Kingdom Disciples: 8 Keys to Life-Transforming Discipleship

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Cover Painting by Heather Gemmell

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Special thanks to . . .

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. . . Neil Anderson, understanding identity in Christ
. . . Bill Gillham, understanding that we are spirit beings in an "earth suit"
. . . Rick Warren, his understanding that the mission of the church, is about the purposes of God
. . . John Bray, for his understanding on Kingdom.
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. . . Hank Hanigraaff, Bible answer man and Kingdom understanding
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. . . JI Packer on the greatness of God
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. . . Paul Johnson's teaching- on pastoring
. . . Bert Johnson: teaching, justification, and endless conversation
. . . Abundant Life & Royal Heights – great churches of God

-- Alan Braun

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-- Nancy Ingold

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Alan is married to Wanda and has four grown children, Richard, Simon, Sharon and Jerry; and four grandchildren, Damien, Summer, Emma, Uriah.

Nancy Ingold is the director of Celebrating Life at Royal Height Baptist Church in Delta, BC. She is passionate about seeing people walk in the freedom that Christ has secured for them. She and her husband, Paul, served with the Lord overseas for twelve years. Prior to that, Nancy co-founded and led Freedom Ministries at Mosaic for eight years, to help people find freedom from addictions and life-dominating problems, in Los Angeles, CA. She and Paul have three children, Jeremy, Micah and Joanna.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Kingdom Disciples: The 8 Keys to Life-Transforming Discipleship sole purpose is that you would know and love God more and more deeply and be all He created you to be in Him. When we love God, we naturally want to tell others. We want to make disciples, because that is His heart. We desire people to know the God we love and we desire to teach them, if they want to learn, everything God has taught us because we love them and want them to also experience God and live free.

As God ignites your heart in this study, we anticipate you will be one disciple God will raise up in a wave of people who are a powerful force of righteousness in the world. You will understand more deeply who God is and who you were before you met Him. You will know who you are in Christ and how to live free in Him. Your life will be marked by love: loving God, loving others and loving yourself. You will know what it means to abide in Christ and see God use your life to have eternal impact in the world. You will be a Kingdom disciple.

As you disciple others, you can help people become as free and victorious as you are yourself. If you are struggling in your life, we want to help you live truly free so you can help other people also grow in their lives. We hope this book will give you tools to disciple others.

You will find repetition of key concepts throughout this book. Please do not be deterred. This repetition is on purpose. The book repeats itself in numerous places where there are important concepts which may be difficult for to fully grasp. You see this type of repetition in the Bible itself, especially in Paul's writings. He tends to focus first on who we are in Christ and what God has done in Christ, then he moves to write about how this truth applies in the roles God gives us on this earth. All doing flows from the solid doctrine he is teaching.

We do what we really believe. Repetition is aimed at sinking key truths into the value system of your mind that drives your behavior. This value system resides in the subconscious part of your mind, where knowledge moves to be the driving force of your life. Jesus says it this way: "If you abide in My word, you will be My disciple (I will teach you) and then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." This is the renewing of the mind process of growth as a Christian. The transformation of your mind is happening at the subconscious level where your values reside. You must repeat the information through the gate of your conscious mind, which says whether the information is true or not. Once accepted as truth, this information will be carried out into automatic behavior driven by the subconscious.

Looking at truth is like looking at a diamond. There are many facets to a skillfully but diamond, each facet offers a different look at the whole diamond. The gospel is like this. The 8 Keys reveal a facet of the diamond of the gospel and repeats key information so that hopefully,

as you sit with the Lord, He will reveal these truths deeper and deeper until they become the norm of your walk with Him.

Each Key unlocks a foundational doctrine or teaching of the gospel. As we know the Truth of God's Word, and believe it, the Truth sets us free to really live. As you work through each Key, we pray God will reveal His Word to you and you will live more and more in the freedom you have in Christ. In order for this material to impact your life, however, you must read it for YOU, so you will grow. View it as your spiritual bread and water. Soak in God's Word. Sit with God to know Him. Lay aside every other agenda, and just seek to know God. A book will not do this for you. You must seek Him yourself, listening to His voice and believing what He says in His Word is true.

Using this Workbook:

1. Introduction: The introduction explains the purpose of this book and the 8 Keys.

2. 8 Keys: Each key begins with a short summary followed by bible verses and then a longer "Going Deeper" section which is more detailed bible study of that key. You can go through these shorter sections of each key to get an overview of the 8 Keys, then go back and study the 'Going Deeper' sections for each Key. Or you can study the summary and dive right into the "Going Deeper" section of each key

   We recommend you take time to go through the "Going Deeper" section and allow God's word to speak to you. Remember: Each Key is a part of the whole gospel, like the facet of a diamond. No one Key can be taken out and looked at too long. Each is intimately connected to the others and form the whole of the gospel.

3. Appendix: In the back of the book you will find help for discipling or counseling people, plus a fairly exhaustive list of verses written out for each key, and Alan's doctrinal statement.

   Enjoy! We pray God's abundant blessing as you read. May you have ears to hear what the Spirit of God wants to say to you. May He enlighten the eyes of your heart that you might know Him more and know the amazing power He has for us who believe!

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PREFACE

A storm is coming!

A storm is either a fearful event or a welcomed event. It depends on the perspective of the one anticipating the storm. If the people are unprepared, a storm creates confusion and fear. Dark clouds spell trouble and damage as they swirl overhead. But if the ground is dry and desperate for life-giving water from years of drought, then a storm is welcomed, celebrated and needed.

I believe the church of the living God is beginning to awake from her sleep. A storm is coming. The church is moving from a system of attendance to a living body which lets her experience her God. She is becoming aroused and alive! The church is getting on mission with her Master, passionately embracing Her King, learning from Him and listening to Him. She longs to be used by her God, working with Him as He sets up His Kingdom earth as it is in heaven. I believe God is raising up people totally sold out to their King! These people are Kingdom disciples.

A storm is coming!

The life-giving rain will pour down through the Holy Spirit, reigning in and through God's people, Kingdom disciples. Kingdom disciples are people who know their God. They know how to walk with their God and equip others to do the same. These men and women will not be doing church, they will be the church! They want more than a meeting to attend. They want God!

When this rain falls, some church leaders will feel uncomfortable and grasp for methods to create order. They will fear they are losing control. When this rain falls, chaos will be the norm as God sets captives free and binds up those who are broken. Ministry will get messy and be out of our control, but in the control of the living God. God will be at work in and through His disciples, doing what only He can do, redeeming a lost and dying world and setting them free to proclaim the message of His grace.

Kingdom disciples are people radically abandoned to God. Kingdom disciples walk by faith. They know who they are in Christ and they love being who they are. When the rain falls, there will be freedom from religious performance and rules, freedom to work and move with God for His glory alone. Baptisms and teaching will be common daily as God calls people to Himself through the gospel proclaimed by His people.

The leaders will attempt to organize the movement of God to keep it safe and controlled, but the movement will be alive and dangerous. Church gatherings will be divided. Many will leave as things get too intense.

"Church" will no longer be comfortable to just attend. People will be challenged to live beyond mediocrity and to embrace their God, radically obeying Him, even at the cost of their own lives or all they own. Each person will know how to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ

and lead their friends to Christ. Evangelism will be the norm as they are on mission with their God, knowing it is God who works within and through them, calling people to Himself. Excuses like "It's not my gifting" will be the thing of the past, for all will desire to live out the great commission of Christ to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.[1]

The experience of the church will be what it really is: a vibrant, living system, empowered and driven by the unstoppable and uncontainable God. Church will be the church, the bride of Christ, redeemed humanity on mission with their God. The mission and power are His. He flows in and through His people, seeking to save the lost, bringing all things back into alignment with Himself. When this happens (and it will happen and is happening throughout the world) a movement will come with such force it will turn the world upside down!

This is Kingdom discipleship: a movement of people who believe God, know who they are, and live for His will and glory alone.

The purpose of this book is to produce unreasonable, unorganized, uncompromising, focused spiritual people who will carry out the desire of the Christ to reach a lost and dying world. It is written for a variety of people: people who don't know how to be spiritual, people who are tired of religion, and people who are tired of trying to live a Christian life devoid of power. It is written for the church leaders, lay or otherwise, who are tired of having zero converts, zero baptisms and zero impact on their communities, year after year!

This book is not a book to be read and shelved. It is a book to equip you as a believer to live out the Kingdom experience with your Lord and Master and to learn how to equip others to do the same. This book is not for cowards or the lukewarm. This book is written to stir you up to live by faith, to passionately love God and those He brings to you to love.

This book is a working textbook so you will have a clear plan on how to be a disciple and how to make Kingdom disciples that truly function as disciples of the great commission. Each person who works through these teachings will know how to walk with the Lord, see others come to Christ, and know how to equip the new disciples to reproduce their lives to do the same.

I believe the Lord is tired of our impact-less worship services. He doesn't need our routine of singing songs without passion or love. He has angels that sing better than us. He is tired of fellowship that is only a cookie and a cake. He wants us to grow up in the faith, speak the truth in love to one another, and see His Kingdom impact the world around us.

I believe He is tired of little passion as the norm of Christianity. He is tired of religious activity and meaningless prayer. I believe He is tired of passionate, spiritual people being removed from any form of influence in the Body of Christ because they scare people with their faith. He is tired of the church watching the old evil one come down day after day and blaspheme His Name with so few Kingdom disciples to challenge him. I believe He is ready for us as His church to be who we really are in Christ, believing Him, obeying His voice and speaking His gospel boldly to those He is calling to Himself.

A storm is coming! The rain will flow in and through Kingdom disciples! God is working. This book has one goal in mind, to equip you to live as a Kingdom disciple, so you can equip others to make disciples who can make disciples to the glory of God.

-- Alan Braun, Pastor

[1] Matthew 28:18-20

KINGDOM DISCIPLES

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:16-20)

When we speak of Kingdom disciples we are talking about the reign of God in and through His people. He is bringing us back to Old Testament times when the invisible God was the King of Israel, but His people dethroned Him and set up a king they could see. The prophet Samuel warned the people not to do this ungodly act. As he cried out to God, God said, "They have not rejected you, they have rejected Me. Give them a physical king."

But in Christ, God has reinstated Himself to the original plan as the invisible King of His people. He wants no person to be in this role physically. No pope or priest. No pastor or church. He is King and He reigns with His people in the spiritual realm, and all who call themselves Christians will openly admit Christ is their only true King.

When they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some doubted. What a challenging verse! They had seen Him die. Now He was alive! Jesus had risen from the dead and walked among them. He had entered their rooms without walking through the doors. He let some touch His nail-pierced hands. Some disciples had eaten food cooked by the Lord Himself. He was alive. Very alive! What more evidence did they need? Yet still… some doubted. Why?

Then Jesus came and spoke to them and said the now-famous words we casually call the Great Commission: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." Jesus is now in charge. He has been given supreme authority in heaven and earth. He defeated the power and principalities through His death and resurrection and now He has the Name which is above every name! He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Everything is under His control and power. So, He commands us, "Go, therefore, and make disciples…"

What is the connection between His authority and our ability to go? Making disciples is an impossible task. How does someone go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things He has commanded? Jesus closed the Great Commission with a revealing statement and promise. He said, "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

I am with you. Me, He said. Not a system or a method. Me. A Person. I am with you. You can go because I am with you. I will do this work through you. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without Me you can do

nothing."[2] Jesus was pretty clear. A disciple is created to bear fruit and he or she does this by abiding in Him. Bearing fruit does not mean producing fruit. Bearing fruit means displaying the fruit produced by the Lord as He works with you, in and through your life. Kingdom disciples know that apart from Jesus, they can do nothing of eternal significance at all apart from Christ.

A disciple is a student, a learner. As Kingdom disciples, Jesus is our teacher. A person who abides in Jesus must abide, or live within His word, or he is not truly a disciple. Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."[3] As we abide in His Word, we will learn from Him. He will teach us the truth and the truth will set us free to be who we truly are in Him, more fully expressing the resurrection life of a disciple of Christ.

Jesus set the example, as the Son of Man, for us as One Who learns from Another. He was also a Disciple. He was fully God, yet He took the form of a man and submitted Himself to Father God's leading, walking in perfect faith. Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."[4]

Jesus did nothing of Himself. What an amazing statement coming from our Lord!! Jesus said only the things the Father taught Him to say. He did only the things the Father told Him to do. Always! Perfectly! Wow! He always did those things that pleased God, and what pleases God more than faith? Nothing! Jesus perfectly walked by faith in the Father, obeying His every command. If Jesus did nothing of Himself, but said and did only what the Father said to say and do, how much more should we speak and do only what we are taught by God to speak? We don't walk ahead or push our plans forward, we wait and trust and move in obedience to Him.

What impact can one life have when it is completely surrendered to the will of God? Unstoppable and uncontainable impact of transformation that continues today!!

We are disciples who are being conformed into the image of Jesus, the King of our lives. He is teaching us to live by faith, completely abandoned and yielded to the reign of God within us. Jesus authored and He is perfecting our faith. As He grows us up, He is reaching a lost world through us for His Name's sake.

The focus of this workbook is to teach clear doctrine that we might grow up in maturity in Christ. We believe that solid doctrine created passion!! And passionate people live to the glory of God! This is our desire!

As we passionately love God with all we are, being who He has made us to be, there will be impact in this world and our God will receive all the glory and praise. We are His ambassadors, with one voice proclaiming His message to a lost and dying world. Our King is taking over the visible world, conquering all who stand against Him. And He is doing it through His people, His Kingdom disciples, His church.

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[2] John 15:5

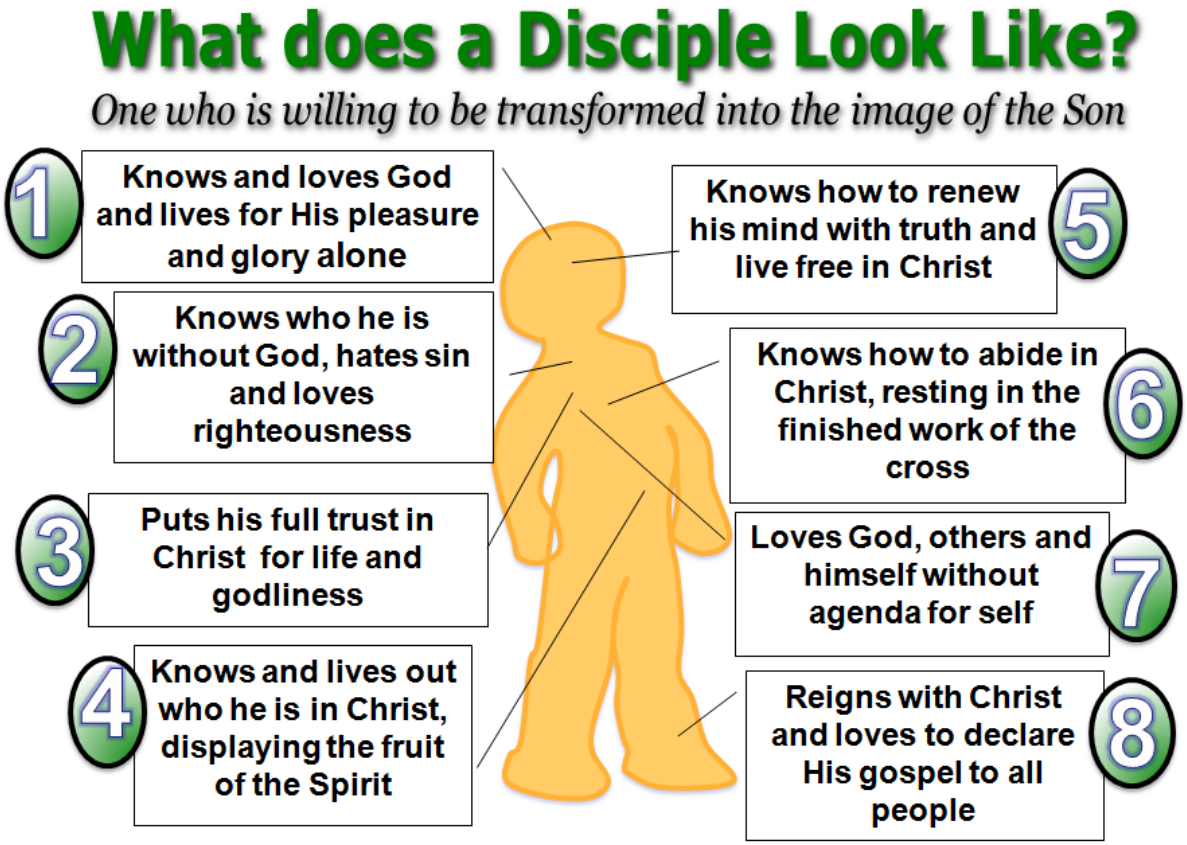
[3] John 8:31, 32

[4] John 8:28,29

WHO IS A KINGDOM DISCIPLE?

Our prayer is for the church to be the church! We desire that we, as the church of the living God, would be the living, vibrant, powerful representative of Jesus Christ we were created by God to be. We desire that we, as God's people, would accept the miraculous work of the cross as the answer for all of our needs in Christ Jesus and for all the needs of the world. We want nothing more and nothing less, to the glory of God! May God be glorified in and through us all!

This book is written so you, as an individual or a church, can be all God created you to be in Christ and to know how systematically and consistently make disciples who love God with abandon and passion and who live in gratitude to the God who saved them in Jesus Christ!! We believe the 8 characteristics below, taught throughout this workbook in the 8 Keys to Life-Transforming Discipleship, are found in all true disciples of Christ.



A Kingdom disciple maker is one who can reproduce this body life in the hearts and souls of others, just a Jesus commanded us to go and make disciples, teaching them all He has commanded. ***A disciple maker knows what truth must be believed, taught and accepted to see consistent life transformation in the lives of others.*** We seek to produce disciples who become disciple makers!

What Does Discipleship Look Like?

Discipleship sets one on a path to know, love and discover God, the world and Christian community

Discipleship is not a "straight path." There are many turns or bumps in our journey with God. We do not come to Christ and know instantly how to walk the Christian life in full maturity. He doesn't give us a manual that lays out exactly what we must do each day of our lives. Our walk requires faith! It requires actually learning to listen to God and obeying His voice. As we grow in the knowledge of Him, we learn to walk out this knowledge in our daily lives by faith. Having accurate information about God is critical for walking a victorious life in Christ.

As you read through the pages of this book, we pray God will speak to you, revealing Himself to you, perhaps teaching you some concepts for the first time or reminding you of what you once learned. We pray He will build, restore or deepen your fellowship with Him, so you experience the reign of Christ in and through your life as He leads people to Himself through you. Then you will know how to teach them as He has taught you, so that they too might grow up to be mature in Christ and conformed to His image.

10 TRUTHS WE BELIEVE

- **God's Sovereign Will:** We believe God is working all things together according to the counsel of His will. (Ephesians 1:11)

- **God's Abundant Life:** We believe an abundant life is promised by God and that this life is found in Jesus. (John 10:10)

- **God's Unfathomable Love:** We believe God can and will heal, forgive, free, and restore everyone who comes to Him by faith, no matter what they have done in their lives. (Luke 4:16-21)

- **God's Helpless Subjects:** We believe we cannot transform ourselves into clean, spiritual beings no matter how hard we try. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 3:11-12)

- **God's Pure Righteousness:** We believe that apart from God, no one is good enough in their own merits to be accepted by our Righteous God. (Romans 3:10-18)

- **God's Unlimited Power:** We believe God can and will transform us when we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ by faith. (Romans 10:8-13)

- **God's New Creation:** We believe when we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ, God makes us completely new and righteous. (2 Corinthians 5:17, 21)

- **God's Living Word:** We believe our standard for life is the living and active Word of God. (Hebrews. 4:12)

- **God's Only Son:** We believe Jesus freed us from the power of sin through His death and resurrection. (Romans 6:5-7)

- **God's Holy Work:** We believe we abide in Jesus who is abundant Life and our work now is to believe in Him. (Colossians. 3:3-4; John 6:29)

INTRODUCING THE 8 KEYS TO LIFE-TRANSFORMING DISCIPLESHIP

Our desire is to produce unreasonable, unorganized, uncompromising, focused spiritual people who will carry out the desire of Christ to reach a lost and dying world. The *8 Keys to Life-Transforming Discipleship* represent eight key truths which form the foundational framework for walking with God in the freedom and power that is rightfully yours as His child; and then to help others do the same.

Knowing and loving God is foundational. We are not interested in just giving you more Bible knowledge or information about God. Many of you have had plenty of Bible knowledge. Has that knowledge alone given you peace and joy and an unshakeable security in your life? We also are not interested in helping you just survive on this planet, to struggle through the Christian life. We believe we are created to thrive!! We are interested in helping you to truly thrive, to be all you were created by God to be in Christ! Knowing and loving God is the true Key. You will learn how to be a disciple of His. As your love for Him grows, His passion will drive you right into the centre of His heart!!

This book is a working textbook so you will have a clear plan on how to be a Kingdom disciple and how to make Kingdom disciples that actually function as disciples of the great commission.

This book is a working textbook so you will have a clear plan on how to be a Kingdom disciple and how to make Kingdom disciples that actually function as disciples of the great commission. Each person who works through these teachings will know how to walk with the Lord in freedom and joy, see others come to Christ. You will also know how to equip the new disciples to reproduce their lives to do the same.

As we said earlier, this workbook is divided up into 10 sections, the introduction, 8 keys, and the appendix.

We have written a short synopsis of each key followed by many Scriptures for you to explore on your own under *Discovering Each Key*. The Scriptures are the most important part of this study. We believe that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. God will speak to you as listen to Him in His Word; He will reveal His truth to you and teach you what He wants you to know.

Keys 1 - 3 are consecutive. In these three keys, we come to *Realize* who God is, *Admit* who we are without Him, and *Surrender* to Jesus Christ.

Keys 4 - 8 are not consecutive. These five keys express the reality for a believer in Jesus Christ. All are true all the time throughout your walk with God. Learning these principles will build a solid foundation that cannot be shaken by the events or circumstances of life.

Each key has a shorter summary section and a longer study section called "Going Deeper." You will have a summary of the whole book by looking at the summaries of each key. You will learn the keys as you work through the scriptures and dig into the "Going Deeper" studies. Each study is meant to form a basis for living a victorious and purposeful life on this planet. As you read, we encourage you to sit with God, and read His Word to *know Him*, not just to finish a study.

We only disciple people to the level of maturity we are ourselves. If you are not living free you will not be able to disciple others to be free. So it is critical that you dig into this study first for yourself, to know your God and to love Him more deeply. As He teaches you, He will give you opportunities to disciple others, teaching them what He is teaching you.

Discipleship is a living process, not a system of lessons to teach. Discipleship is not just a Sunday school class or Bible study. Discipleship is not just memorizing Bible verses. Kingdom disciples follow the wisdom of God in a person, not personality, though sometimes personality initially attracts. Wisdom is what the heart of a true disciple seeks. They seek to know God and live for His glory alone.

As you look at this book, pulling one key out too long and focusing on it without the connection to the others will move you to misunderstanding. Each key is essential to the whole. They cannot stand alone and express the full picture. The gospel is a living system. If you wanted to study the heart of a living being, like an animal, and you remove its heart to look at it, it will die. Likewise, if you remove the lungs, it will die. You must look at the animal in its completeness as it functions and works. It's the same with the gospel.

The gospel is not robotic, like a system that man can build. It is God's living system showing how He functions and how we function in Him. The gospel shows God in His completeness. If you want to examine God's love and pull it out by itself, but do not have an understanding of His sovereignty, His wrath, His righteousness, His justice, His mercy, His holiness, or His power, then soon your view of His love will become perverted and unhealthy. God is a living being. His attributes all describe Him in His wholeness. He always loves even when wrathful. He is always righteous, even in His mercy or judgment. He is life and must always be examined as a whole Being. The gospel is the same. We can look at the parts, and we do in this study to understand the gospel more fully, but the parts must be living in the whole.

Being a Kingdom disciple is being all you were created to be in Christ, not about trying to live the Christian life. Jesus says, "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest"[5] The Christian life is not hard, but it is impossible without the Christ. There is incredible joy in this journey of learning to walk by faith in our God. We pray that God will speak deeply to you through this study, and that you will come away with joy and peace and a solid assurance in the goodness and love of God in your life. So let me encourage you to come to the fountain of life and drink.

[5] Matthew 11:28

WHY 8 AND WHY KEYS?

Eight is the number of new creation!! The number 8 is often used by God when He is about to start something new, like a new beginning or a new creation.

Keys represent a significant symbol of the gospel in the Bible. Jesus said, in speaking to His disciple Peter, "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."[6] To enter the kingdom of God, we must believe the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. If we do not believe, then we are outside God's Kingdom and remain in darkness and, in fact, are darkness. The gospel is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes. The power of living an abundant life in Christ begins and ends in Jesus.

We emphasize 8 keys to focus our mind and heart on the new creation power of God. Here are some examples from the Bible where God seemed to use the number 8 to show something new He was doing:

- **A New Start, Noah:** When God prepared to flood the earth because mankind's sin had become so great, He had eight people build an ark to escape His wrath. (Genesis 7:13)

- **A New People, Israel:** When God started the holy nation of Israel, He commanded that every male child be circumcised on the 8th day, making them holy or set apart to Him. (Genesis 17:12)

- **A Resurrected Life:** When Jesus was sent to His death on the cross, He arose on the first day of the week (7+1) which is the eighth day. (Matthew 28:1)

- **Miracles:** The miracles of Elijah were eight in number. (1 Kings 17-18; 2 Kings 2:8-11) The miracles of Elisha, who was given a double portion of Elijah's spirit, numbered 16. (2 Kings 2-13)

- **Key Principles for living the New Creation Life:** When Jesus and the New Testament writers were explaining how Kingdom people thought and lived, they described eight principles or truths. (Matthew 5:3-10, eight blessings we have; Phil. 4:8, eight attitudes to possess; 2 Peter 1:5-7, eight character traits to live out)

[6] Matthew 16:19

8 Keys to Life-Transforming Discipleship!

Key 1 Realize

We realize God created us for His pleasure, that we might know Him, as He truly is, and live for His purpose.

Key 2 Admit

We admit that, before knowing God, we were unrighteous beings who lived independent of Him.

Key 3 Surrender

We surrender to Father God by confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and believing in our heart that God raised Him from the dead.

Key 4 Believe

We believe we are new creations who are complete in Christ.

Key 5 Transform

We are transformed by fully resting in the Truth as we yield our soul and body to God.

Key 6 Abide

We abide in Christ, knowing that apart from Him we can do nothing.

Key 7 Love

We live out the heart command of God to love Him, others, and ourselves.

Key 8 Reign

We reign with Christ, declaring the gospel, as He advances the Kingdom of God in the entire world until His Father is fully glorified.

KEY 1 REALIZE

We realize God created us for His pleasure, that we might know Him, as He truly is, and live for His purpose.

In Key 1 *Realize,* we learn about God, and, more importantly, we come to know Him as God. We realize He is the Creator of and Ruler over everything. We also realize who we are in relation to Him. The Bible is inspired by God, literally breathed out by Him, and describes the very nature and passion of God. God tells us, in His Word, that if we seek Him with our whole heart, we will come to know Him. God promises to reveal Himself to all who truly desire to know Him. God also reveals Himself through the things He has made, from the vast galaxies to the smallest atom.

The dictionary defines *realize* as "to know and understand something; or to be or become aware of something." In this First Key, we are coming to know and understand who God really is. He is not a God of our natural understanding. Our understanding of who He really is must come through and by Him as He reveals Himself to us. If He did not reveal Himself, we would not be able to know Him.

God has revealed Himself as the Unchanging One. "Unchanging One" encompasses all He is, His truth, His life, His character, and His ways. His purposes do not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Unlike people who change their minds, God never changes His sovereign mind. His Word stands and will be fulfilled. He will change His methods for every generation and people group, but His unchanging character remains and is more consistent than the North Star.

God knows everything. He needs no new information. God has no need of counsellors or advisors. He is absolutely wise and all-knowing. He doesn't need to discuss His decisions with us. He will tell us what we need to know as He brings us into friendship with Himself. He doesn't want us to debate with Him. He desires that we know who we are in our relationship with Him, and that we obey Him in perfect trust, in perfect faith.

As a good parent expects a small child to obey because the parent knows what is best, God expects obedience as He directs us according to His perfect will. He expects us to obey Him because He knows best all the time and His character is completely good. He always works from love, in all things, whether seemingly good or bad, all the time. Even when we don't understand His decisions, He is right.

There is nothing we can give to God, yet He chooses to experience life with us, as we learn and experience life with Him. We do not add quality to His life because He is fully complete in Himself. God is infinitely greater than all He created. God only and always works to His highest good which is the glorification of Himself. He alone is worthy! He is the centre, the cause and the purpose of all His actions and ways. Yet, amazingly, His love wants to express itself in relationship with us. We are the by-product of God's glorification. God has decided, in and of Himself, to redeem mankind and bring us into the very Presence of Himself. To God be the glory, great things He has done!

God is always present. He exists. He just is. And we exist in Him. He always was and always will be. He has no beginning and no end. He is not created. He is the Creator of all things. All things were made by Him and for His good pleasure. There is no escape from Him, nowhere we can hide from Him. Everywhere we go, God is there. Whatever we believe about God does not change the reality of His existence and who He is. He exists. If we don't believe in Him, our

belief does not somehow annihilate God. He just is, and what we think about Him doesn't change the true reality of God.

God is the only Being who can say whether other gods exist or not, because He alone knows all and sees all. He knows if another god exists because He has complete knowledge of every being, planet, star and atom. When He says there are no other gods, there are no other gods. He alone knows all beings in every corner of the universe, beings in heaven and in hell, and He claims there are no other gods but Himself. Humans may attempt to create gods outside the One True God but these are man-made religions and hopeless to save.

God is absolutely powerful. What, to us, might seem impossible is not impossible for God. Nothing is too hard for Him. He transforms, frees, and heals every person who comes to Him in faith. He raises the dead, gives sight to the blind, and sets the captive free. He binds up those who have been broken and hurt. Through His Word, God appeals to us: "Let Me tell you of the abundant life I have for you. I work all things together for good and for My glory. I am gracious and loving in all I do."

God is the one Being who is fully trustworthy. He is Truth and all that is true and right originates from within Him. God never acts outside His character. He is who He is and all He does, thinks, and says reflects who He is all the time. He never lies. He always speaks what is true, so we know that His word is always trustworthy. God's words and actions flow from His inherent goodness and love. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."[7] As we turn to Him in complete trust, believing His Word, He reveals Himself to us, and sets us free to truly live the life of a Kingdom disciple, which at the heart is to glorify God.

When we truly come to realize who God is, a healthy fear comes over us. This fear is a normal response of a person who is now beginning to know God. We have come to realize that without Him we are lost, evil and in rebellion to Him and His ways. The end of this is everlasting death. So the fear of the lord is the first sign of a person beginning to walk in the wisdom of God. When we fear because we know God is who He says He is, His light is beginning to shine in the dark places of our lives. The beginning of this fear is the very judgement of God against us. Once we come to repent and accept Him, then this fear changes from judgement to an awesome respect to not go against His ways or His authority. We have come to realize that it is in Him we have life, meaning and protection.

Why the first Key is so critical for your spiritual health is that if you have a wrong view of God and who He truly is, the more devout you go to the god you created in your mind, the more unspiritually balanced you will become. Our main role in understanding God is to accept the God revealed, not invent a god of our own understanding who seems more accepting of us in our dysfunction. A god like this would be called an idol or false god. To come to spiritual health and to walk in freedom (and help others do the same), we must come to realize who God is God. One man said this, "the worst thing one man can do to another is to lie to them about God." I think this is a very accurate statement, because as human beings we live out what we believe. If our beliefs are build on false knowledge, our lives will be off course from what we were created by God to be.

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[7] *Romans* 8:28

DISCOVERING KEY 1

Probably the most important part of this study will be your time sitting with God reading His Word in the Bible. In Key 1, we are looking to see who God really is — not who you might have thought He is, hoped He is, or believed He is, but who He really is. Without fully believing the God revealed in the Bible, you will worship a god of your own making and the more passionate you become for this god who is not true, the further you will move into idolatry and sin.

Take time to study these verses, asking God to reveal the meaning to you. It will not help you to just read them quickly to check off a box. Read carefully and slowly, writing in a journal what you learn, as you look up these and other verses the Lord reveals to you. God will reveal His word to you. You won't need to strive to understand. Just sit with God and He will teach you if you are willing to learn.

As you study, ask yourself these questions. Write down the response of your heart, so you can look, see, and understand what God is revealing to you about who He really is.

L LIE: What LIE of the world or the evil one is being exposed by the truth?

I INSIGHT: What INSIGHT is revealed about God and His ways?

F FAITH: What revealed truth strengthens my FAITH?

E EXAMPLE: What faith EXAMPLE is given for me to follow?

- ❒ Genesis 1:1-3
- ❒ Deuteronomy 32:3-4
- ❒ 1 Chronicles 16:7-36
- ❒ 1 Chronicles 29:10-20
- ❒ Nehemiah 9:5-38
- ❒ Job 38, 39,40,41-42:6
- ❒ Psalm 2
- ❒ Psalm 3
- ❒ Psalm 5:4-5
- ❒ Psalm 8
- ❒ Psalm 11
- ❒ Psalm 16
- ❒ Psalm19
- ❒ Psalm 23
- ❒ Psalm 33
- ❒ Isaiah 40:10-31
- ❒ Isaiah 44
- ❒ Isaiah 45:5-25
- ❒ Isaiah 46:3-10
- ❒ Jeremiah 29:23-24
- ❒ Ezekiel 36:16-38
- ❒ John 1:1
- ❒ John 4:23,24
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 10:31
- ❒ Romans 8:28

GOING DEEPER: KEY 1 REALIZE

We realize God created us for His pleasure, that we might know Him, as He truly is, and live for His purpose.

> *He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He. (Deuteronomy 32:4)*
>
> *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3)*
>
> *Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)*
>
> *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Psalm 111:10)*

As we begin to comprehend who God is, we realize that everything does not revolve around us. Instead, everything revolves around Him. We are God's workmanship, created beings, made in His image, whose sole purpose is to bring honour and glory to His name. He is the one Being who has the right to do whatever He wants with us. He is the Master and Ruler of our lives. He is King and we are His subjects. But He is a righteous and good King, Holy and Almighty. He knows what is best for us — all the time.

You are not the focus of God. God is the focus of God. He always brings glory to His Name. He is not centred on making your life pleasant and safe. He is centred on His will being carried out by those who He has entrusted with it, even if it means the death of His saints. Man's true purpose is only found in the purpose of the Father, the glory of God.

It's our responsibility to learn about Him and know Him. He is willing to reveal Himself to us as we stop trying to run our own lives and surrender to Him with our whole heart. As we surrender to Him through faith in Jesus Christ, we enter into an intimate, connected relationship with God. In this, we come to know Him, and He pours His love in and through us by His Spirit.

Isaiah is an Old Testament prophet who wrote around 700 BC. He is speaking to Israel to help them realize who God really is. He begins by saying behold your God. Look and see who God is! Then he starts to describe God. His hope it seems is that the Israelites might come to understand and know God as He is, and revere Him and obey Him as God as the awesome God He is. Come take this journey with us through Isaiah 40, beginning at verse 9:

> *Say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"*
> *Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand,*
> *And His arm shall rule for Him;*
> *Behold, His reward is with Him,*
> *And His work before Him.*[8]

Take a look Israel, at your God. See who He really is!! He is a strong and mighty ruler with an agenda and a reward if you work with Him. He is not going to get on our agenda; we

[8] Isaiah 40:9b,10

are to get on His. Resisting Him is futility, but working with Him has a reward. He is powerful and He is in control. He is strong, but does He care? Will He provide for us? Can we trust Him?

He will feed His flock like a shepherd;
He will gather the lambs with His arm,
And carry them in His bosom,
And gently lead those who are with young.[9]

Isaiah introduces us to God, the Shepherd. God cares for us like a shepherd caring for little lambs. He will gather us up into His arms and gently lead us, always being aware that we have certain earthly responsibilities, as we care for the children God gives us. He is mindful of us. He does not drive us beyond what our heart can take. God is not indifferent toward us, but loves us and watches out for us. God is powerful and cares, but is He able to care for us all?

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand,
Measured heaven with a span
And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure?
Weighed the mountains in scales
And the hills in a balance?[10]

Let me tell you how great God is, Isaiah seems to be saying. Hold out your palm. How many teaspoons of water can it hold before running over? God can scoop all of the oceans, the seas and the rivers into the palm of His hand and without losing a drop!

Look at the sky and tell me how many stars you see. If you look up on a dark night, you see billions and billions of stars, too many to count. Science says space goes on for millions of light years and yet God measures the entire expanse of sky between the tip of his thumb and his little finger. He measures and calculates all of it with one hand!

And what about the dust of the earth? He measures the dust of the earth with just three of His fingers! In ancient times, a measure was three fingers deep, as in measuring the flour for making bread. All of the earth's dust is only three fingers deep for God as He takes the massive earth, spins it like a ball, and then spins it around the sun.

Isaiah magnifies the precision of God, even in things that seem large to us. What is the largest thing you have personally weighed? A car? A truck? A herd of animals? What was the total weight? Maybe a few tons? Here God Almighty took all the mountains and hills and put them in a scale to check their weight as he placed in on the earth in perfect balance. Is this God able to care for all of His people? Isaiah gives us a resounding, yes!! But is God wise enough to guide us all?

Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord,
Or as His counselor has taught Him?[11]

Let me ask you this question? Have you ever needed counsel on a certain subject like marriage, or Christianity, how to build a house, how to drive a car? We all have needed counsel once in a while, haven't we? God has never needed counseling on *any* subject. No one has

[9] Isaiah 40:11
[10] Isaiah 40:12
[11] Isaiah 40:13

directed Him. He knows all things. He is the source of all wisdom. Does God need our help to think out solutions for our lives, others' lives or the world around us? Have you ever tried to counsel God when you pray to Him or speak with Him?

With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him,
And taught Him in the path of justice?
Who taught Him knowledge,
And showed Him the way of understanding?[12]

Isaiah introduces us to God's counsel, as always just and right and wise. Never has he counseled someone in foolishness or said a rash statement that turned out to be error. Every time He speaks, what He says is right, so we can receive His counsel with joy and trust because He alone understands all things and is working all things according to the counsel of His will.

Think of an auto mechanic for moment. This mechanic has studied the workings of engines and all the systems that make your car run for 30 years. Would you be impressed with this person's ability and knowledge and listen to them about your car? Yes, you probably would. Now think about God. He is the God, who created all things with a word of His mouth, from the vast solar systems, to the tiniest atom in the human body or any life form. He has knowledge that we cannot even comprehend about how life works and how we are made to function. He is the One who has been counseling human beings for 6000 years and knows all things. He is intimately acquainted with all our ways. He sees everything from the beginning of time to the end of time. How profound and trustworthy is this God? Isaiah is teaching Israel to bow before their God with humble reverence, accepting God's way as *the* way.

Yes, we might ask, He knows all things and can counsel us, but can His counsel ever be stopped? Does He have the ability to carry things through?

Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket,
And are counted as the small dust on the scales;
Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing.[13]

Have you seen ever taken an eye dropper and dropped a drop of liquid into a en empty bucket? Did that drop weigh down the bucket as you hold it in your hand? All the nations, if they are gathered together against God, are like an drop of water in a bucket. If all the nations set a certain course for the earth, their counsel will not stand, and if God decides to shut them down. God's will will override the will of all leaders of the earth. That's how powerful He is. He is God and we are not.

When you get on a scale to weigh yourself you might remove your clothes, glasses or shoes, so that your weight will be the most accurate, but have you ever blown the dust off the scale before you stepped onto it? My guess is probably not! Why not? Because the small amount of dust doesn't matter. It will not affect the measurement. Nations are dust on the scale. When God makes a measurement the nations are so inconsequential that He does not even compute them into His calculation. He simply does what He knows if right. He does not factor in the will of the nations if it is contrary to His own. He doesn't take their counsel into consideration when He makes a choice that affects their destiny.

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[12] Isaiah 40:14
[13] Isaiah 40:15

And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn,
Nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering.[14]

Lebanon had an abundance of trees, great cedars! If all those trees were chopped down and put in a pile to burn for a sacrifice, and all the oxen and sheep and goats in the land were laid on top of that alter and set on fire, God would miss the whole event if He happened to be looking the other way! What Isaiah is telling us is that nothing of man's world can impress God or entice Him to change His judgements because of financial gain or benefit to Himself. Nothing will change His mind or counsel except His holiness and goodness…

The wealth of the world will not influence God. He is not impressed. People may be impressed if someone gives $10,000 to the church as a gift. Wow, what a big gift. The giver of the gift may think they can influence people or move an organization in the way they want it to go by contributing large amounts to the cause. But there is no buying God. He will not be influenced by us for our own personal gain or self-seeking motive. God is only influenced by Himself. He makes all his decisions based from Himself and the glory of Himself. He delights only in a contrite heart that obeys His voice, not the abundance of our sacrifices.

All nations before Him are as nothing,
And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.[15]

Again Isaiah refers to the nations. If all the nations had a vote and all put their hands up in agreement 100% against what God has planned, all their votes would not stand to the one vote of God. Their significance in the scheme of things is so small that God counts them as less than nothing and worthless. How can something be so small that it is less than nothing, yet that is how the nations are viewed by God? Think how small that makes us individually!!

God does whatever He desires, and He is right in doing so. Our role as human beings is to bow to Him and obey His voice. Nothing He plans can be stopped.

Okay, so God can do what He has said and counsel us, but is there another person like Him.? Is there another being that could stand next to God as His equal?

To whom then will you liken God?
Or what likeness will you compare to Him?[16]

Isaiah proclaims to Israel, behold and see that God alone is God. There is no other being in heaven or earth that can compare to Him. He is the only One you can trust and give your heart to, your soul and your body. There is no one like Him. And yet still humans will not relent and bow down to their Maker.

The workman molds an image,
The goldsmith overspreads it with gold,
And the silversmith casts silver chains.
Whoever is too impoverished for such a contribution
Chooses a tree that will not rot;
He seeks for himself a skillful workman

[14] Isaiah 40:16
[15] Isaiah 40:17
[16] Isaiah 40:18

To prepare a carved image that will not totter.[17]

When we do not like what God has to say, we will go to another source who will tell us what we want to hear. If we do not find a source, we may make our own, as the children of Israel did. They went to rocks, minerals and trees, forming a god with their own hands. They then fastened it down so it would be able to stand up on its own. Then they had their own personal god in their house and bowed down to the work of their hands. How foolish when we make a god and then think it is greater than we are and bow down to receive counsel from something we have made. Is not the creator greater than the created thing? Is not God greater than we are? We are the work of His hands.

Who is this God then?

Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
It is He who sits above the circle of the earth,
And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers,[18]

Israel, do you now realize who God is? He sits above the earth and cannot be made by human hands. In comparison to the awesomeness of God, we are like grasshoppers in His sight! Have you ever walked in the woods and seen grasshoppers jump out of your way? Did those grasshoppers affect the direction you were going? Did you even really notice them, unless of course you stopped, stooped down and looked closely? We are like those grasshoppers to God. The amazing thing is that even though we are so infinitesimally small, God does notice us. And He does more than just notice us, He loves us!!

Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

How great He is to sit above the earth, but He is greater still. He spreads out the stars and galaxies like a person setting up a tent or a canopy to dwell in. All of this vast universe cannot contain God. This universe is within God. He's created the earth and placed us upon it. He created the heavens to give us light by day and by night. As we gaze upon the beauty of His creation, we see evidence of God Himself. The heavens declare the glory of God and the earth is His footstool. He is not hidden, but has revealed Himself to us through what He has made, so we might worship Him.

He brings the princes to nothing;
He makes the judges of the earth useless.[19]

Princes and judges hold honoured positions of status on the earth. They have authority to make rulings that affect others lives and set the course of their nations. Yet God brings their

[17] Isaiah 40:19,20
[18] Isaiah 40:21,22
[19] Isaiah 40:23

rulings and judgements to nothing. No one can stand against God. He alone has the right for rule over mankind and the authority to make decisions. He is sovereign and He is in control of all things. Can we not trust in Him to care for our needs and direct our paths even when the odds seem insurmountable?

Scarcely shall they be planted,
Scarcely shall they be sown,
Scarcely shall their stock take root in the earth,
When He will also blow on them,
And they will wither,
And the whirlwind will take them away like stubble.[20]

Before we know it, our lives on this planet come to an end. Barely do we get going and then it is over. Life is like a plant that withers and then the wind blows it away. Life is merely a breath. It's so short. Yet, God is eternal. He exists for all time; and, once our bodies die and become dust again, He enables us, when we are His, to exist forever in Him.

"To whom then will you liken Me,
Or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One.[21]
Lift up your eyes on high,
And see who has created these things,
Who brings out their host by number;
He calls them all by name,
By the greatness of His might
And the strength of His power;
Not one is missing.[22]

Scientists often use numbers to keep track of the stars. If there are100 billion galaxies with a 100 billion stars in each them. How does God keep track of them all? He calls them by name!! He's intimate with each one. And each one stays in place because of His power, not within the star. If God so much as blinked or blew with a hot wind, everything would disappear. The vastness of the galaxies, the position of the planets, even the presence of humans on planet earth remain because God wills them to remain. So why do we worry? Why do we complain against God?

Why do you say, O Jacob,
And speak, O Israel:
"My way is hidden from the Lord,
And my just claim is passed over by my God"?[23]

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[20] Isaiah 40:24
[21] Isaiah 40:25
[22] Isaiah 40:26

[23] Isaiah 40:27

Have you ever wondered if God even knows you? He is so big. So awesome. How could He possibly know each person on the earth and care about each one of us individually? Does He want to be involved in my world which is so small?

Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the Lord,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the weak,
And to those who have no might He increases strength.[24]

What is God's response toward us, according to Isaiah? _____

_____

Isaiah answers by saying that God is very concerned about you. He loves you. He is here to care for you and to lead you into His goodness; to give you strength and power to walk with Him.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,[25]

What do youths and young men usually represent in our society? _____

Generally, young men and youths are seen as being strong and vital. In the Jewish culture young men were the hope of future generations, carrying on the lineage or the Jewish race. God is saying, even these will fail. They will grow weary. The young men will not be your strength or trust. He says to put your confidence in Me, because I will sustain you if I so choose. Without my blessing or honour, you will not survive.

But those who wait on the Lord[26]
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.

The answer comes, Isaiah says, as we abide in and wait on the Lord. In quietness and trust is our salvation. In this waiting, we are to enjoy our God, trusting that He will work out His life and His beauty through us because He cares for us. God was asking Israel to just love Him. He is asking the same of us. With our own effort we will produce nothing of eternal value. But with God's effort within us, we will produce many eternal and great things, and we will not become weary, or faint. Instead, we will soar.

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[24] Isaiah 40:28,29
[25] Isaiah 40:30
[26] Isaiah 40:31

We are created to soar with God and to run and not grow weary. We are created for so much more than we often live because we choose to not trust in God with our whole heart, but instead to lean on our own understanding and not on Him. As we magnify Him, as Isaiah did, we will see who God really is and have confidence as we place our trust in Him, knowing He can take care of us, and not only can He take care of us, He desires to take care of us. He loves us.

How has the Lord been speaking to you as you read through this study of Isaiah 40? Personalize your thoughts to God below:

_____

_____

_____

Psalm 139 is one of many psalms that reveal the heart of God to us. God penned this Psalm through David, the shepherd boy who became king. David was said to be a man after God's own heart. He knew God and, more importantly, God knew Him.

Read Psalm 139:1-18, slowly:

> *1O LORD, You have searched me and known me. 2You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. 3You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. 4For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. 5You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. 6Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.*
>
> *7Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10Even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. 11If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," even the night shall be light about me; 12Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.*
>
> *13For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. 14I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. 15My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. 17How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! 18If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.*

According to this Psalm, what does God know about you? (vv. 1-4)

_____

_____

Isn't the purpose of a hedge to protect and surround something of value? What does it mean that God has "hedged you in" behind and in front of you? (v.5)

_____

Where can you go to hide from God? (vv.7-12)

_____

There is no where you can run or hide from Him, is there? What impact does this knowledge have on your life right now? How present is God in your current circumstance?

_____

_____

How does the Psalmist describe how God made you? (vv. 13-16)

_____

Since you are God's workmanship, His personal handiwork, what does this mean about your value or worth to Him?

_____

Have you ever felt unwanted and believed that you were a mistake? According to this Psalm, does God create mistakes? Why or why not?

