand. He has no beginning and He has no end. There is no place where His presence is not felt. The Bible asks in Job 1 1:7: "Can you fathom the mysteries of god? Can you probe the limits OF THE Almighty? "

God lives in Heaven and He rules over the whole earth. The Bible tells us: This is what the Lord says: *'Heaven is my throne and the earth is my foot stool...'* (Isa 66:1).

"God reigns over the nations, God is seated on his holy throne " (Ps 47:8).

In this study we are going to be looking at special truths about God. These are facts about God's unchanging character. Through these you will understand more of what God is like. You will come to understand God and how He cares for you personally.

A. WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

1. God Is The Creator Of Everything

"You alone are the Lord You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you " (Neh 9:6).

"For you created my inmost being,- you knit me together in my mother's womb" (Ps 139:13).

2. God Is All-Powerful

"..For who hath resisted his will? Hath not the potter power over the clay .. ?" (Rom 9:19-21).

"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all" (I Chr 29:1 1).

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

3. God Is All-Knowing

"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account " (Heb 4:13).

God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything (I Jn 3:20).

4. God Is Holy

"There is no one holy like the Lord, there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God" (I Sam 2:2).

5. God Is A Spirit

"God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth " (John 4:24).

6. God Is A Person You Can Know

"Come near to God and he will come near to you..." (Jas 4:8).

"The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth" (Ps 145:18).

7. God Is A Loving Father

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!..." (I Jn 3: 1).

B. GOD IS TOO GREAT TO LIVE IN TEMPLES

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else...For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, We are his offspring..." (Acts 17:24,25,28).

C WE ARE:

1. Created By God

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. "When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Ps 139:14-16).

2. Owned By God

'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own,, you were bought at a Price. Therefore honor God with your body' (I Cor 6:19,20).

3. Called To Worship God

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (Rev 4:1 1).

D. MAKE A DECISION

Jesus said, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind"* (Matt 22:37).

The Bible tells us about a man called Joshua. He was a great leader of the nation of Israel.

The people had been wandering for forty years in the wilderness, without a land of their own. Joshua, under God's direction, led them in victory against the evil nations living in Canaan, and possessed their land for the homeless nation of Israel.

Joshua then challenged all the people to make a decision: ... *"choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSEHOLD, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD"* (Josh 24:15).

The same challenge comes to each of us. Will you make the same commitment as Joshua this day?

MY COMMITMENT

This day I give my worship to the only true God of heaven and earth, and surrender my will, my life and possessions to Him.

From this day I determine never to worship any other gods. My worship is for Him only, and I will teach others the truths about God.

A FINAL WORD

Remember the law of multiplying the Kingdom of God. It is your turn to teach someone else about God and teach them to teach another person.

Chapter 3

Man And Satan

A. MAN - THE IMAGE OF GOD MADE TO HAVE DOMINION

God had a very real reason for creating man (male and female). He had a wonderful plan and purpose for them. Because

God is love, He desired to have beings of like-mind and like-heart with whom He could share His life... all that He is and all that He is involved with ... who would rule the heavens and the earth with Him like sons. So He created man - in His own image.

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them " (Gen 1:26,27).

B. LUCIFER

God created many wonderful things before He created the heavens and the earth. Among them were the angels - spirit beings whose purpose is to fulfill God's will. Angels worship God and serve Him continually (Rev 5:11-14).

However, when Lucifer, one of the great leading angels, understood about God's plan to create man, he rebelled against God. He wanted to be above God's Throne. He wanted the position and authority God had planned for mankind. He wanted to rule all creation from above God's Throne in Heaven.

When Lucifer rebelled, God cast him out of Heaven. At the same time, one-third of the angels joined in his rebellion and were cast out with Lucifer (Rev 12:4).

"How you have fallen from heaven, 0 morning star [Lucifer], 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 heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (Isa 14:12-14).

Lucifer was cast to the earth, where he is now known as 'Satan' or 'The Devil.' Separated from the glory of the Creator God, he lost the beauty and light he had once had (Eze 28:11-17) and became evil and full of darkness.

The angels who fell with him also lost their glory and became evil spirits, in God's newly created world. But Satan's evil ambition did not change and so he set about with another plan to try and usurp (unlawfully take) God's Throne ... he went after the man God had created.

C. THE TEMPTATION

God gave His first man and woman (Adam and Eve) authority over all the earth, and told them to keep it under His dominion.

To keep them safe from Satan and his evil spirits, God planted two special trees in the garden where Adam and Eve lived. God called them 'The Tree of Life' and 'The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil' (see Genesis 2:9,17).

The Tree of Life represented the Life and Authority of God Himself - so in eating its fruit, Adam and Eve would be filled more and more with God's strength and love and glory.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil represented Satan's life and authority, and as long as Adam and Eve did not eat its fruit they were safe from the evil spirits which filled the earth. The dominion of the whole Creation would always be theirs if they obeyed their loving Creator God (Heb 2:8).

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man,

... You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die " (Gen 2:15-17).

However, Satan deceived Eve. He told her the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil wasn't really bad - rather it would make them like gods. She believed the lie and ate the fruit of the Tree. Adam, although he knew it was a lie, also ate of the tree (I Tim 2:14).

"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it " (Gen 3:6).

D. THE RESULT

Through that one act of sin, man lost the glory and image of God and the dominion over the Creation. Satan then took the throne vacated by Adam and Eve and exercised his dominion over the earth, and death filled the world (Heb 2:14,15).

'... sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because [in Adam] all sinned..' (Rom 5:12).

All the generations following Adam and Eve have inherited their fallen nature. All have come under the power and dominion of Satan.

'As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

'All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath ' (Eph 2:1-3).

People's hearts, everywhere, are now filled with:

1. Idolatry

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave their thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles " (Rom 1:21-23).

2. Immorality

"Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is forever praised Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another.

Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion " (Rom 1:24-27).

3. All Kinds Of Wickedness

"Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice.

"They are gossips, slanderers, God haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful,, they invent ways of doing evil,- they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

'Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things, but also approve of those who practice them" (Rom 1:28-32).

E. GOD'S GREAT PLAN TO RESTORE

God did not give up man because of his sin. No! Instead, He put into action another great plan - the plan to save mankind from Satan's power and to restore him to His original plan of being His sons and sharing His Throne. He began to prepare the world for the coming of the Savior - Jesus.

"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive " (1 Cor 15:22).

The New Testament records the story of Christ, the One Who would come to save us from our sins.

Chapter 4

JESUS

A. JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD

Two thousand years ago a man appeared on the scene of history. He was born into the world and grew up into manhood just like every other person, but this man was different to anyone else. He was no ordinary man.

A virgin conceived by the Holy Spirit to bring Him to birth. He was God, Himself, coming to the earth in human form. He was the "Son of God" (Luke 1:2635).

"In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.. The Word became flesh and live for a while 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 " (John 1: 1, 14).

B .JESUS CAME TO THE WORLD FOR A SPECIAL PURPOSE

1. To Rescue Mankind From Satan's Power

"For the Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost " (Luke 19: 1 0). See also Colossians 1: 13.

2. To Give His Life As A Ransom To Buy Us Back

"..the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28).

3. To Destroy The Works Of Satan In Our Lives

"He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son

of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 Jn 3:8).

4. To Give Us Eternal Life

"And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life " (1 Jn 5:11,12). See also John 3:16,17 and John 10:10

5. To Give Us New "Birth" Into The Family Of God

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1: 12). See also 1 John 3:1,2.

6. To Restore Our Fellowship With God The Father

"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 1: 3).

C. JESUS CAME TO SHOW US WHAT GOD IS LIKE

"If you really knew me [Jesus], you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him... 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..." (John 14:7-1 1). See also John 1:18.

1. He Showed Us God's Love

"This is how God showed his love among us.- He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 Jn 4:9, 10). See also Romans 5:8.

2. He Showed Us God's Power

a. He Healed The Sick, The Lame And The Blind.

"News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon possessed, the epileptics and the paralytics, and he healed them " (Matt 4:24). See also John 9:1-7.

b. He Cast Out Evil Spirits.

'And Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was ' (Mark 1: 34). See also Mark 5:1-17.

c. He Performed Miracles.

"A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.. [Jesus] got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm... [His disciples] were terrified and asked each other, Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (Mark 4:37-4 1). See also John 6:1-21.

d. He Raised The Dead.

"..Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go ...'" (John 11:43,44).

D. JESUS SHARED OUR SUFFERINGS IN HIS LIFE

During His life on earth Jesus experienced all the troubles of life that we face, and so understands how we feel.

'For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin' (Heb 4:15). See also Matthew 8:17.

E. JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS FOR US

Wicked men took the Lord Jesus and executed Him by nailing Him to a wooden cross like a common criminal. He could have saved Himself, but He did not, for it was through His death on the Cross that God was going to save the world. Jesus died for us! (Read Mark 15:16-39.)

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness, by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pet 2:24). See also Isaiah 53:5,6.

F. JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD FOR US

After three days in the tomb God raised His Son from the dead! (Read Matthew 28.) This, too, was for us!

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ.. God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus..." (Eph 2:4-6). See also Romans 6:4.

G. JESUS OPENED THE DOOR OF HEAVEN FOR US

When His work on earth was completed, Jesus returned to Heaven to be with God, His Father. But this, too, was for us... for He opened the way into God's presence for us, where we can live now and forever!

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body..."

"Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith..." (Heb 10: 19-22). See also John 14:1-3.

MY COMMITMENT

Today I acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God and that He came into the world to meet my great need of a Savior. I will also tell others that He came to the world for them.