_____

_____

What an astounding truth! The God of the universe WANTS YOU!! You are wanted by God!! You were created on purpose and by design. You are His workmanship and His works are marvellous. If there is a human being who has rejected you, know that in God's sight their opinion about you means nothing and their plans for evil have been thwarted by the God who made you and loves you! He ordained the days He set out for you before even one of them came to be. **What is written in God's book?**

_____

What do you think it means when the Psalmist says of God: "How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You."[27]

[27] Psalm 139:17-18

_____

_____

_____

God's thoughts are precious to David, the author of this Psalm. Scripture describes David as a man after God's own heart. No wonder, when we see how David marvelled at the word of His God. He meditates on God's word, the thoughts God reveals to David. He is in love with God and he embraces the truth of God's love for him.

In realizing who God is, we realize, in comparison how small and insignificant we really are. A human tendency is to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. We can think we are in control and designers of our own destinies. We often sing a songs like, "I've Done It My Way." We live for our own pleasure. When we focus on God and get to know Him, we realize that we are not higher than God. We are created beings. He is a Holy Being, and we, when we live independently of Him, are not. Had He been any less than purely good, He would be a god we would run away from instead of run towards.

God sees you. He knows all about you. He knew the days of your life before one ever came to be. He knows what you are made of and yet He loves you. He knows you are fragile and small, beginning as dust and returning to dust. With one breath of His mouth, He could wipe you from existence. Yet you remain.

God is great, and He is infinitely good and loving. He loves you. He is mindful of you. Psalm 103 tells us that He does not treat us as our sins deserve. What kind of God is He that He would show us such mercy?

When you look at the Creator/creation connection, have you ever put yourself above your Creator? Have you ever prayed to God, telling Him what you want Him to do and how to do it? Have you been mad at God when He didn't do what you asked? Have you been disappointed and frustrated with God because of the circumstances in your life that you thought God would fix if He truly loved you?

If, in our prayers, we direct God and tell Him what to do, we are putting ourselves in the position of advisor to God. Where do we get the idea that we can advise God? We direct Him and tell Him what to do, as if He doesn't know already. We devise a god of our own understanding and when our god fails us, we become angry with God as if it's His fault for not coming through. We blame God as if it's His fault for the problems in our lives. We may say things like:

"If only I wasn't born into this particular family."
"If only I didn't have this learning disability or this disease."
"If only people hadn't abused me."
"If only all these bad things had not happened, I would be okay."

We often live as victims, blaming God, or others, when really He desires only to bring beauty from the ashes. All the events of our lives are designed by God to bring us to God in a plan that is beyond our comprehension. God works all things together, whether seemingly good or bad, to bring maximum glory to Himself, and significance and meaning to our lives. He

works all things together for the good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Pain is part of the process of growth. We learn obedience through what we suffer. "Well, God," we might grumble, "that is not fair." He would respond, "Who are you, O created one, to argue with your Maker?" In the greatness of His plan to glorify Himself as He saved mankind, God did not even spare His own Son. Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered, and He lived completely without sin. He obeyed His Father even to the point of death, even the humiliating death on a cross. Jesus was beaten, stripped, nailed to a cross and held up in total humiliation for all to see. God was pleased to crush Him because of the good that would ultimately come. Pleased to God does not mean He enjoyed the process of crushing His Son, but He saw it as best according to the working of His will for the maximum glory of Himself. Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. God highly exalted Jesus, yet He did not allow even His Son to avoid suffering and pain.

Through our pain, we come to know God and to rest in Him. We realize that we can do nothing of eternal significance apart from Him. We learn that even in the pain of this world, the things people do to us, the calamities that come; God works all these things together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. Even the worst events of our lives, God weaves together for good and brings beauty from them. He sets us free and He heals us. He binds up our broken hearts and heals our wounds. He causes His righteousness to shine out from within us when we surrender to Him by faith. He enables us to love as He loves, with no agenda, but to set us completely free to depend fully on Him. The events of our lives lose their power over us as we begin to see as God sees.

As you read the Bible, you will come to know about God. As you go a step further and fully believe the Bible, you will begin on the journey of truly knowing and enjoying God as He is and becoming all you were created to be in Christ.

As you journey to know God, we pray the prayer for you that Apostle Paul prayed for the believers at Ephesus:[28]

> *17That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21Far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.*

[28] Ephesians 1:17-21

DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF: WHO IS THIS GOD?

Look up the verses below to learn more about God, as He has revealed Himself. (NKJV)

Psalm 11:7 The Lord is _____ and loves _____.

Psalm 23:3 The Lord leads me in paths of _____ for His _____ sake.

Psalm 33:5 The Lord loves _____ and _____. The earth is full of the _____ of the Lord.

Proverbs 12:28 The way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no _____.

Isaiah 6:3 _____, _____, _____ is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of _____ _____.

Revelation 4:8 **What did the four living creatures proclaim?**

_____

What does it mean that God was, and is, and is to come?

_____

_____

_____

Psalm 36:7 How precious is Your _____, O God!

How would knowing His loving-kindness inspire us to trust God?

_____

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of _____ for it is the _____ to salvation for everyone who _____.

Romans 1:17 For in it the _____ of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written. The just shall live by _____.

Romans 1:18-19 [18]For the _____ of God is _____ from heaven against all

_____ and _____ of men, who suppress the _____ in

unrighteousness, [19] because what may be known of God is _____ in them, for God

has _____ it to them.

Why was the wrath of God revealed?

_____

_____

REALIZING MORE ABOUT GOD

Study and meditate on the verses below as you continue your journey to know God, as He has revealed Himself in the Bible. Write down what you learn about who He really is. If you like, use a journal or a notebook to write down more than this space allows.

Ask yourself as you study each verse: What does this verse reveal according to scripture about who God is?

Genesis 1:1_____

Genesis 5:1_____

Genesis 17:1_____

Deuteronomy 7:9_____

Deuteronomy 32:4_____

Isaiah 12:2_____

Isaiah 25:1_____

Isaiah 25:8_____

Isaiah 28:26_____

Isaiah 40:28_____

Isaiah 41:26_____

Isaiah 42:5_____

Isaiah 44:6, 8_____

Isaiah 50:4, 7_____

Jeremiah 32:17-18, 27_____

PERSONAL REFLECTION: KEY 1 REALIZE

Write out Key One Realize: _____

_____

Take a moment to explain this key in your own words. What is important for you to remember?

_____

_____

_____

What did you learn about God in this Key?

_____

_____

How is this view of God similar or different than what you understood about God?

_____

_____

_____

Now that you have come to realize who God is, how will this affect your walk with Him?

_____

_____

Key 2 Admit

We admit that, before knowing God, we were unrighteous beings who lived independent of Him.

In Key 2 *Admit,* we are talking about becoming honest with ourselves and before God. We stop trying to hide. We stop trying to appear to be people we know we are not. We let the barriers down in our hearts and we face the truth of who we really are. In admitting who we are, we prepare to become who we were created by God to be.

Humans fit into only two categories. We are either connected to God or we are disconnected from Him. The Bible describes this disconnection from God as *sin*. Sin refers to the state into which we are physically born on the earth. When you think of sin, think identity and independence, not just behaviour. The opposite of sin is not good behaviour. The opposite of sin is faith.

Many think sin refers only to bad behaviour. Sin actually refers to any behaviour done by a person living independently or separated from God. Sin refers to independence from God which shows up in our "bad" and "good" behaviours. When we are born onto the planet, we are born into this disconnected state of sin, so we are identified by God as *sinners*, people who are living independent of Him.

Everything we do in this state is sin. It doesn't matter, really, what it is. We can do seemingly good things or bad things. Both are still done independent of God. The Bible says there is no one who is good, no one who is righteous. Not even one person on this planet is good enough to enter the presence of Holy God on their own merit. We would have to be absolutely perfect in all we do and all we say and in every motive of our hearts to come into God's presence without God's grace.

We live our lives on this planet, in the state of sin, searching for meaning. We try various ways to improve ourselves, help ourselves, fulfill and please ourselves, but all our efforts fall short. We are always searching. We search for happiness. We search for contentment. We search for significance. We search for security, and a sense that we are in control of our lives. Yet deep inside, our longings remain unsatisfied. We are not truly satisfied with relationships, with careers, with gaining material things. All these things might seem to fulfill us temporarily, but they do not fulfill the deep need we have inside. We hunger and thirst for meaning, but we do not know how to attain it. We are empty and lost. Our existence on the planet, this journey we call life, often seems like an exercise in futility.

If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit we fall far short of perfection. No amount of religious devotion will change that. No amount of trying to do good things for others. No amount of meditation, hard work, or self-improvement exercises will make a difference. We cannot transform ourselves no matter how hard we try. We need Someone who can take something devoid of life and goodness, and transform it into something alive and good. We need to be transformed from what we are into something else. We must be made new.

We learn in this second key that we were created for a specific purpose: to glorify God, honouring Him in our lives. We learn we have fallen short of that goal. In fact, we are unable, in ourselves or in our striving, to accomplish that purpose. Our purpose in life is realized in

connection to Him alone. The problem is we are unable to connect ourselves. We need help. We need a Saviour.

In sin, God is opposed to us. His wrath rests on us. He will not unite us to Himself when we are sinners. He will not unite Himself with imperfection and uncleanliness. He will throw us out of His presence unless He intervenes to redeem us, perfect us and make us clean.

God did not create evil. Evil is not a "thing" or a state or a place. Evil is any and every choice made without God. When we have not chosen God, then we are evil and depraved at the core of our very heart.

God gave choices to His created beings. He gave us the choice to love Him, because without a choice to love, would it really be love? Forced love is not really love at all. We call forced love rape. God will not rape us. He wants us to come to Him willingly and with our whole heart. However, if people choose to not love the Being who created them, they will not come to know Him. Or if people believe their thinking and ways should be accepted by God even though they are in error, they will experience the absence of His fellowship.

God, being perfect in all ways, cannot be around sin without dealing with it. So, fallen man and angels were forced to leave the presence of the Lord. Darkness and Light cannot occupy the same area. God created all things to obey and worship Him but gave them the free choice to do just that. Some chose not to and evil and death came into existence. Satan was an angel of great glory but chose to desire the worship only given to the Lord. He and those who followed him were removed from heaven. They are called demons and devils today.

God did not approve of Satan's temptation of man. Satan just chose to tempt man on his own and without support from the Lord. Yet, God, in His sovereignty, knew this temptation would come before man, and He held man morally responsible to obey the truth of His command. Man was given the choice to obey and believe God, and walk by faith in his Creator, or to believe the evil one. Man chose to believe the evil one.

When Adam sinned he was immediately out of fellowship with the Lord, or as the Bible says, "Dead in trespasses and sin" (independence from God). We were all birthed from the seed of Adam. In Adam's loins was all the seed or DNA of man, so all were born sinners separated from God because of their father's sin. All are born into sin, independent of God, and now seek to find meaning in their lives apart from God. As we live our earthly existence, we realize there is no true meaning of life outside of connection and intimacy with God, so we sense loss and emptiness and our striving in life is ultimately meaningless and futile.

God, in His mercy and grace, sent us a way to return to Him. He sent Jesus, who was not from man's contaminated seed but born from above. Jesus was God's Son in human form. He came and lived out the pure laws and ways of God to show that obedience to God was possible. He lived a perfect life, a life without sin.

He was not under God's judgment because He lived in complete obedience, so He could give His life to pay for another's life as an exchange. Jesus bore the full wrath of God the Father as He poured out His wrath and judgment against His own Son as a substitute for the sin of man. Jesus was the righteous and holy payment for the sin of man. His death was proof that He became sin to give the opportunity for man to be saved. As Chris Tomlin's popular song declares, "He became sin who knew no sin" to give the opportunity for us to be saved. Jesus became the substitute, the ransom for our sin.

To illustrate the reality of what Jesus did, imagine you have committed a great crime. You stand before the judge and the sentence is passed. You have been found guilty. The judge fines you one hundred billion dollars, which you must pay or go to jail for life. Could you pay it?

Do you have personal resources to save yourself from a life of imprisonment? No, you probably do not have the resources. So what will happen to you? You will go to jail for life.

There is a man sitting at the back of the courtroom. You do not know him. He stands after he hears your sentence and asks the judge for permission to speak. He says, "Truly, your Honour, you have judged righteously for this person is guilty of the crime, but today I have brought one hundred billion dollars to pay from my resources for this great evil he has done. Judge, I love him. I ask you now to set him free." You look at the man and you wonder why he would do this great act. It makes no sense because you know your own guilt. This type of love is unfamiliar, holy and deep. You are humbled by this seemingly unnatural type of love.

The man speaks to you and says, "Child, today, out of my resources I have set you free. Live in a manner of honour, and wherever you go, tell others that I will also set them free." You quickly realize he has no agenda for himself, only an agenda to love without manipulation or control. This man becomes your friend.

This is what Christ has done for every person who will but ask from their heart for His payment for their sin. Fortunately, God loves us, even in His righteous wrath against all ungodliness. He loves us so much that He made a way for us to be made new, to be saved from His wrath.

We are given a choice once again — the choice to repent of our sin (living independent of God and His ways) and fully surrender our whole being to the Lord, or not. Every person has this choice to make: Will I believe by faith that Jesus has paid for all of my sin, or will I reject this as a fairy tale and take my chances when I die that my own goodness is enough? Each one of us must choose.

As you continue to study the 8 Keys to Life-Transforming Discipleship, you will see this plan unfold, the mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ. *Surrender* outlines God's plan to restore humanity to a connected, vibrant relationship with Him so that we can be all He created us to be in Christ.

Let us conclude this introduction to Key 2 *Admit* with another story that shows the beautiful message of the sacrifice of Christ:

> *In a small kingdom, there was a king who passed a certain law. This law decreed that for the crime of stealing the penalty was 39 lashes across the back in the public square. For many years, people didn't steal. The punishment was so great, no one dared steal. They left their doors unlocked and felt safe in their homes.*
>
> *Then one day, the advisor came and told the King that a person had stolen. Whispers began in the chambers of the king, shock that a person had broken this law. So the king, without knowing who it was, said, "Let the sentence be carried out; the criminal shall receive 39 lashes across the back in the public square, as payment for the goods they stole."*
>
> *But his counsellor said, "Oh King, may I speak to you in private." The king granted permission and the counsellor with trembling voice said, "Oh King, the one who has stolen is your mother. She took the goods of another without permission and she has broken the great law." The king was saddened by this news and withdrew into his room.*
>
> *Throughout the kingdom, the word went out: a person is guilty of the crime. Many came from all around to see what the king would decide. As the king came out of his chambers, he again took his seat on the throne. "Bring the criminal out. Stand her before me," he commanded.*
>
> *With head bowed and tears streaming down her face, the king's mother entered the room. Her eyes were full of guilt as she looked at her son. She knew she had committed a great*

crime. As she approached the throne, he said, "Mother, you have done a great crime and as king I must now judge you. According to the law, 39 lashes will be given without mercy and in full view of the public." So they took the mother, bound her hands to the lashing bench and ripped her clothes revealing her naked back. As the assistant raised the whip, ready to strike the first blow, the king called out a second command and said, "Wait!"

The king rose from his throne and slowly walked to where his mother stood strapped to the whipping post. He took off his robe and tore the shirt from his own back. With back bared, the king laid himself over his mother's body and said with a loud voice, "Now, carry out the punishment to the full."

This story is the picture of Christ. He stripped Himself of His glory, so He could take the stripes of the whip across His back, the sins of mankind. He is the King who was beaten and gave His life for His subjects. A normal king has his subjects sacrifice their lives as they battle against their king's enemies. But Jesus, our King, came and fought the battle of life and death for His subjects.

DISCOVERING KEY 2

Transparency is central to Admitting. Transparency means being honest and open about what you are really thinking and what you really believe. Allow God to speak to you as you read these verses. If you are a believer already, look to see who you were before you knew God. See what He saved you from. If you are on a journey to know God, look to see what God says about your life and how you can truly live freely and abundantly in Him.

As you study, ask yourself these questions. Write down the response of your heart, so you can look, see, and understand what God is revealing to you about who you are when you were (or are) in independence from Him.

L LIE: What LIE of the world or the evil one is being exposed by the truth?

I INSIGHT: What INSIGHT is revealed about God and His ways?

F FAITH: What revealed truth strengthens my FAITH?

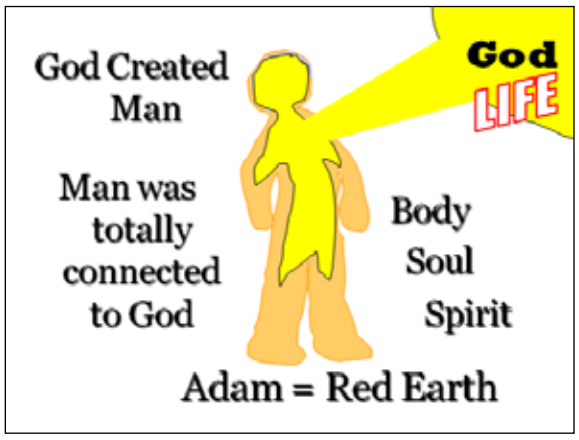
E EXAMPLE: What faith EXAMPLE is given for me to follow?

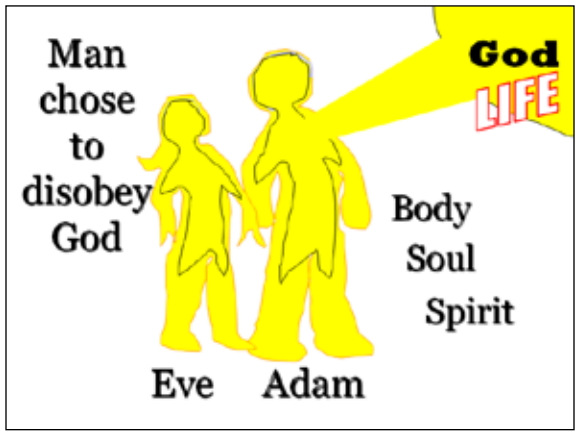
- ❒ Psalm 1:4-6
- ❒ Proverbs 6:12-15, 32
- ❒ Psalm 9:15-17
- ❒ Psalm 10
- ❒ Psalm 11:5
- ❒ Psalm 32:3-5
- ❒ Psalm 51:1-4
- ❒ Psalm 107:1-22
- ❒ Proverbs 7:16-23
- ❒ Proverbs 22:24-25
- ❒ Proverbs 23: 20-21, 29-35
- ❒ Isaiah 5:11-15, 20-25
- ❒ Isaiah 59:15-16
- ❒ Jeremiah 2:13-14, 19-22
- ❒ Ezekiel 16:1-14
- ❒ Matthew 5:21-28
- ❒ Matthew 7:24-27
- ❒ Mark 2:1-12
- ❒ Mark 10:46-52
- ❒ Luke15:11-32
- ❒ Luke 18:9-17
- ❒ Luke 19:1-10
- ❒ John 4:4-26
- ❒ John 8:34
- ❒ John 15:5,6
- ❒ Romans 1:18-32
- ❒ Romans 2:5-9
- ❒ Romans 3:10-20
- ❒ Romans 5:6-10
- ❒ Romans 6:16-22
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 6:15-16
- ❒ Galatians 3:22
- ❒ Galatians 4:7
- ❒ Ephesians 2:1-3
- ❒ 1 Timothy 3:7
- ❒ 1 Timothy 6:9
- ❒ 2 Timothy 2:22-26
- ❒ Titus 1:15-16
- ❒ Revelation 3:15-21

GOING DEEPER: KEY 2 ADMIT

We admit that, before knowing God, we were unrighteous beings who lived independent of Him.

> *But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6)*
>
> *As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." (Romans 3:10-12)*





True health begins by admitting how unhealthy we really are when we are apart from God. As strange as that may sound, it's true. Jesus stated this simple truth this way: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."[29] Most of us would prefer to stay as far away from doctors as we can. We don't like being sick. Yet, from God's perspective, a doctor is just what we need. In fact, when we think we are well and managing our lives just fine on our own, we are in the gravest danger. Jesus said He didn't come to call the healthy. He came for those who know their desperate need.

As we saw in Key One *Realize*, we were created by a Holy and Loving God. He is a perfect Being, absolutely righteous in all His ways. There is no error in Him. We were created to live holy lives in complete dependence upon Him. We were created to love Him and to live for His pleasure and glory. He commands us to obey Him and to believe His every Word, because He is the only Being who is truthful and right all the time. In His righteousness, He works together everything for the good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. He is always working out what is right — all the time. He never sleeps or rests. He is fully trustworthy. He never acts outside His character.

When God created the first man, Adam, He placed him in a magnificent garden and gave him authority to care for and rule over all created things. Adam was an innocent being. He had no awareness of evil. He lived with child-like faith and trust in His Creator. Adam was dependent upon God. All of his needs were met, his labour was meaningful, and he existed in close friendship to God.

[29] Matthew 9:12

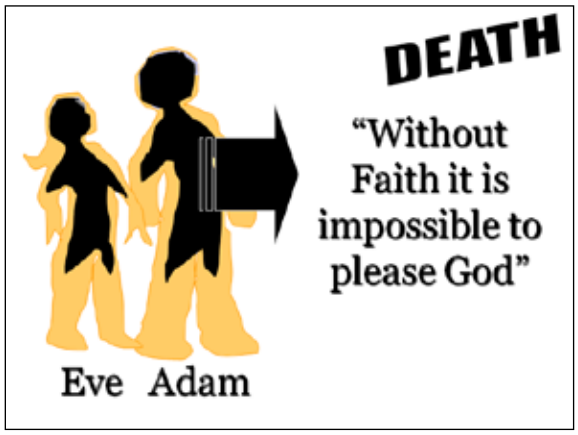
God formed Eve from Adam's body because He knew it was not good for Adam to be alone. He needed another being like himself. Eve was a helper and companion to Adam, a co-ruler of the earth. Both were naked and unashamed. They were transparent, open and living dependent upon God.

Adam and Eve could eat of any tree in the garden, but one. God gave Adam only one rule: you must not eat of this one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "If you eat of it," God said, "you will surely die."[30] Adam and Eve now had to choose. Would they choose life or death?

Death, in the Bible, means independence from Life. There is the physical death of our bodies and spiritual death of being disconnected or independent from God. God says to choose Life, because He alone is Life. Outside of Him is Death. This independent existence outside of the life of God is called sin.

When the evil one used the serpent and entered the garden, he directly contradicted the Word of God, tempting humans to disbelieve their Maker. They now had to choose whether they would walk by faith in God or choose to put their faith in the serpent who challenged the truth of God's Word. Adam and Eve gave way to temptation and chose to believe the lie. They ate of the forbidden fruit and entered death, being instantly separated from God Himself.

The Bible says, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God."[31] The consequence of their unbelief was immediate and lasting. God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden and out of His presence. They died a spiritual death that day, followed years later by the physical death of their bodies.



Through Adam, sin had entered the world and through sin, death. Adam now existed independently of His Creator and, through his seed, all people, including us, are born into sin. Death reigns over us in our identity as sinners, as beings who live independent of God.

When we disbelieve God it is sin, because God cannot act outside His character. He is Truth and every word He speaks is true. It is impossible for God to lie. To doubt God's word is to profane His character; calling Him a liar.

In this state of independence from God, everything we do, whether seemingly good or bad, is still sin. All the acts of a sinner are sin: they are acts done in independence from God. The opposite of sin is not good behaviour. The opposite of sin is Faith. Only faith pleases God. As Scripture says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."[32] All human beings have fallen short of the glory of God. They live in a manner that is not glorifying to God, when the sole

[30] Genesis 2:16, 17
[31] Hebrews 11:6
[32] Romans 3:23

purpose we were created was to glorify our Creator. No matter what background we come from, or what we have done in our lives, we have fallen short. No amount of effort on our part will qualify us to enter into relationship with God.

ADMITTING OUR CONDITION

Admitting means we agree with God about the reality of who we are apart from Him. We admit there is nothing good in us. We admit our need for Him and our complete unrighteousness without Him. The trouble we have is that we resist admitting the truth of our condition before God. We tend to think we are okay, unless things go desperately wrong in our lives. In many ways, calamity is a gift that God allows to shake our world in order for us to begin to look for Him and find true health and life.

If we have lived what we would consider moral lives, we might be tempted to argue with God, claiming He is unfair or harsh in His declaration of who we are. We recount to Him the good things we have done: how we have attended church, read our Bibles, helped people, obeyed the law, taken care of our families, and worked hard at our jobs. God's response to us is that there is no one who is good, including us. There is no one righteous, not even one.[33]

Consider some of the questions God might ask of you to clarify your condition without Him. He would ask, "Have you loved Me with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, perfectly all your life? Have you worshipped Me above everything else, perfectly obeying My Word? Have you loved others perfectly? Have you been kind, and patient, looking to the interests of others always? Have you ever lied or slandered someone? Have you gossiped or sworn against Me? Have you ever wasted any resources that I gave you? Your time? Your money? Your abilities? If I cast Adam and Eve out of My presence for eating a piece of fruit, what do you think I will do with you?"

The problem we face with God is that He is absolutely holy. In His Holiness, God hates sin. Sin destroys what He loves. He righteously hates anything that defiles what He loves. Humans were not created to live independently from God. We were created to enjoy God and to live with Him forever, bringing glory and honour to His name. We were created to love and be loved with the unconditional love of God.

God's hatred and wrath will be poured out against all the ungodliness and wickedness of mankind. God takes no pleasure in wickedness.[34] He won't let evil dwell with Him. Those who are boastful or proud will not stand in His sight. He hates all workers of iniquity and will destroy those who speak lies or thirst for blood. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."[35] If we humbly allow these words to sink in, we admit that, unless we surrender to Him, we are in serious trouble with God.

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[33] Romans 3:9, 10

[34] Psalm 5:4-6

[35] Romans 1:18

A Story of Heaven and Hell

If you died and you came into the presence of God in heaven, you would see angels and great beings of holiness standing around the throne of God. You see the mass of witnesses, people standing in the great courtroom of God. God Himself sits on the throne and calls you to come forward. He calls out your name. You come before Him trembling, standing naked before Him, and He says to you, "Why should I let you into My heaven?"

You look at Him and say words that become your death. "I was good. I tried to live the golden rule. I helped people. I did good things." In the middle of your statement He interrupts again and says, "Silence! Bring up the video documents that record this person's life." So a picture appears in the great hall of judgment and you watch and observe all the sins and evil you have done. What you thought was hidden is now made public. Angels see. Witnesses see you for what type of person you are; your wickedness is now exposed, every thought and evil intent, and every evil act is exposed. You realize that you are undone. You hang your head in shame. The movie ends and God again speaks. "The evidence is brought before Me that you are not good and that your sin remains on you. Though I love you with a great love, justice must be done. You have done crimes and the wages of sin is death." With those words, a chilling fear goes up your spine.

God speaks again saying, "Now I claim back from you every grace and mercy I have shown you. What I have given to you in love I now bring back to Myself." At His words, you feel everything of value leaving you, coming out of your skin. Every ounce of blessing you received from the Lord is again returned to Him. You are now revealed for the vile creature you really are, twisted and pitch black and evil. Your eyes are vacant and full of fear and self. You are now who you really are: a creature absent of God and His mercy. Your friends and family now gasp in horror at the sight of you. Two large angels stand beside you, one on either side. They grab your arms and stand before the throne to hear the final words you will ever hear from Creator God: "Damned! This person is guilty and will forever be thrust from My presence to where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "

With these words, angels praise and declare, "Glory be to God, You have judged righteously." Your parents and your friends and millions of witnesses say, "Oh God, You are a Holy God; by the casting out of this creature from Your sight, You have purified Your kingdom again, bringing justice, honour and righteousness to Yourself." The last words you hear are your own as you leave the Presence screaming, "Woe is me for I am undone."

A Choice Must Be Made

If you are living independently of God, and your identity right now is as a sinner, the most important choice you can make today is to admit your condition before God. Admit you have lived independently of Him, and have tried to run your own life. You now repent, turning away from running your own life and giving control to God. Repentance means changing direction, admitting the way you were going was wrong and sinful, and turning toward God who can save you.

We invite you to surrender today, for today is the day of your salvation. Today, you have an opportunity like no other. A King willingly gave His life for you, but if you refuse, you refuse to the damnation of your own soul. The wrath of God abides upon you and there is no escape outside of His Son.

ADMIT AND SURRENDER

If you know the Lord, and identify yourself as a Saint, reflect on what you have been saved from. What words would describe your gratitude and love for your God, who has saved you from His wrath and eternal death? When we know we have been forgiven much, we love much. It's vital you know the grace and mercy of God. Apart from Him, you are undone, lost and hopeless, vile and unclean. In Him, you have been healed and completely forgiven. If you take the sacrifice of God as a 'common thing' you will not love Him, nor will you respect Him as you should. Your love will grow cold.

As you slowly read Isaiah 35:1-10. Meditate on these words. They are living words from God. In them, we find much hope.

> *1The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; 2It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the Excellency of our God. 3Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. 4Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you." 5Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. 7The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes. 8A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. 9No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; It shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, 10And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

Isaiah expresses the glorious heart of God, and His plan to redeem His people from the wilderness where they have dwelt in darkness and despair. He has prepared a way for them, a highway of Holiness. Whoever walks on it will not stray.

What will happen in the desert and the wilderness according to these verses? (vv. 1, 2)

_____

_____

What will be seen there? (v. 2)

_____

Who is God calling to come? (vv.3, 4)

_____

What does God say to the fearful-hearted?

_____

What will happen to those who come to God? (vv. 5-7)

_____

_____

What is the highway called? (v. 8)

_____

Who is this highway for? (v. 9, 10)

_____

_____

Who cannot pass over it? (v.8)

_____

What will those on this highway receive? (v.8-10)

_____

_____

What will flee away? (v.10)

_____

God loves us, yet He will destroy all that is contrary to His nature of Holiness, Righteousness, and Justice. From birth, we were unclean in God's eyes. No amount of self-improvement, good deeds, or religious activity can make us clean enough for God. God describes our good deeds, and all our righteousness, as filthy rags. No scrubbing of our physical bodies will help. The filth is on the inside, in our very hearts as sinners.

In our independent state, separated from God, our hearts are desperately wicked. We have become unprofitable and useless to God. Nothing we do is good. It doesn't matter what it is. Every deed done as a sinner is sin, whether it is bringing cookies to a neighbour or stealing a car. It is still sin, an act done from the independent state called sin. There are varying degrees of badness or evil, but sin is still sin and it is hated by God. He does not accept work from

Real Life Transformation

One of the fundamental truths that have changed my life is one I learned while studying the eight keys, namely the definition of sin. The definition of sin, "independence from God," has helped me put all my thoughts and actions into a proper perspective. There is only one way to live, the theistic way: God's way. All other ways of living are contrary to God. That is what sin is: doing our own thing, regardless of what God wants us to do.

The 8 Keys helped me to understand how to abide, and live a life that is not contrary to God. So how do we do this? Well, we need to know who God is, and what He wants from us. As I went through the keys, I began to know what the truth is. Who am I? What does God want from me? Who is Christ? The keys taught me to know who the Truth is, and to abide in Him. The only way to abide in Christ is to spend time in His word and hear what He says. The keys, with all the relevant scriptural references, helped me tremendously to know how to live a life victoriously. "In Him." John 1:14 states, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

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humans. He accepts the work He does through a human who is walking by faith. We are not pure enough in and of ourselves to present anything to God. He wants perfection and we cannot offer Him perfection. We offer him tarnished and defiled works.

To justify our plight, we might try to conform God into our own image. In doing so, we create a god of our own understanding; such a god is called an idol.

Though we were created for intimacy with Him in His Holiness, and to reign on the earth, we cannot enter His presence because of sin. We must be made perfect, and there is no way we can perfect ourselves, or make ourselves whole. In spite of our desperate situation, we still do not desire God, as He has commanded. Paul declares, "As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."[36]

We humans do not naturally want to change. We stubbornly desire to remain as we are, even in our dysfunction. We form a god who is not wrathful, who accepts us as we are in all our imperfection and sin. We want a god who pities us and acts at our bidding, a god who accepts however we choose to behave and even validates perversity. We want a god who applauds our religious activity, our church meetings, our Bible readings, and our prayers and our rituals. Religion has the appearance of godliness, but we know in our hearts it is devoid of power.

There are three gods the world has created and enjoys to fulfill three very real needs we have as humans, security, belonging and significance. These three gods offer counterfeit and temporary fulfillment for these needs. These gods are the god of wealth, the god of intimacy, and the god of power. The god of wealth is called Mammon in the Bible; the god of intimacy is called Diana, the goddess of sensuality and sex; and the god of power is called Moleck. These three gods reign like a trinity on the earth. They promise great things to and for man, but deliver death and destruction. They promise great hope, but deliver empty promises and despair. They promise great freedom, but they enslave. These three gods mimic the real God, for He is the real God of wealth, intimacy and power. He created all three and uses them for His glory.

God created us with the basic needs of security, belonging and significance. The fulfillment of these needs is found in Him alone. God is the true nature of these qualities, and He desires to give these to His people within the framework of His reign and His grace.

In Scripture, God often delivers these resources to people whom He finds faithful in His Kingdom business. He continues to give more and more to the faithful, for He knows they will be used to further His Kingdom influence.

In the kingdom of the world, people look to the god of wealth and luxury when they set their hearts on acquiring the riches of the earth for themselves. They gather material goods, enjoying the status they give, thinking that somehow they will add meaning and long lasting satisfaction and security to their lives. But the true God decides who will be wealthy and who will be poor.[37] A Christian is looking for resources and riches only for God's glory and not for his or her own life. We are content either way because our contentment is found in God, not in the resources He gives. When godly leaders have great resources, they bless the nations and they give a tremendous amount of goods away to those who are poor and in need. This is wealth,

[36] Rom. 3:10-12

[37] 1 Samuel 2:7

using the world's goods to glorify the Lord God. So, Christian, if God lets you be a steward of His resources, if you are a good steward, you can be extremely wealthy as long as riches do not possess you.

People in the kingdom of the world look to the god of intimacy to fulfill their need of belonging. They desiring true love, but they find that sex does not satisfy. The lust they mistakenly thought was love grows cold as they tire of the conquest they have found. True intimacy and belonging comes in relationship to knowing God. The real God uses the word "to know" to express intimacy with Him. This is the same word that was used when Adam and Eve "knew" each other and conceived. In John 17:3, He uses the same word. "And this is eternal life, that they may *know You*, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (italics added).

God's view of intimacy is so deep and powerful that our very identity is joined with Him. The closest human picture of the relationship of Christ and His church is the marriage relationship, where husband and wife become one under covenant before God.

One either side of Christian marriage is sin, waiting to destroy. At one edge of Christian marriage is fornication. Fornication is sexual intimacy before entering into the marriage covenant. Its intimacy seeks to destroy the gift of sex and closeness between two humans, to enjoy something that is forbidden, and though attractive, results in pain and death. On the other edge of marriage is adultery, also seeking to destroy the intimacy between two humans. In the centre of these two extremes is the marriage bed that is undefiled, to be used with full expression of vulnerability between two humans to represent the relationship between God and His people.

Husband and wife share the marriage bed with no one else. The marriage bed is sacred. The marriage between husband and wife is a picture of intimate relationship between God and the body of Christ (the bride, His church). God invented sex to enjoy, but it must be within the confinements He placed on it. You cannot enjoy a relationship with God unless you are in covenant with Him. Intimacy between two beings, male and female, is also to be only fully enjoyed when a marriage covenant has been declared between the couple. This picture is the mystery of the church.

When people in the kingdom of the world look to the god of power, they seek significance and desire to control those around them and the environment in which they live. When a Christian comes under the power of the Holy Spirit, this power brings transformation in their own lives and the lives around him or her begin to transform as well. The people God uses become very powerful in the spiritual realm, but powerful for the will of God, not the self-will of men. When the sons of Sceva, Jewish exorcists, saw the power that Paul had to cast out demons, they tried to cast out demons in the Name of the Jesus whom Paul preached. "And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.[38]

In the spiritual world, God grants us people to love and gives us the privilege to speak to people about Him. As God's people, we are the church, and the keys to the Kingdom have been given to us. The church receives the actual power to declare who, according to the Scriptures, will go to heaven or hell, based on the confession of their mouth in either rejecting the gospel or accepting the gospel. If a person rejects the gospel, we can declare, or state, that based on what they have told us, they are going to hell. We clarify that point in love. Our declaration is

[38] Acts 19:15

clarifying, but it's not the end of the story. They may turn and surrender their lives to Christ in the future. If a person accepts the gospel, we declare that they are saved, based on the confession of their mouth. We then begin to disciple that person, checking for the evidence of salvation, the fruit of the Spirit of God, which cannot be faked.

Christians are powerful beings in Christ. Christians openly can say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."[39] We will not be conquered in anything if we walk with God. We are more than conquerors. We are victorious in all the assignments He asks of us because He goes with us to fulfill them.

People are created to live secure lives, full of power and life. We are designed to desire satisfaction and pleasure and we are designed to belong. We often seek to fulfill these legitimate needs outside of God in illegitimate ways by trying to be the best, or the fastest, the smartest, the richest, the most attractive, or the most talented. Even after all our striving, the gods of our own making disappoint us. These gods cause us to crave and desire, without ever being satisfied. Though we crave more stuff, more money, more sex, more power, we feel empty inside and alone when we attain them.

We have seen that three needs of mankind, security, belonging and significance; how does the world meet these needs through power, intimacy and wealth in an unhealthy way?

_____

_____

How does a person who has come to God see these three needs being met in a healthy way?

_____

_____

Some people have given up on the idea of God altogether, and try to annihilate Him by disclaiming His existence. They say there is no God. They declare their own version of truth, boldly asserting that there is no life after death. They live to enjoy themselves because once they are gone, they believe there is nothing else. So they eat, drink, and party, making the most of their futile existence on planet earth until death claims them. A wise man once said, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind."[40]

If we are honest, most of us would admit we like being in charge. We want to run our own lives and do whatever we want. We couldn't care less about God — until things begin to go wrong in our lives. Then we cry out to God and plead for help. Pain gets our attention. We barter with God. We accept God if He doesn't require too much of us, and will accept us and let us remain as we are. We reject the God who speaks out against the empty ungodliness of our lives.

God issued a warning to His people, Israel: "Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against

[39] Philippians 4:13
[40] Ecclesiastes 1:14

you this day that you shall surely perish."[41] This same warning stands for us today. We entered into this world in death, because of sin, and, if we do not turn to God, when our body breathes its last breath, we will enter into everlasting death, living apart from all that is good and righteous and pure forever. This everlasting death or separation is what the Bible calls hell, where there is weeping and agony and the expectation of severe judgment of God. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."[42]

The following verses may give even more understanding:

Psalm 139:8 **Where is God, according to this verse?**

_____

_____

Matthew 10:28 **Who are we to fear?**

_____

Why? _____

Please read Matthew 25:31-46. In this passage, Jesus tells a story revealing two types of people.

Who are they? _____ and _____.

He showed two types of people, describing them as sheep and goats. And He came to separate them with the sheep on the right hand and the goats on the left.
What did Jesus say to the sheep? (v. 34))

_____

Why? _____
(vv. 35,36)

What did He say to those on the left, the goats? (v. 41)

_____

Why did He send them away and condemn them to everlasting fire? (vv. 42-43)

_____

Who will enter eternal life? _____ (v.46)

[41] Deuteronomy 8:19
[42] Psalm 9:17

It's significant to note that the core purpose of hell was not designed for people. Who was hell prepared for? (v. 41)

_____

Admit can be a challenging key for us. God's word cuts through our hearts like a sharp knife, and His uncompromising hatred of sin produces a deep sense of guilt in us. Any facade of inherent goodness within us is stripped away by His word. We are opened and laid bare before the One to whom we must give an account. If we are honest, our response would be to admit we are independent and self-righteous beings deserving of death. If we have not yet received mercy, our response should be to cry for mercy. If we have received mercy and belong to God, our response is simply thanksgiving because we know that without Him we are completely lost.

Why is it critical that we understand the truths expressed in Key 2?

_____

_____

It's been said that the worst thing we could ever do to someone would be to lie to them about God. Why? Because when we lie to someone about who God really is and who we really are apart from Him, our words have eternal impact on their soul. We are affecting a person's life forever. God does not lie and His character does not change. He hates sin and He will send people to everlasting fire in hell. Jesus Himself talked more about hell than anyone in the Bible. Why? Because of the love of God for us. Jesus was warning us of what would come if we did not repent and turn to Him in faith. God's word challenges us, but we must face what it says. Our everlasting life is dependent upon it. We are destined to face Him, and when we do, will it be as a friend or as a foe?

DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF: WHO YOU ARE APART FROM GOD

Romans 5:10_____

Romans 6:17_____

1 Corinthians 2:14_____

2 Corinthians 4:3-4_____

Ephesians 2:1_____

Ephesians 2:19_____

Ephesians 5:5-6_____

Ephesians 5:8_____

ADMITTING IS ABOUT IDENTITY

Admitting is about making a statement about your true identity. Your true identity was given through birth. The Bible says you are either dead or you are alive. You were born physically into sin, so you are a sinner. If you have surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, you are born again of a spiritual birth, and you have been given a new identity. You are now a Saint. If you have not yet had an encounter with God, you are still a sinner, a person disconnected from the God of *Life*. As a sinner, because you are outside God who is *Life*, you are still dead in your trespasses and sins.

This is important to come to grips with because the world philosophy is telling everyone a different message than what Jesus proclaimed. The world is saying, "You can be all you can be!" "You are okay!" "You are your own person so command your own destiny!" This is a lie! A lie that will only be clearly understood by a person on the other side of this life if he refuses to hear Jesus' word, but by then it is too late.

Jesus' message is clear -- Your potential life is only found in the Father's will. You are *not* okay! You are *not* your own person. You are a person who was created to bring glory to Father God and anything less than this will be judged with an everlasting judgment! Repent!

There is nothing you can do in your own power or strength to change your identity position. You must cry out to God. He alone can birth you spiritually.

A SAINT OR A SINNER?

If you have surrendered to God through Jesus Christ, believing in Him with your whole heart, then you are saved and you have a new identity. You are a Saint, not a sinner. So, in this Key, *Admit*, if you are a Christian, you are admitting that you *were* a sinner, but by God's grace, this is not your identity any longer. You *were* a sinner saved by grace, but you are not a sinner anymore. You are a Saint. You *were* condemned by God, but now you are totally accepted by Him because of the work He did in you through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Understanding the desperation of your life without God will help you realize how lost you really were. Unless you realize that you were truly lost, you will give little value to being found. Let's look at the relationship of a parent and a child to illustrate this point.

Consider this example: A parent and a child are in the mall and the child walks away from the parent and goes to look at the pet store window. The mall is crowded and the parent loses sight of his child. The instant his child is gone, the dad looks frantically, going from store to store wondering where the child is. Eventually, he comes across the child and the child is oblivious to the condition of the dad because the child does not even know he was lost. He didn't see the dangerous situation he was in. He could have been abducted and his life totally destroyed because of his simple act of disobedience.

Now, let me give you another illustration. A parent and child are again in the mall. The child walks away and goes to the pet store window and the mom is unaware her daughter has left. The mall is busy, but this time, the child begins to look around and realizes that she has lost her mom. The mother is also looking for the child. The child is desperate, frantically looking for the one she values the most, her mother. When they find each other they hold each other close and the child determines to stay close to her mother. She knows she was lost and she is so grateful to be found. The value of the relationship is enhanced because of her understanding of her own lostness. Now she desires and seeks to stay close to her mom, unlike the son who, in the

previous story, had no idea of the trouble he was in, so he didn't even notice his father was not there. This is the difference of Christians who understand their lostness and those who do not.

We, as Christians, often treat salvation as a common thing. Salvation is far from common. Jesus said, "Those who have been forgiven much, love much." When we know we have been forgiven completely by God in His grace, our hearts overflow with thankfulness because we know we were hopelessly lost without Him.

Admitting, for the believer, focuses on confessing, but confessing does not go to the level of our identity or our salvation. Our identity is defined by birth, not by behaviour. We were saved by grace through faith, not by our own works or merit. Birth determines if we are spiritually dead or spiritually alive. If we have been made alive by God, we are righteous beings. Yet, as righteous beings, we still sin in the flesh. So we confess deeds done in the flesh, but those deeds do not change the reality of our new identity in Christ. We are children of God and we remain children of God. Sinning in the flesh does not affect our birth and our relationship as children of God. Sinning affects the fellowship we experience in our relationship, but the relationship is sealed by God and is not determined by our behaviour. We remain who we are in Christ because of His finished work on the cross. We dig deeper into this reality in Keys Four through Eight.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: ADMIT

Understanding the reality of who we are apart from God either wells up in us as a deep gratitude for the God who saved us or as a terrifying fear of what is to come. As strange as it may sound, admitting that we are lost and broken, without hope in the world, is the first sign of health. When we admit that we are unrighteous beings in whom nothing good dwells, sinners who have fallen short of the glory of God, we finally have the potential for incredible Hope. The healthy do not think they need a doctor, but when we are sick, we know we need help. How much more when we realize we are spiritually dead. We cannot raise ourselves from the dead. But God can and does when we come to Him by faith, believing in His Son, Jesus Christ. Pain is a gift from God to cause us enough discomfort that we begin to look for Him. When we know we are lost, we want to be found.

Write your thoughts to God, confessing to Him what you have learned about who you were and are in relation to God.

If you have been saved, your heart can cry out with thanksgiving, for you have been forgiven much. Your identity has been changed and your sin is gone. You are a new creation of God. You are not who you were. Thank Him for what He has done, for giving you life and setting you free to enjoy Him. Thank Him for what He has saved you from and how He is now transforming your life and giving you experiences with Him.

Write Key Two *Admit*: _____

_____

Take a moment to explain this key in your own words, on the next page.

What did you learn about God and yourself in this Key?

If you have not yet surrendered your life to Jesus, and desire to do so, cry out to Him, asking Him to heal you and forgive your sin. State openly to Him that you have a desire to repent or turn away from living life that is alien to Him and you want to surrender you whole life to Him. He will remove your sin and save you if you believe with your whole heart. Write out your words of confession to Him below:

What has the Lord been speaking to you about as you studied the Scriptures in Key 2?

As you turn to Key 3 *Surrender*, we pray you will be astounded by the reality of God's love.

KEY 3 SURRENDER

We surrender to Father God as we confess Jesus Christ as Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead.

Key 3 *Surrender* is about giving up control of our lives to God. We give up control by admitting we want God to be the One who is the Lord of our lives. When we surrender to God, we are surrendering as an enemy surrenders to a new ruler. Think of a king who has come into a country and conquered the people. The people naturally raise their hands in the universal picture of surrender. If they do not surrender, and admit they are conquered, the king will not show mercy. Surrender is the only way to stop the inevitable, our death. We surrender to God because we are caught in our sin before Him. We surrender this one time as an enemy of a conquering righteous King of Kings.

Sin is not just our behaviour: sin is separation from God. When we are in sin, we are enemies of God and the wrath of God is upon us. We are in serious trouble with a Holy God. The penalty of sin is death — not just physical death which occurs in most of us before we hit one hundred years of age, but spiritual death and separation from Him and His life forever and ever.

The amazing news is that even when we were God's enemies, God made a way for us to know Him. God gave His own Son to take the death we deserve. Jesus is the Way and He gave His life to ransom us out of slavery to sin. What good news!

God loves you. He created you to be in a dependent, love relationship with Himself, but you could not. You were trapped in sin and could not free yourself. In fact, you could not even seek Him if He did not begin to call your name.

When you surrender to God, you admit it is futile to try to run your own life. You admit that you are sorry for how you have lived. You admit to God your total need for Him. You turn away from your past and all you have ever done, and put all your faith and trust in Jesus. You ask Jesus to take all your mess and all your sin on Himself, taking it away forever. Your desire is to love and serve only Him.

"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."[43] Jesus was a totally sinless, totally perfect human being. He lived in perfect obedience to God the Father in complete faith. When He died on the cross, He took all your sin into Himself and became sin for you. He experienced independence from God the Father for the first time ever, and suffered death as a result. He died to pay the penalty for your sin, and He rose from the dead to set you free and give you new life in Him.

When you admit with your mouth that He is now Ruler of your life and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. He removes all your sin, past, present, and future and He makes you completely new, completely righteous in Him by His grace. You are transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light. You become a member of God's family forever. God gives you a new identity and a new beginning. Now He will live His life in and through you, letting you conform to the image of His Son as He advances His Kingdom throughout the earth.

[43] 2 Corinthians 5:21

DISCOVERING KEY 3

Key 3 is the beginning of a new journey. The choice you make here will affect you forever. Read and see who Jesus really was and is.

As you study, ask yourself these questions. Write down the response of your heart, so you can look, see, and understand what God is revealing to you about what He did in Jesus Christ.

L LIE: What LIE of the world or evil one is being exposed by truth?

I INSIGHT: What INSIGHT is revealed about God and His ways?

F FAITH: What revealed truth strengthens my FAITH?

E EXAMPLE: What faith EXAMPLE is given for me to follow?

- ❒ Psalm 11:5-7
- ❒ Matthew 18:1-4
- ❒ Matthew 27
- ❒ Matthew 28:1-9
- ❒ Mark 10:17-31
- ❒ Luke 14:25-33
- ❒ John 1:1-7
- ❒ John 3:3- 36
- ❒ John 5:1-47
- ❒ John 6:22-40
- ❒ John 8:1-12
- ❒ John 10:1-20
- ❒ John 11:25
- ❒ John 14:1-23
- ❒ John 17
- ❒ Acts 2:22-24
- ❒ Romans 5
- ❒ Romans 6:1-10
- ❒ Romans 10:8-12
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 1:23
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 15:45
- ❒ 2 Corinthians 5:21
- ❒ Ephesians 1:3-22
- ❒ Colossians 1:21
- ❒ Hebrews 1 & 2
- ❒ 1 Peter 1:23
- ❒ 1 John 5:1-13
- ❒ Revelation 21:1-8

GOING DEEPER: KEY 3 SURRENDER

We surrender to Father God as we confess Jesus Christ as Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead.

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

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8, 9)

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

THE STORY OF THE KING

Someone was calling my name. As I cowered in my hiding place, a light shone into the darkness. As the light reached my face, I knew I was exposed. Raising my hands above my head, I stepped forward to face my captors. My chains jangled loudly around my ankles, biting into my skin. Slowly, pressed between the guards, I walked the agonizing walk to the King. As we entered His throne room, I saw Him. My breath caught in my throat at the sight of His eyes. My friends had told me He was cruel. They told me to run from Him and to hide, so that I could really live free and enjoy my life as I wanted. They said He was cold and calculating, manipulating His subjects with laws, holding them back from really enjoying life.

Now, as I looked into His eyes, I couldn't look away. A powerful, penetrating Light radiated from Him. I felt Glory and Power surge through Him; the Glory of the Truly Righteous. And to my astonishment, I felt such Love -- an overwhelming Love like I had never known before.

My face burned as His eyes pierced through me. He saw me and He knew me. I longed to hide, but I could not run. He called me by name. He knew who I was. I felt laid bare before Him. I felt so unclean. Deep sobs welled up in me as I fell to my knees before His throne. The law declared death to anyone who broke even one of His commands. I willingly had broken many, over and over again. Guilt pressed down on me. I felt completely ashamed. I was His enemy. I knew I deserved death. Bowing in complete surrender, I bared my neck to this King.

I felt the cold edge of His blade on my neck. It rested against my skin. I was at His mercy, but ever so gently He lifted my head, and spoke right into my heart. "You have sinned against Me," He said. "You lived your life after your own will, violating my Law and My Truth. You deserve to die. You have become unprofitable to Me, a waste of a human life."

But then He slowly raised the sleeve of His robe, uncovering a gaping scar on His hand. "In obedience to My Righteous and Holy Father," He said to me, "I gave My Life for You. I paid the penalty for your sin. Because of My Father's love, I willingly laid down My life, so that you might live. Look at My hands. See the scars where the nails pierced through. I suffered humiliation at the hands of sinful men for your sake. I was falsely accused. Men spit on My face. They stripped My clothes and nailed Me to a cross. I died the death that you deserve, despising the shame; for the joy set

before Me, I endured the cross. Though you benefit from my sacrifice, I did not do this just for you. I did this for My Father's glory, for His Name's sake.

"You do not deserve this love, but because of My Father's mercy and the love with which He loved you, I gave My life in exchange for yours. For it pleased My Father to bruise Me. In My death, I glorified My Father and you were set free. I perfectly obeyed My Father, totally trusting His Love, and fulfilling all that He commanded Me to fulfill.

"As I hung on the cross, My Father poured all of your sin, every independent act you have done, into Me. I bore the full weight of His wrath against you and your sin, and, in the agony of My soul, was separated from Him and entered death for you. I died the death you deserve and was in the tomb three days and three nights. But death could not hold Me. It was for your sin, not My own, that I paid this price. I lived a sinless life, in absolute faith in My Father. My Father raised Me from the dead and I am now alive forever.

"You have a choice today; if you are willing to fully turn to Me now, you must completely surrender to Me. With your whole heart, admit your guilt before Me, confessing that I am now the sole Ruler of your life. Admit that you have sinned against My Father and that you believe that He raised Me from the dead. We will remove your guilt and forgive your sin. I will save you and you will be one with Us. We will make Our home with you, making you new and righteous in Us. We will work within you through My Spirit whom I will give to you. He will cause you to obey Our law. You will enter into My Father's righteousness and live with Us forever. You will become a slave to Our Righteousness, daily yielding your body and soul to Us, living for Our Glory alone. You will obey the Word we speak, for We do not lie. You will not be your own. You will be bought with a price.

"If you choose not to surrender, you will remain in your guilt and you will surely die. You will be cast from my presence and exist in death forever, where there will be weeping and utter torment."

As He rested the blade of His sword across my exposed neck, memories of my life flooded my mind. I had lived a wanton life, living only for myself. I had wanted to be free, not under the control of a King, but had become a slave to my own desires. Now as I humbly kneeled before this King whose presence filled the entire room, I knew how foolish I had been. How blind. As tears streamed down my face, I confessed my guilt before this Righteous King, gratefully receiving His merciful gift of Life.

He removed the sword from my neck. He lifted me to my feet, removing the chains from my ankles, and, to my amazement, He washed my filth away. In awe, I looked at Him. His Love penetrated my heart, washing me, renewing me, filling me with His righteousness and sealing me in His Spirit. As He embraced me, He called me His child. "You are now Mine," He said. "I love you with an everlasting love. I declare you righteous because I have made you so through the cross of My suffering. I will never leave you or forsake you. We will walk together, enjoying each other, working together to see My kingdom advance on the earth. I have come to proclaim good news to the poor, to bind up the broken hearted, to set captives free. I give sight to the blind and make the lame walk. I came that you might have life, and life more abundantly. I am your Life."

Behold Our King

Throughout the Old Testament, a mystery is revealed; a foreshadowing of what is to come. God was about to do something new and powerful in the history of mankind. God was redeeming His creation and restoring human beings to Himself. God spoke of His plan to Abraham, saying "In your Seed, all the nations of earth shall be blessed."[44] This seed was not the Jewish race, but the Christ, the Messiah who came from the lineage of Abraham. God worked together all things according to this promise to Abraham, the birthing of a new covenant, a covenant based on grace

[44] Genesis 26:4

through faith.

Through Moses, God gave the law. Through the law, people now became conscious of sin and their need for God. As the people rebelled against God, refusing to listen to His voice, God sent kings to lead them, and prophets to speak to them, telling them to repent or turn away from living for themselves and to live for God. Through the Psalms and the Prophets, God spoke of the promise of the coming One who would set His people free from slavery once and for all and bring them into the land of the Son of His love. Through the prophet Isaiah, God spoke the following words about His Son. As you read these words, allow them to soak into your heart, for this is the King, Jesus the Christ.[45]

> *13Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.*
> *14Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; 15So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider.*
> *1Who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. 3He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*
> *4Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. 7He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. 8He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. 9And they made His grave with the wicked — but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.*
> *10Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When you make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. 11He shall see the labour of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge my righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. 12Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

When God says, "Behold," He is saying for us to look at something very closely. **Who does He command us to behold?** (v.13)

_____

When we look at His Servant, what do we see? Answer on the next page. (Is. 52:14, 53:1-2)

_____

[45] Isaiah 52:13-15, 53:1-12

What was our response to Him? (vv.3-6)

_____

_____

_____

What did He endure at the hands of sinful men?

_____

Why was He wounded?

_____

How did He respond to all this abuse? (vv. 7-9)

_____

_____

Why was God pleased to bruise Him? What was the purpose of putting His Servant through so much pain? (vv. 10-12)

_____

_____

_____

God was pleased to bruise or crush His Son because only in this could He bring humanity into fully into His presence. This was the only way.

What reward did the Servant receive after He accomplished the task God had given Him to fulfill? (vv. 10-12)

_____

_____

Now read Ephesians 2:4-10:

> *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), [6]and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7]that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. [8]For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*

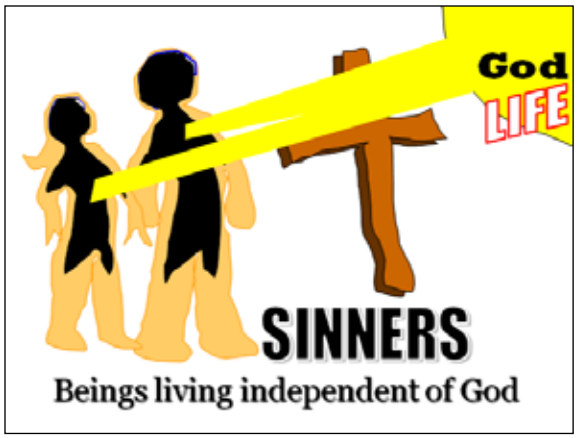
> *9not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

"But God who is rich in mercy..." But God. But God who does not treat us as our sins deserve. But God. But God who gave His only Son as a ransom for us. BUT GOD. What amazing words. Those two words sum up the mystery of the gospel. Out of the character of God, out of His mercy and love, for He cannot deny Himself, He sent His Son to die for our sin and redeem us from slavery with His own blood. How do we even begin to comprehend such a God? He sought us out!

We come to Him because He called us. "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."[46] We would not be able to come otherwise. We cannot seek Him on our own. In our independent state, humans are selfish, sinful beings, in whom there is nothing good. If He did not reveal Himself, we would not see. We are blind. If He did not give us ears to hear Him, we would not hear. We are deaf. We are dead in our trespasses and sin, absent from the life of God. Yet, because of the Love with which He loved us, He enabled us to hear His voice and opened our eyes so we could see because He is drawing us to Himself.

He draws us for His Name's sake, for His glory and honour. He did not do this for us, as if there was something in us that was worthy or good. "As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; here is none who does good, no, not one." [47]

How should we respond to such love, that even while we were sinners, Christ died for us? We bow our hearts before this King, who has laid down His life for us. We turn from running our own lives and we surrender to Him.



The word "gospel" means good news. The mystery the prophets declared, years before it came to be, is revealed to us now in Christ. This mystery is the gospel and it is incredibly good news to those who have ears to hear. The gospel is that mankind can have a relationship with the God who rules. God made a way to save the human race and bring us back to Himself, that we might be all that He created us to be. Jesus came to earth preaching the good news about the Kingdom of God. This gospel of the Kingdom was proclaimed by Him before He died on the cross.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"[48] In this gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. We are saved by the grace of God through faith, and our walk with God continues on by faith alone.

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[46] John 6:44
[47] Romans 3:10-12
[48] Romans 1:16-17

All who believe in Christ are saved. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what income level you have, or what nation you are from. It doesn't matter what you have done in your life, whether seemingly good or bad. It doesn't matter what others have done to you. It also doesn't matter what you have believed or what gods you have served or created. God the Father can redeem you.

God has made His Word very clear to us and He does not lie. He says to us, "if you seek Me with your whole heart, I will be found by you." But He says you must come through His Son. He has put His Son in charge and no one can come to the Father except through the Son. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. He has been highly exalted and given the Name that is above every name.[49] Jesus is in charge. There is no way around Him. Every road in life leads to His throne. The good news is that everyone who comes to God by faith, believing in the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, will be saved.

Once we realize our condition as beings living independently of God, our response will be to either turn away from Him or surrender. We surrender to God only once in our lives, but we surrender all that we are. With our whole heart we believe that He who promised is faithful and He will save us when He calls us out of death and into Life.

Behold the Son: Who is this Man?

In Hebrews 1 and Colossians 1, the Son is beautifully described. As you look these verses up in your Bible, reading and meditating on them, ask God to reveal His Word to you, giving you understanding. He will open the eyes of your heart that you might comprehend the Son for who He really is.

Hebrews 1

What does Hebrews 1:2 reveal to us about the Son?

_____

What is an heir? (see side box)

_____

What does it mean that the Son is "heir of all things"?

_____

_____

Heir
1. *A person who inherits or is entitled by law or by the terms of a will to inherit the estate of another.*
2. *A person who succeeds or is in line to succeed to a hereditary rank, title, or office.*
3. *One who receives or is expected to receive a heritage, as of ideas, from a predecessor.*

Read Hebrews 1:3 and fill in the blanks below (NKJV):

The Son is the _____ of His

[49] Philippians 2:9, 10

_____ *and the express* _____ *of His*

_____.

He upholds all things by the _____ *of His* _____.

Please take a moment to think deeply about Hebrews 1:3. **What is this verse saying about the Son? Who is He?**

_____

_____

How powerful is His Word? What does He do with His Word? (Hebrews 1:3)

_____

_____

What did the Son do by Himself before He sat down at the right hand of Majesty, the Father, on high?

_____

In Hebrews 1:4-7, how did the Son compare to the angels?

_____

_____

> [8]*But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your Kingdom.* [9]*You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions." (Hebrews 1:8-9)*

How does God refer to the Son? (v. 8)

_____

The Father refers to the Son as "God" whose throne is forever and ever. An everlasting throne and kingdom.

What does the Son love? (v. 9)

_____

What does He hate? _____

10And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. 11They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; 12Like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail."

What did the Son do in the beginning? (v. 10)

_____

What does this say about His existence in comparison to the heavens? (vv. 11,12)

_____

Such majesty and power in Christ! And to think He laid aside His majesty for us! Jesus laid the foundation of the earth and created the heavens**.** The created order, the heavens will die away, but He will remain forever. Jesus will remain the same even though the heavens fade away and grow old.

COLOSSIANS 1

Read these verses in Colossians 1. Write out what this verse says about Christ. Some you may fill in the blanks, and some you write on the line provided.

Colossians 1:15 _____

Colossians 1:16 *All things were created* _____ *and*

_____.

Colossians 1:17 And He is _____ all things, and

_____ all things consist.

Colossians 1:18 _____

In your own words, what does it mean that *"in Him all things consist"*?

_____

Colossians 1:19

_____

Colossians 1:20

_____

Consist:
1. To stand firm; to be in a fixed or permanent state, as a body composed of parts in union or connection; to hold together; to be; to exist; to subsist; to be supported and maintained.
2. To be composed or made up;
3. To have as its substance or character, or as its foundation; to be.

What did God do through His Son according to

Colossians 1:20? _____

Colossians 1:21 _____

What are you before you are reconciled by God?

_____

Why did God reconcile us to Himself? (Colossians 1:22)

_____

Reconcile:
1. Restore friendly relations between; cause to co-exist in harmony; make or show to be compatible.

What does this mean for you as you surrender (or have surrendered) your life to Christ?

_____

In Colossians 1:23, the word "if" is translated from the Greek and carries the meaning of "since." This verse reads like this. Fill in the blanks:

"***Since*** _____*, not moved away from the* _____ *of the*

_____*, which you heard, and was preached to every creature under*

heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister." (emphasis added)

Note: When Paul is talking about preaching to every creature, we can assume he means in the context of his ministry. When looking at the Bible, context is very important to keep in mind. As we read, we can ask ourselves a couple questions that will help us understand the context: When and where did the event happen? Who was the intended audience? It is also safe to assume Paul was preaching to people, so when he was saying "every creature" he was speaking poetically, not literally, as if he were speaking to animals also.

WHAT DOES THE FATHER SAY ABOUT THE SON?

Look up the verses below to see what Father God says about His Son.

Only Begotten: The Unique Son of God

Matthew 3:17: **God the Father is _____ in the Son.** -- Father God is pleased with His Son, even before Jesus began His mission.

Luke 9:35: **God the Father commands us to _____ to the Son. --** Father God commands us to listen to or hear the Son. We are to pay attention to what He says because the Father is speaking through the Son to us.

Mark 8:38: **Who will the Son be ashamed of?** _____
If we are ashamed of Jesus and His words, then He will be ashamed of us before the Father. He wants us to boldly declare Him and His word in obedience to the Father; we are to fear God above the fear of what men might think.

Acts 13:33: **God the Father has _____ the Son.** Jesus was God's unique Son, sinless and born from the Seed of God in the womb of a virgin.

WHAT DO DEMONS SAY ABOUT THE SON?

According to Mark 3:11, what did the unclean spirits cry out about Jesus?

_____

Even the demons knew Jesus was the Son of God. On several occasions Jesus commanded them not to speak because of the knowledge they had. Yet having this knowledge did not save the demons. They did not surrender to Him and obey Him as Lord.

WHY DID THE SON COME TO EARTH?

The Old Testament unfolds God's amazing plan to redeem humanity and glorify His Name. God reveals His heart and unveils a mystery that He had kept hidden since the beginning of time. In the fullness of time, this mystery was revealed in His Son.

Through the prophet Ezekiel, God displayed His intense displeasure with the leaders of His chosen people, Israel. Over the next couple pages, we will take a look at Ezekiel 34:1-16. This is a beautiful passage revealing the fulfillment of a promise through Jesus Christ:

> *1And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3"You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock."*

The leaders should have known the heart of their God. Yet God pronounced woes unto them. A woe, in the Bible, is a declaration of severe displeasure and impending calamity. God was angry with the leaders of His people. The shepherds' role was to care for and protect God's people, teaching them the words of God. The shepherds were supposed to be the mouth piece of God to His people. They were His arms of love, loving the people as a shepherd would care for his sheep. Yet they were only looking out for their own interests, not obeying the voice or heart of their God.

> *4"The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. 5"So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. 6"My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them."*

So God made this amazing declaration against the shepherds of Israel:

> *11For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.12"As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. 13"And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.14"I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.15"I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord GOD. 16"I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."*

In Ezekiel, the leaders in of God's people failed in the task they were given by God. What were they supposed to do? (v. 4)

_____

_____

Who, now, would take up that task and see that it was accomplished? (v. 11)

_____

Now read Luke 4:18-20 below, for the fulfillment of this prophecy in Jesus Christ. As Jesus began His earthly ministry, He went to the Jewish temple as was His custom. He was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Upon opening it, He found the place where it was written:

> *18The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD. 20Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.*

According to Luke 4:18-20, what did Jesus come to do?

_____

Now look up and read the next verse, Luke 4:21. What does this verse mean?

_____

As Jesus spoke these words, the reality of them came to be. He was the living fulfillment of the words God spoke to the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 61) hundreds of years before.

Read Luke 19:9-10. What else did Jesus say He came to do?

_____

_____

Describe, in your own words, what just took place — from the word of God spoken to the prophet Ezekiel and the reading of the scroll of Isaiah by Jesus in the temple. What is the significance of the word Jesus spoke in Luke 4:18-21 and Luke 19:9?

_____

_____

Can you imagine what it would have been like to be a prophet like Ezekiel or Isaiah? Do you wonder if they had the faintest idea what they were actually writing? They spoke the words of God, but the fulfillment of these words would not happen in their lifetime, not until hundreds of years later.

Jesus came to fulfill all the righteousness of God, to set the captives free. He came to fulfill the heart of Father God to seek and to save the lost. He came to perfectly fulfill all of the Law and Prophets, obeying the Father in every word He spoke and every deed He did. He lived life on this planet completely by faith and trust in the Father, obeying the Father's every word, knowing that it was the Father working through Him for His glory.

John 14:6 reveals who the Son is. What does it say?

_____

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.[50] A Kingdom disciple's life is not just an experience or an emotion. It is the expression of Jesus Himself, His life flowing in and through the disciple. This life is a Person. Our lives are an expression of the reality of knowing this Person, of being intimately connected to this Person so that His Life is flowing through our lives. We become one with this Person.

[50] John 14:6

Jesus is the Way. He is the only way chosen by God. There is no other Way. There is no other Name in heaven or on earth by which we may be saved.[51] There is no other Saviour. In the fullness of time, God sent His Son to accomplish His perfect righteousness by laying down His own life to free human beings from slavery to sin and death and to make them righteous in Him.

Life is a Person, not a concept.

We were created for an intimate, connected relationship with our Creator. Through His Son, God is restoring us to the purpose of our creation, restoring us to dependence and total trust in Himself. It is by His design. This is why we were made. Our lives are for His honour and glory alone. No matter what we think, no matter whether we agree or disagree with His word, God's word will stand firm and He will accomplish His will.

SURRENDERING TO HIM

In John 3:16-18, some of Jesus' most famous words tell the secret of knowing Him:

> *16For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Who will not perish? (v. 16)

_____

What will happen to those who believe in the Son? (v. 16)

_____

What about those who do not believe? What will happen to them? (v. 18)

_____

If performing religious activities could save us, we would have been saved by our effort. If Bible reading, performing religious rituals, or attending a church could have saved us, probably many of us would have been saved. The Bible says there is no way we can save ourselves, none of our good deeds, none of our religious activities, no works of our own at all can save us. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Only in Christ does salvation become our reality.

"Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law: 'The man who does those things shall live by them.'"[52] If we try to gain salvation by doing good things, by doing what the law says we must do, God says that we must then fulfill the whole law perfectly. Yet, the truth is we all fall short of the law. Instead, the way of salvation is by faith.

[51] Acts 4:12

[52] Romans 10:5

"But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'[53]

In the verse above, what two things must a person do to be saved?

_____

God wants you to speak out your confession of faith to Him. You must speak it out to God, confessing you believe in His Son and want Him to save you; to take away all your sin. You also must believe it fully, from the heart. Belief in the Bible is not with your mind, but with your heart. Belief is with your whole being. Belief moves you to action or it's not really belief. If you say that you believe, but do not act on that belief, then you really do not believe. To say you love God and then not do what He says, means that you don't really love God. He calls you a liar. To be saved by God, you must believe in your heart, putting your whole weight into that belief.

Think of faith like entering an elevator. Every time you enter an elevator you are living by faith. You believe the elevator you are entering is safe and you are putting your full weight on it out of your trust in it. You believe it will take you to the floor you desire and not plummet to the ground. If you didn't believe it was safe, you would not enter. Your body will follow your belief. When you step inside that elevator, riding in it to the floor you desire, you are putting your whole weight into that belief. Your life depends on it. You are living what you believe. You are living by faith.

"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."[54] This verse teaches that God poured out all of your sin, all your independence and its deeds, into His Son, a perfectly sinless Being. Jesus became sin for you. Remember sin is not behaviour: Sin is separation from God. Jesus became independent, separated from His Father, hurting His Father's heart for your sake. He cried out on the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"[55]

The Father poured out the full weight of His wrath on His Son without mercy. On the cross there was no forgiveness for Christ. In this wrath there was no kindness, no gentleness for Christ. There was only wrath. The full wrath and indignation of the Father was poured into Him. The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.[56] The wrath of God abides on us as sinners. He is seething against the independence of man and He will destroy us if we do not come to His Son.

Jesus took this wrath on Himself. He paid the price of our independence with His own life. On the cross, the justice of God was satisfied. His wrath was appeased. God could now fully

[53] Romans 10:6-13
[54] 2 Corinthians 5:21
[55] Matthew 27:46
[56] Romans 1:18

express His love for us and save us in Christ Jesus. He redeemed us with the price of His own Son's life. We were bought with a very high price.

As humans, we tend to think there is nothing wrong with just seeking our own pleasure on earth. Eat, drink, and be merry we say. Just enjoy life and have a good time, doing whatever we feel like doing. We settle for so much less than the deep satisfaction we were created to enjoy. God created us for the ultimate pleasure worth billions yet we settle for a penny in comparison. God's view is that it's better that you die than to live separate from Him.

Jesus died and was in the tomb three days and three nights. On the first day of the week, He rose from the dead, defeating the power of sin and death once for all. He is alive forever!

When you confess to Him that you believe with your whole heart that He died for you and that He rose from the dead, asking Him to take away all your sin and to forgive you, He will do just that. You will become a new creation in Christ. You will be saved. He will give you His righteousness and make you new. He will give you a new identity as a child of God. You will be a Saint.

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He came to set the captives free. We are (were) the lost and the captive ones. If we do not think we are lost, we will not want to be found. If we do not think we are captive, we will not want to be set free. Unless God reveals the desperation of our situation, we will think that we are okay. Jesus said it's not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who know they are sick. Those who know they are lost. Those who know they are enslaved.

So when events happen in your life that feel out of control, when calamity strikes and shakes up your world, view it as designed of God, calling you to turn to Him, enabling you to be willing to hear His voice. When you are seeking to help others in the midst of a crisis, don't try to fix their crisis. God may be using their crisis to draw them to Himself. God is always speaking, but we so often refuse to listen. If you hear His voice today, do not harden your heart to Him. Turn to Him and surrender to this King. He loves you.

He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. If you believe this gospel, He will save you and transform your life. Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me, though he may die, will live."[57]

If you refuse Him, He will still reign as King in your life, but you will be treated as an enemy and be destroyed. The choice is yours.

WHAT IS YOUR CHOICE?

If you have *not* yet surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, are you ready to do so now? Bow your head before Jesus Christ, and humbly beg Him to spare your life. Ask Him from your heart, not your head. You must mean it with all that you are. Ask Him to save you and to forgive your sin, all your years of living independently of Him. Repent and turn from running your own life. Accept all He has done for you in His death, taking all your sin into Himself, paying the price you deserve to pay. Admit to Him how you have lived your life and that you now want to turn to Him and follow Him, giving up all rights to run your own life from now on. Accept the gift of righteousness God gives you through Jesus Christ.

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[57] John 11:25

You can just talk to God. It doesn't matter how you ask Him; what matters is that you ask from your heart. If you have cried out this prayer from your heart, you are saved, you are new, and your sin is forgiven. If you would like to, write today's date as a reminder of your new birth.

Date of Your New Birth: _____

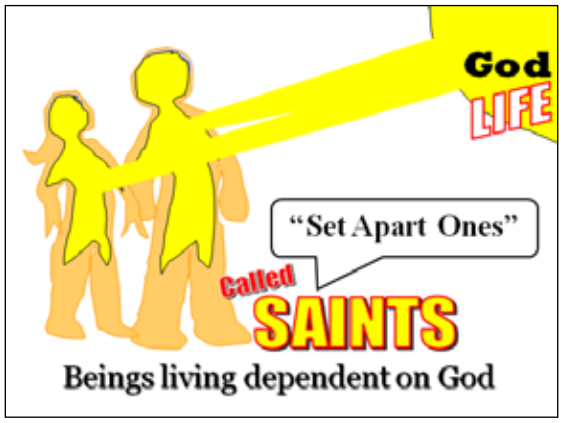
Write out the prayer of confession and repentance you just prayed to your Lord:

_____

_____

_____

As a Believer, You Yield to Your King



If you surrendered your life to God through Jesus Christ, you are saved by His grace. You did not deserve the sacrifice He gave, but because of the great love of the Father for you, Jesus willingly laid down His life for you. You couldn't have earned it. You did nothing to deserve it. It was a gift. It was and is by grace. You have received mercy from our richly merciful God.

You surrendered once as an enemy to the One who could kill you and cast you into hell. Because of the sacrifice of the Son, you received mercy. You are saved. Now, as His child, you yield many times. Yielding means you give your mind over to God to learn from Him and you give your body over to God to be used for His purposes. You daily yield to Him. You press your whole self into Him, laying down all agendas, all earthly wisdom, and all reliance on all earthly systems that are contrary to His Love. Your work is to fully believe His Word now, obeying all He says because He is right. Yield your whole self to God, loving Him with your whole heart, your whole mind, your whole soul, and all your strength.

You surrender just once,
You yield continually

Settle in your heart that you are truly saved. This is the truth of salvation that will protect your mind from doubts as you walk with God. You are complete now because of the work that He did on the cross, through His death and resurrection. You were saved by His grace alone. You were not saved because you were good or by what you did. You were dead and lost and could not bring yourself to life. Even on your best day, you could not have figured this out. Your thoughts do not even come close to God's thoughts. All your wisdom is foolishness to God. All your righteous works are garbage to Him.

You live because of His grace alone. You walk by faith and not by sight. The food you eat is the spiritual food of His word, so listen to His voice, fully believing what He says in His word because He is faithful and He does not lie. His word is sure.

As you put your full weight into His word, you will begin to experience a deeper walk of faith. God wants you to learn one lesson: Faith. That's all. Just faith. Fully believing God. Believing Him honours Him and brings Him glory. Faith pleases God, and a by product of this faith is joy, which springs up from the well of Living Water within you, who is Christ.

Gratitude will overflow in your heart because you know you were lost and now you are found. You were dead and now you are alive. You have been completely forgiven and now you will love because you have been overwhelmingly loved by God. Love God with the abandon of a small child running to his Father, your arms stretched out wide, enjoying Him, loving Him, listening to Him, and walking with Him as He sets people free to be all He created them to be.

BEHOLD YOUR KING

> *[11]Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. [12]His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. [13]He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. [14]And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. [15]Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19:11-16)*

Write out the description, John uses to describe Jesus in Revelation 19:11-16?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

PERSONAL REFLECTION: SURRENDER

Write out Key Three Surrender: _____

_____

Take a moment to explain this key in your own words. What is important for you to remember?

_____

_____

_____

Have you surrendered to God through Jesus Christ? YES NO

If yes, when? _____ Were you baptized? YES NO

If no, why not? _____

Write down your experience of surrendering to Christ. Where were you? What happened?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What has God taught you as you worked through Key 3 Surrender?

_____

_____

_____

_____

KEY 4 BELIEVE

We believe we are new creations who are complete in Christ.

In Key 4 *Believe,* we learn the truth of who we now are in Christ. Key 4 is central to living as a Kingdom disciple. In order to walk free in Christ, we must know the truth of who we are and what God has done. Then we can fully believe it and our lives will come in line with God's word. So, as God's children, we focus on the reality of life in the Kingdom of God. God, in His grace, called us out of darkness and transferred us into His Kingdom. We were not called because we deserved to be called or because of anything we did or ever could do. We were called by His choice and desire for His purpose and glory.

When we surrendered to God through Jesus Christ, He made us new. We have a new heart and new spirit that is totally complete in Christ. We are now completely righteous in Christ. The Bible calls us new creations in Christ. The old is gone. All sin is forgiven. The old spirit that was within us and dead and independent from God has been replaced with a new spirit. Now we are not who we once were. We are new. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works that He prepared in advance for us to do.

God has made us righteous in the core of who we are in Christ. God poured His righteousness into our new spirit. He gave our spirit love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. He gave us everything we need for life and godliness. He also put His law into our hearts and works within us through His Spirit, so we desire to obey Him.

God connected us to Himself in Christ. We now abide in Him and He abides in us. The fullness of God is within us in Christ. We are forever connected to Him and nothing will ever separate us from Him. This is the reality of being a new creation. We begin to understand how we are dependent upon God for everything. We can do nothing of eternal significance apart from Him. He develops us and causes us to grow in Him through the various circumstances He brings into our lives. He lives His life through us, for He is our life. All He asks us to do now is to believe His word.

God has poured His Spirit into our hearts to instruct us and help us to understand and apply the truth of His word. God doesn't leave us alone. He doesn't intend for us to live the Christian life without Him. He knows we cannot. He lives it through us. We do not work for Him, but with Him. God has saved us through His Son and is now conforming us into the image of Jesus.

God did not send His Son to die for our sin so we could just survive and live a mediocre life, trying to be joyful, trying to do good things. He came so we might live a celebrating and abundant Life in Him, fully believing Him and yielding ourselves to Him so His life might be expressed through us every day.

If you have surrendered to God through Jesus Christ, you, believer, are totally accepted by God. His acceptance of you is based totally on the work <u>He</u> accomplished in His Son, Jesus Christ, and the work <u>He</u> did within you through His Son. You are loved and accepted by God. His love and acceptance is not based on your performance. You can't earn His love. It's a gift, given to you by His grace.

You have been adopted into God's family. You are part of the church, His bride. His love is jealous for you. You are not your own. You belong to God. He created you by His design and

forethought. In His absolute goodness and love, He created you for His purpose and glory. This truth lets us know there are no unwanted children on earth. There may be parents who do not want them or people who do not want others around, but there is a God who wants them, because He created them and made them for relationship with Him. Many people do not understand this. Do not take your identity from a flawed system. You are wanted. You are created. You are loved.

You are sealed in Him. Your body is the suit God gave you for this time on earth: earth suit. You have been cut away from sin that still resides in your body. In the newness of your spirit, you have never sinned - you have never been independent from God. You have been set free from the power of sin that still resides in the flesh. You are now clean and holy. Your life has started over completely. Your new history began the moment you fully put all your trust and weight in Christ.

In this Key, you will learn who you are and who you are not. You will learn what God did for you and that it doesn't depend on you. It's *not* about what you *do*. It's about *who* you now are. You must now *be* who you really are. You cannot try to *be*. Your doing will flow from your identity and what you truly believe.

You are a spirit being who is holy and righteous. There is nothing you can do to make yourself more holy, more righteous, or more accepted in your spirit than you are right now. God has done it all for you. The work is finished. You are complete. Now your work is to *believe* in Him so that the application of this truth becomes reality in the physical realm.

When we understand the truth of who we really are in Christ, that we have been made righteous and new, and that this righteousness has been given to us by God as a gift, it helps us to live free. We can learn to identify Truth and expose Lies. As we believe the truth, the truth sets us free to be who we really are in Christ. When we understand we have a new heart and that our true thoughts are always holy, pure and righteous because we have been given the mind of Christ, we recognize thoughts that are contrary to the truth. For instance, when thoughts of negativeness, self-condemnation, unworthiness and the like come in, you can know that these are not truly your thoughts in your spirit. Remember this as we go through the book and you will understand how the Lord transforms your soul into His way of thinking. This is the focus of Key 5 *Transform*.

God is with you wherever you go. Once you are His, nothing will ever separate you from Him -- not your behaviour, not any events in your life, not feelings you have. In fact, He is working all events, all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. Nothing can touch you without His permission. He is in charge. He wants you to rest in the finished work He did, and join Him in the incredibly significant work God has for you to do, as He reaches out through you to a lost and dying world.

DISCOVERING KEY 4

As you surrendered and now yield your life to Jesus Christ, He does something amazing within you. Read these verses slowly. It may help to read these verses within the whole context of the passage, reading the surrounding verses. As a believer in Christ, you are an amazingly beautiful being. Look and see who you are.

As you study, ask yourself these questions. Write down the response of your heart, so you can look, see, and understand what God is revealing to you.

L LIE: What LIE of the world or the evil one is being exposed by truth?

I INSIGHT: What INSIGHT is revealed about God and His?

F FAITH: What revealed truth strengthens my FAITH?

E EXAMPLE: What faith EXAMPLE is given for me to follow?

- ❒ Jeremiah 31:31-33
- ❒ Ezekiel 36:22-28
- ❒ Matthew 17:26
- ❒ John 3:16
- ❒ John 10:27-30
- ❒ Romans 2:28-29
- ❒ Romans 3:21-26
- ❒ Romans 5:1, 9, 19
- ❒ Romans 6:4-11, 18
- ❒ Romans 8:2-4
- ❒ Romans 8:30-33
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
- ❒ 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
- ❒ Galatians 2:16-20
- ❒ Galatians 3:26-29
- ❒ Galatians 4:4-7
- ❒ Galatians 5:22-24
- ❒ Ephesians 1:3-7;13-14
- ❒ Ephesians 2:1-10, 19
- ❒ Ephesians 5:8
- ❒ Colossians 1:21,22
- ❒ Colossians 2:11-13
- ❒ Colossians 3:10
- ❒ 1 Peter 2:9,10
- ❒ Titus 3:3-8
- ❒ 1 John 5:10-13

WHO DO YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE?

As you begin looking at Key 4 *Believe*, take an honest look at what you truly believe about God and yourself. What you believe determines how you live. Who you believe you are affects every decision you make, so it's important to know what you really believe about God and yourself, and about what you believe to be your purpose for being on the planet.

As you work through this key, we hope you will revisit this list and look again to see how you are growing in your understanding of who you are and what God has done. Circle feelings or characteristics you feel apply to you. Please be as transparent as you can.

How do you view yourself? Circle all the words that apply.

Addicted	Forgiven	Prostitute
Alcoholic	Fornicator	Pure
Adulterer	Free	Righteous
Angry	Friend	Saint
Bad	Frustrated	Self-centred
Bisexual	Fulfilled	Set apart for God
Bitter	Good	Sick
Broken	Happy	Sinner
Child	Healed	Struggler
Church Member	Healthy	Suicidal
Clean	Homosexual	Thankful
Content	Husband	Unacceptable
Dearly loved	Holy	Unforgiving
Depressed	Jealous	Unhappy
Dirty	Joyful	Unlovable
Discontent	Leader	Unstable
Divorced	Lovable	Victim
Dysfunctional	Mother	Victorious
Employee	Moody	Whole
Employer	A New Creation	Wicked
Enslaved	Overeater	Wife
Excited	Pastor	Worshipper
Father	Peaceful	Worried

Right now, at this moment, what do you see as the purpose of your life

_____

_____

_____

_____

What makes you feel this purpose is correct?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

GOING DEEPER: KEY 4 BELIEVE

We believe we are new creations who are complete in Christ.

> *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)*
>
> *Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. (Romans 6:6-7)*

The heart question of Christianity is "What are we intending to be?" not "What are we intending to do?" This lesson is critical to understand. You *are* a new creation. Only when you understand this, then and only then, do you concentrate on your behaviour and actions. Minimal transformation happens in people for this very reason: people spend only a few minutes coming to know Christ without really meditating and thinking, praying and spending time before God to understand what has really happened to them before they begin to work for Him. As Christians, we are eager to get people to do a task of trying to work for God instead of knowing God. You must think through this new creation slowly enough and deeply enough that it never lets you be the same again. If you do not understand who you really are and what God has done, you will forget and go back into the world and learn the hard way.

The focus of Christianity is <u>not</u> what you are intending to do. The focus is what you are intending to *be* and what God will do through you as you abide in Him.

COMING TO THE END OF HERSELF

> *Alone on her bed, she cried out to God. Years of fruitless living had filled her with despair. Where was God? Had He given up on her? Why did He not seem to answer her prayers? She felt so far from God, and so unclean. She remembered the early years when she had surrendered her life to Jesus Christ. Words had leaped off the pages of the Bible and God felt so close, continually speaking to her through His Word. Life became an adventure of joy and awe as she got to know her God.*
>
> *Years of addiction and broken relationships had prepared her for God. She came to Him bankrupt and when He made her new, the change was dramatic. Yet now, she felt alone. What had she done to displease God and lose His favour on her life? She'd been attending church, doing ministry things, trying to pray, trying to read her Bible, trying to help people, and she was tired. She was tired of trying to live the Christian life. Tired of lacking joy. Tired of struggling to find peace. Just plain tired.*
>
> *In a desperate cry, she wept before the Lord, "Just kill me God, if this is all there is to Christianity. It's no different than the world; in fact I feel worse than I did before I knew You. Just take my life. Kill me. I don't want to live like this anymore. Help me see what I'm not seeing. I would rather die."*
>
> *It was about 3 am. She'd stayed in her bed for three days, crying out to God. For years, He seemed to ignore her prayers. Why would He answer her now? For years she had asked Him to make her holy, to show her the way to be clean again and accepted by Him. For years, He never seemed to answer. Tonight, in the very early morning she sensed God speak.*

As she lay in her bed, He seemed to say, "My child, you have already died. You have been crucified with Christ. You no longer live, but Christ now lives in you. You prayed for years for Me to make you holy. I didn't answer those prayers because my work in you was done. I made you holy the moment I saved you. I killed you that day, removing the old spirit within you, and I gave you life. I gave you a new spirit and heart that was totally clean and righteous, set apart for Me. You kept praying for peace, and I didn't answer that prayer because I had already given you My peace. All of it. There is no more to give. I gave you My peace through My Spirit the moment I saved you. You have all of Me in you now. All my love. All my peace. All my joy. All my self-control. All the fruit of My Spirit is in you now. Then I sealed you in My love. I have given you Me. All of Me. I am in you and you are in Me. You live within Me.

You've been trying to gain something you already have. That's why it's been hard. That's why you have struggled. Your salvation was a gift, not something you can try to get. I have made you new and have made you whole to send you into the world to proclaim this good news. Just believe Me. It's done. You are complete."

She listened in awe, tears streaming down her cheeks, "So you mean I'm completely holy?" Yes, the word resounded in her spirit. "So you mean I'm pure and clean?" Yes. The words kept flowing back with clear assurance. "So you mean You never left me? You are pleased with me and accept me?" Yes. "So you mean I'm not broken? I'm complete, totally complete?" Yes. Scripture began to flow through her mind, words she had read many times, but had never really heard. His words pulsing with the reality of the life within her, flowing like a river cleansing away all doubt, all pain, all the despair of the past 20 years.

God seemed to whisper into her heart, "You are a new creation. You are complete in Christ. You are accepted and holy. Dearly loved. You are seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus and you reign with Christ. You are clean. You are royal. You are a priest. You are my workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works that I prepared in advance for you to do. You have abundant life now and this life is in My Son. I gave you the righteousness of My Son as a gift of My grace. I made you completely righteous from the day I saved you. I filled My Son with the fullness of who I am and you exist in Him and He is in you. You are engulfed in Me. I have set you free. Now go and proclaim this good news to others who live without hope in the world."

Then with the impact of His Spirit, the words came to her, "But I will not share My glory with another. You cannot accomplish the work of God by your own strength or design. I never intended for you to try to do ministry, try to set captives free, or bind up the broken-hearted. It's impossible for you to transform a person, but it's not impossible for Me. It is what I do. I set captives free; I heal the lame; I proclaim freedom to prisoners; I bind up the broken; I give life to the dead when I call them from the grave. It's impossible for you. You cannot accomplish it through your efforts, but I will accomplish this through you as you fully believe Me. Walk with Me as I set up My Kingdom. Be about My task, living for My will alone. Walk by faith, obeying My Word, and you will do even greater things than My Son did on earth, but you will know it's not you. You will know it's Me in you and I will receive honour and glory through you. Work with me and I will work with you. We will work together to see My Kingdom established. We are now one."

"Oh, God," she cried, "You are so beautiful. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for what you have done. For saving me and making me complete. Use my life for Your glory. Draw people to yourself through me, Lord. I yield myself fully to You." Sobs welled up inside her, spilling over onto her pillow, cleansing her, releasing the beauty of His Spirit within her, the beauty of who she really was, who she had always been in Christ.

Unbelief fell away and joy rose up, surrounded by overwhelming peace. God had accomplished everything and her life now had meaning and purpose beyond compare. No longer would she live for herself, focusing on her own transformation, but for her King, walking with Him, learning from

Him, moving in the world according to His will and plan. He would speak His gospel through her, transforming people around her, and she would grow and become more and more like her King in experience. She would live for His pleasure alone, seeing His will done on earth as it is in heaven. What lies she had believed! What lies she had been taught! The struggle was over; the truth was setting her free. Now she just needed to believe.

THIS IS CHRISTIANITY

What if you had unlimited power pouring in and through you, enabling you to live a life that transforms the world around you with such force that the effect would last forever? This is who you are in Christ. What would you do in your life if you knew that ultimately you could not fail? This is your reality as a child of God. God Himself is in you in Christ. The limitless Creator, Sustainer and Sovereign ruler dwells in you and you are in Him. You are His. You are born from Him.

This *is* your life as a believer in Jesus Christ. You are a citizen of heaven, a child of the living God. You have entered into the unlimited realm of God, and are permanently connected to the most powerful and loving Being who ever was, or is, or will be. He is reigning on the earth, calling the dead to life, and building His Kingdom one life at a time. And He wants you to join Him in this incredible task, believing Him, loving Him, abiding in Him, and reigning with Him. He will transform you as you walk by faith with Him, loving everyone along the way.

God saved you, but He saved you not just for you. He saved you for Himself, for His pleasure and His purposes on earth as He seeks out the lost, bringing all things back into Himself and wholeness once again. He is saving you to send you into the world as His ambassador, to be a voice of love proclaiming the truth of His gospel. You are a living letter, written on by God Himself, a letter to be read by others as you live your life of faith.

Real Life Transformation

Before coming to Celebrating Life, I was doing everything in my own power to "earn my way to heaven." I thought if I could just be good enough that God would accept me and make my life better. The more I tried, the worse I felt and the harder it became. When I arrived at Lazarus house, they told me to stop *trying* and stop *doing*. They taught me to abide and just rest in the truth of God's word and believe it… Now I understand that I am in Christ and I know my identity in Him and my work is to believe in Him. (John 6:29)

A pastor's son who was trapped in addiction and now is free and newly married, learning to live to God's glory.

God pulled you out of the world into the light to put you right back into the world to set others free through you. As you go with Him, you will transform, but your transformation is not His ultimate goal. His goal is His own glory, seeing His will accomplished on earth as it is in Heaven.

The problem is, we base our view of reality on how we feel rather than on His truth. Like Moses before us, we often don't *feel* prepared enough, qualified enough, healthy enough, forgiven enough, new enough, or skilled enough to join God in His task. If we get prepared and spend years on ourselves, then we end up thinking we are a gift to God to help Him in His work. We begin trying to do God's work, and we tire, get discouraged, and often give up because it's not possible to do the work of God.

God doesn't expect or desire us to do His work. Only He can do the impossible. God expects us to walk with Him as He instructs and teaches us in the way we should go; as He counsels us and watches over us, moving mountains before us as His Kingdom impacts the earth. God takes us right where we are, as new spiritual beings called according to His design, and uses our lives for His purpose and glory. He commands us to believe Him, dying to all we once were, and living in complete abandonment and trust in Him. He calls us to be who we are, His new creation, His holy and chosen people. He calls us to live a life of faith, the life of a Kingdom disciple.

Knowing who we are is critical to being Kingdom disciples. Knowing our identity is not just a nice exercise, but an essential element in our walk with God and our victory as a believer. Our identity is formed by birth. When God birthed you through His Spirit, He made you new. You are new right now! You are not the same person you were before you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ.

Your core essence in your spirit is completely new, made new by the power of God. And God has given you everything you need to live a godly life on this planet right now! How do you know this is true? Because of the Holy Spirit He placed inside of your spirit to walk with you and teach you the ways of God. You cannot fail in your walk with God. You can only learn! This is what a disciple is: A person who is learning from God!

Knowing our identity is not just a nice exercise, but an essential element in our walk with God and our victory as a believer.

As His child, you are complete in Him. He connected you into Himself and you abide in Him. He filled you with all the fruit of His Spirit instantly. You have been given love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. He seated you in the spiritual realm in Christ and now He is bringing all things into alignment with Himself.

He designed you to do God-tasks by faith alone, knowing they are impossible for you. God will do them through you as you fully trust in Him. You do them in connection to God, because He is working through you! You do God-tasks by the power of God working through you mightily. You could never do them alone!

Before you were saved, God would not work with you because He does not unite Himself with sin. So God formed within you a holy vessel called your spirit in which He would pour His Spirit, to guide and teach your spirit and grow you in the ways of God. Your walk with Him is by faith alone. He created you to walk with Him by faith (for the just will live by faith!). You have been made just, right with God. You are as righteous as God in Christ. He wants you to rest in His finished work. You no longer have to try to fix yourself, change yourself, perfect yourself, or perform any other self-improvement scheme. Now your responsibility is to love Him and rest fully in Him, trusting Him as He completes the transformation process as you believe His Word and work with Him as He sets up His Kingdom on earth. Your work as a believer is to believe your God! That's all. It's that simple!

YOU CANNOT TRY

You cannot try to live the Christian life. Have you ever tried to pick up a pen? Try it right now. Set your pen on a table and try to pick it up. If you picked up the pen, you are not trying. You've done it. You have picked it up. *Try* to pick it up. Is it possible? Do you feel frustrated as you *try* to

pick up that pen, knowing that trying is impossible? You either pick it up or you don't. There is no in between. There is no way to *try*.

You are either a child of God or you are not. You cannot try to be. You are who you are. No amount of trying will change your identity.

METAMORPHOSIS

We are transformed by the power of God. The Bible says the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes from every culture, tribe, tongue, and nation on earth.[58] The gospel reveals the righteousness, justice, love, and grace of God through Jesus Christ. The gospel reveals how a spiritually dead person can come to life, how a lame person can walk, how the blind can see, and how prisoners are released from captivity.

God gave us a beautiful picture of the gospel in the caterpillar. The caterpillar is an earth-bound creature, eating leaves, moving slowly through life, but through the process of metamorphosis something amazing happens.

When the caterpillar is ready, it forms into a chrysalis. This is one of the coolest stages of a caterpillar's life. From the outside, it looks as if the caterpillar may just be resting, but the inside is where all of the action is. Inside the pupa, the caterpillar is rapidly changing.

Now, as most people know, caterpillars are short, stubby and have no wings. Within the chrysalis the old body parts of the caterpillar are undergoing a remarkable transformation, called "metamorphosis," to become the beautiful parts which make up the butterfly that will soon emerge. That little caterpillar will emerge with a completely different body and a full set of wings that it will be able to set out and fly with.

The caterpillar transforms into a whole new being, a butterfly. Once transformed, the butterfly can never be a caterpillar again. The butterfly has wings and is not bound to the earth. It can fly! You, beloved, were the caterpillar and you became that butterfly. You have been metamorphosised by God.