Chapter 5

The Cross

When Jesus Christ was put to death by being nailed to a wooden cross, wicked men thought they were just executing a man who was disturbing their way of life. They did not realize that the Cross was planned by God from the beginning of the world.

A. GOD DEALS WITH ALL SIN

Through His Son's death on the Cross, the great Creator God was dealing with every person's sin, suffering and sorrow. Jesus was dying in the place of every individual in the world. Receiving personally what He has done on the Cross brings the answer to all our needs.

1. God Reveals His Power Through The Cross

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (I Cor 1:18). See also Romans 1:16.

2. God Shows His Love On The Cross

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

3. God Removed Our Sorrows On The Cross

"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted" (Isa 53:4).

4. Jesus Took The Punishment For Our Sins On The Cross

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:5,6). See also I Peter 2:24.

B. NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH THE CROSS

Because God is so holy and righteous, sin separates us from Him. No one with sin in their hearts is able to be in His presence.

So, not only by dying on the Cross did Jesus suffer for our sins in our place; but also He made it possible for us to know God personally and to experience the love, peace and joy which fellowship with Him brings.

1. We Become Acceptable To God Through The Cross

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21).

2. We Receive Forgiveness Through The Cross

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1: 13,14). See also 1 John 2:1,2.

3. We Become Members Of God's Family Through The Cross

"Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, 'I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your'

praise " (Heb 2:11,12). See also John 1:12.

4. Racial Barriers Are Broken Through The Cross

'But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility ' (Eph 2:13-16).

C FREEDOM THROUGH THE CROSS

Jesus' death on the Cross was a great victory for us. Because God dealt with our sin on the Cross, it means also that all the misery and suffering which is a result of sin was also dealt with.

The Cross has won great freedom for us!

1. Freedom From Satan

'And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the Cross' (Col 2:15). See also Colossians 1: 1 3.

2. Freedom From Past Sins

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:3 6). See also Colossians 2:13.

3. Freedom From Present Sins

"For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace " (Rom 6:14).

4. Freedom From Sickness

This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: *'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases ' (Matt 8:17).*

5. Freedom From The Curse

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, *'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree ... (Gal 3:13). See also Deuteronomy 28:15-68.*

6. Freedom From The Judgment

"Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation OF THE world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Heb 9:26,27).

7. Freedom From Everlasting Death

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life " (John 3:16).

D. LOVE AND JUSTICE MEET AT THE CROSS

The Cross is the place where the love of God and the righteous judgment of God meet. His righteous judgment demanded the death penalty for sin - the shedding of blood. His love met His own demands and Jesus, the Son of God, died in our place.

'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

"Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation " (Rom 5:8-1 1).

E. THE CROSS IS THE CENTER OF HISTORY

The Cross of Jesus Christ is the center point of mankind's existence on earth. From the moment the first man and woman sinned (see Genesis 3), it was pre-planned by God that Jesus would die on the Cross.

From that time on, people looked forward in faith to what God promised He would do on the Cross to save them. Today we look back and, by believing what Jesus has done for us on the Cross, receive forgiveness and new life.

MY COMMITMENT

Today I put my whole trust in what God was doing for me when Jesus died on the Cross. I believe He took the punishment for my sin. I receive the forgiveness that God is offering to me. And I thank Him for the relationship this now gives me with Him. I make a decision today that I will live each day in this personal relationship with God and commit myself to share this truth with others.

Chapter 6

The Blood of Christ

The shedding of Jesus Christ's blood on the Cross was a factor in order for us to receive forgiveness for our sins and acceptance into the presence of God.

... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness " (Heb 9:22).

A. LIFE IS IN THE BLOOD

"For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves ... it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life " (Lev 17:1 1).

When we sin, we earn death. *"The wages a sin is death "* (Rom 6:23). Jesus paid this penalty for us by shedding His blood (dying for us - in our place).

Atonement (atonement) means to be made AT ONE with God. Jesus gave His life (shed His blood) on the Cross for our AT ONE MENT (atonement). This made it possible for us to be AT-ONE with God. Jesus' blood means we are no longer His enemy but His friend, His sons and daughters. By faith we accept what He did for us.

B. WHAT SIN DOES TO OUR LIFE

1. Separates Us From God

"But your iniquities have separated you from your God,- your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear " (Isa 59:2).

2. Makes Us Feel Guilty

"My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear " (Ps 38:4).

3. Allows Satan To Accuse Us

... the accuser a our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night.. " (Rev 12: 1 0).

4. Demands The Death Penalty

"... The soul who sins is the one who will die" (Eze 18:4).

The blood of Christ meets all of our needs:

C. THE BLOOD IS FOR GOD

The blood of Christ wholly satisfies God's law - which requires a penalty for breaking the law. I John 3:4 says "sin is breaking the law. "

The blood protects us from the penalty of breaking the law (death).

In Exodus 12, God commands the people of Israel to put the blood of a lamb on their door posts to protect them from the destroyer - who would kill all the firstborn.

This lamb was a picture of the Lamb Jesus - Who would come later. God said, *"... when I see the blood, I will pass over [protect] you..."* (vs 13).

1. Fellowship Is Restored

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this, While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him " (Rom 5:8,9).

2. We Are Redeemed (Purchased Back From Slavery)

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

D. THE BLOOD IS FOR MAN

The blood has satisfied God; now it is to satisfy us in the cleansing of our conscience from guilt.

1. The Blood Cleanses From Guilt

"How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! " (Heb 9:14).

2. **The Blood Sanctifies Us**

"And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood" (Heb 13:12).

3. **The Blood Brings Us Close To God**

"... and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ' , But now he has reconciled you... " (Col. 1:20-22).

4. **The Blood Gives Boldness To Enter God's Presence**

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, the body... "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:19-22).

5. **The Blood Perfects Us In The Sight Of God**

"...because by one sacrifice he has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy " (Heb 10: 14).

E. THE BLOOD IS FOR THE DEVIL

Satan's most strategic activity in this age is as the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12: 10) and it is as this that the Lord confronts Him in His special ministry as High Priest through His own blood (Heb 9:11-14).

1. **The Blood Puts God On Man's Side Against The Devil**

"'...If God is for us, who can be against us?... Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? ",Shall God who justifies? Who is he that condemns? Will Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - and is at the right hand of God and is also interceding [praying] for us?" (Rom 8:31,33,34).

The devil has no ground for accusation against those who have received the work of Christ's shed blood for them.

2. **The Blood Dissolves All Satan's Legal Rights Of Ownership**

"...in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins " (Col 1: 14).

'Redemption' means 'to buy back.' We are under new ownership, and the price that was paid for us was the shed blood of Jesus.

"... the church of God, which he bought with his own blood " (Acts 20:28). See also I Corinthians 6:19,20; 1 Timothy 2:6.

F. WHAT THE BLOOD OF CHRIST HAS BROUGHT US

1. **Purity Of Heart**

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin " (I Jn 1:7).

2. **Eternal Life**

"Jesus said to them., 'I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink my blood, you have no life in you. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day " (John 6:53,54).

3. **Approach To God**

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ " (Eph 2:13).

MY COMMITMENT

I now understand what the shed blood of Jesus means to God, to Satan and to me. I make my commitment to share with others the truth concerning the blood of Christ. I will remind myself often of the covenant God has with me, to forgive my sin and cleanse me from sin and protect me from Satan's harm.

Chapter 7

The Resurrection

After His death on the Cross, Jesus lay in the grave for three days (Matt 12:40). Then - God raised His Son from the dead! (Read Matthew 28.)

"... and who through the Spirit of Holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead,

..Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 1:4).

A. GOD RAISED YOU UP TOGETHER WITH CHRIST

Jesus' death was for you. So was His resurrection!

'As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air..

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus " (see Ephesians 2:1-6; Colossians 3:1-3).

1. To Give You New Life

God .. has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.

"This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim 1:9,10).

2. To Give You New Birth

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." (I Pet 1: 3).

3. To Give You A New Beginning

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come " (2 Cor 5:17).

4. To Give You:

a. Victory Over Satan.

"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome the world, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world [Satan] ... for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 Jhn 4:4;5:4,5). See also Colossians 2:13-15.

b. Authority Over Satan. After His resurrection,

"...Jesus Christ ... has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels, authorities and powers [this includes Satan] in submission to him (I Pet 3:21,22). See also Luke 10: 17-19.

c. Power Over Satan.

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... his incomparably great power for us who believe.

"That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

'And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills more than everything in every way " (Eph 1: 1 8-23). See also Mark 16:15-18, Acts 1:8 and 4:33.

5. To Make You A Son And Heir In God's Kingdom

"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. Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ..." (Rom 8:15-17).

B. THE RESURRECTION MEETS EVERY NEED OF LIFE

1. It Is Your Deliverance From The PAST

Your old sinful life was put to death on the Cross with Jesus, and buried with Him in the grave. Then, when Jesus was raised to life again, you were raised with Him as a new creation - leaving behind your old life in Jesus' grave!

"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life... the death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:4-1 1). See also Ephesians 2:1-7 and Colossians 2:12-15.

2. It Is Your Power For The PRESENT

Because Jesus is ALIVE we have now received the power of His Spirit to live a life of victory over sin and all Satan's

attacks against us.

"What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

"Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? Shall God who justifies? Who is he that condemns?"

"Will Christ Jesus who died ... who was raised to life - who is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us?"

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?"

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loves us..." (Rom 8:31-39).