You were an ungodly sinner and have become a beautiful, resurrected saint. You are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared in advance for you to walk in. You were crucified with Christ and made into a new creation by God. You were earthbound, like the caterpillar, and you are heaven-bound now, seated in the heavenly realm right now as the butterfly. You've been saved by His grace. Now He will grow you as you learn to fly with Him by faith.

As you set your mind to believe the truth, you will begin to live out this inner transformation of your spirit. Your thinking and your behaviour will

[58] Romans 1:16-17

begin to transform, matching who you are in the spirit. Living as a spirit being, who is holy and righteous, will begin to be the normal experience of your life. Normal is Christ. Anything outside of Christ is abnormal. Worldly behaviour is abnormal for a Christian. Godly righteous behaviour is normal behaviour, and "natural" from the nature of your righteous spirit.

God promises to preserve your whole spirit, soul, and body blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus.[59] This transformation process is growth which leads to maturity. In Key 5 *Transform*, we take a closer look at the process of growing in Christ and learning to walk in the freedom we now have. You cannot try to grow as if it's something that you do, but as you eat and drink the Word of God, the natural outcome will be that you grow according to the power of God.

If you are a child of God, *be* who you are. No amount of Bible reading will get you closer to God than you are right now. No amount of prayer, church attendance and seminars will do it. The reason is because you are one with Christ right now. You cannot be closer than being one. You are as close to God as you will ever be, because of what He did in Christ. You don't have to *try* to be close. You must just believe it's true, because *it is true*. If you don't believe this, you will struggle.

IDENTITY CRISIS

Christianity is vital and alive when it is really real. When it is fake it brings disgrace to God. True Christianity cannot be faked. It can't be contrived. It just is what it is. There are only two realities in human existence: death or life. People are eternal beings and we exist either in Death or in Life. We are either sinners or saints. Our identity is based on birth, not behaviour or good works. If you are a child of God you are connected to Him, and you are dependent upon Him for everything. Your works just show the true reality of this connection. You will experience an identity crisis if you do not believe who you truly are.

Many people can say they are Christians. Does "saying" you are a Christian make you a Christian? Just because someone says, "I am a Christian," does not mean it's really true. So how do we know who is really real? The litmus test is the fruit. Is there evidence of God's activity in their life? Is there joy? Is there peace? Do they hunger for God and love Him? Is transformation happening around them?

As shocking as this might sound, even those who grew up in the church may not really know God. Attending church, attending Bible studies, teaching the Bible, even being a leader in a church does not prove God knows you. These activities do not prove that you are His. Jesus said we will know His disciples by the fruit of their lives.[60] His Kingdom disciples will love one another; they will even love their enemies. There will be evidence of the supernatural activity of God in the life of a true disciple. On judgment day, many will stand before Jesus and say, "Lord, we healed the sick, we went to church, we shared the Bible with everyone we met," and He will say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you." Why? Because they were not really His, they were just pretending to be. They were trying to live a Christian life, but it's impossible to try.

Does God *know you*? This is the central question. This question is even more important than the question: "Do you know God?" Are you His? Does He know you as one of His own? Have you surrendered to Him from your heart? We are not talking about just saying a "sinner's prayer," just repeating words without really meaning them from the heart. Have you truly had an encounter with God, where you fully believed His gospel, His good news of God? Saying the

[59] 1 Thess. 5:23, 24

[60] John 13:35; 15:8

"sinner's prayer" does not save you. You are saved when, as a sinner, you pray from your heart for God to save you and you believe in His Son. You are saved when you know in your heart you are completely useless and pathetic before God. You know that nothing good dwells in you. You are a waste of skin and only deserve to be judged and thrown into everlasting torment and pain for the ungodly life you lived.

With this knowledge burning in your heart, you cry out to God, asking Him to please save you, because only in Him alone is there hope of salvation. You cry out to Him for mercy, to not treat you as your sin deserves. You cry out that His grace might save you, that He would give you what you do not deserve, the righteousness of His Son as a gift. When you cry out like this, God reaches in, crucifies the old rebellious sinful you, and makes you into a new being, who is perfect and holy in His sight. When God makes you new, you are new. Period. There is no denying the impact.

If God birthed you through His Spirit, you are new. If He made you new, He placed His Spirit in you and is now working out His righteousness in and through you. How will you know? You will know by the fruit that begins to show. You will not want to sin. You may still sin, but you will feel the conviction of how wrong it is. Your former life will become uncomfortable to you. If you lie now, it will disturb you. If you steal, it will press in on you. You won't like it. You won't want to do it. Why? Because that sin does not reflect who you really are. Think of the difference between a sheep and a pig. When a sheep falls into the mud, it wants to get out. When a pig falls into the mud, it wallows and enjoys the mud. A believer no longer enjoys sin, but a sinner can only sin. Sin is normal behaviour to a sinner.

As a new believer, you don't even know totally who you are yet, but you know something happened to you that you can't explain. You just know God changed you and you are not who you were. You want to please God. You won't be able to deny Him, because you are His and He is yours. You have become one with Him. You will want to pray and read His Word, and you want to know and worship Him from your heart. You hunger and thirst for Him.

But, if you are not really His, you can openly disrespect Jesus and not care. You won't be bothered if you sin. You can try to do religious things, but they will be hard to do, and the change will not last. You won't be able to sustain your "good" behaviour. Your true self will eventually show through. You also won't be able to comprehend the Word of God. It will seem like foolishness to you. Your life will be all about yourself and not Him, even in your attempts to be religious, because you do not really love Him or desire what He wants. You are really "dead," and cannot fake real life because real life is found in Jesus Christ.

The life of a Christian is Christ. He is the power and the life of a Christian. For this reason alone, there is no faking Christianity. If you are dead, you are separate from Life, and cannot bring lasting transformation within yourself or to others around you. But if God made you alive, you hunger for Him. You love Him. You may not know how to walk with Him or know what to believe deeply yet, but you want Him. You love Him. Loving God is in your DNA as His creation. He made you to love Him. He made you to hunger for His word, and He gives understanding so you can comprehend it. He designed it this way.

He will work this salvation out through you as you begin to work with Him in His Kingdom. As you work with Him, you will transform. As you read the scriptures and believe them, you begin to think differently and your behaviour, then, will reflect your new thinking. Your transformation is a by-product of walking with God, not the goal. He created you for good works that He might be glorified.[61] He will work in you, equipping you, teaching you,

[61] Ephesians 2:10

guiding you, and leading you in this work as you love Him and love the people He brings into your life. He will work out His will in and through you.

WE CAN'T DISCIPLE DEAD PEOPLE!

Have you ever tried to move a person who is unconscious or not alive? Was it difficult? A person who has no life in them is dead. We would be foolish to attempt to make a corpse move and then say it is alive, wouldn't we? And it would take a tremendous amount of work to keep it moving. A dead body would always require someone else to force the movements. In the same way, if a person is not born from above, they are spiritually dead and it is a lot of work and foolish actually, to try to disciple them. Many churches are filled with spiritually dead people who may think they are alive, but you can see by "their dead works" that they actually are dead. Their lives are devoid of God's power. They are living like mere humans. They focus on self, not God. They try to learn the Bible, but cannot understand what it says.

Years ago Paul Washer spoke at our church and gave an excellent illustration about the impact God should have on a believers' life. He said, "Think of a man who shows up in front of a meeting as the guest speaker. He arrives twenty minutes late. You ask him, 'Why are you late?' And he says to you, 'As I was driving here, my car had a flat tire. I pulled the car to the side of the highway and began to change the flat. As I was working, one of the lug nuts rolled out in the middle of the highway. So I went to retrieve it, and just as I picked it up a semi-truck going 100 km/h smacked right into me! I flew across the highway and into the ditch. That's why I am 20 minutes late!'"

Think about that for a moment. If a man is hit by a semi-truck going 100 km/h, the impact is several tons. Would he really be twenty minutes late? Either the man telling the story is a liar or totally confused by what has happened, because no one hit by a semi-truck going 100 km/h is twenty minutes late for anything! The impact of a truck would be undeniable, causing severe injury or death!

So, let me ask you, which is greater? A semi-truck or Almighty God? If people say they have been impacted by God and there is no change in their lives, in how they talk or walk, they are either liars or severely confused, because no one has an encounter with God and remains unchanged! If God saves you, you will see and experience the impact of that encounter. Period.

You, believer, have been made righteous by the power of God. You are new. The experience of this inner transformation is realized only by faith, by fully believing God and resting in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. You are not trying to be somebody. You *are* somebody. You are now light, so live as light in the world. Be who you are!

We, as believers, are not trying to make ourselves better. We are better. We cannot improve in who we are. We are new creations in Christ. The old us is dead and buried. We have been made perfect in Christ. Now we must learn to walk out this reality by faith in God. The Christian life is experienced and lived by faith and not by sight. God, in His Word, tells us who we really are. Either He is lying or His Word is true. You decide. What you decide will be your experience on the planet. The truth will remain true, but you will not experience the benefit of your relationship with God if you choose not to believe Him. We are new creations, so we walk with our King, being who we are in Him as He expresses Himself in and through us to the world around us.

GOD HATES RELIGION

Christianity is a living system of God working His life in and through us for His purposes on earth, for His glory, not our own. Christianity is more about God's glory than about our improvement. Christianity is about us being who we truly are in Christ, not us trying to be something we think we should be or trying to do something for God to somehow earn His favour.

The opposite of Christianity is religion. Religion is when we attempt to work for God to please Him. Religion is also when we try, in our own efforts and best wisdom, to do God's work. In Christianity, God does His work in and through us, not for our sake, but for His own glory, as He brings His creation back in line with Himself. We are being religious when we think we have something to offer God. We try to do works for God as if God needs something from us, as if our works will somehow add something to God or help Him get His work done. God needs nothing from us, but He enjoys working with us.

Religion has pride and self at its core. When we think we are better than the person next to us, we are being religious. On the flip side, when we seek to improve ourselves or seek to feel better about ourselves in the guise of loving God or experiencing His love, we are being religious. Religion says I must work on myself to make myself more acceptable to God, or to get closer to God. The feeling of religion is that I am somehow not complete enough or not fully accepted by God, so I have to work on myself and try to be better. Religious people often love self-help books because they seek to improve self.

Religion also says I *must* do all the things He expects me to do and sets about trying to obey God's rules. There is a feeling of never measuring up or never being able to be or do all we think God wants us to be and do.

Christianity says, I have been crucified with Christ, I no longer live. Christ now lives in me.[62] Self is crucified; the old man is gone.[63] In the old man's place is the new man who is created by God in holiness and righteousness. Now, we say, "I am accepted by God, holy and righteous. I am complete in Him." If we truly believe this, we will have little concern for our lives and circumstances. We will no longer try to work for God, to be approved by Him. We will seek to work with Him and be who we now are in Him: righteous and holy children of God.

Christianity says deny yourself and accept that self is dead, crucified with Christ. Religion says I must try to be good or try to look good. Christianity says I was evil, and could never have made myself good no matter how hard I try. Through Jesus Christ, I have been made good by God. I am good and righteous, not based on works I do, but based on the work He has done in Christ. This is the central different. Now I desire to *be* who I am, as a righteous being who is dearly loved by God. I desire to walk by faith in God.

Religion feels like a heavy burden on our backs. It's hard. Have you experienced the weight of trying to be religious? It has the appearance of spirituality, but lacks joy and power. Religion has *trying* and *rules* as the core, as we keep trying to be what we think we should be. Christianity's rule is light and easy and comes from a heart of love, yet it may cost us our physical life to live it out. Religion says we must continuously keep working for God or we will be lost, creating fear and guilt. Christianity says we are kept by God.

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[62] Galatians 2:20

[63] Romans 6:6

Christianity is love and truth-based and is completely secure, because our security rests in God, not in what we do or don't do. In true Christianity, God works through His people to bring glory and honour to Himself. Our transformation and growth is a bi-product of our relationship with God, not the goal. As He works in and through us, we learn to walk in love, enjoying our experience with Him.

If we are religious, we will talk a lot about what we are doing or have done, emphasizing all the effort we have put in. We will seek to be noticed by others for the good things we do. We would miss the value of silent work because there is no praise in it. We feel we need to do more for God. Why? So we feel better about ourselves and get noticed by others. We feel if we do something significant we will be truly happy.

Religion sets up rules for us to follow without the heart of the process. It says I need to read my Bible more to become more holy or to appear more holy to others. Why? Because I feel like I must improve myself or I want others to see what a good Christian I am. Religion makes me feel guilty when I don't read the Bible enough or when I miss the church gathering, or fail to do other religious activities. Religion tells me to share my faith with everyone, pray often, attend church meetings, go forward at every altar call to show how committed I am; then religion makes me feel guilty when I don't.

The problem with religion is that it can look a lot like the real thing, but it is only a counterfeit to true spirituality. A man once told the following story to illustrate the difference between religion and Christianity:

> As a visiting pastor entered a church he was greeted by a deacon. The deacon said a great prayer warrior had just arrived. The pastor asked, "How do you know he is a great prayer warrior?" The deacon said, "Often he begins to groan and cry out to God even as he is sitting at the table or around us. I've seen him before he could even get to the room and pray, he was already on his knees weeping." The pastor said, "This is actually the sign of a non-prayer warrior." The shocked deacon asked, "Why do you say that?" The wise pastor replied, "The sign of a prayer warrior is that activity of God happens around him and you do not know he is doing it." When God's people pray, you may not even see them pray, but you will see the impact of it for the effective prayers of the righteous accomplish much.[64]

The truth about religion is this: religious works are filthiness to God. Non-Christians can try to be religious and Christians can easily fall into the sin of being religious. We attempt by our own efforts to achieve what God has already completed in us. Or we try to do God's work through our own plans and devices. We cannot achieve, devise, improve, or add to anything that God has done in us, and we cannot do His work apart from Him.

The Christian life is meant to be lived by faith and faith alone. Faith will work itself out through us, but works alone will not accomplish what faith can do. Biblical faith finds all of its strength and resource and power in the abiding presence of Christ. It works because the Father is always working. Religious works are found in the essence of that person seeking to do good things for God. Religion's power is from self-will and not from Christ. Both sometimes appear to be the same and can only be identified by Christ.

Religion creates apathy. Apathy is indifference about what God loves. Apathy focuses on "good" works at its core, not caring if it is truly pleasing God. It may appear really aggressive, or

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[64] James 5:16

zealous, like Paul persecuting the church. Religious apathy can appear to be worship. This is why we can be easily fooled. But apathy requires no faith. Apathy creates religious rules that take no relationship with God or real faith to do. Apathy reveals itself in our laziness to find the heart of God.

Any activity can be either faith-full or apathetic. Our motive reveals which it is. At a worship service, there are both true worshippers and false worshippers. There are people who worship God with their hearts, fully engaging with and loving Him. There are also people who are only trying to put on a show of worship, but without the heart of worship. Both might look the same. Their hands may be raised. They sing songs. They smile and say they love God, but God sees the heart and He knows who are His. He is seeking true worshippers who worship Him in spirit and truth.

The motive reveals if an action is worshipful or evil. Is the motive love for God or self? Why do we attend church? Why do we read our bibles? Is it to love God with our whole heart, or to be seen by others as someone who worships? Why do we raise our hands or not? Do we refuse to raise our hands because we are not charismatic people? Or do we raise our hands because it is what we ought to do? If we raise our hands, not so much to worship God, but to do what we think we should do or to be seen by others, we are being apathetic and religious. We are not doing it as an expression of our love for God, rather because we have to, or we will look good if we do it. If we are doing something for the wrong reason, not from a heart to just abandon ourselves to God, it is sin to do it. Apathy doesn't look for what God wants, but for what self wants. Self wants anything that makes self feel better or look better to others. This self-love displaying itself in a Christian is what the Bible calls fleshly or carnal behaviour. This behaviour reflects immaturity. It does not reflect the *real* you, if you are in Christ because you are a being who loves God with abandon, and you long to express this love to your Abba Father.

God has poured out His love into our hearts. This love is agape love, with no condition for self. This is how we are made to love as a new creation in Christ. Agape love is active, not passive. It has no conditions to its expression. This love is pursuing, desiring, building up and pure. Agape love says, "I will do whatever God wants, and do it from the heart, regardless of how it looks and feels." If God wants me to raise my hands in worship to Him, I will raise my hands and love it. If God wants me to kneel in worship, I will kneel and love it. If God wants me to just sit still in worship, then I will sit still and love it. It is prideful to <u>not</u> raise my hands, or bow, or dance or have joy in worship, due to wrong motives. God enjoys my worship and adoration of Him from a pure heart. He lives within my praise. He deserves it. I live to give Him praise and glory.

Not worshipping from the heart, from the core of who we are, is apathetic toward God. We are saying, "I don't really care what He wants. He will get what I decide to give because it's my style. It's just the way I am." Apathy raises hands because we *have to* raise hands. Apathy reads the Bible because we *have to* read the Bible. Apathy goes to church because we *have to* go to church.

Agape love raises hands or doesn't raise hands because we *want* to worship the King. Love reads the Bible and gathers with the church because we *want* to express love for the King. We *get to* love God. We *get to*! What a privilege it is to worship our King! It's a gift. We *get to* read the Bible. We *get to* express our love however He leads us, with complete abandon and joy. People in apathy do many things which might appear like "good works" to those who are watching, but are a stench to the nostrils of God. He detests those works because they do not come from the pure heart He gave you in Christ.

The weakness of the church in our generation seems to be apathy and religion, so it often lacks power to transform. When apathetic, the church will be self-centred, and self-focused, simply trying to improve self or please other people. True discipleship calls people to move from religion and apathy to true faith. How do we acquire such faith? Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.[65]

BE A FAITH-WALKER!

A Kingdom disciple is a faith-walker! A faith-walker desires only to please the Father. If others are pleased that's great, but pleasing others is never the motivation. Faith-walkers do not seek to make friends outside of Christ, but they are friendly. They do not seek to acquire earthly possessions outside of Christ, but they may be rich. They know they are merely stewards of their Father's wealth, not the owners of this wealth. They do not seek ministries outside of Christ, but they may be ones who are discipling people individually or discipling the masses. They know the work they do is not really their work, but their Father working out His will in and through them. They hold all things very loosely and seek only to love and obey their Father.

To identify faith-walkers, listen to their conversations. Do they glorify the Christ? Do they boast in the Cross? Do they understand the great gift God has given man, the Holiness of God and power of the gospel? A non-faith walker focuses on self, on what they have done and their own efforts, seeking the praise of men as their goal or motive. Faith must have an object to be faith. The object of biblical faith is God Himself. We believe in Him. Biblical faith sees its expression in what God has completed, on His work within us and other people of faith. A worldly or human faith object is man's faith in himself.

When God created you as a new creation in Christ, He did so with masterful perfection. You are His masterpiece and He does not make mistakes. You are beautiful. There is no denying it! God is like a master painter who creates a work of art and knows that if he added just one more stroke of his brush the masterpiece would be ruined. The new creation life in you is the work of the God who made you. You are perfect and complete in Christ, and you have been from the moment you surrendered your life and became His. You are the workmanship of God Himself.

What this means is that you are no longer broken. You are no longer dysfunctional and you don't need fixing. The moment you surrendered to Him, at the core of who you are, in your spirit, you are new and complete. You can fully function and you can live a godly life because God has given you everything you need for life and godliness right now.[66] There is no excuse not to because you are connected into the God of the universe and He is in you. All things are possible for you now. You can do all things through Christ who gives you strength.[67] God's love working within you is a passionate love moving you in the direction of His heart and His ways. Your new heart beats with the heartbeat of God. You are created to display the greatness of your God!

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[65] Romans 10:17

[66] 2 Peter 1:3

[67] Philippians 4:13

WALKING BY FAITH -- ZERO FAILURE!

You cannot fail in living out your spiritual journey with God. God will work all things to His glory. This is not a license to sin, this is a command to live without fear. You can only grow and learn. You can't try to grow. You will just grow. God will grow you. He will allow events and challenges in your life that produce growth in you. He did not save you to make you happy and comfortable. He saved you to make you holy, bringing honour and glory to Himself through the process. In this holiness, there is unspeakable joy. This joy is not based on circumstances or the value placed on you by others. This joy wells up from the life of God within you and gives you strength to face any challenge in this life. This is a big difference. God is conforming you into the image of His Son and He placed His Son inside of you, through His Spirit, right into the core of who you are! Now He is working the life of His Son out through you.

EXPECT SUFFERING

You live within the resurrection life in Christ and you will share in the sufferings of Christ at the same time. There is suffering in Christianity. Expect it. Through this suffering, God grows you, teaches you, guides you, and conforms you into the image of His Son. This is His promise to you and He is doing it.

You will receive whatever Christ receives from the Father. The Scriptures say that you have been crucified with Christ, yet you live, and you live by faith. When the first Adam sinned, the seed of all humans was in Adam's loins. So when Adam sinned all humans went independent from God with him. In Christ, the spiritual children are again placed within the loins of the last Adam, who is Christ. When Jesus was crucified, you were crucified with Him. All sin went to the grave with Him and so did the sinner. After three days He was resurrected by the Father, the penalty of sin had been paid once for all, and justice had been satisfied. The Father's wrath was appeased because of Christ's sacrifice. Abundant peace, hope and love was freely given to the Son and, when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we are born again into Him. So whatever the Christ receives from the Father, we also receive.

We live within the resurrected life of Christ and we share in the sufferings of Christ at the same time. People say things and do things against us only because we identify with Christ. They abuse us the same way they abused and hurt Him because He identified with the Father. We are one with Him. Jesus said if the world hated Him, the world would hate us too. If the world did not accept His words, they would not accept our words either, but He said, be of good cheer, because He has overcome the world.[68]

Through this suffering, God grew His Son into an absolute mature man. Through the suffering you endure, God will grow you, teach you, guide you and conform you also into a mature person in Christ. This is His promise to you and He is doing this, with or without your permission. He is moving everything, all mistakes, accidents, failings and tragedies, into His glorious purposes. Christian, you cannot learn to walk with God without faith. And you will make mistakes as you learn to walk by faith. You learn through sufferings in your present experience on earth. You learn who your God really is. You learn who you really are and you learn to walk by faith in your God, loving Him and obeying His voice.

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[68] John 15:18-25

If you fall or make a mistake, you will fall forward in your failures. This is called learning. Learning is not sinful. Mistakes are not sinful. Learning is learning, and learning is how we grow. Go and make a thousand mistakes in your walk with God as you seek to love Him and listen to His voice. God is working even your failures and mistakes together for your good and the good of all of His children.[69] You cannot fail! You will learn and grow through pain and struggle and will shine more brightly through the process. You will grow deeper in love with God, enjoying Him and working with Him as He sets other people free through your experiences. Look closely at Him, learning who He really is and who you really are in Him. What you will see is beautiful beyond compare. You are a child of the living God. Now be and believe who you are and who you were made to be. Be alive. Be new. Just *be*.

God hates religion. Why? Because we start trying to be what we already are in Christ. We try to attain what we already have. We turn the focus on ourselves and try to fix ourselves, rather than walking with our King believing Him at His word, and just being who He has made us. When we focus on ourselves, we turn our eyes inward, rather than outward to His will being accomplished on the earth. We have only a short time to walk with God before He calls us home. He has set us free from the power of sin through Jesus Christ, yet we strive to free ourselves from sin. He made us holy, yet we start trying to do religious activities to feel like we are holy. We try to gain what we can never attain through our effort. We try to do, in our own power, what we could never accomplish. No wonder we get frustrated! It's like trying to be in a room you are already in! Craziness! Yet, we many times we try to be what we already are.

God calls us to walk by faith in Him, doing tasks that are impossible for us to do – without Him. If we are fully able to do all we are presently doing, we are not living by faith. We are playing it too safe. We are staying within our comfort zone. If we try, in our own effort, to do a God-sized task and we fall short of doing or being what we think we should be, then we despair. We give up. We get angry at God. We become depressed and complain to Him. We pray and plead, asking God to make us what we think we should be but believe we are not.

Why do we try to be what we already are? What a frustrating experience! Think about it this way. Is it possible to try to be human? We would laugh and say, no. We are human at all times. When a baby is born it is fully human. As it grows it doesn't become more human; it just becomes a more mature human. God is calling us as believers to wake up and believe Him at His word. When we are born again from the seed of Christ, we are made children of God, born from above, holy and righteous beings dwelling in an earth suit, a body made for earth. We are who we are by His grace. We did not do any work to make ourselves holy or righteous or good. God made us holy, righteous and good through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ when we surrendered our lives to Him by faith. His Word is accurate. Anything other opinion is not true, no matter who says it.

When we fail to believe God's assessment of us, we struggle as Christians. Our lives become hell on earth as we try to improve ourselves when, in reality, we have heaven within. We have the fullness of God within us in Christ and we are in Him.[70] This is the beauty and mystery of the gospel: Christ in us, the hope of glory![71] We are one with the living God. How much closer to God can we get than that? We abide in Him and He abides in us. We bring dishonour and shame to our God when we choose to not believe that what He says He has done within us is actually real. If we seek to add to His work, we offend Him.

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[69] Romans 8:28

[70] John 17:23

[71] Colossians 1:27

God hates religion because religious people try to love God through behaviour and God wants us to love Him with our whole heart. Religious people try to be holy, but God wants us to live holy lives because He has made us holy already. He calls us to be who we truly are, His workmanship, His perfect design. God wants us to be who He made us to be as righteous, holy beings who love Him, who love others and love ourselves, because we are incredibly loved by God. God wants us to fully believe Him, fully resting in Him as He works out His righteousness in and through us.

THE STRUGGLE TO BELIEVE

If God has done all these things, why do we struggle to believe? We struggle because we don't see the reality of the new creation life within us in every area of our lives — *yet*. We hear the word of God, but our experience contradicts it. We long to see evidence of God's word working in our lives. As we grow, if we make a mistake, we call it an error or failure, rather than calling it what it is – learning and growing experiences with God. These negative experiences or "failures" lock in our soul and become very difficult to overcome. These become biblical strongholds in our mind.

We are righteous beings who sometimes sin, not sinners trying to be righteous. When we sin or act independently of God (and we sometimes do), we may not *feel* God's word is true of us. So we try harder to improve ourselves, to be more pleasing or holy before God. We focus on our feelings or behaviours, and try to change, when all we really need to do is believe that we are complete in Christ and be who He says we are. Instead of believing Him, we turn our focus inward and try to fix ourselves. We create support groups, self-help Bible studies, prayer meetings, all with the focus of improving self. God looks and seems to say, "Self is crucified! You have died and your life is hidden in Christ. I made you perfect. What is there to improve? My work is complete. Won't you just accept this gift and believe Me? I am so pleased when you just believe Me."

We can never accomplish what God has done in us. It's a plan God purposed and is fulfilling in Himself from before the foundation of the world. He is moving events and people, raising up and casting down thrones and powers, bringing death and life, working all things together for His glory and His Name's sake. How could we ever possibly figure this out? We must just rest in it by faith, accepting His gift to us with gratefulness.

We do not deserve it, so stop condemning yourself. You don't deserve it. Just face it. It's a gift of His grace. By the grace of God, you received a gift you do not deserve. You were lost, lost, lost. If He didn't reach into the darkness and call your name, you would still be lost. You did not seek God. He sought you. You did not find Him. He revealed Himself to you and He gave you the ability to hear His call. He authored your faith in Christ Jesus. He birthed you through His Spirit and so you live. You were dead and now you are alive. It's by His grace you have been saved, through faith.

God orchestrated all the events of history, all the events of your life to bring you to Himself. He found you and He called you to Himself in Christ Jesus. The moment you surrendered to Him, He saved you and gave you a new heart that beats for Him. Your life is His design. He formed you in your mother's womb. He wove you together, and knows every hair on your head. He placed you in a certain family, in a certain town, in a certain culture, in a certain language group, and in a certain country. He did all these things and had you go through all of your "mistakes" and "failings," problems and difficulties, as He worked them all together for your good according to the counsel of His will and His good pleasure.

After all He did to save you, it might be shocking to know He did not save you just for you. His goal was not just to fix your life, get your marriage together, help your children, get the right job, or give you success in this life on the planet. God did not send His Son to die for you for your sake. God sent His Son to die to fulfill all righteousness, revealing the glory of God to the praise of His Holy Name. Jesus came to fulfill the will of Father God and to live for His glory. God is bringing all things back into alignment with Himself, back to the original purpose of creation to bring honour and glory to His Name.[72] We are the benefactors of this glorious work of the Father through His Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus modelled for us what life was supposed to be like. Jesus was a faith-walker. He loved God with His whole heart, soul, mind and strength, and He loved His neighbour as Himself. Jesus walked in perfect trust in His Father, knowing that, even in torture and death, God was good and was working all things according to His righteousness and character. Jesus saved us from the wrath of God and now lives in us to bring about the will of His Father on earth as it is in heaven.

[72] 2 Corinthians 5:19

BEING WHO YOU ARE -- IDENTITY

He chose you, calling you by name, and He saved you, giving you a new heart and new spirit when you surrendered to Him. He removed all your filth, removing your sin forever. You are not sinful anymore. Sin means independence from God. You are not independent anymore. You have a new identity. You are no longer a sinner; you are a saint, a dependent being, holy and connected to God. Nothing will ever separate you from Him again.

You were not saved by your effort and you cannot be lost by your lack of effort.

You were not saved by your effort and you cannot be lost by your lack of effort. You are not saved by your works or religious activities. You are saved by His grace, through faith. It was a gift of God, authored by Jesus Christ. Agree with the truth of His word, beloved child of God. Thank Him for what He has done. Embrace the reality of your salvation. You need to feel it. This has to be true to you. It can't be wishful thinking. No lasting change will come if you just try or wish it were true. You must fully believe with all of your heart. It has to go to your core.

The work in you is complete, so get to work with Him being who you really are. Your faith will reveal itself in good works that God has prepared for you to do. He invites you to join Him as He sets up His Kingdom in the world where you dwell. You are His ambassador, the letter of His grace, the light through which He will now shine His light to the world. You can't try to shine, but, in being who you are, you will shine. As you love and enjoy God, believing Him and walking with Him, you will get to work with God, and your thinking and behaviour will transform. You won't try to transform, you will just transform. You will grow.

You will develop a deep relationship with God, seeking only to bring Him glory and honour because you love Him so. You won't feel like you *have to* go to church; you will realize that you are the church and love gathering together with the church. You won't *have to* read your Bible or pray to God. You will *want to* because you love your King and have abandoned yourself to Him. You know you are saved by His grace alone. The impact God will make in and through your life will last forever and ever. The key is just to love Him. Christianity is about a relationship with God. It's a living, healthy, family relationship.

Religion doesn't work, but Christianity works. Faith works. God doesn't need your help in His work. He wants your availability. God is not honoured by what you *try* to do. He is honoured as you walk with Him, believing Him and loving Him with all of who you are. God loves faith.

HUMILITY

We are totally humble to agree with Him about who we are and what he has done! Saying we are God's righteous people is humility. God loves child-like faith and adoration. He loves hearts overflowing with thanksgiving for what He has done and Who He is. A humble person knows who they are and Whose they are. We can't try to be humble. We *are* humble in Christ. Humble means we are under the hand of God. This is a big difference between the world's view of humility and Christianity's view of humility.

According to the world's view, humility means feelings of inferiority, poverty, and weakness. In Christianity, it means you understand you are under the care and authority of

God. In the world's view, if you say, "I am humble," people will think you are proud. In Christianity, we should be able to say, "I am humble and lowly of heart," because we know our position before God.

We know we can do nothing apart from God, so we don't try. We rest. We wait. We abide in Him, enjoying Him and walking with Him. Humble people agree with God's description of them. Saying we are completely righteous in Christ is humility. Saying we are perfect in Christ is also humility. Humble people know God has birthed them; to deny this reality is to remain proud and unbelieving.

As humble people, we know we have been made perfect in Christ. We joyfully believe and receive all that God has done, knowing we didn't deserve it. We deserved death, but He has given us life. We are who we are because He made us who we are. So, let's be who we are, fully believing our King, fully resting in His truth and love. The work is done. We have entered His rest. As a Christian, we always keep the very Sabbath of God.

Humility is not weakness. It's powerful. We are incredibly beautiful and powerful beings in Christ. And we are totally humble to admit that reality. It's true. To say something else brings dishonour to the God who saved us.

Being humble means you are under the hand of God.

Humble is the word for *meek* which means "to bridle a horse." The bridle humbles the horse, but does not diminish the strength or beauty of that horse. When a horse is first humbled by its rider, the horse doesn't understand what the rider is actually doing. It just knows that it's been enslaved by him. One of its first reactions is to buck and throw off the rider. It is not comfortable with the new weight and authority of the rider. But the rider remains until over time a relationship is built between a horse and a rider to the point that the rider can just barely touch the rein and the horse knows exactly what the rider is thinking.

The beauty of the rider and horse is that they become one. The horse knows what the rider is thinking and the rider knows what the horse is thinking, and the beauty of the relationship is expressed by the ride together. Christian, this is where Christ is taking you. He does not want to pull hard on the reins to get obedience. He does not want to cause pain to the horse, because he loves the animal. His desire is that the horse will obey quickly and listen to the very nuances of His will.

The harness allows the rider to control the horse, harnessing its energy for a specific purpose, fulfilling the destiny of that animal. We could say the horse has been humbled by the rider. In the same way, we have been humbled by God. We are harnessed by Him and are now slaves to His righteousness. God is the Rider, the Driver of our lives. He rides us, so to speak, steering our course, giving light to our life, guiding us safely through obstacles He designs for our path, giving us encouragement and strength in the journey as we walk with Him in faith alone.

Before we knew God, our energy was wasted. Now this energy is focused as God harnesses our energy for His purposes and glory. In harnessing us, He sets us free to bring glory and honour to Him by being all we were created to be as Kingdom disciples. The full beauty and strength of who we are in Christ expresses itself through this humility. We are under the hand of God, and we are a slave to the Rider. As we rest in His hands, submitting to His full control to lead us, speak through us, and use our lives for His glory alone, we experience the joy and excitement of the ride. We get to work with the King as He transforms one life after another.

Religion leads to false humility. Again using the horse and the rider analogy, religion

seeks to buck the rider off and remains what it considers free. It does not want to come under control of the rider for it fears that "its freedom" will be over and it must now subject itself to the rider fully. Religion fears Christ. It fears His will and it fears where His will will lead. Religion looks down on humility in arrogance, saying that it knows better than God.

The world's view of humility is weakness. Worldly humility lacks power and strength. To God, humility is based on strength, knowing fully who you are and choosing to do any task, whether simple or great, to express love to your King. Jesus expressed the power of humility as He unwrapped His outer garments, took a basin of water, and stooped to wash His disciples' feet. Knowing who He was, as coming from the Father, He humbled Himself to obey the Father. He fully knew He was the strongest Being in the universe, worthy of all praise and glory, yet He humbled Himself to wash His disciples' dirty feet. This is humility, controlled power.

Whatever task the Father commands, we do, thankfully giving honour to our King in small tasks, in dirty tasks, in tasks of honour and dishonour. We are as free to serve as to lead. We can teach a thousand or we can teach one. Humility asks, "Is this task in the will of God?" That's all. Jesus was perfectly humble. He could just as easily talk to the woman at the well or chastise Pharisees. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to God even to death on a cross, fully yielding to His Father's will. Jesus knew Who He was, yet He was fully humbled by the Father.

The Power of Identity

When you know who you are and Whose you are, you will live a profoundly different life. You won't try to be a Kingdom disciple. You just will be one because it is who you are. This is the power of identity. You will just *be*; you won't *try to be*. You will then do, and your doing will flow from who you are. You will do, and you will know that it is not *your* doing, but God doing His work in and through you. It's you *with* God and God *with* you. It's never just you and it's never just God. You are a dependent, connected being, and you move and live for the will of God. You are learning to walk by faith! In the end, you can only say, like Jesus, "I have done nothing," because you know it is God working His purpose and will out through your life.

What you truly believe drives your life. You always *do* what you believe. If you say you believe you are completely forgiven, yet you heap guilt on yourself when you make a mistake, you do not really believe you are forgiven. Your behaviour is revealing the true belief of your soul. So, belief is central to living out the life of a Kingdom disciple. You can be saved by God and yet still struggle in your Christian life if you choose to believe lies about God, about yourself, or about His gospel. You cannot try to be a Christian. You just are who you are. So *be* who you are.

Our hope for you is that as you sit in God's word and He reveals His gospel to you, your passion for Him will explode. As you begin to fully grasp the reality of what He has done, you will begin to feel an excitement well up inside of you! You will become passionate about His gospel. Your joy and thankfulness will overflow from the rivers of living water within you as you begin to grasp the awesomeness of your God and the powerful reality of His gospel. You will not be able to contain yourself, but life will flow out of you as rivers of living water. You will shine forth who you really are in Christ as you fully believe the truth. Your words and your deeds will flow from the righteous life within your spirit as His life flows through you.

PRAYER: COMMUNICATING WITH THE KING

Kingdom disciples pray continuously. Prayer is like breath to a disciple. Another word for prayer is communication. We are always communicating with God, listening to Him. The Lord told us to pray without ceasing, or to stay in continuous communication with Him as we walk out our life of faith. Prayer seems to be a great mystery to many and confusing to most.

Prayer is so often equated with the rituals people do. Why do we shut our eyes, bow our head, and fold our hands together? What purpose does this serve? We are right to ask these questions, because much of the way we do prayer is out of habit and how we have been taught when we were a child or what we learned while attending a church or religious gathering. Prayer is more than the physical position we take to pray. Jesus said to not pray to be seen by others or to just try to say a bunch of big words or have long winded prayers, thinking we will be heard if we say more. God wants us to pray from our heart as children talking to their Father, not people trying to parade around and appear religious. God wants us to pray from our hearts to Him, in a relationship of a child speaking with adoration to his or her Father. Whether we sit, stand, fold our hands, kneel, lay down, dance around, doesn't matter. We move in response to God and how we want to express our adoration to Him. We may do all those things or none of them. The important thing is the heart. Why are we coming to pray? To honour Him, or just to get what we want?

In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus is preaching a sermon and gives instruction to people on how to pray. Let's look at the Lord's Prayer so we can see and understand the principles of prayer:

> *"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."*

"*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.*" In all prayers in Scripture, as we are praying we first recognize who we are praying to, and we recognize that God, our Father, is Holy, Sovereign, and in relationship with us.

"*Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" We pray, not seeking to see our own will carried out, but the Lord's will carried out. So as a disciple, you may be going through an experience and you go to the Lord to find out His mind on that experience. What is His desire? What does He want to do?

Then it says: "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" The bread is maybe a small thing, but what Jesus is teaching is that God alone provides you life. We must ask Him to supply our needs and take care of us every day, for His provision is our daily bread.

"*And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*" The Lord assumes we will hurt people and we will be hurt by people, because we walk on this planet and things happen to us and around us. He is telling us that just as He has forgiven our debts, we must forgive those who have debts against us. These are not debts of money; these are debts of love and compassion. Where other humans have not fulfilled this toward you, you are fulfilling it toward them. The concept of forgiveness is a banking term. If you have a house mortgage, and you cannot pay, the bank can choose to forgive this debt or force you to pay. In this case, the bank forgives your debt and you do not have to pay them back. The banker does not have feelings of forgiveness; it is an accounting word. It means the banker chooses to no longer seek to get payment for that loan.

The Lord is teaching that when we forgive someone, we fully understand what has been

done to us and the sins that have been done against us, but we hand the debt over to the Lord, Who is the bill collector. We are not responsible for collecting these bills. He will work out His will in this situation. He will collect or bless or deal with the person in His own way. Our responsibility is to continue to love.

"Do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one." The Lord is mindful that we are but dust. We are frail and prone to temptation. We can be tempted even though we have a great desire to walk and live with Him. Sin has great pleasure in it on one level and this is why it is a temptation. We are tempted by the lust of our soul and body seeking to find life on the earth. But God promises to deliver and send a way of escape for every temptation that comes.

He concludes with *"For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen*." The end of the prayer recognizes Who is sovereign, Who has power and for Whose glory all these things are being accomplished.

When we read the next verse, verse 14, Jesus emphasizes what He wants us to see as one of the most important truths of what He has just taught. He says: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Jesus again opens up the conversation about forgiveness, wanting us to fully understand that without forgiveness there will be conflict between you and the Father. He will discipline you until you learn to forgive, for unforgiveness holds the body and soul in captivity. Unforgiveness keeps you from living in the freedom you have in Christ. It produces anger, frustration, depression, guilt, shame and a variety of negative emotions. It seeks to destroy your life on this planet. Christian, you must forgive all things that happened to you or will happen to you. Choose today to forgive. Period. This is warning from Jesus Himself.

The power of prayer is simplicity. The foundation of prayer is faith. The action of prayer is love. The desire of prayer is the will of God.

The power of prayer is simplicity. The foundation of prayer is faith. The action of prayer is love. The desire of prayer is the will of God. The Father is not interested in long prayer or short prayer. He is interested that His children are truly talking with Him. Worship is love responding to love. Prayer is worship, your heart of love responding to God's heart of love.

Think of prayer like two lovers sitting on the beach looking at the ocean in the cool of the evening as they hold hands. They've been talking to each other as they have come to sit on the beach. They sit looking at the waves, neither saying anything, but both are communicating. This is a great understanding of prayer. God just wants you to talk with Him in a simple language: the language of love, respect and need.

Think of yourself as two years old and you are communicating with your parent. There is nothing you can say to counsel your parent because you don't know as much as them. There is nothing you can say to negotiate with your parent because they don't need your strength or your help because they are bigger than you. What they desire is that you will say words like "daddy" or "mommy". That you will talk about your little world and all that is in it. They enjoy when you share your experiences with them. This is what prayer is. Keep it simple. As you grow up, don't think so much about the length of time spent in prayer as the quality of that time.

We see in the Scripture where a one or two minute prayer has a profound effect on all those around. We see in other places where Jesus condemned long prayers because the pray-ers were doing it only for show and prestige. When you pray or communicate what your

heart is feeling and sensing to your Father God, keep His Word close beside you, and begin with this in mind: that you are talking to a holy God, who loves you and is fully supportive of seeing you conformed into the image of His Son. Speak with Him about the littlest of things or the biggest of challenges. Either is no different for Him because He is God.

As you speak with Him, remember that prayer is not a monologue, a one sided conversation, a short little speech, and then, without getting ready to listen, you are off doing something else. Prayer is a conversation. God is first of all speaking into your heart about something. He's moving you to consider, to meditate on an issue that He now wants to speak to you about. End your prayer by recognizing who He is and that He has full right and access into your life.

You may bow your head, shut your eyes, or you may lift your face to heaven with your eyes wide open. You may grasp your hands together and put them before your face, or you may spread your arms wide and high above you. You may stand erect, go for a walk, you may bow the knee or lay flat on your face. There is no right way or wrong way to communicate with your Father according to these positions. Let your body speak and move in the direction your heart is taking. Sometimes you will know you should be on your knees. Another time you will know you should be skipping down the road laughing. But pray. Communicate these things to Him, for He loves you.

THE TWO KINGDOMS

Did you know there are only two kingdoms? There is the kingdom you see and the Kingdom you cannot see. Both exist together at the same time, but on different dimensions. The kingdom of the world is the visible, physical kingdom you see around you. The Kingdom of God is the invisible, spiritual Kingdom you cannot see, yet it influences and is taking over the physical kingdom.

Your identity is formed by birth. You entered into the physical world through a physical birth. You entered into the spiritual world through a spiritual birth. Physically, you are a descendant of Adam, born into the dark kingdom of the world. You learned from the world how to interpret the reality of the world. You formed values and beliefs based on what you learned in this world. Those values drive you. You do what you do because of what you believe at the value level. This is in the subconscious part of your mind.

Identity is formed by birth, not behaviour.

Spiritually, you entered the Kingdom of God when you surrendered to Jesus Christ. He conveyed you out of the kingdom of the world into the Kingdom of God. You were born again. You are now a child of God. This Kingdom of God, or heaven, is the spiritual realm where you exist. You reign with Christ in the spiritual realm right now. Heaven is not just a destination you are heading to; it is the reality of where we dwell as believers all the time.

The kingdom of the world and the Kingdom of God each have a value system and both kingdoms operate on belief, but the object of their faith is very different. Both kingdoms seek pleasure to satisfy, but the source of that pleasure is dramatically different.

THE KINGDOM OF THE WORLD

The kingdom of the world is religious and self-centred. People consider themselves as the king or ruler of their own lives. People in this kingdom live separated from God and focus on self. Sin reigns in this kingdom, in and through men and women who live for themselves, seeking meaning and purpose to fulfill their own desires and needs. They ask questions like: "What do I need?"; "Why do I exist?"; "What feels good to me?" or "What makes me happy?" They long to feel satisfied in their lives and they do what they need to do to have this feeling of satisfaction. As believers, we are against the system of the world which tries to say, "You are okay, it's all about you. It's all about human potential." It's not about human potential; it's His potential through me.

Because people in this kingdom exist in sin, everything they do is sinful no matter what they do. Independence from God is called sin, so everything they do as sinners is sin. It doesn't matter what it is. Every act, whether seemingly good or bad, is sinful because it's all done in separation from God. Sinners do not seek God; sinners seek to satisfy self. In fact, unless God intervenes, they will not seek Him. They will live their whole lives on the planet seeking to satisfy or please themselves. Even the good things they do for others are done with self in mind. They want something in return for the good they do.

Physical senses interpret reality for them. They say things like, "if I see it, I'll believe it," or "if it feels good, I'll do it." When events happen, their perception of that event either brings them

happiness or satisfaction, or brings them dissatisfaction and displeasure. Seemingly good events make them feel good. Tragedy, death, abuse, divorce, even seemingly small comments made by someone they care about, rock their world, affecting them sometimes for decades, many times even changing the course of their lives. Their decisions are based on relieving pain and gaining the pleasure of happiness. Emotions drive this process. As emotions fluctuate, so does their perception of life, and the joy of it.

Most humans acquire possessions, go on vacations, marry, have children, try religious experiences, all in an effort to find meaning in their lives. We ask ourselves, "What makes me happy?" If we are unhappy, we change our behaviour to find happiness and pleasure. We may seek counselling, read books, try religious activities, or try different types of recreation; we try anything to make our lives worth living. We become religious in our efforts to improve our lives, but our religious activity does not transform our lives or give us true peace. The peace we find is at best circumstantial and unstable.

The kingdom of the world operates like this:

In this kingdom, we do what we *feel* like doing. We believe it to be our God-given right. We want the feeling of happiness and we do what we think will produce that happiness. If it works, we believe that our action was right because it produced the desired feelings. Our beliefs and inner-most values are formed based on what seems to produce happiness. The foundation for these beliefs is based on a lie, yet we believe this lie is true because it seemed to work.

Think of the example of marriage. I meet someone and I fall in love. I have the feeling of love and it feels really good. I decide to marry this person. I believe I made the right decision and for a while I have the feeling of love. As time goes on, pressures mount because of financial challenges, children, age, and any number of things. I lose this "feeling" of love and I believe I have fallen out of love. I no longer believe I love my spouse because the feelings are gone. So I begin to search for ways to regain the feeling of love. My behaviour may lead to divorce as I search to satisfy this feeling of love I believe I must have, that I feel I have a right to have. I no longer "love" this person, so I seek to find that feeling in other relationships.

This false truth, in this kingdom, is relative to what we *feel* is true, rather than what an outside objective source declares to be true. So your truth may be different than my truth, yet equally accepted, because it's subjective to the individual feeling or perception of each person.

As we listen to parents, authors, friends, or talk show hosts, we take some of what they say and apply it to our perception of reality, forming our own view of truth. We are content for others to have their own truth as long as it doesn't condemn our truth. What we feel to be true will drive our behaviour regardless of whether or not what we believe is actually true. Our underlying values always drive our behaviour. What we really believe we need determines what we do.

How would you answer these questions? "What do I really want? What is driving me? Why am I alive?"

A humans, we derive our value or self-worth from three basic needs: security, significance,

and belonging. These three needs are as important to us as food and air. We are created with these needs. These are essential to our existence on the planet.

Security is the need for love, significance is the need for purpose, and belonging is the need for community. People commit suicide when one of these three disappears in their lives and they do not believe they can be attained. Since these needs are critically important to us as humans, we seek to meet these needs.

In the kingdom of the world, we strive to fulfill these needs for ourselves through the physical world. We seek security for ourselves in stuff, money, or relationships. We seek significance in jobs, in tasks, or in other people's opinions of us. We seek to belong by attaching ourselves to others, manipulating relationships to fulfill our perceived needs. We seek to gain what we really value.

All human beings derive their value or self-worth from three basic needs: security, significance and belonging.

The deeper core values we hold show up in how we live. We cannot hide what we believe. For instance, if we want to be secure, feel truly loved, and feel like we belong, we will seek a relationship where we feel loved. If we feel loved, we feel we have value as a person. So, we may seek out a partner to love. We may give ourselves to this person, even outside of marriage, because we believe sex will connect us to this person and we will be loved and cared for. If this person reciprocates and gives us the response we desire, we feel like we belong and are valued by someone. We feel secure. This validates our whole experience and we believe what we did to meet our needs was true and right because it worked.

If this person later tires of us or finds someone else, our world is shattered. We feel insecure and unloved again. Why? Because we put our hope in a person to satisfy our deepest need. We suddenly feel lost and alone. Our need is no longer being met, and we become angry, leading to frustration and eventually depression until the situation improves.

We have been trained by this world to be dependent upon ourselves and our senses. Our feelings drive us in this kingdom. We are taught to validate our feelings and express them. The problem is that feelings and experiences are a shaky foundation on which to build our lives. We form an opinion of "truth" based on what we feel to be true, not on Truth itself. So "truth" becomes relative to how we feel and how things work out. Based on the foundation of feeling and experience, the "truth" of the kingdom of the world is changeable and unpredictable, not solid or trustworthy.

Jesus compares life in the worldly kingdom to building a house on sand. [73]Sand is unstable. A builder who builds on sand is unwise. When storms come and beat upon that house, the house crumbles because the foundation was unstable. Jesus said we must build our lives on a different foundation, an unshakable foundation, a rock. Jesus is this Rock and we are commanded to build our lives on Him. He is unchangeable. What He says is true and trustworthy for every generation.

[73] Matthew 7:24-27

DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF: IDENTITY IN THE KINGDOM OF THE WORLD

Now take a brief look at who you were before God saved you in Jesus Christ. As you look at these verses, you will see what you have been saved from:

Romans 2:5 I was treasuring up_____

Romans 6:20 I was a slave to _____ and free in regard to _____.

Romans 7:5 _____ were at work in my members.

Ephesians 2:1 I was_____ in my trespasses and sins.

Romans 8:5 I lived according to the _____ and set my mind on the things of the _____.

Romans 8:6 The carnal [fleshly, earthly] mind is _____

Romans 8:8 Those in the flesh cannot please _____

1 Corinthians 2:14 The things of God were _____ to me.

Ephesians 4:18-19 My understanding was _____, I was alienated from the _____, and my heart was _____.

Take a moment and summarize who you were before surrendering to Jesus:

_____

_____

_____

_____

KINGDOM OF GOD

The Kingdom of God has one King and His Name is Jesus. Every knee will bow in heaven and earth to this King. In the Bible, we come to know Jesus in many ways and by many names. He is the Rock of our salvation. The Scriptures say if we build our house on Him, our house will stand. We will not be shattered by events and circumstances of life that don't work out according to the physical world.

He is the Word of God. He is Eternal Life. He is Living Water. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the Son of God, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. Every knee will bow before Him. Each one of these names creates within us an understanding of how He is answering.

Jesus is the King of the Kingdom of God. He is the Lord. Everyone who comes to Him in faith, He saves and transfers out of the kingdom of the world. He then sends us back into the world because He is seeking to save the lost and He works along with and through us for this purpose. This is why He said we are to remain in the world, but not be of the world. We have been born of God and are different than the world.

The Kingdom of God operates like this:

Whereas the kingdom of the world operates first from feeling and with self always in mind, the Kingdom of God operates first with the sure foundation of Truth and with God in mind. Godly feelings are a by-product of a life based on truth, rather than the goal we seek. But Christians feelings are very important because they help to identify that we are living in truth.

The Kingdom of God operates according to the Word of God. Jesus said, "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free."[74] Truth is not a concept originating from within our own minds. Truth is a Person and His name is Jesus. The words of truth originate from Truth. "Fully believe Me," He is saying. Put your whole self into My Word and live within it. It is Truth. It is the expression of Me."

Truth is not relative to what we feel about it, or up for debate. Our wisest thought is foolishness to God. Truth is truth. Truth is outside of us. If we do not believe Truth, it is still true. Truth doesn't change according to the whim or feeling of a person. Truth is objective and revealed to us from Truth.

God reveals Truth to us through His Spirit. To hear truth, we must have ears that are willing to hear. When we are ready to listen, treating Truth with the respect He deserves, God will reveal.[75] Truth originates in God, spoken out as the living Word of God, the Person of Jesus Christ. So, we better listen carefully to what He says.

Jesus tells us if we abide in His Word we will know the Truth and the Truth will set us free. Many expressions in the Bible mean the same things as *abide*: rest, believe, faith, trust, wait upon the Lord, continue in, remain, put on, and walk in the spirit. When we abide in the Word of

[74] John 8:31-32

[75] 1 Corinthians 2:10

God, we are putting our full weight upon the Word, fully trusting that what God has said is true and reliable.

As Kingdom disciples, we are living within the Word of God. It is our milk, our food, our sustenance. We crave His Word like a newborn baby suckling at his mother's breast. Jesus is the Word of God. He was in the beginning with God, and all things were created through Him.[76] This Word became flesh and dwelt among us, John tells us, so we could see who God really is. He is the living Word of God, the exact expression of the unseen Father. We are to abide in the Word. The Word is Christ.

We should abide in Jesus, and we are to eat of Him. He sustains us. To a crowd of startled Pharisees, Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe."[77] The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we did not comprehend it. The Pharisees did not understand what Jesus meant. He said, "I am the bread of life." He is saying, "Eat of Me and you will live. You will never hunger." He said, "He who believes in Me will never thirst." If we eat of Jesus and believe in Him, we will be fully satisfied, not just for a short time, but forever. Eating and drinking of Jesus is the same as abiding in Him, placing all the weight of our trust in Him alone.

All our longings will be quenched forever through abiding in Christ. Abiding is not hard if we accept Jesus as our only truth. Truth is powerful and lasting and it is our reality forever as a believer. Jesus is our food. He is our drink. Life is not in the words on a page of the Bible. For, as you remember, many of the Pharisees knew the Bible by heart, but there was no change in them. Life is in Him. We must come to Him and fully believe or rest in the words of the Bible. They are words of life. Those who come to Him will never hunger or thirst spiritually again for He will fully satisfy.

We all long to be satisfied at the core of who we are. We long to have purpose and meaning. We long for security, significance, and belonging. Jesus says all these desires are fulfilled in Him alone. Think of yourself as a well. Jesus is the water that fills you. He is unlimited in His supply. You *must* get this or you miss the only way you can ever be satisfied as a human.

Jesus is our security. He is the One we put our trust in to love us and meet our love need. Jesus is our significance. He is the One we put our trust in to give us purpose and meaning in our lives. Jesus is the One in whom we experience our need to belong. He is the One who brings us into the spiritual community called the church. We belong to the family of God.

Jesus says the life of the Spirit will flow in and through us, overflowing to others around us. Jesus says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."[78] We drink of Jesus. He fills us with Himself through His Holy Spirit, like an ever-flowing artesian well whose source never runs dry. He fills us and we drink of Him continually through abiding in Him; He flows through us, and others drink from the water filling the well within us. The water is the Holy Spirit and what they drink from us as we love them, He fills again as we rest in Him, abiding in His Word. He waters His Kingdom through His people, causing fruit in the season and bringing growth to the body of Christ.

This is abiding. This is the reality of the new creation life in Christ. All 8 Keys to

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[76] John 1:1
[77] John 6:35-37
[78] John 7:37-38

Life-Transforming Discipleship flow together and form the whole of our reality as a Christian. These keys are not consecutive. They are holistic. They each express a part of who we are all the time and our experience as believers in Jesus Christ. As we *believe* (Key 4), we *transform* (Key 5), we *abide* (Key 6), and we *love* (Key 7) as we *reign* with Christ (Key 8). It is happening all at once the instant we truly believe. This is the reality of the Christian life. It's a powerful life of complete dependence upon the One who never runs dry, never sleeps, never slumbers. He is the One who sustains us with living Water and Life in Him. He fills us to overflowing with joy and love and all we need for this life. We are tapped into a never-ending source of life and power, as we yield ourselves to God for His purposes and glory. We live for His pleasure and all our desires are fulfilled in Him.

The Kingdom of God operates on faith and the normal feeling of faith is fear — at first

Abiding emphasizes belief of the heart, fully resting in complete assurance in God. Abiding is the same as walking by faith. It's the same as walking in the Spirit. We put our full weight of belief in the truth of God's Word. In Key 4, we look at what the Truth is. As we do this, fully believing what He reveals to us, our faith grows. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."[79] We read God's word, remaining in God's word, eating it, meditating on it, sitting within it, waiting on the Lord to reveal His Truth to us, enabling us to understand. He feeds us. He fills us. He flows His Life in and through us. He is our life. He is Eternal Life and we exist in Him and for Him.

Truth is the Rock on which we stand. Truth is unchanging and solid. As we meditate on His word, we will reject the core values we believed from the kingdom of the world and accept the new values from His word. From these new values, godly behaviour will always follow. We do not have to try to change our behaviour. Our behaviour will change in obedience to God's Word, as we are fully resting in Him. Godly feelings will also follow. Feelings are a by-product of fully believing the Truth, rather than a goal we need strive for.

Faith works. James says "faith without works is dead."[80] Faith must work. If it doesn't work, it is not faith. Biblical faith will always produce godly fruit in your life. Biblical faith does not believe from the head, but this faith believes from the heart. What you know from the heart, you will naturally do.

The Kingdom of God operates on faith and the normal feeling of faith is fear — at first. Walking by faith feels scary in the beginning. It feels scary because the soul is not used to being out of control and accepting an invisible God as its only Source of reality. God calls us to believe Him at His word, without seeing physical evidence of the unseen reality of the spiritual world.

In our soul and body, we are conditioned to rely on physical sight and experience. Now we must choose to trust God even when it doesn't make sense to us or feels uncomfortable. It's uncomfortable because it's totally new. You cannot get your soul to reason with the Truth of God. Your soul will argue against the Truth at first. It must be told to deny itself and be transformed, coming into line with what is really true. As Jesus said, "Deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Me." Be aware that your soul will struggle with this because it is used to being the controlling influence over your life. Your body will follow what your soul believes. It is used to giving you permission to move on the planet, but you must stand against this. You no longer take your orders from your mind or your body. You take your orders from your King,

[79] Romans 10:17
[80] James 2:14-18

His mind and will, as He reigns within your heart. He will go contrary to the world you are used to and move you into the world of faith.

As you read the Scriptures you will be encouraged by the many examples of those who walked this faith walk before you. One example is the life of Abraham and what God did to grow him so he would be a person who fully trusted Him, when He moved him and his family. God told Abraham to pack up his family and go to a land that He would show him. Abraham did not know where this land was or how long it would take to get there, walking with his whole family. This seems to be against good family leadership and responsibility, and yet God was teaching Abraham that He was his security, significance, and the One to whom he belongs.

Another example was Gideon. God said get an army together to fight an enemy army of thousands. 32,000 people showed up to go with Gideon into battle. But then God began to teach Gideon how He was his significance, security and the One to whom he belonged. God said, "Let Me show you how you can trust Me," as He eliminated 31,700 people from the army He was preparing for Gideon. This seems to be against human logic and against good understanding of how to win a war. God was not just trying to win the war; He was developing Gideon into a person of faith.

Another example was Moses, when God sent him to Egypt to speak with Pharaoh. He said to go to Pharaoh with no sword or military strength, and say to that strong nation, "Let My people go." This was also against human logic and common sense, yet God expected Moses to do it. God was increasing Moses' faith; He was taking an ordinary man and making him into an extraordinary man of faith, calling Moses to walk with God, obey His voice, and be used for God's purpose on earth in astounding and unexpected ways.

God's faith development plan is repeated again and again in the Scriptures and is the principle of faith. God forces growth in our faith by calling us to do things that are impossible for us to do without Him. Faith challenges the soul and body way of doing things. The soul and body prefer to play it safe. Yet faith is truly expressed through the new spirit that God has created within us as His children. This is why He tells us, "Walk in the Spirit for I have given you the Mind of Christ."

The safe and perhaps dysfunctional behaviour we had as a non-believer feels more comfortable than functioning by faith in the God we can't see. Faith pushes us through our fears and into the very peace of God. Walking by faith means that we rely on the truth of God's Word above what we feel, above what we see, above what others say, if their words contradict God's Word. Fear is the normal feeling of faith until you are fully walking in faith. Faith is the norm for the believer's life. We are created to live by faith in God alone.

Self-reliance is the feeling of non-faith because it gives us the false feeling that we are in control. Self-reliance leads to either guilt or pride depending if we fail or succeed. Faith pushes us beyond our comfort zone into the reality of fully relying on God. As we grow in faith, walking by faith becomes normal, and although still scary sometimes, we gladly press through this fear, for the enjoyment and the excitement of walking with God. We filter out old values, thoughts and feelings through the Word of God, renewing our mind, washing it with His Word. All you learned from your years in the kingdom of the world is now suspect and must be looked at according to Word of God. This is the process of transformation described in Key 5.

Jesus made a powerful statement when He proclaimed, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."[81]

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[81] Luke 14:26

What do you think Jesus meant by that statement?

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Jesus is not saying you should hate everyone in your life that you used to value. He commands you, throughout Scripture, to love others as you love yourself, even to love enemies. In this passage, He is setting up the priority of love. He is saying that loving others, even those with whom we are in the most core and deepest relationship, must always be placed in a submissive position to loving and obeying Him. God is saying you cannot trust them anymore as being the dominant source of complete wisdom and truth unless what they say lines up with the Word of God.

A Kingdom disciple is a student of Christ. He is your Source of wisdom and understanding. He is your Teacher. He is fully trustworthy. Every word He says is true. Every word comes from the Father and the Son to you through the Holy Spirit. As believers, we call no one else Teacher. He is the Truth and the Word of God. He teaches us through His Spirit that indwells our spirit. Every system is now subject to Him. We judge all things by His Word: all teachings, all books, all talk shows, all words people say. No system on this earth is fully trustworthy. Only One Person tells you the truth all the time and His name is Truth. If you know His Truth, His Truth sets you free.

THE GOAL IS MATURITY

> *11And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — 16from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:11-16)*

According to this verse, why does God give leaders to the church? (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers)

_____

_____

What is the role of the saints in the work of the ministry, according to Ephesians 4:11-16?

_____

_____

What is a characteristic of a babe in Christ (v. 14)?

_____

_____

What is the solution to stand against various teachers that throw people off track (v.15)?

_____

_____

Why is it important that truth is spoken in love?

_____

God chooses some as servant-leaders in a church -- the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers -- for the purpose of equipping God's people for the work of the ministry. The work of the ministry is to build up the body of Christ, bringing all to unity of faith and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is eternal life that we might know God and His Son, Jesus Christ.[82] We have one mind in Christ.[83] There are not two minds, nor are there many

[82] John 17:3

viewpoints of what is true. As the body of Christ, we are to come in unity to this one mind and one truth in Christ. Why? Because the Truth is a Person, not a concept. The Truth is Jesus Christ, the Word of the living God. In Him, we have unity. We have one mind, one Spirit, one baptism, one Lord and God who is the ruler of all.

The role of Christian leaders is to equip the body of Christ to disciple each other, so they do work of the ministry. The goal of this ministry is that we all grow up to become the "perfect man," the mature person, growing up into the stature of the fullness of Christ -- in other words, being who we truly are in Christ as the saints of the living God. Maturity comes as we fully rest all our faith in the truth of God's Word, abiding in His word. As we do this, He will teach us who He is, and how to walk with Him in obedience.

Immature Christians walk in a carnal or fleshly way, as seen by the works of the flesh.[84] They are being tossed around by all kinds of winds of doctrine, not certain what to believe.[85] Immature believers listen to the ideas of men and seek to please men rather than God. The fruit of their lives reveals their immaturity.

As saints of God, we speak the truth in love that we may all grow up in Him, in Christ, walking by faith in our King. A mature person walks by faith, standing firm in sound doctrine, not moving away from the hope of the Gospel. A mature person focuses on Christ and Him crucified, and the power of His resurrected life in us.

The purpose of this book is discipleship that will impact the Kingdom of God. We believe that Christianity must be practical. If theology is not practical, theology is useless. It will accomplish nothing but pride and arrogance. True theology always produces humility, power and impact in the world around the theologian. We believe that if you know Truth and fully believe the truth of His word, you will walk free and strong in Christ. Your life will transform and you will have joy and peace because you now believe God and rest your full assurance in the finished work of the cross.

What you are learning is important for your growth, but it is not just for you; it's for those the Lord is working in right now, preparing to hear His gospel message through you. As you learn to proclaim the truth in love, in a clear way, you will see God lead many people to Himself through your life. You will then be able to teach them how to walk with their King as He works through them in His Kingdom.

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[83] 1 Corinthians 2:16

[84] Galatians 5:19-21

[85] Ephesians 4:14

DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF: IDENTITY IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Take some time to read through these verses. Meditate on what God is saying to you. Don't try to just fill in the blanks and move on. Study it to learn. Soak it in. Listen to the Holy Spirit as He reveals the Word of God to your heart. Have ears that hear what the Spirit is saying to you. Ask God to enlighten the eyes of your heart to understand and really see, to believe who you are now.

Romans 6:6 The old me has been _____.

Romans 6:7 I have been set free from _____ because I

_____ with Christ.

Romans 6:18 I am a slave of _____.

Romans 8:9 I am not in the _____ . I am in the_____

because _____ .

1 Corinthians 2:16 I have the mind of _____.

1 Corinthians 3:3 A babe in Christ can act _____.

1 Corinthians 6:11 I have been _____,

_____, and _____.

1 Corinthians 6:17 I am one _____.

2 Corinthians 5:17 I am a _____,

Old things are _____.

2 Corinthians 5:21 In Christ, I am the _____.

Galatians 2:20 I have been _____. I no

longer _____ but _____ now lives in me.

Galatians 2:16 I am justified [made righteous] by _____ not

_____ .

Galatians 3:26 I am a _____.

Galatians 5:16 If I walk in the spirit, I will not carry the _____

_____.

Ephesians 1:3,4 I am _____.

Ephesians 1:6 I am _____.

Ephesians 1:7 I am _____.

Ephesians 1:11 I have an _____.

Ephesians 1:11 I have been _____ according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

Ephesians 1:13 I have been sealed with _____.

Ephesians 2:4 I am _____.

Ephesians 2:5 I am _____.

Ephesians 2:6 I am seated with Christ in _____.

Ephesians 5:8 I was _____ but now I am _____.

Philippians 1:6 God will _____.

Colossians 2:10 I am _____ .

Colossians 2:11 I have been _____.

Colossians 3:4 Christ is my _____ and I will _____.

Summarize, in your own words, what you learned about who you really are below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SEALED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

> *13In Him, you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. In whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,14who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)*

In the Middle Ages, when a message was sent from a king, it was written on a scroll of parchment. Hot wax was dripped on the scroll and the king's signet ring was pressed into the wax to form a seal. This seal authenticated the document as being from the king. This document was given to a runner. The runner must deliver the document to the intended recipient with the seal intact. If the seal was broken, the runner would lose his life. He had to deliver the document fully intact, sealed and unread.

This same picture is an example of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. It says you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and your inheritance is secured by God.[86] The Holy Spirit keeps you, runs with you, and will deliver you to God the Father, fully intact. When the Holy Spirit places His seal on you, He is authenticating you, showing that you are the real article, the work of His hand. Because God sealed you with His Spirit, so too, just as the runner of the earthly document would be killed if he did not deliver the document with the seal intact, the Holy Spirit would be separated from Father God if He did not deliver all those whom God has called to Himself.

God is saying you will be delivered once He set His seal on you or He will have to deny Himself and His own power because He could not accomplish all He promised to do. Since we know that God is all powerful, and is fully committed to the task of saving you, we have confidence in Him and we rest in Him.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was given for a task. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is given for life.

In the Old Testament, God anointed someone with the Holy Spirit for a task when He was about to do something through someone. He gave the Holy Spirit to empower the person to accomplish the assignment. One example of this is when Israel cried out to God for a king, God anointed King Saul with His Spirit to lead the nation of Israel.

Another example was when God was about to build the tabernacle and the holy articles, He anointed artisans with His Spirit, giving them wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and the skill to accomplish what He asked. When the task was completed, God removed His Spirit.

Filling of the Holy Spirit is similar in both the Old and New Testament with one major difference. In the New Testament, God fills us for task like in the Old Testament, but only in the Old Testament did God remove His Spirit from a person who disobeyed Him. We see examples of this in the life of King Saul, and also in David's prayer in Psalm 51. After David sinned with Bathsheba, He cried out to God, "Do not take your Holy Spirit from me." David remembered how God had taken His Spirit from King Saul, transferring it to himself. In the New Testament, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. We do not lose the Holy Spirit because of our behaviour, but

[86] Ephesians 1:13, 14

we can lose the "filling" of the Holy Spirit for a task if we are morally irresponsible. We lose the power to accomplish the task until we repent of the "sin" we did in the flesh and yield again to God for His will alone. We are His children, born from His Seed, and He will discipline us as His children, but we remain His children even if we sin in the flesh. The relationship is sealed. The experience of fellowship will depend upon our total yielding to God for His purpose and will alone.

RELATIONSHIP OR FELLOWSHIP?

Believers often get confused about the difference between their relationship with God and fellowship with God. Think of our relationship with God like the relationship of being in a family. You are born into the family, not because you willed it, nor because you wanted it, nor because you were good or bad. It was the will of your parents that produced your life. This will was outside of your ability to choose.

In the same way, you are born into the family of God by the Spirit of God. It is not by your will. It is by the will of God who called you. It is not your faith; He gives saving faith to you. Everything about the born again experience has been a gift from Him alone. This is why it is special to be a child of God. You have been called and chosen by Him. You are now in relationship with God because He has willed it. You are His child. You are in relationship with God and this relationship is sealed and kept by Him. It is unchanging.

Fellowship with God is the experience of the relationship you have as His child. To remain in fellowship, it is critical that we walk in a manner worthy of the Lord to remain in fellowship with Him and others. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice 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 Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."[87] To remain in *fellowship* with God and others, we must walk in the light as He is in the light. We cannot walk in darkness and expect to experience an intimate relationship with Father God. Since He has made us children of light, we *are* light in the Lord, we are commanded to live as children of light.[88] We are to live out our identity, *being* who we really are. As we do this, we have fellowship with God and others; we experience the relationship we have as a part of God's family.

Unity comes as we remain in fellowship with God and eachother. Since we, as Kingdom disciples since, we desire to remain in unity and to love one another, we confess deeds done in the flesh, making it right with our brothers and sisters, which restores fellowship with God and others. Scripture says, "You will know My disciples because they love one another."[89] This is an action or behaviour being done by beings who are in relationship with the God of love. "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."[90] Love is the fruit of a Christian life. If we refuse to love, there is reason to question if we are really saved. Fellowship is critical in the Christian experience. Fellowship lets us know who is faking Christianity and who is really walking in faith.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is given, not just for a task, but for life itself.

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87 1 John 1:6, 7
88 Ephesians 5:8
89 John 13:34-35
90 1 John 4:20

Scripture says that without the Holy Spirit, we are not His.[91] God locks Himself in with a covenant, an oath, promising to deliver us to Himself and saying that nothing can now separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.[92] He has bound Himself by Himself in an oath made thousands of years ago to Abraham when He told Abraham that through his Seed all the nations of earth will be blessed.[93] We, as believers, have been birthed through Jesus Christ, the Seed of Abraham, and are living in the fulfillment of this promise in Christ today. God Himself will keep us and He will accomplish all He promised. He has connected Himself permanently to us and lives in and through us in Christ Jesus. This is relationship. The responsibility is ours to remain in fellowship with God and others.

FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

God birthed us through His Spirit, giving us a new heart and new spirit which is holy and without sin before Him. God gives us the Holy Spirit for this new birth, and seals us, and then fills us again and again with His Spirit for the task or work God has prepared in advance for us to do. This filling of the Holy Spirit does not mean that He pours His Spirit into us as if He is a liquid and we are a container. The filling of the Holy Spirit means that we come under the influence of the Spirit's ways and teachings.

The Bible compares the filling of the Spirit to being drunk on alcohol in Ephesians 5:18. Of course we can tell when someone is under the influence of alcohol. They often begin to swagger and slur their speech, and do things they would not naturally do. The Bible condemns this behaviour and says instead of being influenced by alcohol, come under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This means that God desires the Holy Spirit to affect or influence your whole life, your walk, your talk, and your every movement. Others will be able to see you are under the influence of the Holy Spirit and give glory to God for the great works He does through you. Being influenced by alcohol is a waste. Being influenced by the Spirit is life and godliness for you as a Christian.

Let's take a look at two parallel passages where we see the filling of the Holy Spirit explained, beginning with the one we just referred to:

> *"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God." (Ephesians 5:18 – 21)*

One definition of "dissipate" means 'to cause to spread thin or disperse, causing to vanish." An example of this would be the sun coming out on a foggy day and causing the fog to disperse and disappear. In a human life, when a human wastes his or her life getting drunk, their life fades away; it dissipates. Drunkenness causes a waste of human potential. Instead, this verse says, be filled with the Holy Spirit. A Spirit-filled people speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. They focus on the Lord, singing and making melody in their hearts, overflowing with thankfulness for what God has done.

Now compare Ephesians 5:18-21 to Colossians 3:16-17 below:

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[91] Romans 8:9

[92] Romans 8:35

[93] Genesis 15; 17:1-8

> *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

What do these passages have in common?

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In what ways do they differ?

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This time, instead of saying "be filled with the Holy Spirit," the Bible says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another...." Now look at the behaviours of each passage and you will see that they are very much the same. Paul is saying being filled with the Holy Spirit is the same as being filled with the Word of Christ. The Spirit of God reveals the deep things of God. The Holy Spirit declares, reveals and teaches us only what is given by the Father:

> *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."*[94]

The role of the Holy Spirit is to teach us the deep things of God that are hidden in the mystery of the gospel, that is Christ and Him crucified. Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.[95] The Holy Spirit reveals what the Father wants us to know and He reveals it

[94] 1 Corinthians 2:7-16
[95] 1 Corinthians 1:24

to those who have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. The natural mind is not open to the things of God and cannot receive the things of God. The believer, on the other hand, has the mind of Christ and understands the deep things the Spirit of God teaches. God's truth is our truth in Christ, our reality. There is no other reality once you have been born again. If you walk in the Spirit, you will comprehend the things of God, setting your mind on things above, not earthly things. If you focus on the earth, you will seek instruction from the earth and miss the heart of God.

Those who are under the influence of the Holy Spirit or filled with the Holy Spirit are those who are filled with the words of Christ. This contradicts many "Holy Spirit movements" in churches. The word of God must be at the centre of any Holy Spirit movement. People are not to be only moved by emotion, manipulation, and trickery of men. A true Holy Spirit movement is always connected to the word of Christ.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is an ongoing practice. You do not study the word of God just once and then consider yourself completely full of knowledge in all His ways. You are learning. You need bread daily from the Lord. Being filled by the Holy Spirit is a continuous practice of coming under the influence of God's teachings and ways.

Being born again is a once in a lifetime experience. Romans 8:9,10 reveals you must have received the Holy Spirit to be a child of God. This is a onetime experience when the Holy Spirit immerses you into Christ and you are sealed by Him and you will be delivered to Father God. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a continuous action of the Holy Spirit as He develops each Kingdom disciple in the ways of Father God.

DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF: THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Discover for yourself the role of the Holy Spirit in your life as a believer, as you look up the verses below:

Luke 12:12 _____

John 14:26 _____

Romans 5:5 _____

Romans 14:17 _____

Romans 15:16 _____

1 Corinthians 2:13 _____

1 Corinthians 12:3 _____

Galatians 5:22 _____

Ephesians 1:13 _____

Titus 3:5 _____

HEART TRANSPLANT

Circumcision of the Heart

To some of you the circumcision of the heart might be a new concept. This teaching is central to understanding our freedom in Christ. Take your time and allow the word of God to speak into you. When we come to understand this concept, it helps us realize how free we really are in Christ. Let's begin in the Old Testament to give some background on the importance of circumcision. Ezekiel 36:23-27 explains the plan of God in circumcising His people as a sign of His covenant with us:

> *"And I will sanctify My great Name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."*

Profane:
***1.** To treat with irreverence: profane the name of God.*
***2.** To put to an improper, unworthy, or degrading use; abuse.*

What was God's primary concern? And why?

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God was concerned because His Name was being profaned by His people who were living among the surrounding nations. His Name was being dishonoured because His people were living dishonourable and disrespectful lives. The surrounding nations were thinking that God's people were no different than themselves. The people thought that the God of the Israelites couldn't be worthy of worship if His people were so disrespectful of Him and living lives as bad as or worse than those who did not know Him. His people being out of fellowship with God caused the nations to have no interest in coming to know Him.

Read Genesis 26:4. What was the promise God made to Abraham?

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What connection do you think the promise to Abraham that all the nations would be blessed through his seed and God's concern in Ezekiel 36 for His Name when it was profaned by His people?

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In His promise to Abraham, God said all the nations would be blessed through His Seed. God's heart was that all nations would come to know Him and have life — *all* nations, not just His chosen people. God has always desired that all people would be saved, but He began His work with one chosen people, Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham. They were His chosen vehicle on earth to carry the message of who He is so all peoples might come to know Him. Through His chosen people, walking in obedience and faith in God, all the nations would hear about God's greatness. Instead, His people brought shame to His Name because of their ungodly behaviour. So God proposed to do something new to emphasize His Holiness before His people in the presence of the nations.

According to Ezekiel's prophecy, God would bring honour and glory to Himself by purifying a people for Himself, putting within them a new heart and a new spirit. He would remove the heart of stone they had when they lived in the Kingdom of the world and give them a heart of flesh. Within the pure vessel of their spirit, He would put His Spirit, causing them to walk in His statutes. God would then cleanse them from all their filthiness and from all their idols, and from all their adulteries. God was going to make a new covenant with those who would trust in Him by faith, to fulfill the promise He gave to His servant Abraham. "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah —not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD."[96] We, as the new creation in Christ, live within the fulfillment of this covenant as His church and His bride.[97]

COVENANT VS. AGREEMENT

Let's look for a moment at the difference between a covenant and an agreement. A covenant is greater than just an agreement. A covenant is made when two parties seek to give their very best to the other. Each party will say in a covenant, I will give you all that I am to fulfill all that I have said, even if you do not deliver your end of this covenant. This is why throughout Scripture covenants were rare. In Scripture we see them being used for marriage, and promises of God to Israel and Christians. What God is saying in principle in a covenant with us, is I will give you all who I am even if you do not keep your end of this covenant. And man is saying the same thing to God. These are incredibly honourable statements between God and man.

An agreement is merely a contract like when a person purchases a home. This is known as a purchase agreement. Both parties willingly look to see what advantage they would gain for themselves. The home owner wants the highest price. The purchaser wants to lower. They

[96] Jeremiah 31:31-32

[97] Revelation 21:2

negotiate terms to take as much advantage of the other and still in the end will have an agreement that will work.

We see two types of covenants in the Bible, conditional and unconditional. In a conditional covenant two parties agree to do their very best to fulfill the covenant based on the fulfillment of certain circumstances. Under Moses, God made a conditional covenant; God's fulfillment of His covenant promise was conditional on His people fulfilling theirs. We read in Scripture that God delivered all of the promises He made to Moses. God kept His Word, but for it to remain an everlasting covenant, the people had to keep their part also.

The people told God, when He gave Moses the law, the Ten Commandments, that they would love God and serve Him with their whole heart, yet they wilfully and regularly walked away from their responsibility in the covenant and did not put their effort into fully expressing their heart for God. God told the people if they obey these commandments, they will be blessed, but if they do not obey, they will be cursed.[98] God would fulfill His end of the covenant by fully giving Himself to the people on the earth. But they, too, had made a promise they would give themselves fully to God, loving Him and keeping His commandments. As history reveals, God fulfilled His conditions of Covenant but His people did not.

To help His people stay in fellowship with Him, God even set up a system of animal sacrifice to cover their sin, knowing that they would struggle and not be able to fulfill their end of this covenant. God still longed to fellowship with them. He even declared He was like a husband to them and they were like His bride. Then He vowed that if they kept His commands, they would be fruitful and multiply and live long lives in the land He would give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; But they still rebelled against Him. They committed adultery against Him, though He was a husband to them. They prostituted themselves to other spiritual beings or gods. They made idols for themselves with their own hands and chose to serve created things rather than the Creator. So God's anger burned against His people. In His wrath, He determined to destroy them, leaving only a small remnant behind to fulfill His promise which He made with His servant Abraham who believed God.

The covenant God made with Abraham, however, differed from the one given to Moses. The covenant with Abraham was unconditional: God promised to fulfill this covenant Himself, with or without mankind's obedience. In Genesis 15, God told Abraham to take some animals and cut them in half as a sacrifice and separate the halves from each other so there was a path of blood through the middle of these animals where the two parties in the covenant could walk. This type of covenant "cutting" was a common cultural practice in the time of Abraham. When two people made a covenant together, they would walk through the blood of halved animals, and they would promise, on the pain of death, that they would keep their end of the covenant, regardless of what the other person did.

Abraham obeyed God and cut the animals, and waited for the Lord. As he waited, he chased away birds that wanted to eat the carcasses. Still he waited, but God did not come. Finally Abraham became tired, he lay down, and fell into a deep sleep.

While Abraham slept, God came as an oven and a burning torch, and the two, the oven and the torch, walked together through the blood of the sacrifices. While Abraham slept, the covenant was made between the oven and the torch, representations of the Father and the Son. Abraham became the beneficiary of this covenant, but the fulfillment of this covenant was given to God Himself, binding Himself with Himself. By the Father and the Son walking through these sacrificial animals, they were saying to each other, "We, as Father and Son, covenant

[98] Deuteronomy 28

together to save mankind from their sin, through our servant Abraham. We covenant to perfectly love each other and to walk in perfect obedience to fulfill this promise." This was an unconditional covenant between God the Father and His Seed, who is Christ (Galatians 3:16). No conditions were placed on Abraham to fulfill it.

So there were three beings who are being affected by this covenant: Father God, who must now by His own words fully love the Seed of Abraham; and the Seed, who is the Christ, must now fully love Father God and walk out this love in perfect obedience in fullness of who He is; and Abraham, the representative of spiritual man, who is the observer and the benefactor of these promises.

Since, in this covenant to Abraham, God stated that He would fully love us, then He also set up a means to remove sin because it stops our relationship and fellowship with Him. So He said to His Son, "We will remove the sin of man by having you, as a Man, come down and walk out My perfect will on earth, taking away all the sin of mankind so they can come into relationship with Me by grace."

The Christ (the Messiah), born of the seed of David, came as a man, Jesus, who was fully man, yet the very Son of God.[99] From His birth to His death, He lived with full passion and zeal for only the Father's will, heart and mind. Jesus abandoned all self-will, self-preservation, self-dreams, and hopes. He lived (and lives!) for His Father's will alone. His life was bound in the life of His Father and He lived with this one thought alone. He and the Father were one, working toward the fulfillment of this covenant They had made with each other. As Jesus died, remained in the tomb three days and three nights, and was risen from the dead, the Father was please, as if saying, "You have completed the covenant, perfectly fulfilling all the law and the prophets. I will now allow all men to be immersed into You, baptized into You. By your death, all men will die and by Your resurrection, all men, who put their trust in You, will live."

So although God had also made a conditional covenant with the people of Israel through Moses, and introduced the law so that people would become aware of sin, He knew they would not fulfill it to His satisfaction. He then foretold, through the prophets, the advent of the new covenant, a covenant that would not be broken and would last forever. Through this unconditional covenant, God would change the very heart of man, and create a new creation that would dwell with Him forever. This covenant would be completed by His Son, the God-Man, Jesus Christ, mankind would be the beneficiary of this sacrificial love…and Father God would be glorified.

> *But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*[100]

What did God promise to do with His people through this covenant?

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[99] Romans 1:3

[100] *Jeremiah 31:33-34*

God promised that He would put His law in their hearts and minds and they would delight in His law and desire to obey.[101] They would be His people and He would be their God, just as He had hoped the physical descendants of Abraham, ancient Israel, would be. All His people, the new Israel, will know Him, being intimately connected to God.

WHO IS NEW ISRAEL?

God desired oneness with mankind. This oneness expressed itself in total dependence of man upon God. God used the picture of marriage as the closest human relationship to express this oneness, where the two become one flesh. Marriage is an unconditional covenant made between two people; both parties are saying, "until death do us part," meaning both will fulfill their parts of the covenant until one or both die. Only in death will we be freed from this covenant and free to marry another.

Those born under the law of Moses were not free from the law until they died to the law that held them. They were, in essence, married to the law. In Christ, they have died to the law, that they could be married to another. "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another-- to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God."[102]

A new creation, a holy nation, would be birthed through the Seed of Abraham[103], who is Christ. These people would be given a new heart and spirit, being made complete and holy, and as righteous as God. The new creation is the new spiritual Israel of God. God would give them their inheritance as His children, their own spiritual land, the Kingdom of God, not a physical kingdom or a piece of physical land, but an everlasting spiritual Kingdom that would impact and take over the physical world. God would then send His people out into the world as His ambassadors to be light to the nations, thus fulfilling the promise God gave Abraham that through His Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Members of the Old Israel, those born under the law, were Abraham's physical descendants, but, after Christ came, the physical descendants were no longer considered the true children of God. "But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel…"[104] Apostle Paul is speaking here of the physical birth which does not make a person a true Israelite, even though they came from the physical seed of Abraham. What makes a person a child of God, in the New Israel, is faith in the Son, the Seed, according to the promise, for everyone who believes in the Son comes under the New Testament. It's by grace we are saved through faith, not of ourselves, not of our works in obeying the law, but because of His work, His fulfillment of the covenant He made with His Father.[105] So we can boast, but only in the Lord, for we did not save ourselves. He alone saved us and is fulfilling His unconditional covenant as the Triune God of Israel.

The radical reality of this teaching from Paul, is that the descendants of physical Israel are not the "holy" people of God. And the birthplace of Jesus is not the "holy" land. Even Jesus Himself confirms this to some of the Jews of His day who would not receive his teaching. He referred to them as having the devil as their father—not father Abraham, although they were

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[101] Romans 7:22
[102] Romans 7:4
[103] Galatians 3:16
[104] Romans 9:6
[105] Genesis 15

physical descendants of Abraham.[106] How do we know this teaching is still true today? If a person does not come into a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Seed of Abraham, they remain dead in their sins, no matter who they are, whether Jew, or Gentile, slave or free, male or female.

We learn in Romans 9 that there are not three classes of people: the lost, the saved and the Jewish people on physical Israel. There are two classes of people: the lost and the saved. Only those who have come into the new covenant by faith are saved. The old covenant was not able to save because it depended upon man to fulfill his part. "For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God."[107] Only the unconditional covenant God made to Abraham would be fulfilled forever, because God promised to fulfill it Himself, through the obedience of His Son.

God did not abandon the teaching of the Old Testament when He ushered in the New Covenant. Instead He fulfilled it, bringing about a better covenant that was able to save mankind. The Old Testament reveals shadows and types of the fuller reality of the New Testament. In the Old Testament, a person who was saved had to believe in the God of Abraham. It is still true today. We must still believe in the God of Abraham.

In the Old Testament, if someone wanted to be part of God's chosen people, they had to belong to the God of Israel. The same is true in the New Testament. The chosen people of the New Testament are people who have entered into Israel, and Israel is the Son of God. "Out of Egypt I call My Son."[108] "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn." So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.'"[109] In the Old Testament, blood sacrifice was required to satisfy God's wrath because of the people's sin. Sin was covered over by the blood, and sacrifices had to be made daily. In the New Testament, blood is still required, but the sacrifice was the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who died once for all, taking away forever the sin of mankind through His death and resurrection. In the Old Testament, the whole law had to be obeyed for people to be in fellowship with God. In the New Testament, it is the same, but now, the law has been fulfilled or satisfied, within us as God's children, because of the sacrifice of the Son.

THE SIGN OF CIRCUMCISION

Another picture carried over from the Old Testament and into the New Testament is the sign of circumcision. In the Old Testament, the physical sign of the conditional covenant with Moses was circumcision of male children on the 8th day of life. Circumcision was a sign that a person had agreed to this covenant and had entered into relationship with God. The physical descendants of Abraham were circumcised in the physical flesh of the male to show the seal of righteousness, a sign of God's covenant with them. God chose the most intimate part of a man that unites as one with his wife, after the two join together in the unconditional covenant called marriage.

Speaking of Abraham, Paul writes, "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of

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[106] John 8:44
[107] Hebrews 7:18, 19
[108] Matthew 2:15
[109] Exodus 4:22

all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised. For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.[110]

Abraham received the covenant promise before He was physically circumcised. This showed that the promise of blessing was for all nations; it was for those circumcised under the law of Moses *and* for those who were uncircumcised apart from the law. God had Abraham physically live out the picture of this covenant promise, making circumcision a sign that this promise was for all people, for the Jew and the Gentile alike.

In the New Testament, circumcision is still the sign of God's people, the New Israel, but it is now a circumcision made without hands. It is the circumcision of the heart. "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."[111] God circumcised us in the death of Jesus Christ, crucifying our old selves, and making us completely new and righteous in Him. He gave us a new spirit and heart, sealing us in His Spirit and cutting us away from sin, or independence, that still resides in our soul and body.

God fulfilled in us what He promised through Ezekiel and the other prophets, fulfilling the promise He made with Himself in the presence of Abraham. We are this new creation, the new Israel, born of the seed of Christ by grace through faith alone.

The physical descendants of Abraham are not the children of the promise, and they are no longer the true Israel of God, God's chosen people. Now, those who trust in God through faith in the Son have entered into Israel, the children of the promise through faith. "But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.' That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed."[112]

So, Christian, you are in Israel. You are the people of God. Because of His covenant, which He promised within Himself, He has saved you and He will fully save you through Jesus Christ.[113] To not do so, would mean He would have to break covenant with Himself. You are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works that He prepared in advance for you to walk in. You will do good works, but you will not be the one doing, but rather God's doing in and through you. God is working in and through you, and us together as His body, so His Kingdom will be established on earth as it is in heaven, that all the nations of earth might be blessed and come into relationship with their Creator, the Almighty God.

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[110] Romans 4:11-13
[111] Romans 2:28-29
[112] Romans 9:6-8
[113] Hebrews 7:25-28

All of this amazing plan, this mystery of God, the gospel of our salvation, predetermined since before the beginning of time and unveiled to us in Christ, had one purpose alone, and that was the glorification of God the Father, magnifying His Holy Name, reconciling all things back to Himself, for the praise of His glory and grace.

Circumcision of the heart has profound implications for us as believers. Read both of these passages below, looking for and underlining any similarities you see. Underline what you see.

Colossians 2:11-15

11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Romans 6:4-7

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Based on the similarities you found in these passages, what do you think "circumcision of the heart" is referring to?

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When were you circumcised according to Romans 6:6?

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What does circumcision mean according to these verses?

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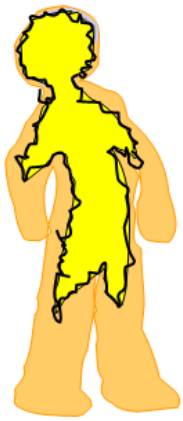

Something incredibly profound happened to us when we repented and surrendered our lives to Jesus Christ. All our sins were judged in Christ and removed. This event is described as circumcision or, as Romans 6 describes, being crucified with Christ, or buried with Christ in baptism into His death. Our old man was crucified with Christ, immersed into His death that the body of sins of the flesh might be taken away. All our sin has been thrown away, like a foreskin that is cut away from a male after circumcision. The foreskin is a picture of our sin, cut off from us, and removed and gone forever. We are now holy and clean beings, sealed by God, holy and blameless.

There is no sin in you, believer, no independence in your spirit. As John says, it's impossible for you to sin now because you have been born of God. You cannot sin. It's impossible.[114] God has circumcised you from your sin and thrown that sin away. He will now deliver you to Himself without spot or blemish.

Nothing can change this reality for you because you did not receive this gift because of you. You received it because God called you and made you His child when you turned to Him in faith. You did not receive this through your works, but by His work. You are completely forgiven of all your sin and you have been made completely new.

You were circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. God cut your spirit away from the body of sins of the flesh.[115] Independence still dwells in your body and soul (this independence is called flesh and is not *you*, but still dwells with you), but your spirit is connected and dependent upon God. We are introducing the reality of being circumcised in Christ here in Key 4 *Believe*, but will talk about this reality more in depth in Key 5 *Transform* as we see how to walk out our victory in Christ.

We are in relationship with God because of what God did when we believed in His Son. God created within us a vessel called our spirit which is holy enough for God Himself to dwell within. Our spirit is always seated in the spiritual realm in Christ Jesus and is pure and desires to fellowship with God forever.[116] There is no impurity or sin in our spirits. "As far as the east is from the west, *So* far has He removed our transgressions from us."[117]

Yet, we are triune beings with a spirit, a soul and a body.[118] Our spirit has been cut away from all sin that still dwells in our soul and body. The power of heart circumcision is that in dying with Christ, we have been set free from the power of sin and death that still resides in our thinking process (our soul), and our physical body. Prior to circumcision of the heart, everything we did was independent of God. Now, we *cannot* sin, in the sense that our spirit can never go independent of God. We no longer *have to* sin. We now choose, with our soul, to either walk in the spirit or to walk in the flesh.[119] Sin in the flesh affects our fellowship with God, but the relationship is sealed by the Holy Spirit within us as God's children. This is why we must know we are His. His Spirit will concur with our spirit that we are children of God. And if

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[114] 1 John 3:9
[115] Colossians 2:11
[116] Ephesians 2:6
[117] Psalm 103:12
[118] Hebrews 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24
[119] Galatians 5:16

children, then we are heirs according to the promise.[120]

Our identity as a child of God is sealed forever by the Holy Spirit. This is the amazing reality of the gospel, the power of God to save all those who believe in Him. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."[121] Your spirit, believer, is sealed by God and set apart from the sin of the flesh. That's what it means to be made holy. You are free from the power of sin and free to live a righteous life, experiencing the full fellowship of God your Father.

Yet sin still has the opportunity to reign in your soul and body. The independence that dwells in your soul and body the Bible calls flesh. You are not in the flesh if the Spirit of God dwells in you.[122] You used to be "in the flesh" and live as a flesh or carnal being. But now the flesh is *not you* any longer, but it still dwells *with* you.[123] Your soul and body have been trained by the system of the world, and tend toward self-centredness and independence from God. Now you must not let sin reign[124], but bring your soul and body into obedience and submission to God's word.

Think of your soul as a connector between your body and your spirit. Your soul must now be taught the truth of God's word, so it will agree to walk in the newness of who you really are. *You* will now focus your soul (your mind) to the truth of God's word. God will reveal His truth to you, and as you believe this truth, you will be set free to fully express who you truly are as a new creation in Christ.

Flesh means the soul and body empowered by sin. Your soul and body are amoral in and of themselves. They can be used to carry out the will of God or the will of sin. When empowered by the independence in sin, the Bible calls this flesh. Paul uses the word flesh or *sarx* to remind us to keep this battle on the outside of us, not on the internal workings of the Christian. That battle against sin has already been fought by Christ, where He has purified the spirit forever. We are told to not let sin reign in our mortal body and soul, but to walk in the spirit, believing God.

You are separate from your soul and body when it's empowered by sin, though you still live in your body and need to use your soul. Sin is no longer your master. It seeks to glorify itself not God. So you do not have to obey its lusts. Key 5 *Transform* focuses on the soul and body connection and how to walk out the Christian life in the victory and freedom of the spirit.

The simplicity of this message, and the truth for you to believe, is that you, believer, have a new heart that loves God, totally and completely. Your new heart and spirit is made of the very essence of God. You are a new creation in Christ. God calls you to be who you now are and He empowers you to do so. There is no sin in *you,* in your spirit, and you are free from its power. You do not have to obey sin's lusting anymore. You are free from sin's power because of the circumcision of Christ, which He did through His death and resurrection to fulfill within Himself the covenant promise to Abraham.

You have a new identity. You *were* a sinner, but you have been saved by the grace of God, and you are *now* a saint. You have received mercy. You have been saved by God, not because of your behaviour, but because of His grace which you received through faith. You are now intimately and eternally connected to your King. Nothing can separate you from Him. Even if

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120 Romans 8:16
121 2 Corinthians 5:17
122 Romans 8:9
123 Romans 7:17,18,21
124 Romans 6:12-14

you don't sometimes *feel* this connection, it is still true. Your walk with God is not based on your feelings. It is based on the truth of His Word. As you believe His Word, feelings will follow as a by-product of your faith. You are now a saint, set apart to be a slave of righteousness, in whom He dwells, living for His glory.

WHAT IS A SAINT?

There are various views on what it means to be a saint. In Catholicism, to become a saint one must go through certain miracles or a certain acts of reverence to God. These actions must be proved first so that person could be called a saint. There is absolutely no biblical support for this view. We see the apostle Paul call those at the church at Corinth saints,[125] and yet there is major dysfunction among Corinthian believers. The church at Ephesus was also called saints, and yet they are accused later in Revelation by Jesus himself for not loving correctly.