3. It Is Your Hope For The FUTURE

The resurrection of Jesus gives us great hope for the future. He is called *"the firstborn from the dead"* (Col 1: 18). In His resurrection, he was opening the way for all those who would believe in Him to follow after Him - to also be raised from the dead!

One wonderful day in the future, Jesus Christ will return to the earth again - not as a baby this time, but revealing to the whole world Who He really is - the glorious God and Ruler of all Creation. At that time all those who have died, believing in Him, will be raised to life again!

"If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men."

"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

"For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man."

"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first-fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him" (I Cor 15:17-23). See also I Corinthians 15:50-57 and I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

MY COMMITMENT

Because of the resurrection of Christ, I make a commitment today to receive the fullness of my new life and liberation in Him. I will stand fast in this truth and share it with everyone I can.

Chapter 8 Repentance

Repentance is the first step we take to receive the salvation that God offers to us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven'" (Acts 2:36-38). See also Acts 17:30.

A. WHAT REPENTANCE IS NOT

1. Not Just Feeling Guilty

Feeling guilty, about our sin comes before repentance, but is not repentance itself. No one repents unless they first feel guilty about their sin, but not all who feel guilty actually repent.

'As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, 'That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you ... (Acts 24:25).

Felix felt guilty but did not repent.

2. Not Just Being Sorry For Your Sin

Some people are very sorry because of the consequences of their sin, or because they have been caught. Many people are sorry, not for what they have done wrong, but for the penalty they receive in being caught.

"Godly sorrow leads to repentance that brings salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death" (2 Cor 7: 10).

3. Not Just Trying To Be A Good Person

Many people try in their own strength to become a better person and change their way of life. Any self-effort has a root of self-righteousness in it, which does not acknowledge the need of repentance from sin.

"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Isa 64:6).

4. Not Becoming Religious

The Pharisees in the Bible were extremely religious in behavior and practice. They fasted and prayed and had many religious ceremonies, yet never repented.

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them. You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

"And do not say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father. 'I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt 3:7-10). See also Matthew 5:20.

5. Not Just Knowing The Truth

Having an intellectual head-knowledge of truth does not necessarily guarantee that the truth has become a living reality in one's life. Believing with the head and believing with the heart are different (see Romans 10:10).

"You believe that there is one God, Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder. You foolish man, do you want further evidence that faith without righteous deeds is useless? " (Jas 2:19, 20)

B. WHAT TRUE REPENTANCE IS

1. Being Sorry To God For Your Sin

True repentance is a sorrow not just toward one's self, or toward another person, but first and foremost it is true sorrow toward God.

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight... " (Ps 51:1-4). See also Psalms 3 8:8.

2. Being Truthful About Your Sin

"Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord' - and you forgave the guilt of my sin " (Ps 32:5). See also I John 1:9.

3. Turning Away From Your Sin

"He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whosoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Prov 28:13).

4. Hating Sin

"Thou has loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore ... God has anointed thee..." (Heb 1:9).

"... and you will loathe yourselves for all the evil you have done..." (Eze 20:43,44).

5. When Possible, Paying Back To Others What You Owe

"But Zacchaeus stood up and said, 'Look Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount "' (Luke 19:8). See also Leviticus 6:1-7.

C. WHAT REPENTANCE INVOLVES

1. Turning From Sin

'Don't be like your fathers were! The earlier prophets pled in vain with them to turn from all their evil ways. 'Come, return to me,' the Lord God said. But no, they wouldn't listen; they paid no attention at all" (Zech 1:4 tlb). See also Galatians 5:19-21 and Ephesians 5:5.

2. Turning From The World

"Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love these things you show that you do not really love God" (I Jn 2:15 tlb). See also James 4:4.

3. Turning From Yourself

"He died for all so that all who live - having received eternal life from him might live no longer for themselves, to please themselves, but to spend their lives pleasing Christ who died and rose again for them" (2 Cor 5:15 tlb) See also Luke 14:26.

4. Turning From The Devil

... to open their eyes to their true condition so that they may repent and live in the light of God instead of in Satan's darkness... " (Acts 26:18 tlb). See also Colossians 1: 13.

5. Turning To God

"Therefore tell the people. This is what the Lord Almighty says., 'Return to me,' declares the Lord Almighty, 'and I will return to you, ' says the Lord Almighty" (Zech 1:3).

6. Turning To Right Living

"Do not offer the parts a your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those

who have been brought from death to life, and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness" (Rom 6:13).

MY COMMITMENT

Today I decide to repent and will keep turning from sin as God reveals wrongdoing to me.

Chapter 9

Faith

Faith has always been the mark of a disciple of Jesus. The early disciples were known as BELIEVERS. Jesus said: "*..Everything is possible for him who believes*" (Mark 9:23).

Faith means total dependence on God. When Adam sinned, he stepped out of God-dependence into independence (which is unbelief). This is the reason God has placed such a high priority on faith. Faith is the way we come back into relationship with God (God-dependence).

This dependence on God is called faith. Faith advances you beyond your five senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching. Faith releases you from your limited capacities. By faith you move from in-ability to His-ability.

This is the walk of faith to which all of us are called - where "*nothing is impossible*" (Matt 17:20).

A. WHAT IS FAITH?

Faith is obedient action in response to what God has said. True faith is expressed in **1) Obedience** and **2) Action**, in response to **3) Hearing** God's word (voice).

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Heb I 1: 1).

Faith means having trust, assurance or confidence in another person or that person's words. Having faith in God involves an exchange of self-trust for God-trust. We stop trusting in our self and trust Him. We abandon reliance on our limited source of knowledge and start receiving from His unlimited source.

B. TWO KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE

"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on MEN'S WISDOM, but on God's power.

"We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

"No, we speak of God's SECRET WISDOM, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began" (I Cor 2:4-7). See also verses 8-16.

1. Sense Knowledge

All knowledge that comes to natural man comes to him through the five senses - seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching. This is limited knowledge, described as 'man's wisdom.'

2. Revelation Knowledge

This knowledge is not based on the five senses, nor on natural reasoning but on an alternative source - the TRUTH of the Word of God. It is received through man's spirit, and is described as 'God's wisdom' "*We live by FAITH, not by sight*" (2 Cor 5:7).

C. THE BASIS OF FAITH

The basis of having faith in God is in three important realities:

1. The Nature Of God

"When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater or him to swear by, he swore by himself" (Heb 6:13).

a. He Cannot Change.

"I the Lord, do not change.." (Mal 3:6). See also James 1:17.

b. He Cannot Fail.

"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted" (Job 42:2). See also I Chronicles 28:20.

c. He Cannot Lie.

"God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (Num 23:19). See also Titus 1:2.

2. The Redemptive Work Of The Son Of God

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God " (Heb 12:2).

Christ has become the source of our faith in God. The fact of His death and resurrection provides ground for our believing.

".. Christ Jesus ... has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption" (I Cor 1:30). See also Romans 5:1,2.

3. The Word Of God

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away " (Matt 24:35). See also Isaiah 40:8.

"The Lord said to me, '...I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled'" (Jer 1: 12).

His Word stands true forever. Faith comes when God brings a specific word - out of all He has ever said - directly to us in our circumstances. Spoken in this way, the Word of God comes alive to us, releasing our faith.

D. HOW FAITH WORKS

The principle of faith (Rom 3:27) is to operate in our lives continually, no matter what the circumstances (see 2 Corinthians 5:7, James 1:5,6). It works in the following way:

1. God Gives Us Faith

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written:

... The righteous will live by [HIS] faith ... (compare Romans 1:17 and Habakkuk 2:4 niv).

The righteous live by HIS faith, that is the faith HE gives us as a gift.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith, it [the faith] is the gift of God... " (Eph 2:8,9). "... according as God has dealt to every man ... faith" (Rom 12:3).

2. Faith Comes By A Word From God

Firstly, God encourages us by speaking a "word" relevant to our circumstances. This may come as you read the Bible or by hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit inside your spirit.

faith comes from hearing the word, and is heard through the word of Christ " (Rom 10:17). See also Genesis 15:3-5-17:15-21; Joshua 1:8.

3. Obedience To The Word

For faith to operate in our situation, we must obey that word. Faith is ACTIVE, not passive. Most of God's promises are conditional - He will do His part, if we do our part.

"...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (Jas 2:17). See 1:22-25; Genesis 15:6; Matthew 7:24-27.

4. The Crisis, Or "Trial Of Our Faith"

This is a period of testing. Everything happening around us appears contrary to what God has said, and there seems to be no natural evidence for our believing. At this point, our faith rests completely on God's word (what He has spoken to us).

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

"These have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Pet 1:6,7). See also Romans 4:16-21; Psalms 105:17-19.

In faith we cast ourselves on HIS FAITHFULNESS. In our times of doubt and struggle, God is faithful and does not abandon us.

"If we believe not, he abideth faithful. He cannot deny himself" (2 Tim 2:13).

He was faithful to Thomas and Peter when their faith was tested. Jesus didn't abandon them. *"He will never leave us nor forsake us " (Heb 13:5).*

5. The Result

The end result is always victory on the part of the believer, bringing glory to God (see also James 1:2-4, 12; Genesis 21:1-3; Psalms 105:19-22; Acts 3:16; Hebrews 6:13-15).

" ..for everyone born of God has overcome the world This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" (I Jn 5:4).

MY COMMITMENT

Today I decide to live by faith and trust God in all areas of my life. I acknowledge my need to be totally dependent on God - which is faith in action. In problems, challenges and difficulties I will rely on His faithfulness. God's response will be His grace - His enabling power. I will teach others also to rely on God's faithfulness and walk with faith in God.