So what does saint mean? A saint is a person who is set apart or sanctified by God to be used for the purposes of God. The instant you became a believer and accepted the Christ, you became a saint; you became a being set apart by God for His will and glory. You spirit is sanctified, or set apart to God. He is now working out this sainthood in you by purifying your mind (in your soul) and your body by the washing of water of the word of God. This is what being sanctified means. When you walk into His presence, at His final coming, or in the day you pass on, you will be completely sanctified in body, soul and spirit. So it is right for us to say we are sanctified, being sanctified, and will be sanctified. We are saints.[126]

What has the Lord been revealing to you through this study so far? How does this help you?

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God is working out His righteous will in and through you as you work within His Kingdom. He is calling out the captives and setting them free through the proclamation of His gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. Join Him. Look for His activity and join Him in His work. As you do, you will grow and transform. Don't seek to transform first, or you will struggle in your walk with God.

You are commanded as a Kingdom disciple to disciple His "called out" or holy ones, teaching them who they are in Christ and how to serve their King. You can only disciple people to the level you are willing to go. If you do not believe the truth of God's word, you will not be able to bring other people to health. Real health in the Kingdom of God is contrary to the world's view. This health appears insane to those who want to live safe and controllable lives, people who walk according to the flesh and not the spirit. Walking with God is not controllable and it often *feels* out of control. That is the feeling of faith! God is not in our control. He is wild and uncontrollable, yet He is always in control, always working out His will. How it feels to us is not His concern. He says in Him we have perfect peace. True health means accepting as

[125] 2 Corinthians 1:1

[126] 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:6; Hebrews 10:14

true the reality of Scripture, radically aligning ourselves to God's definition of who we are.

Understanding the old and new covenant and circumcision is important because it shows that what God has done, only He could do. The plan God revealed in the Old Testament, He has fulfilled in the New. It is impossible for us. He made us like Himself. We have been born of the DNA of God. We are new, pure, and completely righteous. We have received mercy. We need His mercy no longer, for we are His children, heirs of the promises He fulfilled in Christ. We will receive what He has promised because He promised to fulfill it all Himself. The work is done!

What a joy to bask in our relationship with God, enjoying Him, and thanking Him for He has saved us and He is still saving us. He will complete what He has begun and He will keep you by His power. Nothing will change your identity as His child--not your behaviour, not your mistakes, not anything having to do with you. It all depends upon Him and He is able to complete what He began. In fact, He will do it. So rest in Him, listen to Him, learn from Him (even if you don't yet understand), walk with Him in the world as He sets up His Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.

Our work as a Kingdom disciple is to believe our God! Our belief shows up in our good works which God prepared in advance that we should would in them. This faith works through us, transforms us and impacts the world around us because of the power of our unseen God. We know the impact is not ours--it is His! He deserves all the glory and all the praise. People will see our good works and marvel! They will know it's not us because it's impossible for humans (on our own) to live this way; they will know it is God and He will be honoured and His Name will be magnified.

Our work as a Kingdom disciple is to believe our God!

Our healing and transformation is secondary to the process of discipleship. They are by-products of walking with God as He takes over the world with love. We benefit, yet we are not trying to benefit. We heal, yet we are not trying to heal. We grow, yet we are not trying to grow. We are just enjoying our God and being who we *really* are!

PERSONAL REFLECTION: BELIEVE

Write Key Four Believe: _____

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Take a moment to explain this key in your own words. What is important for you to remember?

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Look back at the chart at the beginning of Key 4 *Believe,* entitled "Who Do You Believe You Are?" How has your view of yourself changed or how has it been reinforced? What is difficult for you to still believe? Why?

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What has God taught you as you worked through Key 4 *Believe*?

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KEY 5 TRANSFORM

We are transformed by fully resting in the Truth as we yield our soul and body to God.

In Key 5 *Transform,* we learn how to live out our lives in Christ. In Key 4, we learned about who we really are. In Key 5, we learn that we are beings, with a spirit, a soul, and a body. Our spirit has been made completely righteous and holy by and before God. This is the good news of the gospel. This is who we really are in Christ. As we choose to believe truth, our soul and body will be transformed; our thinking and our behaviour will express the work of God within our spirit.

Salvation means to be made whole. God has begun His work in us with our spirit, in the inner core of who we are. We are saved, and now we are seeing this life transform into the outer life. So we can say we *are saved* and we *are being saved*. This is the process the Bible calls sanctification. We don't try to change ourselves, but as we choose to believe the gospel and live and walk within this truth, fully resting in the completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross, we change. We are not trying to change ourselves because at the core we are new.

The work is done and it has been done by God. As we focus our minds to the truth of God's word, abiding within it, our thinking in our soul transforms and our behaviours respond to the truth we believe. Our behaviours will begin to change and really match who we are in the spirit.

"I say then: Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."[127] Walking in the spirit means walking out who we really are by resting our full faith and assurance in the finished work God did within us in Christ. Apostle Paul is essentially saying, "Be who you really are in Christ." We cannot try to be holy. We are holy, so we desire live holy lives. We cannot try to be righteous, as a religion might imply. We have been made righteous, so we must live as the righteous beings we are. The order of this command is important. When we walk in the spirit, we will not carry out the lusts of the flesh. Walking in the spirit comes first, behaviour follows.

Our work as believers is to believe God. Walking in the spirit means the same as abiding or walking by faith. It means fully believing God's Word and living out God's way. As we fully believe God's Word, knowing who we really are as His new creations, we will desire to stop doing ungodly, fleshly things because our innermost values in our mind will be transformed. This process will not be hard; it will become natural.

Jesus said "My yoke is easy and My burden is light."[128] The Christian life is not designed to be hard. It's impossible in our own effort, when we walk after the flesh, but it's not hard in the spirit. It's easy and light. If the process seems hard, we are trying to change ourselves, instead of believing and resting in the finished work of Christ in us. When we walk in the spirit, we live by faith alone, trusting the Lord that He has saved us, and is living out that salvation within us

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[127] Galatians 5:16 (author's translation). Author's Note: As Greek scholars realize, the capitalization of the word spirit is subject to the interpretation of the translator, since in the Greek language capitals are not used. In this particular context of Galatians 5, it appears that a small "s" for spirit is more contextually appropriate than a large "S" which would mean the Holy Spirit. Our spirit is one with the Holy Spirit, and our spirit wars against the flesh.

[128] Matthew 11:30

for all to see.

What God says is true. God defines our reality and we accept His definition as true. We agree that the Reality of the Kingdom of God is the Reality we live within. The truth is that God made us new and we are healthy. We are not broken and we do not need fixing. Yet, God did not make us healthy just for our sake. He did this for His Kingdom's sake and the sake of His Name. If we are not healthy, we will not have a voice for the Kingdom. If we look just like others in the world, no one will seek after God because they will see no difference. When people see non-sickness and people who fully function in a dysfunctional world, people praise God. As God heals the spirit of a human, people move to worship Him.

When the Israelites failed to live godly lives amidst the nations, as we saw in Ezekiel 36, the surrounding peoples or nations did not desire to seek after God. Because of Israel's disobedience, God promised to create a new Israel, a new humanity. In this new humanity, God promised to remove the heart of stone and put a heart of flesh in its place. He put a new spirit and a new heart that beats only for Him. He also would place His Holy Spirit within this new spirit and work from within a human being, causing them to obey His commands. We are living within the fulfillment of these promises to the Old Testament prophets. We are the new creations in Christ. We are this new humanity. Because of what God has done through Christ, He wants us to be who we truly are as His children of light and to live godly lives among the people He has placed us, so they might come to know Him and be saved.

How, then, do we function as Christians, with a new spirit, but with a soul and body that still are influenced by sin? The answer is faith. Even though you are healthy, you can still choose to live in an unhealthy manner. God made your spirit healthy and perfect in Him. Your spirit has been cut away from soul and body and sealed so no sin can enter it. Your soul has not been transformed yet. Your soul houses your mind, will and emotions. With your soul you can choose to walk in the flesh or the spirit. You are a spirit being, completely dependent upon God, yet if your soul does not believe this truth, it will do what it really believes. If you believe the word of God, you will walk in it. But if you believe a lie, you will walk in the lie. Your body follows what you really believe at the soul level.

You have been cut away from the sin that still resides in the flesh. The flesh is not you, but you can choose to walk in lies and struggle in your Christian walk. Your flesh is independent from God and wants to live independently. But you have been circumcised away from the flesh. You have been set free from the power of sin and death. You do not have to sin. You can, but you do not have to.

You have a whole new system called righteousness working within you in your spirit. Your spirit dwells in the unseen world where God is. Your spirit is *always* seated in the spiritual realm in God and receives commands from God. This is why your walk as a Christian is by faith. You cannot see God, yet you must live according to His will. To do this, you must listen to God and learn from Him, receiving food from Him through His Word. As you talk with God you will learn from Him.

You grow in faith as you fill yourself up with the word of God and believe what it says about you and your God. You are learning to live as a whole being by faith alone, not by sight. Your senses and experiences must all be filtered through the word of God. Your mind, will and emotions, which reside in your soul, have been aligned and trained by the world system. Throughout the years, this training has come through parents, schools, friends, TV programs, books, and a wide variety of sources all claiming that their view of reality is the truth. As a new creation in Christ, you have come to know that only Jesus can define your reality and the reality of His created beings. You must now look at sight and senses in a new way. Sight and senses will

try to deceive your true self and keep you focused on earthly things. Jesus said to fix your mind on the things above where He is. He says to listen to His Word. The Word of God becomes a filter for your mind, filtering everything you see, hear and experience through God's truth.

God has given each of His believers the gift of His Holy Spirit. God's Spirit walks beside and within your spirit instructing and guiding you in truth. He continuously works from within you, giving you wisdom and understanding for the work He has prepared you to do. He knows that you have been made new at the core, in your spirit, and wants you to live that reality out according to His will. God gifted you with the mind of Christ through the Holy Spirit, so you can understand His ways and thinking.

The soul has a tremendous ability to either walk in the spirit or walk in the flesh.

As we learned in Key 4, the metaphor the scriptures use to illustrate the covenant relationship we have with Christ is circumcision. It was through circumcision that an Israelite child was brought into the covenant God made with Abraham. The foreskin was cut away from the part of man used for the joining husband and wife in the intimate relationship of the unconditional marriage covenant. In the New Testament, circumcision is no longer physical, but rather spiritual, cutting away the new creation from the sin that still resides in the soul and body of the believer. Circumcision is a sign of joining a new creation being into the intimate covenant relationship with God, joined to God in Christ.

In Christ, the flesh was crucified by God as we were immersed into the death of Christ.[129] In the new covenant, the spiritual picture is that God cuts away the new man from the sin that resides in his soul and body so God can be in covenant relationship with his spirit. This is a picture of the new Israel, God's chosen people, who received this gift by His grace through faith. Just as the marriage relationship symbolizes the oneness of two beings in covenant with each other, our relationship with God is expressed in the unity of Christ and His church, who is His Bride.

As believers, God is our Master and He reigns in us. Yet, sin or independence still dwells in our soul and our body and it lusts against us and wants to reign. This independence is called *flesh*. When the Bible is using "flesh" in this sense, it refers not to the physical flesh of our bodies which you see, but to the independence residing in the soul and body. The flesh is *not* us, but it still dwells *with* us. Through the circumcision of our hearts, we have been set free from sin's power in the flesh. As we walk in the spirit, we will not carry out the lusts of the flesh. Walking in the spirit is key. The victory of the Christian life is believing the truth of who we now are and living within this truth each moment of the day.

In direct correlation with our belief, the flesh will either have power over us or no power over us. Sin's power, if we walk by faith, fully believing the gospel, has been removed by the death and resurrection of Christ. It is according to our faith that we experience the overcoming power of God as we walk in the spirit.

Through our new birth, we are children of God. Our new spirit cannot sin or be separated from God again. There is no sin in us, in our spirit. The evil one has no hold in us and cannot touch us.[130] Our new identity is sealed by God through His Spirit within us. Nothing will change the reality of who we are. We grow as we learn to *be* who we truly are, filtering all information we receive through our senses through the filter of God's Word. We learn to identify thoughts

[129] Galatians 5:24

[130] 1 John 5:18

and values we held which are contrary to Truth and take them captive into obedience to Truth.

Our soul has a tremendous ability to either walk in the spirit or walk in the flesh. The soul is like a connector between our spirit and our body. Our soul must believe the truth for us to walk in it. The mind's way of making decisions is through the conscious mind. As thoughts come into our minds, this is the time to decide to receive or reject them. Once they reach the subconscious part of our minds, they have become habit patterns that take on a life of their own. The conscious mind is where we will things to happen. The subconscious mind is where the emotions and values are seated. Although we can try to will things through the conscious mind, like trying to change habits, the will of the conscious mind is not stronger than our emotions and values embedded in the subconscious mind. Our behaviours will go against the will and live out the emotion and value part of the mind. These values are our core beliefs in the soul.

Our bodies move in response to what we value. Our behaviour reveals what our soul truly believes. The phrase "actions speak louder than words" is true. We live out what our soul believes. If our soul's values are fleshly, our behaviour will be fleshly, too. If our soul's values have accepted God's truth as true, then our behaviours will be godly. This is why Jesus said people will know His disciples by the fruit of their lives. We cannot fake Christianity. We can try to fake godly living for a while, but we will eventually behave according to what our soul has accepted as truth.

Our work as believers is to believe God. As we learn to think differently, we work at believing His Word. We abide in it, meditate on it, talk about it with God and others. We eat His Word, forming a habit of bringing godly input into our minds. Our soul will resist at first, but as our values transform, our behaviour begins to change, aligning with the reality of who we are as a new creation in Christ. As we grow, new godly values will replace the worldly values embedded in our subconscious mind. In time, the soul and body become trained in righteousness as we choose to believe God's word. Our bodies will transform as our actions begin to follow the truth our soul now believes. At first this process might seem hard as we work to retrain our thinking, but over time, our new godly thoughts become normal.

We can choose to believe the truth of who we now are and live in the freedom Christ secured for us at the cross, or we can choose to not believe and live like captives even though we are actually free. This is the process explained in Key 5 and it's the process of our lives as believers.

The focus of Key 5 *Transform* is not trying to transform ourselves. The focus is *being* who we truly are as beings who abide in Christ, love others and reign with Him in His Kingdom. As we walk in the spirit, abiding in His Truth, we *do* great things *with* God. Our doing flows from abiding in Him, not from trying to do great things. When we do something with God, we will know it's not really us doing it, but God doing the work in and through us. Our response will be to thank Him, giving Him praise for transforming our lives, bringing beauty from ashes, giving us meaning and purpose beyond our wildest dreams as He allows us to work with Him for the praise of His Holy Name as He brings all His creation back into alignment with Himself.

DISCOVERING KEY 5

How do you live life as a believer in Jesus Christ? Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). The focus of our freedom is in fully believing the Word of God. Look and see the reality of your life in Christ.

As you study, ask yourself these questions. Write down the response of your heart, so you can look, see, and understand what God is revealing to you about who you are and how to renew your mind in His truth.

L LIE: What LIE of the world or the evil one is being exposed by the truth?

I INSIGHT: What INSIGHT is revealed about God and His ways?

F FAITH: What revealed truth strengthens my FAITH?

E EXAMPLE: What faith EXAMPLE is given for me to follow?

- ❒ Romans 5, 6, 7, 8
- ❒ Romans 12:1,2
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 2
- ❒ Galatians 1:6-12
- ❒ Galatians 2:11-21
- ❒ Galatians 3
- ❒ Galatians 4:1-20
- ❒ Galatians 5
- ❒ Galatians 5:16-24
- ❒ Galatians 6:8-15
- ❒ Ephesians 2:1-10
- ❒ Ephesians 4:17-31
- ❒ Ephesians 5:1-21
- ❒ Philippians 3
- ❒ Philippians 4:8
- ❒ Colossians 2
- ❒ Colossians 3:1-17
- ❒ James 1
- ❒ 1 John 3:4-9

"Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"
Galatians 3:3

GOING DEEPER: KEY 5 TRANSFORM

We are transformed by fully resting in the Truth as we yield our soul and body to God.

> *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)*
>
> *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)*

In Key 4 *Believe*, we saw the amazing reality of what God has done in each of us as His children. What an exciting journey we are all on, to know and love God and to walk humbly with Him! Jesus said, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."[131]

Some of you are already experiencing the abundance of the Christian life, the joy and peace of God in your life on a consistent basis. You are seeing God work in and through you in a powerful and exciting way. You understand what it means to abide in Christ and you understand the reality of the gospel in your life. Much of what you have read may have been a review for you. We join you in worshipping and thanking our Creator that you know who you are and are walking in victory and power in your life. Our hope is that this book will encourage you in your faith and spur you on to encourage and disciple others. Perhaps you will learn some tools to help you in your journey to disciple others in this walk of faith, teaching them to proclaim His gospel and disciple those He brings to Himself.

Some of you, however, feel more like the thief had come to steal and destroy you. You struggle to find joy in your Christian experience and you feel burdened down by the weight of trying to live the Christian life. You might say, "Okay, it's fine to say we are new and righteous, but why don't I feel new? Why do I still sin?" You may pray desperate, painful prayers to God like, "Lord, please give me joy." "Lord, please help me live in victory." "Lord, help me overcome anger (or guilt or depression)." "Lord, please make my heart clean." "Lord, please help me love my husband or wife." "Help me overcome my addiction."

You have tried all sorts of methods to get closer to God including being more diligent reading your Bible or memorizing Bible verses, attending spiritual retreats, and praying more. You may have sought help from pastors, counsellors, and friends. You long to experience the freedom others seem to have and the Bible says you should have, but you can't seem to get it no matter how hard you try. You end up crying out to God in utter frustration and despair, "Lord, why won't you answer my prayers?!" When Sunday comes, you fake it pretty well and play the part of a victorious Christian, but you know you are dying inside. You may have come to a place of nearly giving up on your Christian walk altogether.

We want to encourage you: Do not give up. Freedom is right at your fingertips. Press

[131] John 10:10

forward to understand. Lay aside all you once knew and just look closely at the gospel. Explore Key 5 *Transform* and allow the Word of God to speak to you. The gospel is the power of God for salvation for *everyone who believes*, including *you*. The gospel brings you to wholeness, all of you, your spirit, soul and body.

Let's begin to look at the Captain's Tale and the struggle of the soul.

THE CAPTAIN'S TALE

I've lived my whole life at sea. I ran my ship with precision, seeking the best profit and reward for my ship's ruthless owner. He sold slaves and ruined many lives, all to promote his own interests and advantage. He stole property and raped the land. He did pay me for my work, yet there was a cost in it--a cost that is hard to describe.

I keep looking for meaning in my life, because the things I received did not satisfy me. The owner promised me great success, but inside I did not really feel successful. I started seeking more wealth and material things, and I didn't care who I hurt in the process. I became ruthless, too, just like my owner. My way had fully conformed to his way, to his course – to his destiny.

People feared us when we came into port. People would cower and move away, in awe and respect, yet a respect with fear and mistrust. Sometimes the owner beat the slaves that ran the ship. Sometimes he even hurt me. But always he justified his actions and words, saying the beatings were necessary to get the outcome he desired. "The end justifies the means," he would say. And, "You will all see this is best in the end…."

I was beginning to wonder, yet the course was set. My job was secure and, although I didn't receive the promised contentment yet, I always thought it was just beyond my grasp. Someday I would find it and be content and happy in my life.

One day, a stranger entered the owner's office. This stranger was a very strong man. The owner became angry and a fight broke out. The owner lost his life that day because he would not back down. The stranger walked up to me and declared, "I am now the new owner of this ship. Change course! We are setting sail into seas charted by my Father."

This new man-in-charge was not like the old owner. Sometimes I could hardly believe what he was saying – yet he spoke so powerfully and authoritatively. I tried to put up a protest as he turned the ship around and headed in the opposite direction. I watched as things around me began to change. I became afraid and unsure. My whole world was changing and the change was drastic.

In the beginning, I mistrusted him; I fought against his every command. His ways didn't make sense to me, especially when he started giving commands to revamp the ship for his new purposes.

"Replace that flag with a skull with my love banner," he ordered. "And dump those guns overboard."

"What?!" I exclaimed. "How do we protect ourselves? We are at war!"

"We don't need to protect ourselves," the owner said. "We are protected. We do not need guns to fight with anymore. And by the way, get rid of all those cannon balls, too. Let's put in storage units with wheat and dry goods instead. We will bring food to every port, focusing on life and transformation of the people. This is my Father's command. Remember, He owns the whole fleet."

Maybe his Father was the owner of a whole fleet – I didn't know. But I did know that I did not like what I saw. I tried to intimidate this new owner with my position as captain. I had never heard of such strange procedures. I accused the owner to his face, and tried to get him to follow my "path of experience" (which I knew was cruel, but at least it worked). He refused--he wouldn't budge.

Calmly, without anger or spite, the owner told me, "We will go this way, charting this new course, whether you like it or not. My Father knows the way and His way is right. I do not care how

you feel. Your feelings are trained by the old system you lived under. Now you will do what I tell you to do. This way is right, even though you do not yet understand why."

As I watched, I realized the new owner was very good to people. He seemed to actually love them. He looked to their interests and not just his own. He was kind and he was patient with them, even when they argued with him or stole something he owned. Now, when our ship came into port, the people no longer shrank back from us in fear. Instead they cheered with gratitude, for wherever we went, he brought light and health to the community. People in the community transformed around him as he declared to them the love of his Father. Health came to the people.

The owner's very essence was light. It was very foreign and uncomfortable to me, and I felt myself want to pull back from the light. I didn't quite know what to think. I felt afraid and insecure. Everything was different and I didn't know quite what to believe. Yet, the more I watched the owner and understood who he really was, I found my thinking beginning to change.

If I argued with the owner saying, "This is not going to work," he responded with quiet assurance declaring, "My Father is in charge, and He does all his work for the good of the whole fleet, working within every ship, moving it toward the perfect destination. He is fully trustworthy."

I would sometimes retort with my old argument, "I've been running these ships for many years--and you are new. How can you really know the way?" With steel patience velvetted in love, the owner would say, "The knowledge I'm bringing is eons old. My Father is the wisdom of the ages, and this is where my knowledge is from. Your knowledge is from your experiences; my knowledge is from a well so deep it's source is unending."

"But," I would cry, "look at the other ships, they are all dressed for war. They will be ready for battle, but we will stand out and be at risk of destruction."

"We have a different purpose that is lasting and powerful," the owner calmly explained.

As I listened, his calm assurance caused me to start to rethink many things. "Could it be true?" I asked myself.

Those whose purpose is only for themselves head toward their own destruction – and to the destruction of those who follow them. I've seen it happen to others and to myself. I sought pleasure, but was never satisfied. Now I have a glimpse of something so different, so freeing, that hope kindles within me. The owner's Father charted a course that brings peace to his people and praise to himself for he is a good master, full of mercy and love.

I thought hard. Dwelling on the words the owner said and the results his life produced, I found myself believing the owner and realigning myself to our new purpose.

As I began to transform, I noticed transformation around me. People began to praise me and thank me for coming to their city, for helping them so much. I had to say, "It's not really me. It's the owner and His Father. I live to the purpose of the Father now. He is leading and His way is transforming my life, too. The owner is retraining me by focusing me on the truth of his Father's words and on the heart of his Father. The owner teaches me to think differently about my purpose, about myself and about how to love others."

One day, I pulled the owner aside and asked, "Why are you like this?"

"I am just the representative of my Father," he replied, "who is the true owner of all the fleets. He is the king of all the land and He is a good king. His heart is full of love for the people. His anger burns against the slavery of their condition, against the evil things they do to themselves and others. His anger burns against the greed of the evil owners of each evil ship. My Father has come to set them free if they will fully surrender to Him. My Father has put me in charge of this ship and this ship will obey me as I do the will of my Father. I will not obey you or let you rule this ship any longer. You are now a slave to me, but you are free and will be made whole as you trust my Father and me. I'm his child. He's given me this great assignment. What pleases me is when I come back to port and he

declares, 'Son, I am so pleased with you. Well done.' My Father loves me and I love Him. I have no greater pleasure than to bring Him joy."

KNOWING YOUR IDENTITY IS CRITICAL

In Key 4 *Believe*, you looked at who you are in Christ. The old you was a slave of sin. You could not help but sin, for you were living independently of your Creator and you were on a different course altogether. Now you have been set free. You are now a new creation in Christ, and God's Spirit is inside you, guiding you, teaching you the ways of the Father. "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."[132]

What does this verse say about you?

_____

_____

Do these verses suggest a process or an instantaneous change?

_____

_____

You, in your spirit and heart, are complete. You are clean. You are totally righteous, having been completely justified through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The work of the cross is finished and you are sanctified, made totally clean and holy by God. This is the gift of God's grace in your life. God gave you a new spirit, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who now rules in the place of the old spirit that was a slave of sin. Your spirit is free to be a slave to Christ's righteousness in you.

Your spirit is the real *you* and *you* are connected to God through the Holy Spirit within you. You have entered into Jesus Christ and He is in you. He is your life. Your spirit has the mind of Christ and always agrees with Father God.

Your soul was trained under the evil one and the world. Before you surrendered your life to Jesus, the old man ran the show. The old man is the heart of stone.[133] God removed this heart of stone and gave you a new heart/spirit that is cleansed, justified, and sanctified. You are completely clean, right with God, and transformed.

However, your soul has not yet been cleansed. Within your soul, you have a mind, a will, and emotions that were programmed by the world, the evil one, and your sinful, independent

[132] 1 Corinthians 6:11
[133] Jeremiah 31:33

nature. When you surrendered to Jesus Christ, your old man was crucified in Christ.[134] To say this another way, your old man was immersed into the death of Christ. The old man is gone. God resurrected you in Christ, giving you a new spirit and heart that is holy and in which He now dwells through the Holy Spirit.

Your soul struggles with having a new boss. Your soul -- your thinking patterns, will, and emotions -- were trained by evil and independence. This sin, or independence in your soul and body, still wants to dominate you. But you have been set free from its power. You are forever new and you do not have to let sin reign in your soul. You are seated in the heavenly realm in Christ Jesus. As a new creation in Christ, you now live only by faith. You delight in the will of the Father. You hunger for righteousness and long to obey His Word.

The struggle you feel is your soul wanting to control you. Your soul needs information to know who the Father is and to know who you are.

We do not know exactly how we grow. In the physical world, we eat food and we gain calories and grow. Some of that growth is outward rather than upward, but we grow. We do not question that the food will cause growth, we just eat it, enjoy it and we grow. If we do not eat, we grow thin and stop growing. We need physical food.

Our spirit needs spiritual food. God's word is our spiritual food. We do not know how His word works to grow us, but as we read it, thinking about it, asking God to give us understanding, we grow. We grow in faith. We grow in knowledge and understanding. This understanding leads to action as our soul believes the truth of God's word. As we apply this knowledge in our lives on a daily basis, we grow in wisdom. Wisdom is applied knowledge.

We do not cause ourselves to grow. We are very much like the branch of a tree or a vine. What causes the branch to grow? The branch grows because of the sap that is running through the vine. The branch doesn't try to grow; it just grows as it receives nutrients from the sap in the vine. We grow in the same way. We grow as we read, believe, and live the word of God.

Our soul resists this growth, because it means it can no longer rely on what it once knew. This feels very uncomfortable to the soul and it resists change. Change means it must die to the way it once thought. The soul's thinking must be transformed by being filtered through God's word. The old thinking patterns will die, and new godly thinking patterns will take over, leading the soul into the will of God. The soul doesn't like this because it feels insecure and, as a result, we get feelings of insecurity, of wanting to hide or protect our old way of thinking so we don't have to change. Our feelings indicate what we are really believing. Freedom comes when we realize that the soul was trained by the world system, and must be retrained by Truth. As we abide in the word of Christ, we will learn from Him and He will set us totally free to be who we truly are in Christ.

If we follow our soul's thinking, the independent programming from our former life, we will "walk in the flesh" and we will behave just like we did in the world. Our bodies will follow what we truly believe and value. As we read and study the word of God, listening to God and

[134] Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20

believing that His word is true over and above all other sources of information, the values in our soul will be replaced with godly, holy values. The new values will guide our behaviour and our behaviour will transform, too. But our thinking must be filtered through the word of God. He forms new values within us as we logically think through the truth of His word.

Many Christians have asked the question, "If I am totally righteous, then why do I still sin?" The assumption is that if I sin in the flesh, I am still a sinner and not really complete like God's word says. This assumption is based on the false premise that our behaviour determines our identity. Our birth determines our identity, not our behaviour. We were not saved by our behaviour or our "good" works. If we were saved by the law, we would be saved by our "good" works, but we were saved by the grace of God, by believing in His Son and accepting what Jesus did for us on the cross. The law says, "Do this and live." Grace says, "Live and Do this." Our doing flows out of who we are. It doesn't make us who we are.

By the grace of God, we were given the gift of righteousness through Christ. We are as righteous as God in Christ. Our righteous standing before God is declared by Him and manifest through the new spirit and heart He put within us and the circumcision of that spirit away from our soul and body, those parts of us that were independent from the Father. We are indentified by God as saints now. God says, "Just *be* who you are, fully loving Me and trusting Me. As you do this, you will transform. You won't try to transform. You will transform as a natural result of your belief in the truth of My completed work within you."

We are not just covered with Christ's righteousness, as if we are still so unclean that Jesus must somehow cover over us with His blood so that God will accept us and not destroy us. When we were still sinners, Christ died for us and we have been saved by grace. We are sinners no longer. Our acceptance is based on what God did through His Son when He poured all of our sin into Jesus and He became sin for us. He took into Himself all we ever did, said, and thought that was independent of His Father. And Father God poured out His full wrath, the wrath we deserve, on His Son. We are accepted by God because of His work in us, not our own work.

Our behaviour speaks more loudly than our words. This is the argument James makes when he writes, "Faith without works is dead"[135] If our faith is not producing righteous behaviour and the fruit of the Spirit within us, we have cause to question if we really have been transformed and made new by God. There has to be impact. James also says, "We must be doers of the word and not hearers only."[136] If we hear the word and don't do it, we deceive ourselves. Faith works. Faith produces a change in us or it's not faith.

Saying a sinner's prayer does not save us. But when we, as a sinner — an independent being — pray from the heart to God to save us and to forgive our sin, confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives and that He died and rose from the dead, we are saved. A sinner prays because God is birthing them new. Just like a newborn baby cries out as it enters the world, we cry out to our Father with the faith that He provided. We cannot even come to God unless He calls us. He orchestrates the whole process. We are saved by His grace alone, through faith.

A non-Christian cannot live a Christian life because without faith it's impossible to please God. A non-believer who tries to attend church and do religious things will become either full of pride or full of guilt as he or she tries to do the things of God without the power of God within. It's impossible.

If you have struggled in your walk with God, you first must know you are saved. Have you completely surrendered your life to Him from the heart, fully believing in the death and

[135] James 2:26

[136] James 1:22

resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ? If you surrendered your life to Christ, you will know because you cannot deny Him. You may feel like you are too unclean to be accepted by Him, but you cannot deny Him. You love Him and you want to please Him. An unsaved person can spit on Jesus and not even care. If you are saved, you can not do this. So settle this issue once and for all in your mind. If you are saved, you are saved. End of debate. God has done it. You don't deserve it. You were filthy, deserving of death, but Jesus took all your filth away into Himself on the cross. Your old self died with Christ the moment you turned to Him in faith, and He birthed you new through His Holy Spirit. You are new.

Once you know you are saved, you must now understand who you are. The struggle you have in your soul is belief, not salvation. If you have been saved, you are a righteous being. If you do not believe this truth, the truth of the gospel, your soul will lead you in your old thinking as it tries to keep control and make you walk like an ordinary human. You were not saved by your behaviour and you cannot lose your salvation by your behaviour. You can only grow.

Salvation means "being made whole". You have been made whole in your spirit' now you will be made whole in your soul and body, as you live out the reality of who you are in Christ by faith. The remedy is to believe the Truth of God's word over and above everything you have learned from your family, from teachers, from books, from movies, from philosophies, from friends, and from any other sources that are not the word of God. This might seem like a tall order. How can you possibly change everything you believe all at once? You cannot. This is the process of growth. You cannot force growth. You grow in faith and faith comes by hearing the word of God. As you eat the word, day by day, you will grow. Just as all living things grow, you will grow too. You won't try to grow, you will just grow.

Your soul will try to resist growth because it is scary and even painful sometimes. But the soul no longer has power to control you unless you give it power. If your soul refuses to believe the real you (that is, your spirit) and Christ in you, you will walk in dysfunction, even as a believer, because your body will follow what you truly believe in your deepest values. Get the beliefs right — the foundational doctrine, the gospel of your salvation — put your whole weight into it and you will begin to walk in the freedom you have in Christ.

You will learn to take any thought which is contrary to the gospel "into captivity," forcing it to obey Christ.[137] As you practice this, your thinking and behaviour reflect who you truly are and you will live a godly life. It will be natural, not hard. You won't try to do it; it will just happen. Your soul and your body will begin to transform and over time will become more and more mature and Christ-like, matching the work God did in your spirit.

Knowing your identity is critical. When you first came to Christ, what you were taught sticks with you. For example, if you were wrongly taught that you must "validate your feelings" and "stick up for your rights," then your body will obey and move you to obey those thoughts. You will dig into your feelings, no matter how dysfunctional they may be, and seek validation in your dysfunction. If you learned you are a "sinner saved by grace," you will act as a sinner who is saved, but really not transformed. You will live in dysfunction. Your body will obey whatever your soul believes.

You need to *know that you know that you know* the truth about yourself. As you rest in God, fully believing Him and trusting that He will reveal what He wants you know, He will guide you, transform you, and grow you. Your soul is very faithful to orders. It will obey you, because you are in charge. Your soul is no longer in charge, and you have been set free from the power of sin which resides within it. But if you waver in unbelief, your soul will seek to guide your spirit

[137] 2 Corinthians 10:5

to safety and not to faith.

Once convinced, your soul will obey your orders as the new creation in Christ, filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit within you. If you are struggling in your Christian life on many levels, the problem is not the struggle. The struggle is the symptom of a crisis of belief. You either do not know God or you do not understand and fully believe what He did for you on the cross. You must *know that you know that you know* that you are in charge and can fully live a victorious Christ life. You are created to fully live and walk with your King in the work He has for you. You must fully believe from the heart.

> "*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it." (1 Thessalonians 5:23)*

You are a triune being. Triune means three in one. What three parts are you made up of according to this verse?

_____

What has God promised to do with you? _____

Who will do this process of sanctification, preserving our whole spirit, soul and body blameless at the coming of our Lord?

_____

In Hebrews 4:12, we see these three parts, spirit, soul and body, again.

> *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

How is the word of God described? _____

What does the word of God divide? _____

_____

What does the word of God discern? _____

You are a triune being, spirit, soul and body. God has promised to sanctify you completely. Sanctify means to "set apart or make holy." God has sanctified your spirit. He set you apart and you are holy. "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."[138] Notice these verbs are past tense. You were washed. You were sanctified and you were justified. This means you are clean, holy and righteous right now. 1 Thessalonians 5:13 says God will sanctify you

[138] 1 Corinthians 6:11

completely, making you blameless before Him, in your spirit, soul and body. The work done in your spirit will now take over, to bring the rest of you in line with the word of God.

The word of God divides these three parts of us, so we can look at them, and then the word pulls these three back together in the oneness of who we are as a whole being, spirit, soul and body. We will look at these parts separately a little later below.

God's word also discerns the motive behind our actions. Motive is important. Our motives reveal where the idea or the desire is coming from. Knowing the motive of our spirit, helps to clarify what our motive should be as a Christian and it helps us see when our thinking is obeying the voice of the flesh or the spirit.

YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE

Please look up and read 1 Corinthians 10:31 in your Bible and write the verse below:

_____

_____

What is your purpose in life, according to this verse? _____

Did you write "to glorify God"? We are designed to bring glory and honour to God in everything we do, no matter what we are doing, no matter our role in life, and no matter our circumstances. So no matter whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God. This is how we can say we were not saved just for our own selves to make our lives better or healthier. We were saved to bring honour and glory to God and to work with Him. We were not saved so we could continue to work on ourselves and be self focused.

The soul desires to focus on self. The soul wants to protect self, maintain self, fix self. The soul is definitely self-centred. So the soul wants to set goals that seem "good" but are less than the glory of God. These goals might include having a good family, having a comfortable church, having a good education for our children, having a healthy and happy life, having a good marriage, a good job, or lots of stuff. All these goals are not bad in and of themselves, but they fall short of the glory of God, if we are living for these goals alone.

Jesus tells His disciples, "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."[139] Jesus is telling us to have God's priorities in mind first, seeking what is on the heart of God. As we do this, God will provide all the rest. Our human tendency, in the soul, is to seek "all these things" first, to create the security or significance or belonging our soul longs for. Jesus says you cannot find the satisfaction and pleasure in all these things. You must find that you are only truly satisfied in God alone.

If we have lesser goals than the glory of God, our goals will be blocked. Circumstances will happen that keep us from getting what we think we need to be happy. If we think a good job is the answer for our happiness, yet we are blocked by sickness, death, or getting fired from the job, we will become angry because we cannot get what we think we need. If the situation

[139] Matthew 6: 31–33,

doesn't change, and we still are not able to get a good job, frustration will result and eventually, if the situation still doesn't improve, we may find ourselves depressed and giving up hope of ever finding happiness in life.

When our goal is for God to be glorified in our lives, we find we have joy in the midst of any circumstance we face. When we rest in God, trusting that He is in control, guiding the events of our lives according to His plan and for His glory, we have peace and joy in the process of learning.

Knowing our purpose in life is central to knowing the difference between walking in the spirit and walking in the flesh. The flesh seeks goals that appear good, and may even appear godly, but fall short of the glory of God. The flesh always has self as the underlying motive. Our spirit always seeks to glorify God.

What goal are you going to choose to live for?

_____

YOU ARE A TRIUNE BEING

Let's take a closer look at who you are as a triune being, beginning briefly with the spirit, which we covered in depth in Key 4 *Believe*, and then moving on to look at the soul and the body.

YOUR SPIRIT

Your spirit is the *real* you. You have been born again and are now a righteous, pure, beautiful being in Christ. You are totally dependent upon God and He has given you everything you need for life and godliness. His Spirit indwells your spirit and He works out Christ's righteousness in and through you. Through His Spirit He teaches and counsels you. He reveals His heart and enables you to understand His Word. Your spirit desires only the will of God and lives to His glory alone.

Your spirit is made for heaven and is seated right now in the spiritual realm in Christ Jesus. Your spirit only works from within the heavenly or spiritual realm and is governed by God through His Spirit within you. Your spirit delights in the law of God. Your spirit hungers for righteousness. Your spirit seeks to know God. The Bible says, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."[140] As you walk in the spirit, walking by faith and not by the sight and senses of the soul and body, you will live out who you truly are, a spirit being, housed in a body made for the planet, who walks by faith in God. As you believe this, you will experience and live within the abundant life Christ promised.

Your new spirit is your new identity as a new creation in Christ. You are now righteous enough to live in the holiest of holies, the most holy place in the temple of God. Your spirit has not been touched by sin. You, as a new creation in Christ, have never sinned, or been independent of God. You are perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

You have also been sealed by the Holy Spirit of God and will be delivered to Him. You are blameless and no longer condemned by God. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."[141] You are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared in advance that you should walk in them. God is the Master Artist who created a masterpiece when He made you. One more stroke of His brush would have been too much and would have made you less than perfect. God never makes a mistake. He never creates dysfunction. He has made you new and perfect in Christ. You fully are able to function and do all things through Christ who strengthens you. This is the *real you*.

Your spirit has the mind of Christ and only thinks holy thoughts. Your spirit cannot think unholy, ungodly thoughts, so you know when an ungodly or unholy thought enters your mind, it is not really yours. You cannot sin in the spirit ever again. Your spirit has godly emotions, the same emotions of Christ.

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[140] John 17:3

[141] Romans 8:1

YOUR SOUL

Since God took all our sin away and made us new, why in the world did He allow us to remember our former life? Why did He not just wipe out our memory and start us completely over fresh to relieve us of the process of needing transformation in our thinking? What do you think?

_____

_____

_____

Take a look at this passage in Ezekiel for the answer:

> *26"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. 28Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. 29I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. 30And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. 31Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. 32Not for your sake do I do this," says the Lord GOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!" 33Thus says the Lord GOD: "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt." (Ezekiel 36:26-33)*

What did God fulfill in us as His children that He foretold through Ezekiel?

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Why, according to this passage, did God allow us to remember our former life and evil ways? (v. 31)

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God wanted us to remember our former life so we would be ashamed and remember what He saved us from, so we would loathe ourselves. He wanted us to loathe and hate our former life. He wanted to make sure we did not want to return to living independently from Him again. We would not want to return to the dead works and evil deeds we did, because we would know that we are new creations who are now connected to God by His amazing grace.

What will God now deliver us from according to verse 29 in Ezekiel 36?

_____

Did you write "*all* your uncleannesses"? Notice the *all*. All uncleanesses. We are clean! God removed our heart of stone and gave each of us a new heart. He made our spirit new and now He will deliver us from all the uncleanness of the flesh (the independence that still dwells in our soul and body).

Why did God do this? (vv. 28-30)

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God gave this prophecy to Ezekiel about 600 years before Jesus came to fulfill it. God was warning His people that He was about to do something new and make a people who belonged to Him. He was sick of people who honoured Him with their mouths, but their hearts were far from Him. He wanted a people in whom He would dwell and through whom He would bring honour and glory to His Name. These people would be transformed from the inside out.

He started the process with giving a new heart and spirit that is holy and without blame before Him in righteousness. Then He works this process through the whole being, bringing salvation and wholeness to each person. His goal, however, was not the individual transformation of our lives. His goal was to bring honour to His Name and to fulfill His will on earth. Through His people, the nations on earth would hear the message of the redeeming God who loves human beings and gives them life. Through the message preached through His redeemed ones, He would save those who believe in the Name of His one and only Son. God was doing this to take the reproach away from His Name because His people were living ungodly lives amidst the nations.

Do you remember the promise God made to Abraham, that all the nations would be blessed through his seed? Why were the nations so important to God? (Look at Genesis 26:4 to refresh your memory if you need to.)

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God did all of this to fulfill the promise He made to Abraham that through his Seed all the families of earth would be blessed by coming to know the God who made them and to live by faith in Him. He would be their God and they would be His people. They would have the opportunity to live the life they were created by God to live, and they would live it in Christ. God would make a way and that way would be through the death and resurrection of His own Son, Jesus Christ.

Does the passage in Ezekiel move your heart? Even as I write, I am in awe of my God. How could He think up the gospel, this marvellous plan which He worked together from the foundation of the earth, to restore His creation to Himself? God did this all for His Name's sake, and we benefit greatly. He did not save us for us, but for Himself. He redeemed us and set us apart to be His people, to know Him and to love Him. Remember what eternal life is — To know God and Jesus Christ His Son.

In the fulfillment of Ezekiel, He will enable us to live in cities, and the ruins will be rebuilt to the praise of His glorious grace. We are living within the reality of this promise right now as

believers. His Kingdom has come and His will is being done on earth as it is in heaven right now. The invisible Kingdom of God is impacting and taking over the kingdom of the world. His Kingdom is advancing and He is taking back what was lost and replacing corruption with the Kingdom of God.

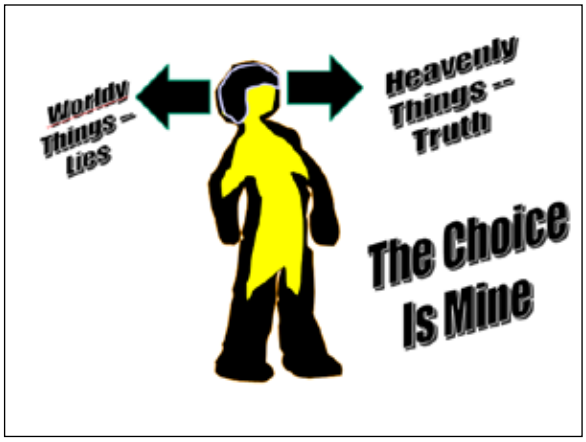
Remember where you have come from. Remember how lost you were. Remember that you were dead and now you are alive by the grace of Almighty God. For if you know you have been forgiven much, you will love your God even more. It's about His Kingdom and His glory, His Holy Name. It's not about us, but we are nevertheless greatly blessed. Is it any wonder that Jesus told us to pray in this way? This was the will of the Father which He purposed in Christ Jesus.

Your soul remembers your former life. You have habitual thought patterns which now must be transformed by knowing and believing the truth of the gospel. These thought patterns are stored in the subconscious part of your mind. These patterns are what the Bible calls flesh.

Your soul is the connector between your spirit and body. Your soul can choose to focus on truth or lies. Your soul is not comfortable with faith, so you must push through this feeling of discomfort and fear, and force your soul and body to move in faith.

Your soul is where you made that first decision to surrender to God and be saved. The soul decides where you will spend eternity. God proclaims the gospel through His saints, and those who believe are made new. Those who do not believe in God's Son remain dead forever.

Before you surrendered your life to Christ, you sought pleasure, security, and significance in your life. You desired to belong and to be loved. These are legitimate needs. God created you with these needs. Yet, you sought them in earthly ways, independently of God. You tried to fill these needs through relationships, earthly pursuits, pleasures, or possessions. You looked for true belonging and found lust disguised as love. You looked for significance, but no pursuit satisfied or gave you the value you desired. So you kept looking, kept climbing. You looked for security and sought secure jobs, secure homes, secure policies, finding only insecurity as those things crumbled underneath your feet. You remained unsatisfied even after all this searching.



Your soul was trained in the system of the world, and, until God impacted your life, you believed the soul and obeyed its commands. It steered the course of your life, always seeking to satisfy itself; you sought to satisfy yourself as a sinner, without hope in the world.

Sin is more than missing the mark. Sin is man's desperate attempt to try to find meaning apart from God. Sin has pleasure within it. If it didn't, we could easily avoid it. Chasing after the pleasure of sin, we will take kilograms of drugs or drink litres of alcohol to experience a few moments of artificial peace and the high our bodies crave. We will have sex with whoever we

find in order to belong to someone, destroying other people's lives as we destroy our own. We will work ourselves to death, to achieve the success we desire. We will do all things to the destruction of the people around us and our own selves.

The world counsels us, and defines for us what is okay. Like a talk show host who recently advised a nineteen-year-old girl that three-way sex is good for her. Experience all you can while you are single, the host counselled, since you will be locked in once you are married. The world says to experiment lots with sin. The world says you deserve to be happy, so enjoy what you want.

God says if you sin, you will die.

In Christ, your life is on a new course charted by the King of kings. He's in charge of you, His church and bride. He leads you according to the will of His Father, Almighty God.

Your soul (like the captain in the opening illustration) has been trained by your old life, by the world, and by the evil one. Your soul wants to be responsible for what it learned on earth. It clings to the earth. Your soul wants to protect itself and preserve its life. It doesn't want to accept that it is dead, crucified in Christ, and powerless to control you any longer. Your responsibility is to convince the soul who you now are, who God is, and that you live for the glory and will of God alone.

The soul questions the truth of God's word, bringing accusations and questions to you. The Father commands a certain course for you which takes your soul into discomfort and fear, seemingly into harm's way. The natural response of your soul is to cry out saying, "Now you are telling me to do what? If God tells me to say that, I'll go to jail." Or "You expect me to do that?! I will look stupid! What will people think? Should I do that? No way!"

When you tell your soul you are now a righteous being, the soul counters with all its experiences on earth. "You? A righteous person? Don't you remember all you did? All we did together? What fun we had? And remember what you just did yesterday when you got mad at your boss at work? You?! A righteous person. You're kidding, right?" The soul tries logical arguments to counter you. Your soul says, "If you are totally righteous and your behaviour does not affect your identity, then that means you can do whatever you want to do and it won't matter, right? So come on let's party. You have it made!"

Believer, knowing your identity is not just a nice Christian exercise to make you feel good about yourself. Knowing your identity is not positive thinking to motivate yourself or give yourself a pep talk. Knowing your identity is positive believing, putting your full weight in the truth of who you really are and how life operates for you in the Kingdom of God. Knowing your identity is critical to living in victory as a Christian.

Knowing your identity is critical to living in victory as a Christian.

The wicked programming of the soul is based on the evil system of lust, not love, and it tries to fight against the real you. The soul craves for itself, for its security, for its significance, for its sense of belonging. It seeks immediate, physical pleasure and safety. The soul hates discomfort that moves it into harm. The soul does not want to accept that it is no longer in charge, that it is crucified, and no longer has any control or power over you.