Chapter 10

Grace

"With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and MUCH GRACE was with them all " (Acts 4:3 3).

"From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been COMMITTED TO THE GRACE OF GOD for the work they had now completed" (Acts 14:26).

Why was the grace of God so important in the experience of the early Christians? Why did the church in Antioch pray that the GRACE of God would be upon Paul and Barnabas, and later on Paul and Silas, as they set out on their missionary journeys?

A. THE MEANING OF GRACE

The most common understanding of the word "grace" is "God's unmerited favor" - in other words, even though we were sinners, deserving of judgment, God looked upon us in love and forgave us.

This, however, is only half its meaning. It also means "God's enabling power."

"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word" (2 Ths 2:16,17).

Not only does His grace make us accepted into the family of God, but it also provides the power we need to live the Christian life. Two scriptures indicate the two aspects of God's grace in every believer.

1. God's Unmerited Favor

"For it is by grace [God's unmerited favor] you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast " (Eph 2:8,9).

2. God's Enabling Power

"...In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will -to the praise of his glorious grace [enabling power], which he has freely given us in the one he loves " (Eph 1:4-6). Read also the whole chapter, which describes all that we have received by grace (by His enabling power).

In salvation, not only is God's unmerited favor expressed (in that we receive forgiveness and restored relationship with Him even though we don't deserve it), but so also is God's enabling power - for it is only by HIS power that we can be transformed.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor 5:17).

This principle of grace continues throughout our walk with God. In every area of our Christian lives, it is God's grace that causes us to grow and be strong God's enabling power given to us without any merit on our part.

... grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ... (2 Pet 3:18).

B. GRACE GIVEN THE HEROES OF FAITH

This operating force of grace is revealed in the lives of men and women throughout the whole Bible. Every hero of faith began his walk with God aware of his own weakness and inability.

It was only through him allowing God's grace - His enabling power - to work in his life that he was able to become the kind of person that God wanted him to be, and to fulfill the plan and purpose God had for his life.

C. GRACE IN THE LIFE OF MOSES

Read Exodus 3:11-13; 4:1-13. The command the Lord gave Moses was no small task. Egypt was the ruling empire of the day. It was an evil nation, and Pharaoh, its satanic leader, held authority that was claimed to be divine. Every nation in the known world lived in fear of Pharaoh.

When God told Moses to go down to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let His three million people go free from slavery, Moses' immediate response - out of his own weakness and inability - was as follows:

3:11 .. "Who am I?"

3:13 .. "Who are You?"

4:1 .. "They won't believe me!"

4:10 .. "I'm not eloquent!"

4:13 .. "Lord, send someone else!"

But with God's grace, Moses did go down to Egypt, and with signs and wonders brought the people of Israel out as God told him to.

D. GRACE IN THE LIFE OF GIDEON

Read Judges 6:1-24. The call of God came to Gideon to deliver His people from the conquering armies of Midian. Israel had known only defeat for many years. Gideon's response to God's word in verse 3 reveals his initial unbelief.

... But sir, 'Gideon replied, 'If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt? But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian. "'

Even when the Lord encouraged him and promised to be with him, Gideon answered: "How can I save Israel? I'm the smallest member of the smallest family in our tribe! " (see verse 15).

But despite his fear and inability, with God's grace (enabling power) Gideon saved Israel. And he did it with just a small band of men. It was GRACE that made the difference!

E. GRACE IN THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

Read Acts 15:40. Before Paul and Silas set out on their missionary journey together, the church at Antioch prayed for them and "Commended [them] ... to the grace of the Lord" for the work that was ahead of them.

Read Paul's description of his experiences in 2 Corinthians 11:22,33. It is understandable that he was first commended to the grace of God!

He needed it to survive! The Lord's answer to Paul's confession of weakness is His promise for us too:

"..My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness... (2 Cor 12:9).

F. GRACE RELEASED IN OUR LIVES

In our relationship with God - as we walk with Him each day -we constantly meet situations that would try to overwhelm us. Our response to God is to trust His Word. We express our trust through obedience.

This proves we believe what God's Word says despite what the circumstances might indicate. God's response to our faith is His grace - His enabling power, which causes us to triumph in every situation.

G. TWO IMPORTANT PROMISES

1. We Have Bold Access To The Throne Of Grace

"Let us then approach the THRONE OF GRACE with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and FIND GRACE [divine enablement] TO HELP US IN OUR TIME OF NEED " (Heb 4:16).

2. God Is Able

'And God is able to make ALL grace ABOUND to you, so that in ALL things at ALL times, having ALL that you need, you will ABOUND in EVERY good work" (2 Cor 9:8).

MY COMMITMENT

Today I decide to receive God's grace - His enabling power - into every area and problem that arises in my life, and teach others to do the same also.

Chapter 11

Water Baptism

Jesus commanded all those who believed in Him to be baptized in water.

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matt 28:18,19). See

also Acts 2:38-41.

To be "baptized" means to be "totally immersed." When a person repents from his sin and believes Jesus died for him, before many witnesses, he (or she) is to be taken to water, put right under it and brought up again. Why would Jesus command that His believers do such a strange thing?

A. UNDERSTANDING WATER BAPTISM

Understanding what water baptism is all about is the key to a victorious and liberated Christian life.

The act of going under the water and rising up from it again is a picture demonstrating what has happened to the Christian believer.

B. FOUR STAGES OF CHRIST'S WORK PICTURED

1. He Died ... I Died In Him

"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin" (Rom 6:6,7).

2. He Was Buried ... I Was Buried With Him

"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death..." (Rom 6:3,4).

3. He Was Raised ... I Have A New Life In Him

"... in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection " (Rom 6:4,5).

4. He Ascended ... I Ascended In Him

"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus..." (Eph 2:6). See also Colossians 3: 1.

C. WATER BAPTISM IS

1. Your Funeral Service!

A burial service is not to kill a man off. It is only performed when the man is dead already. And so, because you have "died" in Christ, you bury your old life in water baptism.

2. Your Resurrection To New Life!

You rise out of the water demonstrating and declaring you are a new creation in Christ!

"Now if we died with Christ", we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.

"The death he died, he died to sin once and for all, - but the life he lives, he lives to God In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus " (Rom 6:8-1 1).

D. THE TWO KINGDOMS

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves" (Col 1: 13).

Every man and woman born into the world is born into the Kingdom of Darkness; born slaves of the dictator Satan. There is no way out of this kingdom except by DEATH, and there is no way into the Kingdom of God except by BIRTH. And so Jesus became both our death and new birth - and this we declare in water baptism!

E. THE TWO RACES

As there are two kingdoms, so within each kingdom is a different race of people. The Adamic Race populates the Kingdom of Darkness, and the New Creation populates the Kingdom of God.

1. The First Adam

"For as in Adam all die..." (I Cor 15:22). See also Romans 5:12.

Adam was the father of us all, the entire human race. Adam's sin alienated us all from God. Because of his sin, we all inherited his rebellious and diseased nature and became subject to death. Adam's offspring are called "the Adamic Race".

2. The Last Adam

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly " (Rom 5:6).

There was no way God could change the fallen Adamic Race. He had to put an end to that race and begin a whole new race of humanity. Jesus was the Last Adam. He came as the lastborn of the Adamic Race and the firstborn of a new race.

As He hung upon the Cross, He hung there as the last Adam - the lastborn of the Adamic Race. When He died on the Cross, the Adamic Race and the Adamic sinful nature died.

God put to death the fallen creation in Him. The Adamic Race died in Christ.

3. The Second Man

"... so in Christ all will be made alive " (1 Cor 15:22). Jesus came as God's new Man, through which a new race would be created. Jesus was raised from the dead not as the Last Adam - but as the Second Man, the Head of the New Creation.

"So it is written.- The first man Adam became a living soul, the last Adam, [Christ] a life-giving spirit.. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man .from heaven.

As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are from heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven" (I Cor 15:45-49).

4. The New Creation

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor 5:17)1. See also Ephesians 2: 10.

In water baptism we declare to all our friends and acquaintances that we are no longer part of Adam's race and the Kingdom of Darkness. We are a New Creation in Christ, belonging to the Kingdom of God!

MY COMMITMENT

Through this study I now realize that my old life with its sin and judgment has been put to death in Jesus' death, and now because of Jesus' resurrection I have a whole new life to live. Because this is what water baptism pictures, I make this commitment to be baptized in water and to share this truth with others.

Chapter 12

The Holy Spirit

After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples for 40 days. Then, when they were all gathered together with Him on the top of a high hill, He was taken up into Heaven before their eyes (read Acts 1: I - I 1). However, before He left, Jesus gave His believers a very special and wonderful promise:

"... I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth... I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.. " (John 14:16-18; 16:5 -7).

Jesus has not left us alone in the world. He has sent us the Holy Spirit.

A. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD

The very first thing we must understand about the Holy Spirit is that He is indeed God.

"Then Peter said, 'Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.. You have not lied to men BUT TO GOD'" (Acts 5:3,4). See also 2 Corinthians 3:17.

God has chosen to express Himself to mankind as Father, as Son and as the Holy Spirit. These are the expression of three distinct Persons (Personalities), yet the three are one.

B. THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is God's gift to every believer. When a person believes in Jesus, and receives the salvation He offers, the Holy Spirit comes to live in the believer, imparting spiritual life.

'Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off' (Acts 2:38,39). See also John 7:37-39.

C. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. In The Believer's Personal Life

The Holy Spirit comes to dwell within the believer to minister to him personally:

a. He Testifies Of Our Relationship With God.