Your soul needs to know your identity. It needs to know you are in charge. It will obey you when it sees your credentials as the righteous being you are. It is not your master any longer. You have been set free from sin's power through Jesus Christ. You are the master of your soul and your body, not the other way around.

God commands you to not let sin reign. "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts."[142] Notice whose lust it is. It is not *your* lust, but instead it is sin's lust. Sin, which resides in your soul, wants to reign, but *you* are commanded to not let it do so. He would not command you to do something He knew you could not do. He fully expects you to not let sin reign. To do this, you have to override the natural way of thinking in the soul. Your soul has to come to grips with God's way of thinking, and it's a challenge because it must now be trained by truth. It has to learn new ways and it doesn't like it — at first. But after a while, your soul will submit to its new authority and obey the orders, again, very much like the captain who obeys the new owner in the story.

The Word of God trains your mind. It divides between the soul and spirit, joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart.[143] You *want* the thinking of the soul to be exposed by the Word of God. You want to live out who you truly are in Christ. You delight in God's law. The word of God will wash your soul and body and bring them in line with who you really are in the Spirit. Your thinking will come in line. Your behaviour will begin to change.

YOUR BODY

Your body is the "earth suit" in which you live and is only made for the planet. Your body needs food, oxygen, rest and the climate of this world to exist. Your body will return to dust when it dies, but your spirit will live on forever. Your spirit, the *real you*, exists in eternity right now. This is the reality of your existence in Christ Jesus.

The human body was made good in its original creation. It was innocent of evil. When God formed Adam, He said His work was good. But, God said, it was not good for man to be alone. So God made a being of like kind to Adam. He made a woman from man, and then God said it was very good; His creation was now complete. In Genesis 2, we see that God formed the first man from the dust of the ground and breathed life into man and he became a living being. The life of man was in the blood.

When Adam chose to sin, sin entered his body. Death now reigned in his mortal body. A spiritual disconnection took place followed later by the actual physical death. Death reigned, bringing sickness and pain into mankind's existence.

People often ask why God allows sin and evil to exist in the world. They accuse God of not being a good God because of the suffering in the world. Sin and death were not in the plan of God when He created Adam. Adam could have lived forever, free from sickness and death, in perfect security and belonging, and with absolute significance, had he chosen to believe God. When He disbelieved God, he was cast from God's presence, so that God's holiness would not destroy him. Adam entered into independence from God, into sin, resulting in spiritual death, followed by physical death. Sin is the result of man's choice, not God's. Sin is a trap from which it is impossible for us to free ourselves. God took it upon Himself to set us free at a great cost to Himself.

In our new birth, in Christ, God placed our new spirit in our body where sin still reigned. Yet He set us free from its power so we walk in faith in Him.

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[142] Romans 6:12

[143] 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Why do you think God allowed our new spirit to be housed in a body still affected by sin?

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In his letter to the Corinthian church, Paul explains why:

> *7But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed — 10always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.* **(***2 Corinthians 4:7-11)*

How is our body described in these verses?

_____

Why does God keep us in our bodies, even after He saves us, according to this verse?

_____

What do you think Paul means by "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus"?

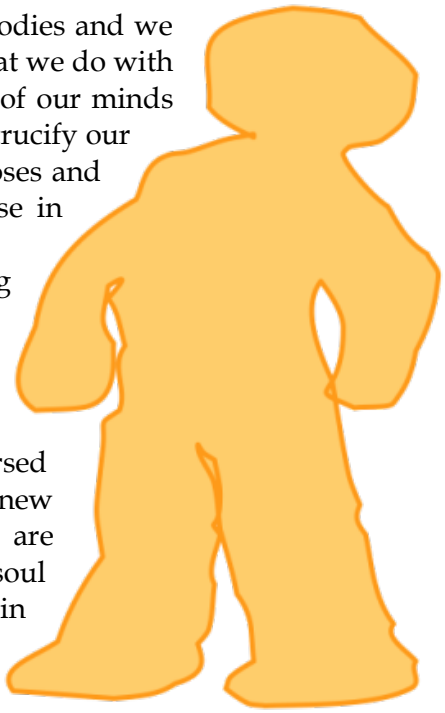
_____

_____

We are continually reminded through the frailty of our bodies, and the sin that still dwells in them, that living the Christian life is impossible without Christ living His life through us. Jesus gives life to our bodies and we walk by faith in Him. Yet we are continually denying our body and soul their desire to reign over us. We continually accept the reality that we have been crucified with Christ, and we no longer live, but Christ now lives in us.[144] God continually reminds us through suffering that we can do nothing apart from Christ, but we can do all things, even endure horrible suffering, through Christ who strengthens us.

God has sanctified our spirit and now He sanctifies our soul and body as well. The process of sanctification of the believer's body is the process of making the body blameless before God, bringing it in line with the reality of the spirit. The body will not return to heaven because it has sinned, but God will give it life through the Spirit that dwells in you.[145]

[144] Galatians 2:20
[145] Romans 8:11



Our bodies are not the real us. But we are housed in our bodies and we are commanded to take care of them. We are responsible for what we do with our bodies. God commands us be transformed by the renewing of our minds and to present our bodies to Him as living sacrifices. He didn't crucify our bodies, but He commands us to give them to Him for His purposes and will. We yield every part of our bodies to God for Him to use in righteousness.

Sin reigns in your body, and lusts against the *real you*, lusting for physical pleasure and the illusion of security of the seen world. You have been set free from this sin, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You died to the power of independence, and have been raised to new life. You were cut away from the sin that dwells in your soul and body, being immersed into the death of Christ,[146] having been circumcised and given a new heart, and you were sealed by God with His Holy Spirit. You are untouched by this independence. Independence reigns in your soul and body, but it does not reign in the real *you*. This independence in your soul and body is what the Bible calls flesh.

The Bible uses the term flesh to mean three different things. When you read the word "flesh" it's important to look at the whole context of the passage. Flesh is sometimes used to mean our physical body. Flesh is sometimes used to describe types of created beings, animals, fish, and other created animals. And flesh is also used to describe the independence that dwells in our soul and body. We will talk about the flesh in more detail in a later chapter.

How wise God is. He designed a system called faith, whereby we live in complete dependence upon Him. God created us to walk in complete dependence on Him knowing that the power of the Christian life is from Him alone. We can't try to live the Christian life. We must walk by faith alone. For the Christian life to work, Christ must live His life in and through us. We can never live independently of Him again and experience the powerful victory of the Christian life. We have been intimately connected to Him and He is in us. We can do nothing apart from Him.

Your body is a vessel for your spirit, which is the real you. Your body is designed for the earth. Your body is yours, and you are responsible to care for it. But it is *not you*. How do we know? If your body was to die today, your spirit would live on eternally with God, but your body would return to dust.

As you read the following passages, you will discover for yourself what the Scripture says about your body. Please read the passages below and fill in the blanks to see:

1 Corinthians 6:12-20 **What should your body be used for, according to this passage?**

_____

The body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. God highly values your body. He made it and it is good. God wants to restore your body to its original purpose, to be used to bring Him honour and glory.

[146] Romans 6:4

If your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, how sacred is your body to God?

_____

Your body houses the Holy Spirit of God. Your body is incredibly sacred to God. He placed your new and righteous spirit in your body and sealed you with His own Spirit, and He has made Himself one with your spirit. He cut your spirit away from your soul and body, so that no sin could enter your spirit and undo the work that He did in sanctifying you. But now He commands you to present your body to Him. He wants your body to be used for righteousness because you are now a righteous being, at the cost of the life of His Son. You also want to use your body for righteousness because, in your spirit, you only want the will of God. You delight in His law. You hunger for Him alone. You do not want to walk according to the flesh. You are a slave to righteousness now.

Read Romans 8:10-11 What do you think it means when Paul says our body is dead because of sin?

_____

_____

Our bodies were fully alive before Adam sinned, but when sin entered, they died and even now they are dying. Our body is not eternal and cannot be eternal. But God wants us to use our bodies for His glory and purposes now. We need them for the planet and for His work on earth.

What will Christ do to your mortal body, according to Romans 8:11?

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> *1For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,3if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 5Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. 9Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. (2 Corinthians 5:1-9)*

When our earthly body is destroyed and returns to dust, what will we receive?

_____

What do you think it means that mortality will be swallowed up by life?

_____

Why did God give us the Holy Spirit, according to this passage?

_____

Think about this verse for a moment: *"So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight." (v.8)*

What do you think it means?

_____

In what way are we absent from the Lord?

_____

When we are in our bodies, we are not physically with the Lord, where we can see Him face to face. Yet He is always with us. He is in us, and we are in Him. When our bodies die and return to dust, we will be physically present with the Lord and see Him face to face.

Why does being "absent from the Lord" require a walk of faith and not a walk of sight?

_____

In our Christian lives, we walk by faith until we come face to face with God. We cannot see Him, yet we must obey Him. So we listen to Him through His word, waiting on Him, and moving with Him as He directs us. We work with Him in the transformation process of our soul and body. There is something we must do and there is something God is doing. Both are operating at the same time. "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."[147] According to these verses, we are responsible to work out this salvation within us, the new creation life of our spirit, being who we really are. At the same time, God is working with us "to will and to do for His good pleasure." God is working within and alongside our spirit by His Holy Spirit, guiding, instructing, and disciplining us; he teaches us His ways, His thoughts and what gives Him pleasure.

Our work as a believer is to believe God.

When the Pharisees saw Jesus perform the miracle of feeding five thousand people, they asked Jesus how they could work the works of God. The Pharisees wanted to do God-sized tasks to get the physical results. Jesus replied, "This is the work of God that you believe in Him

[147] Philippians 2:12,13

whom He sent."[148] Our work as a believer is to believe God. We believe in the completed work God accomplished on the cross. We do not move from the simplicity of the gospel, of Christ and Him crucified. We align our souls and bodies to this truth, bringing them into obedience and working this through our thinking process so that our souls obey the truth of God's Word. We are to live out this salvation by believing that we are truly saved and complete.

We will succeed because God is working within us to will and do for His good pleasure. We are not alone. We are His and He will complete what He has begun in us. He will present us blameless, spirit, soul and body. He is conforming us into the image of His Son. He will not stop until He has completely saved us.

The opposite of sin is not good behaviour. The opposite of sin is *faith*. Faith pleases God. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."[149] Faith puts its hope in God, whom we cannot see. As we believe Him, we see evidence of our faith as our prayers and our lives bring impact into the physical world, beginning first with our body and moving to the world around us. Faith puts its full trust in God as the Sustainer and Source of life. Faith gives glory to God alone because we know that we could do nothing to save ourselves. We accept His work in our lives as complete and total, fully resting in God who will now conform us to the image of His Son. Faith has a child-like acceptance of the wonderful gift God has given to us through Jesus Christ.

THE FLESH IS NOT YOU!

In understanding who you are, one of the most clarifying Truths of Key 5 is this: *You are not the flesh.* Your soul and body are not the flesh either. The flesh is the independent programming residing in and desiring to use your soul and body. The flesh is the memory of your past life when you lived according to the ways of the world. It dwells *with* you, but it is *not you*![150]

The flesh resides in the subconscious part of your brain and your body. Now that you are new, the thinking of your soul needs to be renewed by fully believing the truth of God's word.[151] You must know the word of God to know what to believe because God alone defines your reality.

We do not get rid of the flesh by attacking it head on or trying to change it. We deal with it by believing the truth of what God's word says about the flesh and us, and focusing on what is eternally Real. We yield our soul and our body to God, to His Truth, abiding within Him, and the truth will set us free from the lies of the flesh.

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[148] John 6:29
[149] Hebrews 11:1
[150] Romans 7:21
[151] Romans 12:1, 2

DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF: WHAT IS THE FLESH (NKJV)

As you meditate on the verses below, fill in the blanks from the verse you are reading. Try not to rush through just to fill in the blanks. Sit in His Word, asking Him to give you understanding of what He is really saying about you.

Romans 7:17-18 **But now**, it is no longer _____ who do it, but it is _____ that dwells in me [18] For I know that in me (that is, in my _____) nothing good dwells.....

Question: Where does sin dwell, according to the verse above? _____

Notice that sin dwells in the flesh and not in *you!* Paul is states a profound truth here, one we must grapple with to understand who we are in Christ. We have been cut away from sin that dwells in the flesh through the circumcision of Christ. Notice also the two words that begin these verses, "but now..."

What do you think "But now..." refers to? _____

"But now" shows that something new has happened. Paul is contrasting the previous verses of Romans 7:14-16. Look carefully at Romans 7:14-16 in the NKJV. The NIV does not appear to be as clear on this point. Paul refers to himself as carnal sold into sin. We know that in Romans 6 Paul just stated emphatically that a believer is not a slave of sin any longer because he/she has died to sin. Sin no longer has dominion over a believer. So Paul, in these verses is talking about the old man, who he was before Christ. Then in verse 17 he states "But now..." But now he is a new believer and it is no longer him who is sinning, but sin that dwells in the flesh.

_____

Galatians 5:17 The flesh lusts against _____

Galatians 5:16 If I walk in the spirit, I will not _____

Galatians 5:24 If you are Christ's, the flesh is _____

The flesh is crucified. There is nothing you need to do to crucify the flesh. It was crucified by Christ the moment you surrendered your life to Christ.

Galatians 6:8 And those who are Christ's have _____ with its passions and desires. **Notice the past tense of this statement. The flesh is crucified.**

Colossians 2:11 In _____ you were also _____ with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the

_____, by the circumcision of Christ,

Romans 6:6 The old man was _____

that the _____ might be done away with, so that we should

no longer be _____.of sin.

Notice the similar phrasing of Romans 6:6 and Colossians 2:11. In the circumcision of Christ, we were cut away from the body of sins of the flesh, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Why, according to Romans 6:6 did God circumcise us away from the body of the sin?

_____

Did you write that we should no longer be slaves of sin? This is the amazing truth of circumcision. God has cut us away from sin that remains in our soul and body. He set us apart to Himself in our new spirit, so we are holy, righteous, and without blame. Now He is taking over our soul and body with truth, washing our soul with the word of God as we yielding our body to be used by righteousness. .

Romans 8:8 Those who are in the flesh cannot _____God.

Romans 8:9 But you _____ in the flesh if _____

dwells in you.

Notice again the transitional phrase "But you..." Paul just wrote those in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. You have been cut away from the flesh. You are no longer in it.

Please take a moment to reflect and summarize in your own words what God is saying about you through these verses.

_____

_____

_____

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO OBEY THE FLESH

The key words in the passages above are, "*But now*" and "*But you.*" Something happened to you through the death and resurrection of Christ. "*But now*"... because of what God did in Christ Jesus, you are no longer who you were. You have been made right with God. "*But you*" are not in the flesh if the Spirit of Christ dwells in you. You are in your body, but your body is not the flesh referred to by Paul in this passage. He is talking about the sin that wants to reign in your body and soul. Your body is not bad. Your body is neutral and sin wants to use your body to bring dishonour to God.

The flesh has no power over you anymore *unless you give it power*. Before you were saved, you always walked in independence. Everything you did was sin. You always walked in the flesh. Now that you have been circumcised away from the flesh through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, you no longer *have to* sin. You can sin, in the flesh, but you do not *have to* sin any longer. You are *not* a slave of sin. You are free from sin's power and are a slave to God's righteousness. The flesh is crucified. Paul explains that when we sin in the flesh, it is not us doing it, but sin's doing.[152] Sin is lusting in my soul and body, seeking dominion. Yet God holds us responsible and commands us to not let sin reign in our bodies that we should obey its lusts. We are responsible to walk in the spirit, so we will not carry out the lusts of the flesh.

You have been set free through the cross of Christ and have been given all authority to live a victorious life in Christ. You do not have to obey the flesh. This is the power of your identity. If you are not walking in this victory, the problem is that you do not really believe who you are.

Growing in your Christian life is like being an RCMP officer who is new to the job. Compare this novice officer to an officer with twenty years experience. Both have the same authority, but one knows he has it and the other is scared to fully use his authority. When the novice officer steps into the intersection to direct traffic, his signals are timid and uncertain. The traffic pauses but does not respond to his efforts. Then the veteran officer steps in, directs the traffic, commands cars to stop, and exerts his full authority to get the job done.

What is the problem with the novice officer?

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Think of a novice teacher compared to a veteran teacher. The novice enters the grade 5 classroom almost paralyzed with fear. She wants the students to like her and tries to be a friend to everyone. The children walk all over her and she ends up wanting to quit her job on the first day. A veteran teacher goes into the same class room, commands attention, demanding obedience lovingly, yet with such authority, the children fear to disobey her. Both teachers have the exact same authority. One uses it and one doesn't know how to use it.

The Christian life is like the experience of the RCMP[153] officer and the teacher. When we are saved, we have been given all the authority of Christ to live a completely victorious Christian life. When we are first saved, we do not realize the authority we have. We have authority to cast out demons, raise the dead, heal the blind, and make the lame walk. We can walk on water and live a completely victorious, powerful life in Christ. The authority is ours in Christ, given to

[152] Romans 7:16-18

[153] Royal Canadian Mounted Police

us by Christ, but we often do not believe we have it. If we did think about it, we would not even know what to do with it.

WHO WAS I BEFORE CHRIST?: THE OLD ME

I was **CARNAL**, earthly.
I was **SOLD** under sin.

I was a **Slave of sin**.

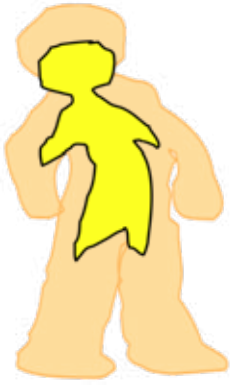
I **COULD NOT LIVE UP** to the Law of God.

SINFUL PASSIONS were at work in my members, bearing fruit of death.

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. (Romans 7:14-16)

For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. (Romans 7:5)

WHO AM I IN CHRIST: THE NEW ME



I DIED with Christ to the law and married Christ.

I am **NEW** in the spirit and I bear fruit to God.

In Christ, I have been **CIRCUMCISED [cut away]** from the flesh. I am no longer in the flesh.

As a result, I am **FREE** from the power of sin.

Now, it is **NO LONGER I WHO SIN**, but sin that dwells in my flesh.

The law of sin is present **WITH** me in the flesh.

But, in Christ, I am **FREE** from the law of sin and death which dwells in the flesh.

In Christ, the flesh is condemned and the requirements of the law have been **FULFILLED** in me.

I am in the spirit, **NOT IN THE FLESH,** because the Spirit of God dwells in Me.

"Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another-- to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. 6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter." (Romans 7: 4 – 6)

"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." (Colossians 2:11-15)

"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." (Romans 6:5-6)

"But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man." (Romans 7:17-22)

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." (Romans 8:2- 9)

WHAT DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE?

Are You New...But Not Really?

Let's pause to ask an important question. **Why do we, as Christians, so often choose not to believe God's word?** We *mentally* agree with God's word, even saying, yes, we are new, but in our heart of hearts, we do not really believe we are new. How do we know we don't believe? We do not *do* the word. We will say, yes, we are righteous, but in our heart we do not really believe we are actually righteous and our lives reflect what we really believe.

Do you struggle with believing you are truly a righteous being? Why or why not?

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When you filled out the chart at the beginning of Key 4, you admitted how you viewed yourself. **How have your views of yourself changed since you started this study?**

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As we begin to walk with God, learning to walk by faith and not by sight, we come face to face with the reality that we are righteous beings who still sin in the flesh. We still struggle with impure thoughts. We still do things we wish we didn't. We can tell we are transforming, but we do not seem to be totally transformed. The conclusion Christians often come to based on this experience is that we cannot be actually righteous or we wouldn't have impure thoughts or sinful thoughts. Welcome, then, to doctrines that arise that seek to justify the seeming inconsistencies between our experience as believers and the word of God.

FOUR COMMON DOCTRINAL ERRORS ABOUT IDENTITY

SINNERS SAVED BY GRACE?

We try to justify seeming contradictions with God's word, by creating doctrines that say we must only be declared righteous by God, but not actually *be* righteous, because we still sometimes sin in the flesh. Or we justify this problem with phrases like, "We are sinners saved by grace" or "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven." The problem with these phrases is that

they lack Biblical support.

We see the term *sinners* used in reference to believers in the New Testament only in the following places: James challenges the believers saying, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."[154] James is writing about carnal believers who are arguing and fighting. The list of "works of the flesh" in Galatians 5:17 - 18 shows us that these behaviours are characteristic of the flesh. James is speaking to believers who are living in the flesh like mere men. They are double minded, focusing on the mind of the flesh and not the mind of Christ and who they really are in Him. He challenges them to humble themselves under God's mighty hand and God will lift them up. James is calling believers to be who they truly are and to stop living in the flesh. The solution to the problem of the flesh, Paul says in Galatians 5:16, is to walk in the spirit, then you won't carry out the lusts of the flesh.

Paul uses the term "sinner" of himself in 1 Timothy 1:15 when he says *"I am the chief of sinners."* But Paul was referring to his life persecuting the church, *before* he was saved and set free from sin. To say that Paul is viewing his identity as a sinner, a being independent of God, would be to take this verse out of context.

In Romans 7:14, Paul writes, *"I am carnal, sold under sin."* Romans 7 must be read in the context of Romans 5 – 8. Romans 6 and 7 are written to explain what it means to be justified by faith. They are like parentheses between Romans 5 and 8. In Romans 5, Paul writes that we are made righteous in Christ. In Romans 6, He describes how we were made righteous, having been crucified with Christ and set free from sin, therefore we are no longer slaves of sin. Paul had proclaimed that he who has died is freed from sin in Romans 6:7. So it stands to reason, in Romans 7:14 that Paul is not referring to himself as a sinner, but instead, following the argument in 7:1-13 about the purpose of the law, he is showing what he was as a person who lived under the law.

A change takes place in verses 7:16-18 when Paul begins, "But now..." and goes on to describe that it is no longer he who sins, but sin that is in the flesh. Paul is free from sin. Unfortunately in the New International Version, this transition of meaning is not clear. In the NIV verse 7:16 reads, "As it is...." and does not have the clarity as the NKJV.

In contrast to these very few references to Christian "sinners," from Acts to Revelation, believers are referred to as "saints" sixty times! Paul liberally uses the term "saints" thirty-nine times in his epistles alone. Clearly the evidence is weighted against the use of the term sinner for the believer.

COVERED BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST?

A popular doctrine proposed to justify fleshly behaviour in believers says we are "covered by the blood of Jesus," therefore God does not destroy us, even though we do sin. This argument basically says we are protected by the blood, but if that blood were removed, we would be destroyed because we are basically still sinners. So in essence the blood stays between us and God. The belief is that we are not truly righteous. We are just covered by the blood of Christ.

[154] James 4:8

TWO NATURES AT WAR?

Another doctrine that is in error says that we have two natures within us that war against each other. The argument identifies a believer as a sinner, trying to be righteous; not a righteous being who sometimes sins in the flesh. This belief results in a perpetual trying to be holy or clean and a discouraging Christian walk. It produces two emotions. If you sense you are attaining this holiness, pride or arrogance comes and often judgement against those who are not striving like you are. The other emotion is depression or guilt that you can never really please God and He's never really pleased with you because you know your behaviour can never measure up to His holiness.

A careful study of Romans 7 differentiates between the spirit and the flesh. The NIV replaces the word flesh with "sinful nature." It further translates it as "our sinful nature." We think that the NKJV is the better translation for Romans 7, using the term flesh and not "sinful nature." We do not have two natures within us warring with each other. We have one new nature, the new spirit we have been given, which has been circumcised away from the sin that remains in the flesh. The flesh is with us, but is not *in* us and we are not in the flesh. There is no sin in us, in our new spirit. Our spirit has been sealed by God and can never go independent of God again. Our spirit delights in the law of God.

Paul declares, *"But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me...that is in my flesh"*(vv.17,18). Paul makes a clear distinction that we are not the ones who are sinning, but sin that dwells the flesh. In Galatians 5:16, Paul reveals the solution. He says, "Walk in the spirit,[155] and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

We will work through the argument Paul makes in Romans 6–8 in a later chapter. Romans is a critical book for understanding the righteousness of the believer. Paul writes with such clarity! He wrote eleven chapters on the doctrine of the gospel, clearly spelling out these difficult truths for us to comprehend the mystery of the gospel revealed to Paul by Christ Himself.

LOSE OUR SALVATION?

Other believers teach we can lose our salvation (perhaps even multiple times). According to this line of thinking, when the true believer sins (usually some "serious" or repetitive sin) he or she goes past the grace of God, and needs to be saved again. The result of this is Christians continuously going to the alter during church services hoping to be saved, only to go through the ritual again and again. They never know that they are truly saved and righteous in Christ.

The logic behind this argument is not biblical, however. As we have seen in Key 4, when we were saved we were sealed with the Holy Spirit and have God's promise that He will keep us until the end. No one will snatch us away.[156] We are connected to Him and dependent upon Him now. We are His children and nothing will change that reality. Believer, your sins have been removed as far as the east is from the west.[157] By God's grace alone you have been saved.[158]

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[155] Galatians 5:16 (author's translation). Author's Note: As Greek scholars realize, the capitalization of the word spirit is subject to the interpretation of the translator, since in the Greek language capitals are not used. In this particular context of Galatians 5, it appears that a small "s" for spirit is more contextually appropriate than a large "S" which would mean the Holy Spirit. Our spirit is one with the Holy Spirit, and our spirit wars against the flesh.

[156] John 10:28-29

[157] Psalm 103:12

You have been justified by faith, not your works. God has made you whole in your spirit and He is making you whole, spirit, soul and body And He is sufficient to save you completely.[159]

You can see the problem, can't you? No wonder Christians have struggled with this over the years.

So what do we do about Christians who sin? If we were saved by our behaviours, by our own works, then yes, we would be sinners. If we were sinners, then yes, we would have to be saved over and over again. Christ's death and resurrection would not be enough for us, if our salvation were dependent upon us. This is the argument of the book of Galatians. Galatians is a wonderful book to read over and over again if you struggle with any of these issues. Thank God, our salvation depends upon only Him and the finished work of the cross!

BIRTH, NOT BEHAVIOUR

The good news is our behaviour does not define us. Birth defines us. Again, as we saw in Key 4 *Believe*, we were born through Adam into death and were dead in our trespasses and sins. Now, we have been born again in Jesus Christ. We were sinners who have been saved by the grace of God, through faith, not works. Salvation is a gift of God. No man can boast that this salvation is of us. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."[160] We are justified, made righteous, through faith in Christ.

We are not justified by anything we have done or ever could do. We are justified by the grace of God alone. Paul declares: "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."[161] Righteousness came through faith in Jesus Christ. To the Roman church Paul writes: For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."[162] Everyone who believes is saved and made just, right with God, through Jesus Christ. We are just and the just will live by faith, believing the God who saved them.

In Galatians, Paul writes this startling question, "This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"[163] Too often, as the church, we try to earn, through religious behaviour, what we already have.

We try to live the Christian life by doing religious things. We try to read our Bible more only to feel guilty if we fail. We try to be faithful at attending church, and again feel guilty when we miss a Sunday. We make Christianity a work and it becomes devoid of spiritual power and joy. It feels hard and the joy we had as a new believer is replaced with the dullness of drudgery and duty. Our lives miss real life and passion.

The Christian life is impossible to live by trying to live it. Trying to live it says either we are living in the flesh, or we are not really saved. A dead person cannot live the Christian life and a

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158 Galatians 5:1-6
159 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24
160 Galatians 2:16
161 Galatians 2:21
162 Romans 1:16,17
163 Galatians 3:2-3

person who is walking in the flesh will live a life of a mere human being. We live the Christian life because it is who we are. We are just being who we are. We are not trying to be. We just *are*.

If you do not believe what God says about you, you will try to become who you think you should be and your Christianity will become religious and pious.

Jesus warns us that unless we become like a little child we cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.[164] By "little," Jesus is talking small. Little. A toddler. Think two-year-old.

What are the characteristics of a little child?

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A little child is totally dependent on the parent for everything. For food. For safety. For money. For clothes. For learning to speak. For learning to listen. For learning the difference between truth and error. For fun and for rest. For the expression of love.

When a little boy falls down while learning to walk, does a good mom kick her child across the room and call him names? No, instead she picks him up, dusts him off, hugs him and sets him on his feet again to keep learning. As a little girl is learning to talk, she utters babbling sounds that make no sense, yet her dad cheers her on, repeating the babbling with words, enjoying his little girl in the process of her learning. He laughs with her, hugs her, and encourages her in her effort to speak. If good earthly parents love their children in this way, how much more will God enjoy you? He loves you with an everlasting love. He created you to enjoy and love Him forever. He loves you and enjoys you. He delights in you. God has joy being with you! Take a look at these verses:

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. (Psalm 37:23)

My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Proverbs 3:11-12)

You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married. (Isaiah 62:4)

Delight
1. *Great pleasure; joy.*
2. *Something that gives great pleasure or enjoyment.*

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

You give God great pleasure and joy just by *being* who you are in Christ, fully believing that what God says about you is true. You are His workmanship, His masterpiece. You are perfect in beauty. Nothing can improve you. You are complete in Him. He is pleased with His work. When you believe Him, He has great joy and is greatly honoured by your faith. He will reward you and cause His face to shine on you. You are His delight.

[164] Matthew 18:2-3

YOU CANNOT TRY

> *Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations – "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using – according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. (Colossians 2:20-23)*

When you died with Christ, what did you also die to, according to this verse?

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What has no value against indulgence of the flesh, according to Colossian 2:20-23?

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You have died to the elementary principles of the world your soul and body believed. You have died to the rules of behaviour. These rules are within you now. God put the law in your heart. You delight in it. Just be who you are. You cannot try to be Christian. You either are one or you are not.

People often say things like, "If only I read my Bible more, I will feel closer to God," "If I attend church more, I'll do better," "If I pray more", or "I should pray in this way or that way." All of these are good things, but they become evil if we are using them to try to be more of what we are.

People who attend support groups often say, "I need a meeting. If I don't have my meeting, I'll use drugs or alcohol or go back to what had enslaved me before." What is the common theme in these statements? "I" need to do something; I should do something. The focus of these statements is unhealthy. They are "self" focused.

We are free in Christ. Someone once said, "Love God and do whatever you want." That is a very true statement. What do you want to do if you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? You want to live for His glory and pleasure alone. You want to be who you are and love those people God places in your life. You are a righteous being. As a righteous being, what do you want to do? You want to live righteously, don't you? You want to love God. You are created for Him.

Because I love God, I pray. I enjoy talking with Him. I want to be with Him. I don't *have to* pray. *I get to*. Because I am a righteous being in Christ, I want to live righteously. It is who I am. I can be nothing less than that. I cannot deny myself and who God has made me. I love because I have been loved by God. I pray because it's natural to pray. I attend church because I want to know and love God and learn from Him. I go to a worship service because I want to worship and bring honour to my God. Going to meetings, praying, or reading my Bible do not make me more spiritual or more holy. I am already spiritual and holy, so I read my Bible to learn from God. I want to. I get to. I enjoy God. It is who I am. I don't do these things because I *have to. I get to. I want to!*

Through the death of Christ, you have died to what held you before. You don't have to obey a law outside of you saying to do this or do that. You are not under the law. You have no guilt. If you want to follow a system of law, listen to what Paul says to the Galatia church: "Even

so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."[165]

God sent His Son into the world, born a human being, born under the law, to redeem those who are in bondage to the law, so we could be free to be become His adopted children. Sin, which was activated through the law, lost its power over us because we are no longer under law, but under grace.

Believer, you have died to the law. You have died to what once held you. This means you no longer need to have rules placed over you to force you to change your behaviour. Now the rules are within you, in your new spirit which is sealed by God and in which God has placed His law. You delight in the law of God in your inner man.

What happens when someone tells you that you can't do something you want to do? What emotion do you feel? What do you begin to think about most?

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Sin is activated by the law. Without the law, we have no awareness of sin. But when the law was introduced, we became aware that we could go independent of the law.

Take another look at Colossians 2:20-23

> *Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.*

According to these verses, will trying to change your behaviour, trying to obey religious rules or trying religious behaviours, help you overcome the lust of the flesh according to Colossians 2:20-23? Why or why not?

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Now read 1 Corinthians 3:1-3:

> *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*

[165] Galatians 4:3-5

Who is Paul referring to when he says, "*Are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*" in the passage above?

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If you are still experiencing dysfunction (envy, strife and divisions, depression, anxiety, fear, ungodly anger, lust, greed) as a Christian, what are you, according to 1 Corinthians 3:1-3?

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God calls us to grow to maturity in Him. Mature believers live by faith in God. Maturity is not determined by length of years on the planet. We sometimes get confused when we see people who have been in the church gathering for a long time, yet they behave like "mere men" as they gossip, complain and live like the world, yet they call themselves leaders or strong Christians. Length of time means nothing to God. He is the Ancient of Days. Time doesn't matter in His World. And we exist in Him. Time doesn't matter to us either. What matters is faith. Faith is what pleases God.

Paul says to the Roman church, "Do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies that you should obey its lusts." Sin is lusting in your flesh, but you must not let it reign and have dominion over you for you are not under law, but under grace.

> *9For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. 10According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. 11For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.15If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:9-15)*

The foundation of our lives as a child of God is Christ. If we build on this foundation with works of faith, meaning these works are really works done by God through us, we will receive a reward. **But if we build on the foundation of Jesus Christ with anything other than Christ, what will happen to the work we do, according to the verses above?**

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And what will happen to us, if we build on the foundation of Jesus Christ with things that are fleshly or not eternal?

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We will be saved, as through fire, but our works will be destroyed. Only works done in faith will be rewarded by God. If we are truly saved, we will not lose our salvation by works

done in the flesh, but we will not be rewarded in heaven for these works. God will not receive anything from us that He Himself has not done through us. You can see the importance of abiding in Him, and walking with Him as He works through us with His mighty power. We can offer nothing to God. He will receive nothing from us, but what He does through us. Only He works out His will perfectly.

COMING TO HEALTH

All we have known and believed in before we knew Christ must now be evaluated by the Word of God, by Christ alone. Our best thinking in the world is not even close to the most foolish thought God would have. In our natural mind, we cannot comprehend the things of God. God calls our best thinking foolishness. Health begins when we admit how foolish we really are. We must admit that we really don't know what we thought we knew. It's humbling to admit this, especially if we have taught bible classes and been in church for a long time. James says, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God and He will exalt you. He will lift you up."[166]

Jesus said unless we die, we will not truly live. We must die to our understanding, die to any false doctrine that is contrary to the gospel, die to our skills and our abilities, die to everything we thought we were or think we are that is not in line with Truth. When we die, we will live.

Must we crucify ourselves then, over and over? No, if we had to crucify ourselves it would be a work of ours. The work is done. We have been crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20). Past tense. The old is gone and the new has come. No, our work is to believe that what God has done He has actually done in Christ. The answer is not trying to do something to overcome the flesh, the answer is to believe the truth that the flesh is overcome. You have overcome the flesh in Christ. It's finished. The flesh is crucified and you reign with God forever. You are free. Now don't use your freedom to indulge the flesh. Yield your body to God for Him to use for righteousness and renew your mind (the mind of the soul) with the truth of God's word. As you do this, you will experience the freedom you have in Christ.

The answer to victory in the Christian life is Christ alone. He is the Rock. He is the foundation of our lives. There is no wisdom apart from the wisdom God reveals to us through His Spirit, opening our understanding to the Word of God, who is Christ. This is eternal life that we might know Him. We know nothing but Christ and Him crucified. We rely on nothing else. We put no confidence in the flesh or worldly systems to define reality for us now. We return to the simplicity of the gospel. We rely solely on His Word, sitting with Him and learning from Him for He is meek and humble of heart. We will find rest for our souls. We have entered the Sabbath rest of God. "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."[167] As you do this, you will begin to experience and walk in the freedom you have in Christ.

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[166] James 4:10

[167] 1 Corinthians 3:11

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

> *I say then: Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*[168]

What must we do to not fulfill the lusts of the flesh?

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Most Bible translators, including the NKJV which is quoted above, translate the word "spirit" using a capital S, meaning the Holy Spirit. In the Greek, capitalization is not evident and must be implied. In the context of this passage, Paul is writing about the flesh and the spirit in a human being, not the Spirit of God. Paul is saying to walk in the newness of who you really are.

Many phrases in the Bible mean the same as "walk in the spirit": Walk by faith and not by sight. Abide in Christ. Love God. Your work is to believe. Walk in the light. Enter the Sabbath rest of God. We walk in the spirit when we fully believe and rest in the finished work of Christ in us.

The emphasis of walking in the spirit is faith. We walk by faith in God who has set us free from the power of sin in the flesh and seated us in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. He has given us everything we need to live godly lives. There is no excuse any longer to not live godly because He now works within us to will and to do for His good pleasure. We are created in complete dependence on Him.

Freedom, in the Christian life, does not mean freedom to do anything at all. When we were sinners, we were slaves of sin, and we were "free" to live unrighteous lives. We could not live righteous lives, no matter what we did. Now, as saints, we have been set free from sin, by the death of Christ. We are free to be slaves to God. We are free to live righteously. When we were in the flesh, we were free from righteousness. We could not live righteous lives. In fact, all of our "good" deeds were like filthy rags to God. The works we did were dead works because they were done without faith.

Jesus authored our faith when Father God called us to Himself. We were, for the first time, able to believe God and, in believing from the heart, we were able to cry out with our mouths to Him to save us. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. By the grace of God displayed

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[168] Galatians 5:16-26, our translation with small "s" for the spirit of a human being who is made new in Christ. The contrast in this context appears to be between the spirit of a human being and the flesh of a human being, not the Spirit of God, though our spirit is filled with and sealed by the Spirit of God and we are one with Him.

through the cross of Christ, God saved us from His wrath, setting us free from captivity to sin, and placing us into Himself forever. Now we can do nothing apart from Him.

Paul tells the Galatia church, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."[169] There were believers who were thinking they must be physically circumcised in order to please God. Paul rebukes them saying, "Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace."[170]

If we want to live by the law, Paul says we must keep the whole law. If we seek to be justified by obeying the law, we must then obey the whole law, perfectly. We must be perfect as He is perfect. If He could not save us completely and we still had to perform some work to be approved by God, then our salvation is based on our works and not on the grace of God, and Christ died in vain. "For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love" (v. 5 - 6). Paul continues in the next verse, "You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you" (v.7).

The persuasion to live our Christian life by our own effort and works, living according to the flesh, does not come from God. This persuasion comes from the deceiver, the evil one, who seeks to destroy us. His power is the lie, but the truth sets us free. This is why Paul writes over and over in his letters to not be moved from the foundation of the gospel, nor to distort the gospel of grace.

By the grace of God we have been saved, through faith. It's a gift of God, not based on what we do, but based only upon what He did in Christ for His Name's sake, that no man can take the credit and boast about having done something to earn this righteousness.[171] We did not deserve this gift. We can do nothing to earn it or improve on it. We must just believe it. It's by God's grace alone because of His great love. Our only response can be to bow our knees before our King, with tears of joy in our eyes, and thank Him profusely from our hearts.

The flesh doesn't want to believe this gift is free. The flesh doesn't feel worthy. Thoughts will come into our heads contradicting the Word of God, saying we are not good enough and should try to do something more. It seems too simple or too easy. It can't be this simple. There has to be some catch, something we have to do. Salvation cannot really be free. But it is. It is! Praise God for His amazing gift of grace toward you, that when you were dead in your trespasses and sin, He made you alive in Christ Jesus, seating you in the heavenly realm and sealing you with His Spirit, to the praise of His glorious grace.

Let no one enslave you again with a yoke of bondage, believer. You have been set free by God and His work is complete in you. He is able to save forever those who come to Him by faith. He said it and He will do it. He has sealed this promise within Himself, and if He failed, He would have to deny Himself. "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' But if you bite and

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169 Galatians 5:1

170 Galatians 5:2 – 4

171 Ephesians 2:8-9

devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."[172]

DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF: 3 STEPS TO WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

(Galatians 5:16; Romans 6, Romans 12:1-2)

The focus of Galatians 5:16 is belief, not trying to fix your behaviour. "Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." As you work through the verses, fill in the blanks with the answers you find in the scripture and you will begin to see the process of living free in Christ.

1. Present Your Body to God as Living Sacrifice. (Romans 12:1; Romans 6)

You have been _____ away from your flesh. (Colossians 2:11)

Your body is now a _____ of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:19)

You are not your _____ _____. (1 Corinthians 6:19)

You were _____ with a price; therefore, _____ God with your _____ (1 Corinthians 6:20)

Your body is to be used for _____, not unrighteousness any longer. (Romans 6:13)

2. Renew Your Mind in the Truth of God's Word: (Romans 12:2)

You _____ with Christ on the Cross. (Galatians 2:20)

Jesus is your _____; You are in Him. (Galatians 2:20, Colossians 3:1-4)

God made you totally _____. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

You are now a _____ being with righteous thoughts, emotions, and actions. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

A righteous being does not _____. (Romans 7:17-18; 1 John 3:9)

[172] Galatians 5:13-16

You have been _____ in the Holy Spirit and are set apart for God.

(Ephesians 1:13-14)

No one can snatch you out of _____. (John 10:28-29)

Nothing can _____ you from His love. (Romans 8:31-35)

You have been _____ so that the body of sin might be done away with.

(Colossians 2:11)

Since you died with Christ, sin is no longer your _____. (Romans 6:1,2)

You are _____ but under grace. (Romans 6:14)

3. Do Not Let Sin Reign in Your Mortal Body that You Should Obey Its Lusts. (Romans 6:12 ; Colossians 3:5-17)

The sin dwelling in your body and soul will want to dominate you. Thoughts will come to your conscious mind that contradict the truth of the word of God. Your job is to take those thoughts captive into obedience to Christ, to what He said is true.

> *1Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ — who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you. But I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*[173]

What should we do with the thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God?

_____

The Bible uses the word "flesh" in two different ways. Both are here in this passage. Verse 2 shows Paul pleading with the believers to not view him as walking according to the flesh, in independence in his soul and body. Then he says, "For though we walk in the flesh," meaning his earthly body, "we do not war according to the flesh," the earthly, physical system.

You have been given the mind of Christ by God.[174] Any thought contrary to the truth of God's word is no longer true for you, because you are a spiritual being housed in an earth suit, and you live in the heavenly, unseen, realm of God.

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[173] *2 Corinthians 10:1-6*

[174] 1 Corinthians 2:16

In the chapter titled "Renewing the Mind" we will go into greater depth about the process of taking every thought captive. The foundation of this concept is faith, fully believing what God said about you, about Himself and His Kingdom, and about what He did in Christ, is true.

How Do I Know If I am Walking in the Flesh?

In Galatians 5:19-21 and Ephesians 4:17-32, Paul gives us quite a list describing characteristics of the flesh. Take a few minutes to look those passages up in your Bible and list the characteristics of the fleshly behaviour here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

It's helpful to recognize these characteristics so we can be aware when we begin to walk in the flesh, rather than the spirit. The flesh always has self as the focus. The flesh thinks it is loving, but it always has an agenda within it that is not agape love. Your spirit always loves without agenda for self. Your spirit's agenda is glorification of God, not self. Always. So any self-thought, self-preservation, self-justification, or self-anything, is fleshly. At the level of our thinking we must choose. We can choose to think on things above or on things of earth.

It is common for believers to be tempted to think that fleshly behaviours or attitudes are normal or justifiable. Walking in the flesh is not normal. It is abnormal behaviour for a believer. It is sinful and ungodly, but this sin is now outside of you, as a new creation in Christ. Christ is the norm for what our behaviour and attitudes should be like.

We often justify fleshly behaviour saying, "We just have a lot to work on," or "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven." We often pray for each other about these things and feel sorry for each other as we struggle with them. We try to "care" for each other, understand each other, comfort each other in our dysfunction, but we fall short of making disciples. Why? Because true Kingdom disciples seek to walk by faith in God. To walk by faith, we must deny ourselves. And, while we disciple people in a caring way, we do not just *care* for people. Truly loving others goes beyond sympathy. Jesus told us to make disciples, and teach them to grow up in maturity and work with Him, as He sets people free. Unfortunately, we have not known what to do to help our brothers or sisters in Christ, or even to help ourselves.

The church (especially in North America, it seems), has bought into a lie thinking the flesh is us, our identity, and therefore we cannot really overcome the struggle we feel in our minds and live in victory. We feel that we must have two natures within us that battle each other. So we try to change the flesh, because we don't want to live in dysfunction. We go to counselling, we try different methods and read different books; we work on trying to fix what is really flesh, rather than agreeing with God that it's crucified in Christ. Counselling, reading books, or other methods are not wrong, but the foundation of all counsel given by people, written in books, or spoken from a pulpit must be Christ and Christ alone.

Christ is sufficient. He cut us away from the flesh, circumcised us by immersing us into His death, and birthed us new within His resurrection life. Now He tells us to walk in the spirit, being who we really are. We are not the flesh. We have one spirit, one identity, and we are able to live godly lives on this planet. Jesus has saved us and His work is complete in us. He did not die in vain. God did not create dysfunction when He created us in Christ Jesus. He set us free and we are free indeed. If we don't feel free, it's because we don't believe we are really free.

For a non-believer, the flesh is normal. For a believer, walking by the spirit is normal life. Christ is the norm. Anything less than that is abnormal. God is conforming us to the image of His Son. Fleshly behaviour and attitudes in a Christian are a sign of a babe in Christ, a person who has not yet learned to walk by faith, no matter the length of time they have been a Christian.[175] As we walk according to the spirit, walking by faith and not by sight, we do not carry out the lusts of the flesh. We don't try not to sin in the flesh, we just walk in the spirit and we have no desire to do fleshly things. As we grow in the Lord, He reveals areas within our soul that are still "fleshly", where our thinking is still based on the old value system, stored in the subconscious part of our mind.

Throughout our lives on this planet, the one thing God is teaching us is faith. He commands us to love Him and fully believe in His Son. As we walk in faith, we will live free. We won't try to live free, we will walk free because we know we are free in Christ.

On the next page is a list of fleshly behaviours. These behaviours are not your identity as a believer. They reveal where you are in terms of what you believe about yourself. You live out what you believe in experience. If you struggle with fleshly feelings and thoughts, there is a truth your soul has not yet submitted itself too.

Take a look at this list and circle those that apply to you.

As you read the next chapter on renewing the mind, we trust the process of living free will become more and more clear.

[175] 1 Corinthians 3:1

DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF: COMMON FLESHLY EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS

Circle the fleshly habit patterns most common in your experience right now. Put a star by the five you struggle with most.

Adultery
Anger
Anxiety
Arguing
Bitterness
Clamour
Conceit
Contentiousness
Controlled by Emotions
Covetousness
Critical Tongue
Deceitfulness
Dissension
Dominance
Drunkenness
Envy
Evil-Speaking
Feelings of Helplessness
Feelings of Stupidity
Feelings of Worthlessness
Unforgiveness
Gossip
Greed
Hatred
Heresy
Homosexual Lust
Idolatry
Impure Thoughts
Insecurity
Jealousy
Laziness
Malice
Materialism
Murder
Obscenity
Outbursts of Wrath
Sensitivity to Criticism
Partying
Pornography
Prejudice
Pride
Provoking one another
Resentment
Self-centredness
Self-hatred
Self-indulgence
Selfish ambitions
Self-pity
Self-righteousness
Sexual Immorality
Sexual Lust
Sorcery/Magic
Ungratefulness
Worry

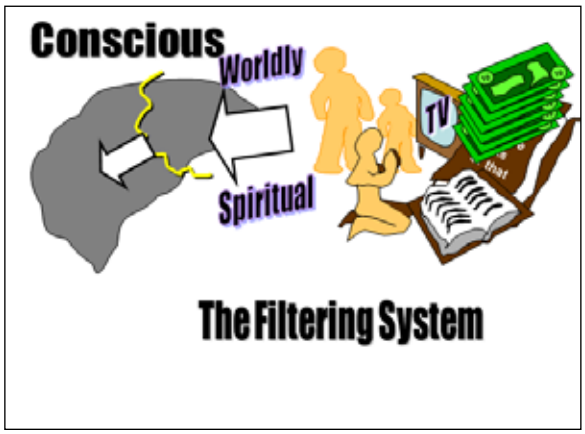
RENEWING THE MIND

> *[1]I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. [2]And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)*

You are a spirit being housed in an earth suit, your body, designed for the planet, with a soul that has also been trained by earth. The soul has a mind, will, and emotions. All the information you have been taught through education, through your family and through your life experiences resides in your soul and it has become automatic to your life on the planet. Through your will, you have directed your own steps, learned to provide for yourself, and to make your own decisions. When you surrendered your life to Christ, your soul submitted to the Truth of God's Word and stepped out of the driver's seat of your life. Christ entered your life and became the Driver. He is now in charge. He is reigning in and through your spirit, and your soul and body are now being conformed to His image, with or without their permission.