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children " (Rom 8:16). See also I John 3:24.

b. He Teaches.

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).

c. He Guides.

"...because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom 8:14).

d. He Helps Us Live A Life Pleasing To God.

"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Gal 5:16). See also verses 17-25.

e. He Helps Us In Prayer.

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Rom 8:26).

D. He Gives Life To Our Bodies.

"And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you " (Rom 8:11).

2. In The Believer For Service

As well as giving the Holy Spirit to dwell in the believer, God also wants to fill and baptize the believer with the Holy Spirit to empower him to serve and glorify God in the world.

a. The Holy Spirit Gives Power And Boldness To Witness.

"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 also to the uttermost parts of the world" Acts 2:14-40.

b. He Introduces The Supernatural Realm.

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit..

"To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues " (I Cor 12:4,8-10). See also Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6.

c. He Testifies That Jesus Is Alive.

"The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead.. We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him " (Acts 5:30-32). See also Acts 4:31-33.

" you shall be witnesses unto Me... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). See

d. He Brings A Fresh Understanding Of The Word Of God.

"...as it is written. 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him'- but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God" (I Cor 2:9,10). See also John 16:13.

e. He Fills Our Spirit With True Worship To God.

"..be filled with the Spirit, speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord" (Eph 5:18,19). See also John 4:24.

f. He Glorifies Jesus.

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

"He will not speak on his own; He will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you " (John 16:13-15). See also John 15:26.

D. HOW TO BE BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

God wants His Holy Spirit, Who indwells you because you are a believer in Jesus, to fill you to overflowing with power to serve Him (Eph 5:18).

1. It Is A Gift Promised By God; So Ask For It

"...how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke II: 13). See also verses 9-12.

2. Begin To Praise God As You Receive In Faith

"Then they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God" (Luke 24:52,53).

3. You Can Speak With A Supernatural Language

"...the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues..." (Acts 19:6). See also Mark 16:17; Acts 2:4; 10:45,46; 1 Corinthians 14:5, 18.

MY COMMITMENT

I thank God for the Gift of the Holy Spirit in my life. I make a decision today to respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting and directing. I determine to learn to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit in my heart. I choose to be filled with the Spirit. I now open my spirit to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 13 Temptation

A. SATAN ATTACKS

Satan attacks the individual Christian mostly through temptation. And he focuses this assault in two spheres:

1. The Desires Of The World

He will seek to tempt a believer to become absorbed into the world's system: to make the material blessings that the world offers a central desire; to make the honor and recognition of this world an important goal; and to make the comfort of being one with those of this world our basis for security.

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 Jn 2:15). See also James 4:4, 1; 1 Timothy 6:6-11.

2. The Desires Of The Flesh

Through Christ's work on the Cross, the true Christian is delivered from the results of sin, and from the power of sin (Rom 6:6-14). But he still lives in a physical body that is subject to natural appetites and desires. Satan will use these to try and get a Christian to place greater importance upon them than upon the promptings of the Holy Spirit within him (Rom 8:5-9). See also James 1:14; Ephesians 2:3.

B. SATAN'S ORIGINAL VICTORY

It was in the areas of the world and the flesh that Satan won his original victory in the temptation of the first man and woman, and these are still his tactics today.

"For all that is in the world, the LUST OF THE FLESH [craving for sensual gratification], and the LUST OF THE EYES [greedy longings of the mind] and the PRIDE OF LIFE [assurance in one's own resources or in the stability of earthly things] - these do not come from the Father but are from the world [itself]" (1 Jn 2:16 Amp).

Compare Eve's Temptation With This Verse:

Genesis 3:6	1 John 2:16
Good FOR FOOD	"Lust of the flesh"
Pleasing TO THE EYE	"Lust of the eyes"
Desirable for GAINING WISDOM	"Pride of Life"

Since the fall of Adam and Eve, all mankind has been governed by their flesh (the three things outlined above).

The flesh is also corrupted by a sinful nature (Gal 5:19-21).

C. VICTORY WON BY CHRIST

1. Through His life

Jesus was tempted in everything, exactly as we are, 'Yet was without sin' (Heb 4:15).

Compare Jesus' Temptation With This Verse:

Luke 4:1-13	1 John 2:16
<i>Stones to bread</i>	<i>"Lust of the flesh"</i>
<i>Kingdoms of the earth</i>	<i>"Lust of the eyes"</i>
<i>Pinnacle of the temple</i>	<i>"Pride of Life"</i>

2. Through His Death And Resurrection

Faith that appropriates (claims, receives) Christ's work releases the Christian from the power and dominion that sin had over him (Rom 8:9).

He is now free to choose to walk in obedience to God (Rom 6:8-14).

"For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man... in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature [flesh] but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:3,4).

D. THE CHRISTIAN'S CONTINUAL VICTORY

Based on the foundation of this great victory won for us by Christ, the Christian can now defeat any attack from the enemy. Here are seven keys to continual victory:

1. Know The Victory Is Already Won

Because of his defeat at the Cross, the devil's only strength now is found in a Christian's ignorance (Hos 4:6). But when a Christian knows the complete work of the Cross and Resurrection in his life, the devil is stripped of any weapon against him.

2. Walk In Step With The Spirit

A new power is placed within the Christian - the Holy Spirit Himself We are to walk in obedience to His inner promptings day by day (Gal 5:22-25).

3. Recognize Temptation For What It Is

Temptation is NOT sin. YIELDING to temptation is! (Jas 1: 1 5). See Genesis 4:6,7.

4. Understand There Is A Way Of Escape Provided

' No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it ' (I Cor 10: 1 3). James 4:7 details the way of escape: Submit to God, resist the devil and he shall flee!

5. Keep The Right Focus In Life

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand (?f God Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things " (Col 3:1,2). See also Philippians 4:8; 1 Timothy 6:11,12; 2 Peter 3:11-13.

6. Keep Away From Obvious Areas Of Temptation

"I will set before my eyes no vile thing" (Ps 10 1: 3). See also I Timothy 6:9-1 1. 7.

Be Aware Of Satan's Schemes It is important for us to know the tactics that the enemy uses against us so that we are not outwitted by him (2 Cor 2:1 1).

- a. *He is a liar (John 8:44).*
- b. *He is a slanderer and accuser (Rev 12: 1 0).*
- c. *He is a deceiver (Rev 12:9).*
- d. *He is a tempter (Matt 4: 1 -1 1).*
- e. *He is an oppressor (Acts 10:38).*
- f. *He is a hinderer (I Ths 2:18).*
- g. *He is as a roaring lion (I Pet 5:8).*
- h. *He can transform himself into an angel of light (2 Cor II: 14).*

As Christians, we are called to live in VICTORY! Through Christ, this victory is ours:

Over the world (I Jhn 5:4).

Over the flesh (Gal 5:16).

Over the enemy (Eph 6:11,13).

MY COMMITMENT

I thank God for His promise to deliver me during time of temptation. I commit myself to respond to His help which is always

available so that I can live in victory. I will share this truth with others also.

Chapter 14

Fellowship

A. THE PURPOSE OF FELLOWSHIP

The fellowship of Christians together is very important, for it is in our unity together that...

1. The Believer Is Encouraged And Grows In Christ

"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you mutually encouraged by each other's faith" (Rom 1: 11, 12).

2. The World Comes To Know That Jesus Was Sent Of God

"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:22,23).

B. CONDITIONS OF FELLOWSHIP

1. A Basic Commitment To One Another

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Rom 12:10).

Without a basic trust there can be no fellowship. The depth of fellowship will vary according to the depth of commitment.

2. Our Commitment Must Be Based On 'Agape'

'Agape' is a one-way love, which loves 'in spite of,' not 'because of.' Such a commitment therefore will not be affected by the other person's inconsistent behavior.

"A new commandment I give you.- Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34).

3. True Fellowship Is Christ-Centered

Our fellowship with one another is founded in our common commitment to Christ.

"And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 1:3). See also Philippians 2:1,2.

4. Walking In The Light

Our fellowship embraces the need to be open, honest and truthful with one another.

This at times may mean:

a. Confessing Our Own Sins To Others, Or Lovingly Covering Another's Sin.

"If we claim to have fellowship with him, yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin" (1 Jn 1:6,7). See also Matthew 18:15.

b. Obedience To The Light - general and specific commandments God has given.

c. The Removal Of Any Masks Or False Coverings.

So much of the world's fellowship is hypocritical acting out a role, and is not genuine.

"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the hearts" (1 Pet 1:22).

5. A Genuine Interest In The Other's Well-Being

There should be no hidden motives of self-gain. Our desire should be to give, not to get.

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil 2:3,4).

6. A Willingness To Lay Down One's Life

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12,13).

Life involves more than physical life. It also includes our material possessions, our personal interests and preferences, etc. (Jas 2:15 16). This also means a willingness to openly share of one's self. We can only know people to the extent they are prepared to reveal themselves.

C. FELLOWSHIP IN THE CHURCH MEANS...

1. Sharing All Things

There were three stages of development in their fellowship in Acts 4:32 - firstly, they were of one heart (spirit), then they were of one soul (mind), and then followed the physical expression of having all things in common.

'All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need' (Acts 2:44,45).

2. Laying Down Their Lives

"Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them " (Rom 16:3,4).

3. Devoted To Serving The Brethren

"You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints..." (I Cor 16:15).

4. Being A Channel Of Supply To Others In Need

'At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need Then there will be equality " (2 Cor 8:14). See also 1 Corinthians 16:17.

5. Sharing In Suffering

"Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles " (Phil 4:14).

6. Sacrificial Giving

"Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability " (2 Cor 8:2,3).

7. Practicing Hospitality

"Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you " (3 Jhn 5). See also Hebrews 13:2.

8. Building Up And Encouraging One Another

"We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us" (I Ths 2:8). See 2 Timothy 3:10-14.

D. RESULTS OF FELLOWSHIP

The results of fellowship in the early Church were:

a fear of God (Acts 2:43);

joy (Acts 2:46);

favor with all people (Acts 2:47);

addition of new believers (Acts 2:47);

all needs supplied (Phil 4:19);

emergence of leadership (I Cor 16:15,16).

MY COMMITMENT

Through this study I now understand the importance of having fellowship continually with other Christians. Today I commit myself to being a part of a group of believers to whom I will give my loyalty, my love and my service.

Chapter 15

Generosity

"The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge " (Ps 19:1,2). Read also verses 3,4.

From this psalm, we learn that God's Creation (the heavens and the earth) declare the glory of God, proclaim the work of His hands, pour forth speech, and display knowledge.

We can learn from God's Creation if we examine it carefully. Just as there are physical laws which bring order out of the chaos in the universe, God has also put into motion spiritual laws which govern life. One of these is the Law of Generosity. This teaches us that *"whoever sows generously will also reap generously "* (2 Cor 9:6).

A. PARTNERSHIP

As partners with God (I Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 5:20; 6:10), it is important for us to understand where responsibilities lie:

1. Ownership Is With God

"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it; the world, and all who live in it" (Ps 24: 1). See also Psalm 89:1 1; Job 4 1:1 1; I Chronicles 29:10-14.

We are not owners, but stewards. All ownership is with God. Every single created thing, living or not, ultimately belongs to Him - including everything material or immaterial that we may personally have in this life: possessions, careers, families.

He has given us all these things for us to enjoy (I Tim 6:17); and when we realize that they still belong to God, we can rest in the assurance that God also has ultimate responsibility for them.

2. Stewardship Is With Us

We are not owners, but stewards.

A steward manages and takes care of that which belongs to someone else. God owns everything; but as stewards, we manage and take care of it for Him. We have an obligation to be faithful in this stewardship.

The Lord holds us accountable for the special responsibility of managing and taking care of the things He has given us (read Matthew 25:14-30). When we understand this Owner-steward relationship that we enjoy with God's property, then it becomes easy to give.

Before God, stewardship covers every single thing that belongs to us:

- a. Our Life (Acts 17:25; I Cor 6:19; Gal 2:20; Job 33:4)
- b. Our Time (Ps 90:12; Eph 5:15,16; Col 4:5)
- c. Our Talents And Abilities (1 Pet 4:10; I Cor 12:4-7, 1 1)
- d. Our Possessions (Matt 6:19-21; Col 3:1,2)
- e. Our Finances (I Tim 6:6-10, 17-19; Matt 6:24).

Even so, many Christians still struggle to give (tithe), no matter how much they may want to.

But the action that releases a believer into the full blessings of good stewardship is SURRENDER - the unreserved submission of one's entire life, possessions and plans to God's will and purpose.

It is only when we give OURSELVES that we learn what it means to give some of the possessions (or money) God has given us.

B. GIVING IN THE EARLY CHURCH

'All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had" (Acts 2:44,45 and 4:32).

This basic attitude of the early Christians laid the foundation for every expression of giving that was to come later.

As the number of Christians multiplied, different methods of giving appeared. But all their giving expressed their understanding of STEWARDSHIP - that everything ultimately belongs to God.

1. The Church Supported The Needy

In the early Church, special men were chosen to serve as "deacons" - helpers in the distribution of offerings and gifts for the widows and needy (see Acts 6:1-3). These men made it their ministry to channel all the giving to where there was practical need.

2. Churches Gave Sacrificially To One Another

When the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were in famine, the poor, suffering Gentile church helped them.

"Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability " (2 Cor 8:2,3). See also verses 1,4.

3. The Church Supported Traveling Ministries

The Apostle Paul traveled from place to place establishing new churches. On some occasions he worked with his hands to provide his own support (Acts 18:3; 2 Ths 3:7-9).

On other occasions the Philippian church showed the true spirit of giving which God commends, by supporting traveling ministries such as Paul.

'I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received .. the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God" (Phil 4:18). Read also verses 15-17.

4. Christians Worked To Be Able To Give

"He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need" (Eph 4:2-8).

5. Giving Was The Proof Of Their Love

'At this time, your plenty will supply what they need.. Therefore show [by giving] ... the proof of your love...' (2 Cor 8:14, 24). (See also verses 7-15; I Corinthians 16:1,2; 1 John 3:17,18).

C. GOD'S PRINCIPLES OF GIVING

In I Corinthians 10:1-11, we are told to learn from Israel's example. We are to apply the principles given them by God. At the same time we are to avoid the mistakes Israel (and the leaders) made in the wilderness. In the area of giving, we find some excellent guidelines that can help us in our giving:

1. God Expects Us To

Begin With A Percentage ... *Bring the whole tithe [10% or one tenth] into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, 'says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it''* (Mal 3:10)

Chapter 16

Kingdom Living

A. CHANGE OF AUTHORITY

We have been delivered from Satan's dominion (rulership or headship). We are now under a whole new authority - that of the Lord Jesus.

As a believer begins growing in his new life in the Lord, he soon discovers that the only way we enjoy living in God's Kingdom is in right RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS (Eph 1:17; Phil 3:10).

At the very beginning of our new life with God, this relationship takes two distinct forms

1. Savior

This is the very first relationship we can ever have with Jesus. We cannot know God as Father or Friend until we first have had a revelation of Jesus as Savior - the One Who died for us and rescued us from Satan's kingdom. Jesus has saved us from:

- a. God's Judgment (I Ths 1:10; 5:9; Rom 5:9).
- b. Satan's Power (Acts 26:18; Col 1:13; Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 3:8).
- c. Our Own Selves (Phil 3:19; 2 Cor 5:15; Titus 3:3-6; 1 Peter 1:18).

"Although he was a son .. he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him " (Heb 5:8,9). See also Hebrews 2:10; 2 Timothy 1:10.

2. Lord

Knowing Jesus as Savior brings us into God's Kingdom, but that is not where our relationship with Him ends.

Once we are inside His Kingdom, that relationship takes on dramatic new changes. Now we know Him not merely as Savior, but as Lord - OUR Lord! He is KING in His Kingdom (Col 2:6).

"Therefore, I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed'; and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord, 'except by the Holy Spirit " (I Cor 12:3). See also John 13:13; Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Corinthians 4:5.

When we enter the Kingdom of Light, we can enjoy what we were created for a loving relationship with the Lord. Because of this, when Jesus becomes Lord of our life, we find that His dominion in our lives brings us out of the chaos of sin into divine order and peace. See Colossians 2:9, 10; 1 Corinthians 8:6.

B. THE MODEL CITIZEN

"Let your attitude toward life be that of Christ Jesus himself. - " (Phil 2:5, Phillips). Jesus, though King of the Kingdom, became a servant. He is the example of what the true citizen of His Kingdom is like.

"You call me 'Teacher, and 'Lord, 'an rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you " (John 13:13-15). Read also John 13:5-17; Matthew 20:26-28; Luke 22:27.

C. SUBJECTS OF THE KING

As members of Christ's Kingdom, we enter into a Master-servant relationship with Him (Matt 6:24).

Jesus came to do His Father's will (Heb 10:5-9). In His day-to-day life, He displayed what the lifestyle of the Kingdom is all about: living to please God (Eph 5:8-10). We are to have this servant heart, just as He had a servant's heart.

Many Christians do not like the concept of being a servant because it seems to make one person inferior to another. But in the Bible, we find four interesting paradoxes:

1. In Slavery, There Is Freedom

"But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life " (Rom 6:22). Read also verses 16-23; 12:1; 1 Corinthians 7:22; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Ephesians 6:6,7; 1 Peter 2:16.

2. In Being A Servant, There Is Greatness

"The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt 23:11,12). See also 20:26, 27; Mark 9:35; 10:43; John 12:26.

3. In Humility, There Is Exaltation

"Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven " (Matt 18:4). See also Luke 18:14; Proverbs 29:23; James 4: 10; 1 Peter 5:5,6; Matthew 19:30.

4. In Submission, There Is Authority

A Roman Centurion (a military leader over 100 soldiers) who came to Jesus understood this principle. *"...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 "* (Luke 7:7,8).

Because the Centurion was under authority, he was able to exercise authority, and he readily submitted to Jesus' authority. Read also verses 1-10; James 4:7.

The lifestyle of the Kingdom of God is an attitude of SUBMISSION and OBEDIENCE TO GOD (see Matthew 12:50; Ephesians 6:6; Hebrews 13:21; 1 John 2:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:1). We submit ourselves to God's will - NOT reluctantly - because of fear or duty - but rather:

- a. Because Of All God Has Done For Us (Rom 12: 1; Eph 4: 1; Titus 3:4-7).
- b. Because In Doing So We Find Fulfillment (Ps 40:8).
- c. Because Of Love (John 14:15; 1 Jhn 5:3).

D. FRUIT OF THE KINGDOM

"For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his children, encouraging, comforting and urging you TO LIVE LIVES WORTHY OF GOD, who calls you into his kingdom and glory" (1 Thes 2:11,12). See also 2 Thessalonians 1:5.

In Matthew 21:43, Jesus said that the Kingdom would belong to those who produce its fruit. The fruit of the Kingdom is explained in a number of scriptures:

Love, joy, peace (Gal 5:22, 23).

Goodness, righteousness, truth (Eph 5:9; Jas 3:13-17).

Righteousness, peace, joy (Rom 14:17; Heb 12:11).

The fruit of that Kingdom is simply the natural outworking of the miracle of rebirth that the Holy Spirit has performed in us (see Galatians 5:22).

Our responsibility as citizens of God's Kingdom is to live like the people we now are! (1 Pet 2:11).

"We also pray that your outward lives, which men see, may bring credit to your master's name, and that you may bring joy to his heart " (Col 1: 10 Phillips). See also 2:6; Ephesians 4: 1; 6:8-10.

MY COMMITMENT

I realize, after studying about Kingdom Living, that I am to submit my life to the service of others, just as Jesus did. I commit myself to being a willing, joyful servant of Christ and others.

Chapter 17

Worship

A. BLESSING GOD

"Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name " (Ps 103:1 - nasb).

It is awesome to consider that we have the ability to bless our Creator, but time after time in the Scripture we are exhorted to do just that. We bless Him through our praise and worship of Him. See Psalm 34:1-3.

B. PRAISE

Praise is an expression of admiration and appreciation. When we praise someone, we tell them how wonderful we think they are, or how great their accomplishments are. It is the same with the Lord. Praise has to do with acknowledging God's character and power.

"Because your love is better than life, my lips will glory you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands " (Ps 63:3,4).

1. Why Do We Praise God?

a. Because Of Who He Is

"Sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King fall the earth, sing to him a psalm of praise " (Ps 47:6,7).

b. Because Of What He Does.

"Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases; He redeems my life from the pit and crowns me with love and compassion. He satisfies my desires with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Ps 103:1-5).

2. Who Is To Praise God?

a. Those Who Seek God

.. they who seek the Lord will praise him...

b. Everything That Has Breath.

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord" (Ps 150:6).

3. When Do We Praise God?

a. At All Times.

'I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips' (Ps 34: 1).

b. In Every Circumstance

'Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus' (1 Ths 5:16-18).

4. Where Are We To Praise God?

a. Surrounded By God's People.

"He [Jesus] says, 'I will declare your name to my brothers, in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises " (Heb 2:12).

b. Among The Nations.

"I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, I will sing of you among the peoples" (Ps 57:9).

c. On Our Beds

"I will praise you as long as I live... with singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you, I think of you through the watches of the night" (Ps 63:4-6).

C. WORSHIP

Whereas praise is an expression of admiration and appreciation, worship is an expression of love and adoration.

Worship has to do with our love of the Lord. It can be expressed only with the giving of our whole heart and life to Him.

"To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:3 3).

The religious rituals and ceremonies of Israel in the Old Testament became detestable to the Lord because their heart was far from Him (Isa 1:10-15; 29:13). Today, also, God is only interested in the genuine and sincere worship that comes from the heart.

"Yet a time is coming, and has now come, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in SPIRIT and TRUTH" (John 4:23,24). Read also verses 4-26.

1. In Spirit

Our spirit is called the "inner man (Eph 3:16). True worship takes place when the inner man, in response to the promptings of God's Spirit, expresses love and adoration to God. This can take the form of spoken words, a love-song to the

Lord, or silent adoration.

True worship requires the action of the Holy Spirit on our spirit. So, only those who have been "born again of the Spirit" through faith in Jesus Christ can truly worship God (John 3:5-8).

2. In Truth

To worship God in truth is to worship Him as the Bible says we should. Nadab and Abihu (the sons of the high priest) offered strange fire before the Lord and died (Num 3:4; 26:6 1). This sober warning illustrates the need to study God's plan (the Tabernacle of Moses) for priestly ministry.

There was sacrifice, cleansing, anointing and clothing before worship (Exo 30:17-38).

You will note in Revelation 1:5, 6 that we are "... washed from our sins in his own blood" before being made "...priests unto God. "

An apostle / teacher in the United States was training lots of leaders how to heal the sick and perform miracles.

A prophetess said to him: "The Lord says to you, 'How dare you teach those who are unclean to do my works! Stop it!'"

There was much preparation of the priests before they could go into the Holy Place to worship the Lord. To ignore the steps outlined was perilous. We must worship in truth - in the Bible way.

D. EXPRESSIONS OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP IN SCRIPTURE

1. With The Mouth

a. Singing (Ps 9:2,1 1)

b. Praising (Ps 103: 1)

c. Shouting (Ps 47: 1)

2. With The Hands

a. Lifting (Ps 63:4)

b. Clapping (Ps 47: 1)

c. Musical instruments (Ps 150)

3. With The Body

a. Standing (Ps 134: 1)

b. Kneeling, bowing (Ps 95:6)

c. Dancing and leaping for joy (Ps 30:1 1)

"Who among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you, - majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? ... Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted..." (Exo 15:11, 2 1).

'Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord.. For you are great and do marvelous deeds; You alone are God.. I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever' (Ps 86:8, 10, 12).

MY COMMITMENT

The greatest thing I will ever do in this life or in eternity is to worship God.

I determine today to be a true worshiper and to make this my supreme goal in life. I will teach someone else this vital way of life also.

Chapter 18

Prayer

"He will call upon me, and I will answer him... and show him my salvation" (Ps 91:15,16).

The time we spend with the Lord in prayer can release the most dynamic, history-changing power this world has ever known.

The Bible describes many different operations of prayer, but in this lesson we are going to look at prayer as an individual first. Our prayer as a Body together can only be as strong as our personal time with the Lord.

A. THE SECRET PLACE

'But when you pray, go into your most private room, and closing the door, pray to your Father who is secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you in the open "' (Matt 6:6 amp).

We have been invited into intimate prayer by none other than the Lord Himself. This kind of "secret" prayer presupposes and ensures:

1. **The Right Motives** (Matt 6:5)
2. **A Right Relationship With God As Father** (Luke 11:11-13)
3. **A Real Trust In The Lord** (Ps 55:16,17)
4. **A Dispensing Of False Fronts** (Mark 7:6,7)

As we express our feelings and burdens in conversation with God, it can be in the form of **adoration** (Ps 34:1-4), **confession** (1 Jhn 1:9), **request** (Matt 7:7), or **thanksgiving** (Eph 5:4-20).

B. FIVE COMMANDS RELATED TO PRAYER

1. Watch And Pray Always

"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" (Luke 21:36). See also Mark 13:35-37.

2. Pray Lest You Fall Into Temptation

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak" (Matt 26:4 1).

3. Pray For Workers

"He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field ..." (Luke 10:2).

4. Pray For Those In Authority

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone; for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (1 Tim 2:1,2).

5. Pray For Your Enemies

"Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:28).

C. WHEN TO PRAY

The Bible gives many examples of people who prayed (1 Chr 4: 1 0). Many of the heroes of faith can be observed to have had regular times of the day set aside specifically for prayer, often three set periods a day; at morning, noon and evening.

As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and noon, will I pray and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice (Ps 5 5:16,17 kjv). See also Daniel 6: 1 0.

The best example of a daily pattern of regular, whole-hearted prayer - prayer that avoided meaningless religious ritual - can be found in the Lord Jesus Himself.

1. **Early In The Morning** (Mark 1:3 5)
2. **All Night** (Luke 6:12)
3. **Before Each Meal** (Mark 6:41)

D. WHAT TO PRAY

1. For Ourselves

'Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain. 'And God granted his request" (1 Chr 4: 1 0).

2. For One Another

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other..." (Jas 5:16).

3. For The Ministries In The Body Of Christ

"Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you" (2 Ths 3: 1).

4. For The Sick And Distraught

"Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is any one of you sick? He should call for the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up ... pray for each other so that you may be healed..." (Jas 5:14-16).

5. For Those Ensnared By Sin

"If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life..." (1 Jhn 5:16).

E. HELP IN PRAYER

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself

intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express " (Rom 8:26).

Part of the Holy Spirit's purpose is to teach us (Luke 12:12), guide us in prayer (Rom 8:27), and to help us in our faith (Eph 3:16,17).

The Holy Spirit will sometimes anoint a believer's prayer in a special way, and this is called praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20; Eph 6:18).

To help us in prayer, the Holy Spirit has also provided a special gift to the believer: The Gift of Tongues - speaking in another language to the Lord in prayer. See I Corinthians 12:4-11.

"...the prayer of the upright is his delight.. He heareth the prayer of the righteous " (Prov 15:8, 29 kjv).

F. YOKE FELLOW

Two joining together in prayer provides some very real advantages: *'Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven "* (Matt 18:19 kjv).

G. THE CHURCH PRAYING

If there is tremendous power when two people pray, what about the whole assembly of God's people? See Acts 4:24.

Today God is calling His people to prayer! The Church's mission is to change individual lives, families, communities, cities and nations through prayer!

MY COMMITMENT

Through this study I realize the wonderful opportunities of prayer - not only in my relationship with God, but also the supernatural results that follow. I commit myself to make prayer always a priority in my life.

Chapter 19

Heaven

"...God is in heaven and you are on earth... Therefore stand in awe of God" (Ecc 5:2,7)

A. WHAT IS HEAVEN?

1. Heaven Is The Dwelling Place Of God

"Is not God in the heights of heaven? And see how lofty are the highest stars! " (Job 22:12). See also Deuteronomy 26:15.

2. Heaven Is The Throne-Room Of God

"The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all" (Ps 103:19). See also Isaiah 66: 1.

3. Heaven Is The Place Of God's Full Glory

'As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow, the hair of his head was white like wool, his throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him... " (Dan 7:9,10). See also Acts 7:55.

4. Heaven Is The Home Of The Righteous (Believing) Dead

"Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands " (2 Cor 5: 1).

5. Heaven Is The Future Home Of All Believers

'After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice.- 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne..... (Rev 7:9,10).

B. THE NATURE OF HEAVEN

Heaven is a place far beyond anything we can possibly conceive (I Cor 2:9; 13:12). Heaven is like a place of holiness, full of glory and without end.

But though the Bible doesn't describe all the details of what Heaven is like, it does give us some clues as to its nature. It is:

1. A Place Of Great Glory

"Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father..." (Matt 13:43).

2. A Place Of Continual Worship

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: ... Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God..' Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting. 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns...' " (Rev 19:1-6). See also Revelation 5:11,12.

3. A Place That Will Never End

"... and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1: I 1). See also I Peter 1:4.

4. A Place Untainted By Evil

"Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life " (Rev 21:27). See also Ephesians 5:5.

The Book of Revelation describes the New Jerusalem, coming out of Heaven, as a place without:

- a. Night (22:5)
- b. Curse (22:3)
- c. Pain (21:4)
- d. Crying, sorrow (21:4)
- e. Death (21:4)

This is because the nature of Heaven is a product of the nature of God. Since Heaven is the full manifestation of His presence, what God is like, Heaven is like a place of holiness, full of glory and without end.

C. OUR LINK WITH HEAVEN

As believers, we now live our lives in a special relationship with Heaven, because:

1. We Belong There

"But you have come to... the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven..." (Heb 1 2:22,23). See also Philippians 3:20.

2. We Are Enthroned There

'And God raised us up with Christ and enthroned us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6).

3. We Have Our Source Of Life There

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph 1:3). See also Colossians 3:1-4.

4. We Have Our Names Recorded There

"However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven " (Luke 10:20). See also Hebrews 12:23.

5. We Have Been Sent By The One Who Lives There

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:16, 18). See also 2 Corinthians 5:20.

6. We Have Our Eyes Fixed There

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal " (2 Cor 4:17,18). See also Hebrews 11:9,10,14-16.

7. We Have Our Treasure There

"...He has given us new birth into a living hope... into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you..." (I Pet 1: 3,4). See also Matthew 6:19-21.

8. We Are Being Called There

"But one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13,14).

Jesus Himself, before returning to Heaven, made a very special promise to every believer: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms, if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am " (John 14: 1-3). See also 17:24.

MY COMMITMENT

I decide today to set my affections on things in Heaven, not on things of this earth. I realize my life on earth is only temporary, so I will live by priorities established by this truth. I will share with others the good news about this wonderful eternal home Jesus offers to all who will believe on Him.

Chapter 20

When Jesus Returns - The Second Coming

"Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you have proclaimed the Lord's death UNTIL HE COMES" (I Cor 11:26).

A. THE PROMISE OF HIS RETURN

The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus to the earth is one of the most important subjects for the Christian. The writers of the New Testament discussed it more than 300 times, and the language used was almost always imperative. The first thing we need to know about the Second Coming is that it is CERTAIN!

1. Jesus Spoke About His Own Return

'At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory' (Matt 24:30). See also John 14:2,3.

2. Angels Foretold It

"They were looking intently into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand there looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven ...'" (Acts 1: 10,11).

3. The Early Christians Encouraged One Another With It

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words" (I Ths 4:16-18). See also Revelation 1:7.

4. The Holy Spirit Bears Witness Of It

"Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (2 Cor 5:5).

"But be patient, my brothers, as you wait for the Lord to come. Look at the farmer quietly waiting for his precious harvest. See how he has to possess his soul in patience till the land has had the early and late rains. So must you be patient, resting your hearts on the ultimate certainty. The Lord's coming is very near" (Jas 5:7,8 Phillips). See also Hebrews 10:37.

B. HOW WILL JESUS RETURN?

1. Unexpectedly

"Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, Peace and safety, destruction will come on them suddenly..." (I Ths 5:1-3) Read also verses 4-11.

2. Like The Lightning

"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man" (Matt 24:27). See also Luke 17:24.

3. In The Same Way That He Left

"... This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1: 10, 11).

4. With Great Power And Glory

"At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27).

5. In Full View Of All

"Look he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen" (Rev 1:7).

C. DRAMATIC EVENTS TO TAKE PLACE

1. The Mystery Of The Ages Will Be Completed

"...There will be no more delay! But in the day when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets" (Rev 10:6,7). See also Romans 16:25,26.

2. God's People Will Enter Their Full Glory

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Phil 3:20,21). See also I Corinthians 15:35-53.

3. The Dead In Christ Will Be Raised To Life

"..because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence " (2 Cor 4:14). See also John 6:40; 11:25.

4. Those Believers Still Alive Will Be Caught Up To Meet Him

'And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other " (Matt 24:31).

5. Creation Will Be Set Free From Its Bondage

"The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom 8:19-21). Read also verse 22 and Isaiah 35:1-7.

6. Every Enemy Will Be Destroyed

"Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (I Cor 15:24,25). See also 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2-8.

7. Satan Will Be Bound

"And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years " (Rev 20:1,2). Read also verses 3, 7-10.

8. Judgment Will Be Meted Out

God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled.

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

"He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power... " (2 Ths 1:6-9).

9. A Kingdom Will Be Set Up That Will Never Be Destroyed

"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever " (Dan 2:44). See also Revelation 19:15,16.

MY COMMITMENT

The Second Coming of Jesus is my great hope for the future. I will tell as many people as possible about Jesus, my Savior, before He returns again. I am committed to Him and look with excitement for that day of His Coming.

Chapter 21

Call Of God

God has a plan for the life of every individual believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only does His call involve a wonderful purpose for us throughout eternity, but we also have an expression of that call upon the earth now.

"Who has saved us and CALLED us with an holy calling .. according to his own purpose and grace..." (2 Tim 1:9).

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE " (Rom 8:17,28). See also verses 29, 30.

A. GOD HAS CALLED US

1. From The Foundation Of The World

"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will" (Eph 1:4,5). See also 2:10 and Matthew 25:34.

2. To Be Separated Unto Him

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light " (I Pet 2:9). See also Romans 9:23-26.

3. To Fulfill His Purpose

"So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, who has saved us and called us to a holy life; not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace..." (2 Tim 1: 8,9). See also Romans 8:28, Philippians 3:14.

B. OUR CALL ON EARTH

"Paul, a servant [slave] of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God" (Rom 1: 1).

In describing his own ministry, the Apostle Paul gives us an example of the call that is upon EVERY believer. It has three aspects:

1. The General Calling - "A Slave Of Christ"

Jesus paid a high price for us: His own life.

"For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's free man, similarly, he who was a free man when, he was called is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price..." (1 Cor 7:22,23). See also I Corinthians 6:19,20.

When Paul calls himself a slave of Jesus Christ, he is pointing to an even deeper meaning. According to the custom of his day, if a slave came to the time when he could be set free, but because of love for his master chose not to accept his freedom, he then received a mark pierced in his ear. This was the sign that he was a "love slave " to his master for life (Exo 21:5,6; Deut 15:16,17). The Apostle Paul, by choice, declared himself a love-slave of the Lord Jesus.

2. The Special Calling - "Called To Be An Apostle"

Just as the Apostle Paul had a special calling upon his life, so does every believer. Paul was called to be an apostle, but there are many different callings in the Body of Christ. See Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-16.

The special part that God has for us to play will be revealed to us as we earnestly seek His will.

3. The Particular Calling "Separated To The Gospel"

Within each special calling there is a particular calling. For example, Peter and Paul were both apostles, but one was the apostle to the Jews and the other to the Gentiles. See Romans 11: 13; 1 Timothy 2:7; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

We move into our special and particular calling only as we prove ourselves as "love-slaves," for we must first learn to be wholly under the authority of Christ before we can be SENT by Him. See Matthew 28:18,19.

C. WHY DOES HE CALL US?

1. Because The World Is In Darkness

"We know that we ourselves are children of God, and we also know that the world around us is under the power of the evil one" (I Jhn 5:19 Phillips). See also Ephesians 6:12 and Colossians 1: 13.

2. Because People Are Hungry And In Need

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36).

3. To Prove His Wisdom

"His intent was that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly realms, according to the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3:10,11).

4. Because The Time Is Short

"Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for the harvest!" (John 4:35). See also John 9:4.

D. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARE CALLED?

1. We Are Made By Him

"... Come, follow me, Jesus said, and I WILL MAKE YOU fishers of men " (Matt 4:19). See also Jeremiah 18: 1-10.

2. We Are Taught By Him

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26). See also I Corinthians 2:12; I John 2:27.

3. **We Are Sent By Him**

"As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). See also Mark 16:15.

When God calls, He comes and interrupts our lives. Some examples of this in the Scripture are:

Moses (a shepherd in the desert): "Go, set my people free " (Exo 3:1-12).

Samuel (a boy serving in the temple): "Wake up, speak for me " (I Sam 3:1-19).

Ezekiel (a captive in a foreign land): "Stand up, I am sending you " (Eze 2:1-7).

Disciples (businessmen, fishermen): "Come, follow me " (Luke 5:27,28; Matt 4:18-22).

Saul (an enemy of the Church): "Go, I will tell you what you must do" (Acts 9:1-9).

MY COMMITMENT

Now that I realize that God has had a plan for my life even before the foundation of the world, I now make a total commitment to this plan and will follow the Lord all the way. I will teach others also about God's call for their lives.