Your soul resists this process. It wants to reign still, but now it has to submit to who you really are in Christ. You are commanded by God to not let it reign.[176] This is the struggle you feel. Within your soul, you have conscious and subconscious parts of your mind. You also have the automatic engine of your brain which runs the vital functions of your body.

THE CONSCIOUS MIND – OUR FILTERING SYSTEM



The conscious mind is the part of your soul that receives initial information from your surroundings using your senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. With the conscious mind you make evaluations, including moral judgements. The conscious mind acts as the filtering system through which information is processed and accepted by your soul.

You receive input from the world around you through the conscious mind. We receive information from many sources into our senses: people talking to us, books we read, TV shows we watch, actions of other people we hear about even if totally unrelated to us, movies, songs, news broadcasts, weather reports. The list is endless. We are receiving information all the time. As a Christian, you also receive input through the Word of God, through sermons, and through talking with other spiritual people.

[176] Romans 6:12

Like all humans, you are aware of yourself. You can talk to yourself in sentences. When an external event occurs and catches your attention, you respond to it first by talking to yourself about it. You may not always notice what you are telling yourself, but you are evaluating the situation. You are deciding what to think about it.

Consider this scenario: I wake up to a rain storm on a day I planned to play golf with a client. I think, "Man, I sure wanted to golf with Bill today. If I had gotten him out on the golf course, I could have made that big sale. This storm is terrible." My wife asks why I am depressed. I say, "Because it's raining." But that's not entirely accurate. Does the rainstorm have power over me to make me feel depressed? No. My mental evaluation of the storm does. In other words, events do not control my feelings. My evaluation of events affects my feelings. My body responds to my evaluation by feeling depressed. Suppose I were to change my evaluation from, "This storm is terrible" to "Money is important but I trust God to meet my needs. Although I'd like to play golf, it is not terrible that I can't. God must have something else in mind to provide for my needs." How would I feel then? I would feel peace and an assurance that God is in control, which is true.

When an event happens, you evaluate it in the conscious mind. For every event, you have a choice to make. You must decide what to believe about that event. Consider another scenario: You are riding on public train through a major city. A man is sitting across from you and you notice that his children are running wild on the train disturbing everyone. The guy next to you gets annoyed and mumbles, "Why doesn't this guy control his kids!" In your mind, you agree that the man should take care of his children. You are beginning to think he is irresponsible and you, being a Christian, decide to talk to the man to see what you can do to help, so the other passengers, and yourself by this time, do not get more annoyed. You cautiously approach the man and ask, "Sir, are you aware that your children are running all over the place and disturbing the other passengers on the train?"

The next statement the man says will either confirm or deny the opinion you are forming in your mind about him. He says, "Oh I'm sorry. Their mother just died this morning, and I don't know what to do. I'll try to help them behave better." This statement forced a major paradigm shift in your mind. Your emotional level dropped from acute annoyance, to deep compassion in a moment's time. Of course, this man is having a hard time. Of course, his children are running all over. It makes total sense now.

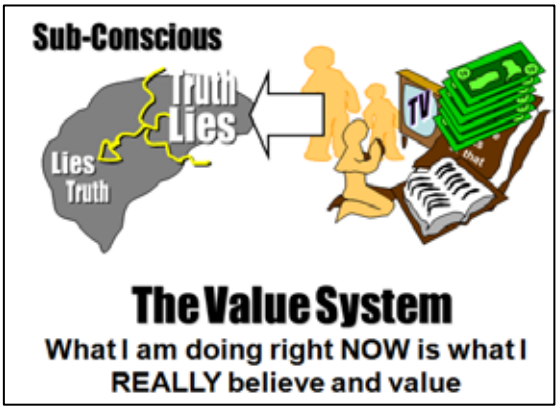
A sign of a mature Christian is that they do not believe their sight and senses. They wait on Father God to reveal to them what is really going on. They assume that God is in control and that He is working all things together for the good of those who love them. So they do not react right away to what they see and hear. They remain calm, They wait, filtering what they see through their mind, applying the Word of God and waiting for God's perception of the event. To a strong, mature Christian, an event is just an event. It's not good or bad. In fact, a strong, mature Christian assumes the event is good, because God is working even the bad events and the tragedies together for good. So, as in this scenario above, even the death of his wife can become a good event, if that event ends up leading that man to Christ, and the whole destiny of his and his children's lives changes forever. The fact that God placed that man next to you is an indication that He is doing something beyond what you can see. If you react in the flesh to that event, immaturely, getting angry and telling that man off, the opportunity to work with God will be gone. Who knows, but it is entirely possible that this man's wife was a believer who had been praying for her husband for years, and God decided to take her home, so he could call her husband to Himself and have him actually listen.

We do not know all that is going on in any given event. We choose what we will believe

and how we will respond. When we initially react to an event, that reaction comes directly from our subconscious mind. What we believe pushes the impact of that event deeper into our value system, moving it to the subconscious part of our mind where it takes on a life of its own and begins to control our reactions and responses. Spiritual growth, as a believer, depends on how we *perceive* and *evaluate* our world. In order to understand why we evaluate events as we do, we have to take a look at the Subconscious Mind.

THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND – LONG TERM STORAGE

> *17This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20But you have not so learned Christ, 21if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.* (*Ephesians 4:17-24)*



The subconscious mind receives what the conscious mind holds to be true. As conscious thoughts move into our subconscious mind, they become values on which we build our lives. At first, we choose what enters our conscious mind. Once we receive input into our mind and value it as true, whether or not it is *actually* true, it enters our subconscious mind and our choice begins to choose us. Our body begins to follow and respond to what we really believe about the event, regardless of whether or not it is actually true. You can see that what we put into our conscious mind becomes very important to our mental health.

Our behaviour follows what we really believe and value in our subconscious mind. What we are doing right now reveals what we really believe at the subconscious level, because the subconscious mind is having us live out the thoughts we have valued as true. The subconscious part of our thinking has potential to be used by the flesh or the spirit. This is the reservoir where values and emotions reside and desire to be lived out. This reservoir contains the basic assumptions or values that we firmly believe and emotionally hold. If those values are based on a lie, we will live out the lie. If the values are based on truth, we will live out that truth. From this value base, we determine how we will live and how we will meet the needs we think we have.

Since we lived out our behaviours from our thoughts about ourselves and our circumstances happening around us, it is critical to think correctly about ourselves. The Lord said we are to love our neighbours as ourselves. We are commanded to love ourselves. The reason is we will not love others beyond how we love and view ourselves. Christian, you are to love yourself, in Christ. You are not a sinner at the core. You are not one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. You are not a sinner saved by grace. You *were* a sinner who was

then saved by grace. You are a royal priest and holy person working in union with the Creator God Himself.

As we saw in Key 4, all people tend to have three basic needs: significance, security, and belonging. In the Garden of Eden, all these needs were perfectly satisfied in man's innocent relationship with God, until sin entered Adam. Adam's task was to take dominion over all the earth and fill it with his kind. His need for significance and meaningful work was satisfied. Adam was connected to God and God provided his need for security. Adam was secure. Adam lived in unhindered fellowship with God, and God even provided Adam a companion and helper. Adam belonged to God and to another person.

When Adam entered into sin and death, by choosing to disbelieve God, he began to seek fulfillment of these needs apart from God. The problem is that these needs cannot be met that way! We are created for Him. So there is a feeling of desire and longing that is never attained but always sought out.

Thanks to Adam, each of us, through our birth into sin, have been programmed in our subconscious mind to believe that happiness, worth, and joy depend upon something other than God. This programming is called the flesh, and the flesh works itself out through our bodies. Our bodies move in response to what we really believe to be true. As a believer, the flesh resides in our soul and body, but we have been given a new spirit in whom there is no sin. Our spirit is sealed by God with His Holy Spirit and cut away from the sins of the flesh through the circumcision of Christ.

Real Life Transformation

This summer of 2011 has been the best summer ever. I am not depressed. I have able to function taking care of my boys in God's strength and power and life. This abundant life that Jesus said we would have I now experience on a daily basis!

We now are having fun as a family! What a difference God has made in my life as I check what I am thinking and then what God says about me. That truly resets my thinking pattern so I can see if I am walking in the flesh or in the spirit. I have been set free and I have joy, peace, and all the fruit of the spirit. Even calmness when it used to be anxiety and depression.

God gets all the glory!!!!! Thank you again. So excited as I study how to share the gospel to see others set free. ☺

A missionary who struggled for years with debilitating depression, but is now free in Christ after understanding the gospel more fully

The Bible tells us that we no longer have to obey the programming of the flesh. What do we do with the flesh? It is there, and it will want to speak to us, giving its view of reality, trying to get us to focus on self-thoughts, rather than God-thoughts. We deny the flesh. We do not recognize the flesh as having any kind of substantial input in our lives because it has been crucified and no longer has any value to the working out of our spiritual life. We mistrust it and de-value it because it always focuses us away from God to self. The flesh will never tell us the truth of God's Word. We see it as wanting us to connect with the world system instead of the spiritual system.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have been circumcised away from the body of the sins of the flesh. [177]The flesh has been crucified.[178] The truth is the Son has set

[177] Colossians 2:11

us free and we are free indeed.[179] We are free from the power of sin in the flesh. Christian, love yourself because God has created you lovely. He has made you pure and clean again to be fully embraced by Him.

FILTER SYSTEM: FROM CONSCIOUS INTO SUBCONSCIOUS

When the Bible says, "*be transformed by the renewing of your mind,*" what mind is being transformed? In your spirit, you have been given the mind of Christ. You joyfully concur with the law of God in your inner man. You delight in righteousness and you love God, desiring to live for His will and glory alone. So what is the issue? Why do you struggle? The mind that must be renewed is in your soul and, within your soul, is the subconscious part of your brain where values reside. These values may or may not *actually* be true, according to what God has said is true, but your soul has decided, based on all the input you received and all your experiences throughout your life, that these values are true and they guide all you do. These values guide your reactions to events, to people, to the circumstances in your life, even if these values go against what your spirit really wants.

The mind that must be renewed is in your soul and, within your soul, is the subconscious part of your brain where values reside.

You always do what you believe.

If you were mistreated as a child by a person in authority over you who should have been caring for you, your mind formed a value, based on your experience that authority figures cannot be trusted. So now you have become a believer in Jesus Christ, have become a member of a local gathering, and you meet with your pastor because you are struggling to trust a leader in your church. This person reminds you of someone who mistreated you in the past, and your gut reaction is mistrust, pain and dislike of this person. Where did all that intense emotion come from? It certainly did not come from the leader in your church. You have just met this man! Your reaction involuntary arose because of values or beliefs you have stored in your brain, deep in the subconscious part of your mind.

Think of the conscious part of your brain as a one gigabyte computer. It holds some information, but it is not designed to hold a lot of information. The conscious mind lets you filter information that you will then allow to move into your subconscious mind. The subconscious part of your brain is like a trillion gigabyte computer. Your subconscious mind never forgets. It stores all the information you have learned throughout your whole experience on earth, from how to brush your teeth and tie your shoes, to knowing who to trust or mistrust in your life. It is this subconscious part of your mind that the Lord wants to transform, so He tells you to renew it with His truth.

His truth is now the guide for you. His truth is your truth. Your spirit readily accepts this. Your spirit only knows the truth and agrees with God's truth. You reside in the heavenly or spiritual realm in Christ all the time. Your spirit has never been trained by the independence of sin. It is cut away from sin and cannot be influenced by sin at all. Your spirit agrees with God all the time. Your soul has not yet been renewed fully. Your soul has independence within it and this independence is stored at the subconscious level. You are not even aware, nor do you consciously remember, what is stored there. It just shows up in

[178] Galatians 5:24
[179] John 8:36

reaction to events and circumstances in your life, often surprising you by the strength of the emotional reaction it creates.

The solution God gives us is to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. He tells us to abide in His Word--then we will learn from Him, and we will know the truth and the truth will set us free.[180] He tells us to walk in the spirit, and we will not carry out the lusts of the flesh.[181] Walking in the spirit and abiding in the Word of God are the same thing. Our spirit concurs with the truth all the time. Our job is to get our soul to believe the truth of God's Word and accept it as true, putting our full weight into it; yielding our mind and our body to it and abiding in it, meditating on it and accepting it as true. Only then will our behaviour change.

So God commands us as His children to "set our minds on the things above,"[182] to dwell on "whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8). Notice there are eight new things to meditate on. This is the scripture reminding us of the new thoughts of the new creation.)

Just as our body's health is greatly determined by the food we put in it, God is very aware that what we put into our conscious mind, as our mental and spiritual food, will filter through to our subconscious mind and guide our lives in health or unhealth. Once information settles at the subconscious level it is very hard to change. Unhealthy values stored in the subconscious are called strongholds in the Bible.

In his illustration comparing the human marriage relationship to His relationship with His Church, Paul writes, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."[183] God sanctifies us and washes our minds with His Word. Remember, from Key 4, God is sanctifying your whole spirit, soul and body that He might present you blameless at His coming.[184] He has already sanctified your spirit. You have been washed, sanctified and justified by God,[185] so what is He sanctifying? He is sanctifying your soul and body, bringing all of you in line with who you really are as His new Creation.

In the passage above, He is referring to this same process, but this time He is talking about the whole community of believers, His Church, the Bride of Christ. He washes His Bride with the word of God that He might present her to Himself "a glorious church…that she should be holy and without blemish." We are His church. God has made us His new creation. He sanctified us, placing a new spirit in a body made for the earth and with a soul that is trained by the earth, and He is now bringing these three parts of a human being together to the praise of His glorious grace. God is reconciling all things to Himself, including all the parts of us in their wholeness. It's not enough that He made us new in our spirit; He wants us to live out this newness on the planet for the whole world to see His splendour and grace.

God's method for washing our soul and body is His word. He is not asking us to try to

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[180] John 8:32
[181] Galatians 5:16
[182] Colossians 3:2
[183] Ephesians 5:25-27
[184] 1 Thessalonians 5:23
[185] 1 Cor. 6:11

change our behaviours. He is asking us to soak up His word, to put true input into our minds, meditate on it, work to believe it (the soul), and present our members (our body) to Him for His purposes on the earth. Our body will do what our soul believes. We always do what we believe. So what we put into our minds becomes central to living a victorious Christian life.

The Romans 6 Process

In Romans 6, Apostle Paul lays out a pattern that is very helpful in understanding how to renew our minds. We call this the **Romans 6 Process**. It looks like this:

KNOW
The Truth

BELIEVE
The Truth

LIVE
Like it's True
Because it is True

PRESENT
Yourself
to God

YIELD
Your Members to God
as Instruments of Righteousness

Now let's look at this process more closely:

KNOW the Truth

> *"6 Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him…" (Romans 6:6-8)*

Verses 6-8 summarize the apostle Paul's argument to the Roman believers. Romans 6 is the beginning of a three chapter explanation of Romans 5, where Paul declares we have been made righteous in Christ. Now Paul is explaining the truth of why this is so. Paul obviously knows that unless we know what is true, we will not know what to believe. Open your Bible, please, and read Romans 6:1-10 to get the whole context of what Paul is saying. In these verses, Paul makes the case that we have been crucified in Christ and the old is now gone. We have been immersed into the death of Christ and are no longer slaves to sin. Having died with Christ, we have been freed from sin, because he who died is freed from sin. If we believe we died, we also believe we live. For 10 verses, Paul is teaching the Roman believers what the truth is.

BELIEVE the Truth

> *"Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:11)*

Once we know the truth, Paul exhorts in verse 11, we must believe the truth is indeed true at the level of our soul. Our spirit already agrees with the Truth of God's Word. Reckon is the word meaning "to logicise", to think logically through and to come to agreement with the truth. Paul laid out the truth, and then he tells the believers to logically think this through and believe they are dead to sin and alive to God. This truth is true, so believe it is true. This is renewing the mind.

LIVE like it's True Because it is True

> *"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts." (Romans 6:12)*

In verse 12, we learn we must live like this truth is really true, because it is true. We force our mind and body to obey the truth. It may feel uncomfortable, but we now move to deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow God. We deny the flesh and its lusts, because the flesh has no power over us and the flesh is *not* us. We are not flesh beings, but spirit beings housed in a suit made for the earth. We are seated in the heavenlies in Christ, so we must live out who we really are, walking in the spirit and not the flesh.

PRESENT Yourself to God

> *"And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead…" (Romans 6:13)*

It's interesting, in verse 13, Paul says to *not* present your members to sin. Your members are the parts of you that can be used by sin: your body and your soul. We are commanded to not give these parts over to sin's influence. He doesn't give this same command when he refers to "yourselves". Instead, he says to present *yourselves* to God, as being alive from the dead. This is significant, because who are we? We are beings who have been made alive, who were once dead in our trespasses and sin. We are new creations in Christ. Paul didn't tell us to *not* present ourselves to sin because it is *impossible* to do so. We cannot present ourselves to sin. We are cut away from sin and sealed. We can *only* present ourselves to God, and this he commands us to do.

YIELD Your Members to God as Instruments of Righteousness

> *"…and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."(Romans 6:13,14)*

After being told to *not* give our soul and body (our members) over to sin, we are told to yield them to God to be used by Him as instruments of righteousness. This shows us how the soul and body can be used by either sin or by righteousness. The choice is ours in what we choose to believe. If we know the truth, but do not believe the truth, we will live in the UN-Truth, and live a lie.

INPUT MATTERS!! THE CONSCIOUS MIND

As we see in the Romans 6 Process, input matters. We must know the truth, to renew our thinking. There are four sources of input into our Conscious mind: God, the world, the flesh and the evil one. What God, the world, the flesh and the evil one say to our conscious mind, and what we believe about what they say, filters into our subconscious mind and plants itself there. Those values produce the fruit we see in our actions. Our soul either agrees with sin or with the truth. We must make that choice. This is our responsibility as believers.

Remember our soul is neutral. It is not evil, but it has been and can still be used by evil, by the world, by the flesh and by the evil one, if we allow it. Think of our soul as the connector between the spirit and the body. With our soul we decide what to believe.

Our soul is comfortable with earth information and self-preservation but it is scared by what it sees and hears of the Kingdom of God. It is only when the soul comes to fully believe that it is most safe and most secure in God that the fear goes away. As we accept God's truth as true, at the soul level, our soul experiences peace and it submits to our spirit, to our true identity.

If we, with our conscious minds, truly believe what God says to us through prayer, others, and the Bible, these things will filter down into our subconscious mind and re-program it so that our reactions, even at the subconscious level, will become more and more Christ-like. This Christ-likeness is called maturity. A mature Christian walks by faith in God and puts little or no trust in sight, senses, physical events and what circumstances tell them. God becomes the only source of truth for a strong, mature believer. Mature Christians wait to get their information from God, who is working all these events and circumstances out for our good. They know God is good and can be trusted because He always loves and never lies.

To renew our minds, we must do two things:

❒ **ABIDE IN GOD'S WORD:** We renew our minds with the truth of God's Word and agree with the truth. If we evaluate events from a biblical perspective, our lives will reflect the reality of who we really are. Our emotions will express joy and peace, even through difficult situations because our trust is in God who is working all things together according to the counsel of His will and for the good of those who love Him. As we trust God, we walk in the spirit and are filled with Him through His word.

❒ **DENY FLESH:** We de-value the flesh system and choose not to listen to the flesh, the world, or the evil one. We know that fleshly desires are not ours, as spirit beings, and have no power over us unless we allow them that power. As righteous, new creations in Christ, we can say when fleshly thoughts oppose us, "My security and significance as a person depends only upon my relationship to Christ, which is a gift, and is eternal and secure. Although I don't enjoy this event at all, still my worth as a person is untouched. Therefore, though this event is painful, it is not devastating. I know God is working good through this event so I keep going, trust Him, and respond in faith and love. I know I will not crumble."

> *12But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, 13so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; 14and most of the brethren in the Lord,*

> *having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.[15]Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: [16]The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; [17]but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defence of the gospel. [18]What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. (Philippians 1:12-18) (underline added)*

In his letter to the Philippian church, Paul's significance did not depend on his situation. Rather, it depended on knowing he could be of use to God. He was significant as a servant of the Living God and secure in his knowledge that the Omnipotent God was his loving Shepherd. Paul knew who he was and that His God was in complete control of all that was happening, and was providing all the resources Paul needed to respond biblically to his difficult circumstances.

A mature believer, walking in the spirit, thinks like this: My significance as a person is in Christ. I have an eternal impact on everyone around me. If I fail in my business, if my wife leaves me, if my church membership drops, if I work in a menial occupation, if I can afford only a small house and a used car, I can still enjoy the thrilling significance of belonging to the Ruler of the Universe, who has a job for me to do. As I mature in Christ, I enter more deeply into the significance of belonging to and serving my Lord.[186]

This also means if I am successful in business, my family life is strong, my church grows, I have a large house and a new car, I still do not have to see this as my significance, but understand that significance is in the One to Whom I belong (and I belong to Christ!). My need for security is met in Christ, where I am unconditionally loved, accepted, and cared for, now and forever. In Christ, I am completely acceptable to God regardless of my behaviour. I never have to earn God's love; it is always there. Since I am in Christ, I know that nothing will happen to me that my loving Lord doesn't allow. I will experience nothing I will not be able to handle.[187]

When problems come, and when insecure thoughts rush in and I begin to fear, I fill my mind with the security-building truth that at this moment my sovereign, loving God is absolute Lord of All. I am secure![188]

ACCOUNTABILITY VS. ACCEPTABILITY

While my salvation is complete, Scripture teaches that my being accepted by God doesn't excuse careless living. I am accountable before God for how I live.

> *"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment." (Matthew 12:36)*

> *"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." (Hebrews 4:13)*

> *"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the*

[186] Philippians 3:7-10,14
[187] 1 Cor. 10:13
[188] Romans 8:37-39

flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" (Galatians 5:13-15)

Accountable means to give an account of our actions, taking responsibility for the actions we do. Acceptable means we are accepted regardless of what we do. If I understand accountability, but not acceptability, I will live under pressure to behave well in order to be accepted by God and others. I will be afraid that I will stand before God and be judged for what I do. I will be tempted to believe my salvation is not secure and is dependent upon my good behaviour to please God.

Accountable means to give an account of our actions, taking responsibility for the actions we do. Acceptable means we are accepted regardless of what we do.

If I understand acceptability, but not accountability, I may become casually indifferent to sinful living. I will be tempted to think, as Paul wrote in Romans 6:1: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Shall we do whatever sinful thing our flesh wants because we are under grace and not under the law anymore? This is the question Paul poses. He answers this question right away the next verse: "Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"[189] The answer to this question comes back to identity. Who I believe I am determines how I live. A sinner sins. A saint, made righteous by the grace of God, lives righteously. My core identity is formed by birth. What I believe drives what I will do. If I don't believe I'm a saint, even if I am, I will live out what I truly believe even though it brings dishonour to the God I say I love.

When I understand my acceptability by God and my accountability to God, I will desire to please the One who died for me because I love Him, and be fearful that I might grieve Him.

[189] Romans 6:2

A LOOK AT EMOTIONS

> *Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your loving-kindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight — That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:1-5)*
>
> *The pains of death surrounded me, And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!" (Psalm 116:3-4)*

Emotion is our capacity for feeling. When trained by the system of the world, we often use emotions as an indicator of our well-being. If I feel happy, I will have a good day. If I feel badly, I will have a bad day. In the world system, my feelings guide my life. My feelings fluctuate based on the weather, the location I live, how people treat me, what I perceive as true or not true in world events. If I build my life on my emotional perception, I will build my life on sand, an unstable, unreliable foundation and I will struggle.

For the believer, emotions are merely an indicator, but they do not necessarily represent the reality of our real condition. The truth tells me my real condition, who I am and Whose I am. Emotions tell me when something I value as true, on the subconscious level of the soul, is being challenged or touched. Emotions reveal a belief I hold, but do not tell me whether that belief is true or false. Emotions just tell me that belief is there. Emotions tell us something is going on, but they do not give us permission to react. The mind uses them to bring our attention to see that something is happening that we should be aware of.

The indicator of a maturing believer is their response to an event. An immature person will immediately react to an event, expressing all the emotion that that event stirred up in them. This expression could be anger, fear, worry, pain, or any other type of emotional response.

Let's look at an example of this process: Say, for instance, you are driving, trying to get to work on time and someone pulls out in front of you, cuts you off, and slows down. Your immediate reaction is anger. Because you want to get to work on time and the person in front of you has cut you off, slowing you down, you believe you will be late for work, so you swear at the driver in front of you, calling him names, possibly even yelling the name out the window of your car. The thought comes to you that you could just pull your car around that car and cut him off, giving him what he deserves. As you contemplate this thought, the driver in front of you moves into the next lane, cutting off another person. You swear at him under your breath as you grip the steering wheel with white knuckles. You know your day has started off badly and it will only get worse from here. What a rotten way to go to work.

When you immaturely allow a fleshly goal (being late to work) dominate and control you, you will struggle. Of course, it could have been worse if you moved your vehicle to follow the feeling you had, to aggravate the other driver, leading, potentially, to an instance of road rage and tragedy. Reactions are immediate and unthinking, and the result of the action could reap destruction (depending on how far you let it go). Your reaction could have not only messed up your day, but could have been life threatening, as well.

Now let's look at the same scenario in a new way: You are on your way to work and a driver pulls in front of you, cuts you off, and that driver slows down. The thought crosses your

mind that you might be late for work; however, you realize you really do not know if this is true. After a slight moment of agitation at being cut off, you process the event in your mind, believing God allowed this person to cut you off for a reason. You would like to get to work on time, but you would rather see that God is glorified even in this. You think to yourself, "Perhaps this is an opportunity for me to pray for this person."

So you talk to God about this person, asking God to bless him and help him in his life. The momentary shot of agitation you felt is replaced with calm assurance in the sovereignty of your God and His love for this person in the car ahead of you. You love this person as well, because you remind yourself who you really are as God's child. So you pray for his family and you pray for his day at work. You don't know what is going on with this person, but you know God is aware and perhaps this is why He is leading you to pray. A thought occurs to you what a privilege it is to walk with your God and to be involved in His work in the life of someone you may never know. Your emotional response quickly embraces peace and joy as you looks to the will and glory of you Father, rather than your own will to get to work. The driver of the car up ahead moves over to another lane, cutting off someone else, and you quietly pray for him, and the other drivers, as you drive the rest of the way work, arriving five minutes early.

Mature believers see or experience an event, and with their minds, they go to the truth of God's word because they know they live in the unseen reality that is bigger and more powerful than what they see with their eyes. God's reality is really real to them. From this base, they wait on the Lord to know how to respond, assuming the event has been allowed and is being worked together for good.

To a mature believer, even "bad" events are viewed as "good" because they know their God is in control and can be trusted to bring good out of even bad things. So, when they hear news stories, go through personal tragedies, sickness, or natural disasters, and any other event that could potentially upset their world (and their peace), they look for God to be glorified in and through them. The event becomes an opportunity to pray, to believe, to trust, to love, to serve, to grow, to see what God is doing in the midst of all to bring glory to Himself and good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Emotions are stored in our subconscious mind and are involuntary reactions based on what we believe is true, but emotions do not always give us accurate information.

Emotions indicate something is happening. They catch our attention. Without emotions we would miss events that we see as valuable. Emotionless people are people without a conscience, which means they have no emotions helping them make choices that have strong values.

Emotions respond to *our interpretation* and *perception* of events, whether events from our past, our present or even our future. Emotions are stored in our subconscious mind and are involuntary reactions based on what we believe is true, but emotions do not always give us accurate information. We must decide how we will choose to interpret the emotion and the event that triggered it.

Our soul has emotions which tend toward satisfying or protecting self. When events happen that threaten the soul's sense of significance, security or belonging, it will seek to protect itself and be tempted to respond in a fleshly manner. The emotions of the soul are unreliable until they line up with truth, though they indicate that something is going on. The emotions indicate that some core value is being affected by the event we are experiencing.

God allows these "bumps" to stir up the values we hold in our subconscious mind. He is interested in freeing our mind to think like His Mind, the Mind of Christ which we already have been given in our spirit. We know the mind of Christ through the word of God because the Holy Spirit reveals the deep things of God to us as we abide in His word.

God has sanctified our spirit, and He is now sanctifying our soul and body, washing them with His word to make them holy and blameless in His sight. He allows events and circumstances to "bump" us, to stir up a "fleshly" reaction to uncover any untrue value being stored in the subconscious part of our soul. He then teaches us the truth as we abide in His word.

As we believe the truth He is revealing to us, we will reject the old value and replace it with a new godly value. This is what "being transformed by the renewing of our mind" means. If He did not stir up the emotions attached to the values we hold, we would go blissfully on our way, never knowing we needed to change our thinking in that area, and our behaviour would remain unchanged as well.

Knowing our identity is critical to this process of renewing our mind. We are told to walk in the spirit, not to try to transform the flesh. He says, "Be transformed". How? By renewing your mind with truth, abiding in His word and believing His word, not trying to change. This is why worldly systems which focus on behaviour modification work only to a certain degree. True behaviour modification comes only through a new value system. Our values drive our behaviour. In Christ, we are given the value system of the Kingdom of God, an unseen value system realized by knowing and loving God and believing His word. Our work is to believe God.

ARE EMOTIONS SINFUL?

Not all emotions are fleshly or sinful. We can look to Jesus to see godly emotions. In Jesus, we see a Man who was passionate, who grieved, who expressed loneliness, who was angry, who was weary, who rejoiced when people spoke words of faith. The driving motive of His emotions was always the glory of God. This gives us a clear guideline for checking our own emotional responses: to check the health of an emotion is to examine the driving motive behind it.

Check your goal, what you are wanting? Are you wanting the glory of God or something else? When Jesus was angry, His anger was only aroused because God's glory was at stake. Jesus was angry, but He never sinned. Humans rarely get angry without sin. Scripture even says, "The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."[190] This is why God commands us to not "let the sun go down" on our anger.

Our purpose as a believer is always to glorify God. Any goal less than this will stir up negative, sinful emotions, because any purpose less than God's glory originates from our own will in the soul, not God's will. Like in the example of you as the immature driver, the goal of getting to work was more important than bringing honour to God. You were motivated by a self-goal, and self-goals are always devoid of love. God's will is always to bring glory to Himself. Our spirit lines up with this will all the time, but our soul struggles to learn.

Anger is an indication that we are not able to get our goal, whatever thing we feel we want or need. Our immediate reaction to this blocked goal is a strong emotion like anger. This emotional reaction, if we stop to look at it (taking it captive), very quickly helps us identify fleshly thinking We can then process this thinking through, deny it as fleshly, realign our

[190] James 1:20

thinking to godly thinking, and re-focus on the truth that we live to glorify our Father and not ourselves. As we do this, the intensity of our emotion subsides and is, very likely, replaced with the godly emotions of peace and joy.

Again, emotions are not bad. Jesus knew anger, loneliness, and heartache. Emotions are part of our makeup as spiritual beings. We don't have to deny them or fear them. They are an indicator of our spiritual health before the Lord. We don't have to be bubbly all the time. We will experience pain, sorrow, and anger as Christians. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."[191] In the world, we will have trouble. In Christ, we have peace because He has overcome the world and we have overcome the world in Him. As we walk in the spirit, we experience joy and peace, (the fruit of being children of God), even in the midst of pain and difficulty.

Christians who don't understand how to deal with emotional reactions, may question their salvation, feel guilt, and look for happiness according to the flesh when things seem to go wrong or don't go their way.

Have you experienced any events that shook your world and challenged you to doubt God? How did you respond? What did God teach you through this experience?

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Sinful (fleshly) emotions are any feelings which are mutually exclusive of compassion. A child of God loves. The major feeling in a spiritual, Christ-centred life is the deep, gut-level feeling of compassion for others. Compassion is the awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it. Compassion is rooted in the love of God for others.

A good barometer of your fellowship with the Lord is your level of compassion for the lost world and the suffering in the body of Christ. As you abide in God, you learn to love as he loves, with no agenda for self, just a compassion for what is on the heart of your God. The flesh seeks to gratify self, not love others above self.

To help us distinguish between godly or fleshly emotions, below are two lists: List A shows common fleshly emotions of the soul that block compassion and therefore involve sin. Fleshly emotions typically focus on self. List B shows healthy, godly emotions. Godly emotions accept the sovereignty of God and are based in compassion and love.

LIST A: FLESHLY EMOTIONS:

1. **DEPRESSION**: Self-preoccupation, self-pity, leading to hopelessness and giving up. No concern for others; therefore no or little action on behalf of others. In depressed people, they are the focus.

2. CRIPPLING GUILT: Feelings of worthlessness and self-punishment which do not lead

[191] John 16:33

to positive steps to correct the problem. Such feelings often serve as an excuse not to work responsibly on problem areas.

3. RESENTMENT: Holding a grudge, unforgiveness, behaviour motivated by vengeance and hate. The emotion always seems justified to the holder of this emotion.

4. **FRUSTRATION**: A "throwing up of the hands" attitude, what's the use of trying, a frantic effort to change, smouldering anger at unchanging problems. The will of the individual is being thwarted; that's where frustration comes from.

5. ANXIETY or WORRY: Apprehension about anticipated unpleasant events, either specified or vague, so strong that it controls behaviour; e.g., preoccupying worry over something in the future. Worry is playing a horror story over in your mind.

Are you experiencing any of these emotions in your life? If so, which ones?

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If you are experiencing any of these fleshly emotions, take some time to ask yourself these questions and answer thoughtfully: What need do you have that you feel is not being met? What do you want to do to meet that need?

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LIST B – GODLY EMOTIONS:

1. **ANGUISH:** deep hurt over difficult circumstances, emotional pain over loss, soul-searching agony as problems mount. Anguish moves us to cry to our God.

   And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Luke 22:44)

2. **CONSTRUCTIVE SORROW:** sorrow and pain over misdeeds or sin, pleasing ourselves in fleshly and destructive ways, whether of the flesh or the evil one using events in our lives, We are crying out for this to cease.

   For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces

repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (2 Corinthians 7:8-10)

2. **ANGER:** responding to moral wrong which opposes the holiness of God and justice for man; rebuking sin with an eye toward vindicating God's holiness and restoring the offender to right behaviour.

Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" (Matthew 21:12-13)

4. **MOTIVATED DISCONTENT:** concern with difficult circumstances, leading to either a plan to change them or, if that proves impossible, an attitude of accepting something unpleasant, knowing God can work in every situation.

But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel. (Philippians 1:12)

5. **CONCERN:** anticipation of a possible future event which does not cause disobedience to God, but rather provokes intelligent forethought.

Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, Provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep — So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man. (Proverbs 6:6-11)

Have you experienced any of these godly emotions? Which ones? What was the occasion?

_____

In every instance, a wrong fleshly emotion can be traced to a wrong assumption about how your personal needs are met. Your soul thinks it needs something in order to be fully satisfied, to feel secure, or to belong. To satisfy itself, your soul will try to find happiness and relief in the things of the world, the only system your soul really knows unless you train it to think otherwise. The soul can learn. If you do not get what you think you need, you will have negative emotions and you will do what you can to make yourself feel better.

If you follow the feelings of the flesh, and seek to fulfill the needs of significance, security, or belonging according to the flesh, you will create one of three primary feelings: happiness, pride or guilt. Happiness occurs when an event turns out like we wanted. Happiness is primarily circumstantial. Pride occurs if you accomplish what you desire. You think you did pretty well in figuring out what you needed. But if things dodn't work out like you hoped, you will get angry, frustrated, and even depressed if they don't change. You will experience guilt at failing to accomplish what you wanted to accomplish.

Marriage and divorce are real-life examples of this process. A man and woman marry, feeling passionately in love. As babies come, bodies get saggy, sleep deprivation sets in, and

physical attraction wanes. The *feeling* of passionate love begins to diminish. The false belief that love is a feeling leads to the conclusion that love must be leaving. A desire to correct this unpleasant feeling arises with the thought, "I need someone else in my life to love." One spouse may seek out a relationship outside of their marriage to fill this desire. If they divorce, and find someone else right away, they might feel pride at making a good decision, but guilt at having to end a marriage, destroy their family and hurt their children's lives. The impact of their decisions have far-reaching consequences, but they justify the resulting pain for the sake of fulfilling the desire to belong and feel loved. Only a Christian who knows that his or her needs are sustained in Christ will be content in any circumstance.

Emotions are often attached to traumatic memories related to events or relationships in the past. These emotions may express themselves from our subconscious mind contrary to our own conscious mind. For instance, a person who has lost his or her spouse after being married for many years may begin crying or laughing for seemingly no conscious reason—except that they see something—a flower, a chair, anything that reminds them of that love. Emotions rise up without any conscious thought.

Emotions may also be attached to traumatic events in your life. The events can form strongholds in your value system in the subconscious mind, like a rape, a robbery, a death, or a a birth. Our bodies will move according to these subconscious values, even without permission from us or conscious thought. What we believe at the value level, and the emotions we feel, can move our bodies to behave contrary to what we would want to do. Left on their own, the thinking and emotion in our soul will not produce health within us. The values of the soul cannot transform our soul or body. The values of our soul must be replaced with heavenly values which our spirit already accepts. This is why God works with us to reveal unhealthy patterns of belief that need to be renewed with the truth of His word. God has set us free in the spirit and now His truth sets us fully free to express who we really are.

Emotions often show us where God is ready to work on our transformation. God grows us, and that growth is often uncomfortable to our soul. Though our transformation is not the primary goal God is seeking, but only a by-product of His overall purpose of bringing glory to Himself, we are His ambassadors, proclaiming His good news to a lost world. If we are dysfunctional, who will want to listen to our message? Who wants to listen to an ambassador who is living in full fleshly dysfunction? What kind of message would we give? God wants us to walk with Him as He sets captives free, but if we are not living free ourselves, the world will not be attracted to the message. We will appear no different than mere human beings. We would be, in reality, mere babes in Christ, carnally-behaving Christians, doing things that any man or woman could do without God. God wants to be glorified, and He points out areas in our lives that are inconsistent with the work He has done in our spirit; this inconsistency sometimes produces discomfort to our soul as we learn the new lesson God has for us to learn.

Emotions are also important in establishing the new value system in our subconscious. It is through worship that touches the emotions that new links are made into our minds and hearts. To create emotional impact when you are reading the scriptures, read them as the truth that they are, with exuberance and strength, not like a dry piece of bread. For, as you read with truth and emotions, this truth moves to the subconscious mind, quickly establishing fresh new patterns. When you worship in song, do all you do (singing, raising hands, clapping, dancing, whatever!) with your heart wide open, desiring to love your King. This type of worship has a powerful effect of immediate change and transformation. Emotion is moving these thoughts right into the subconscious part of the mind. This is why the Psalms have so much emotion in them because they are from the core of the writer. We are not seeking this emotion as a goal of

worship, but we can enjoy emotion as we seek to worship God. This is God-given emotion to enjoy Him in our experience of worshipping Him.

Emotion must be linked to the word of God. When linked to the word of God, emotion is a powerful reality. Some churches are strong about teaching and preaching the truth, but weak in the emotional experience of God. Other churches are strong in emotion with a lot of happiness and exuberance, but little foundation of the word of God. Both of these churches are weak in bringing transformation to human beings. But when these two elements of emotion and truth are brought together, human lives will truly and powerfully be transformed as they experience and enjoy their God.

Emotion lets us gauge what we really believe. Negative fleshly emotions reveal we are walking in the flesh and not believing something at the soul level. They reveal the need to evaluate our goals and return to abiding. Negative emotions, if we run our lives by them, can make it easy to quit. Truth makes you persevere. Truth is a solid foundation on which we build our lives. Truth is immovable and founded in God. Strong doctrine produces passion in a person. Excitement emerges with overflowing feelings of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for His salvation, for the new creation life He has made, for setting you free to truly live!

FROM FEAR TO FAITH

The emotion of faith is fear, at first. God often speaks to us, calling us to move out of our comfort zone and into His will. His will scares us because it is impossible for us to do, in our wisdom and knowledge, with our own abilities and strength. His will requires faith, trust in the God who will work in and through us to accomplish an impossible task. Because He accomplishes it, He receives the glory, not us. The benefit we receive is the opportunity to walk with God and be used by Him for His Name's sake, which is what our spirit loves.

Think of this example: God asks you to be a pastor. You realize that you do not know the Bible enough, do not know how to speak well enough, do not have enough education, so fear grips your soul. The emotion of fear sends a warning to you that you are not capable to do what you are starting to believe God is asking of you. To obey God, you must believe His assessment of the situation, the truth that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you, and move in obedience to carry out His will, knowing if it depended upon you, you are in serious trouble.

Here's another example: In a church congregation, a pastor decides to lead the congregation to do something outside of the norm. Maybe the Lord is directing the church to get involved with helping people get off the street or out of deep dysfunction, so the spiritual leaders begin to work with the Lord in this area. Former drug addicts and criminals start coming to Christ. Fear grips many in the congregation. Questions arise based in fear. People start saying things like: "We cannot afford to care for these people." "We don't want to minister to those people." "What about the safety of our children"? These are emotional statements based on fear, trying to stop the congregation from walking by faith. Fleshly emotions lust for control of a believer's or a congregation's life.

We are all challenged in many ways through events in our lives. We may have a task given by God that seems too big for us and we feel unable to do it. We might feel depressed because of a seemingly bad event. We might feel we are especially defective in some way and therefore not really responsible to live godly in that particular area of our lives. We might feel certain scriptures are true for some people but not really true for us. We might feel we cannot love someone who has hurt us badly. There are many feelings we have every single day. If we are

driven by these emotions of the soul, we will live a roller-coaster life. Emotions are an unpredictable and unstable foundation upon which to build our lives upon.

The system of the world most often uses emotions as a guide, doing what *feels* good or right, rather than doing what IS right and true. The Kingdom of God is based on truth and the unshakable assurance that our loving God is on the throne. He is in control, orchestrating all the events of our lives and the physical world together for our good.

Christians often struggle with feelings because of two extremes:

1. One camp says you should always appear to feel good if you're a Christian, so you deny negative emotions keeping them under lock and key never to be expressed.

2. The other says you should express your emotions and always only do what you feel or are comfortable with no matter what the outcome is. You must be true to yourself.

How can we tell if our feelings and emotions are sinful or godly?

_____

_____

WHAT NEEDS DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE?

To help you think about your perceived needs, ask yourself some revealing questions. Answer as transparently as you can. The answers will help you see what you really believe about yourself and your life on this planet:

Am I significant and is the work I have to accomplish in this life worthwhile and significant?

_____

People who feel significant know their lives have meaning and purpose. They are here on the planet by design and the task they have been given is challenging and meaningful.

What do I see as my purpose in life?

_____

_____

Security is defined as permanent acceptance which is unconditional and consistently expressed.

Am I secure? If the events in my life fall apart, will I make it or not?

_____

Ask yourself these questions: Am I valued as a person? Am I loved for who I am? Am I accepted?

_____

_____

_____

Security has within it an element that does not change, an unshakeable foundation for our lives that will enable us to stand no matter what.

What would I need to feel more secure?

_____

_____

Do I feel like I belong? Do I have people I connect with on a regular basis by whom I feel valued and loved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

EXPOSING THE FLESH

In our subconscious mind, we have formed values that drive us as people. We live out these values through our every day experiences. We have godly values and ungodly values. Our bodies follow these values. We do what we really believe, all the time. The ungodly values and emotions stored in the subconscious part of our soul are what the Bible calls "flesh."

In our thinking process, at the deeper, subconscious level, we may hear words like these:

"I must respect myself as a worthwhile person."

"Sometimes I don't feel like a person at all. I need to feel whole."

"I'll never amount to anything."

"I'm a loser."

"I must like myself, accept myself. In order to really accept myself, I must be somebody."

"I can't accept myself if I don't matter to anyone or anything."

"I must be able to regard myself as important".

"I must matter to someone".

"I must see myself as able to do something meaningful for someone."

"But even if I have this or that, it isn't enough."

"To feel like a worthwhile person, I must be loved by another person and accepted for who I am".

"I am loved only if I behave well."

Before the fall of man, Adam and Eve were significant and secure, and they belonged to God and each other. They walked in complete dependence upon God. All their needs were met in and by God. They didn't worry. They were like little children, trusting their Father to provide their every need. They enjoyed God and rested in His care. They were given a task to do by God which was fully satisfying.

When Adam sinned, sin entered into him. His significance, security, and sense of belonging before God disappeared. Fearing God's rejection, Adam and Eve hid. Losing their security, they blamed each others for the crime. They were cast outside God and entered into death, independent for the first time from their Creator. They felt insecure and insignificant and now had to find meaning outside God. Yet there was no meaning to be found. Life became futile.

When we surrendered our lives to Christ, God moved us out of the kingdom of the world, in which sin reigns, into His Kingdom where He reigns. We have entered back into an intimate, secure relationship with God. We have returned to the garden before sin entered man. This is our true reality as a saint. God put a new spirit inside of us, but did not yet transform our soul and body. Sin still seeks to reign in our soul and body and we are told to master it. This independence, or sin, is called "flesh."

The flesh still craves and lusts for satisfaction in physical things, but we have been set apart to God. We have been cut away from the flesh and are now fully secure and significant in Christ.

FALSE BELIEFS DRIVE THE FLESH

When a person feels or believes they are worthless, they will strive to protect themselves from more unbearable feelings and to ease the feelings already there. The flesh wants comfort. The flesh wants to feel good and happy. So whatever it takes to have that feeling, the body will seek out ways to make that happen.

People pursue irresponsible ways of living as a means of defending against feelings of insignificance and insecurity. In most cases they have a wrong idea of significance and security. These false beliefs are at the core of their problems.

To see the flesh in action, think of the scenario of a counsellor trying to counsel a client. If the counsellor feels he *needs* to have the person he is counselling get well *in order to* feel significant or secure as a counsellor, then his perceived value and worth is dependent on how the counselee responds to the counselling. If the counselee does not respond well to the

counselling session, the counsellor might respond to this perceived need with the following fleshly feelings:

ANXIETY ("Can I really counsel acceptably? If I can't, what do I have left? I'm no longer worth anything.") or

GUILT ("I always do an inferior job. Maybe God is punishing me. I can't measure up. If the person doesn't change, it is my fault.")

If someone actually tells the counsellor that his counselling is not good enough, the counsellor may become resentful:

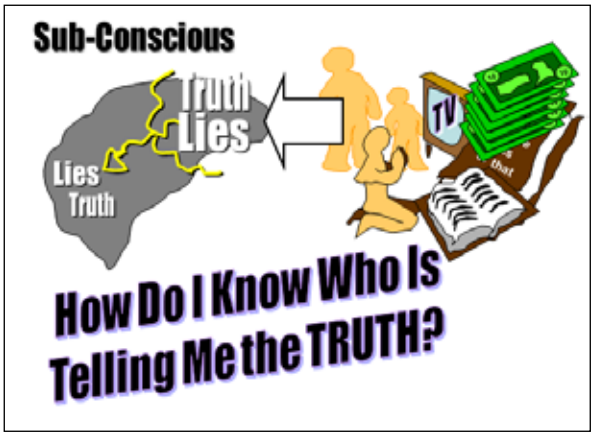
RESENTMENT ("How dare you criticize my counselling? You are robbing me of my significance and that makes me angry.")

The Bible says: *"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he"* (Proverbs 23:7). What we deeply believe drives us. The subconscious value system guides our behaviour and the course of our lives. We live what we believe. Until the truth gets from our conscious mind, into a deep-seated belief of our heart, it will just remain a theory and will not change us.

EXPOSING FLESHLY BELIEFS

To expose a counterfeit you must know the real thing. You must know the truth, bringing the truth in through the conscious mind so it transforms the lies seated in the subconscious value system.

Think of the process of learning how to detect counterfeit bills. In the training sessions, the trainees spend days examining the real bills, looking closely and magnifying the real thing, looking at all sides of the bill. They examine the ink colour, the design, the watermarks, and the lettering design. Every day they study real bills. Impatient trainees keep asking the instructor to show them some counterfeits, but he ignores their request and tells them simply to just keep looking at the real bills day after day. At the end of the week, on the last day, the counterfeit bills are introduced. What do you think is the result of so much study of the real bills? The class easily picks out the fake bills because they really know what the real looks like.



Jesus said we will know His disciples by their love for one another. He tells us to check the fruit. It must work in each of our lives. The truth sets us free when we believe it. There are many counterfeit "truths," but there is only one real Truth. The Truth is a person, not a concept. Jesus is the Truth. Everything He says and everything He did was fully trustworthy and without error. So the answer for discovering fleshly thought patterns is to fill our conscious mind with truth from God's word, like we fill our bodies with food. The word of God is our food. We are to crave it like newborn babies crave their mother's milk. Eat. Eat. Eat. Eat the word of God. Drink the word of God. Abide in the

word and you will learn from Jesus. The Holy Spirit will teach you all that Jesus commanded as you fix your mind on things above, not on earthly things.

Read what Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus in Ephesians 4:17-19, and see what principles you find that confirm what we are talking about here:

> *This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart, who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

The Gentiles were the people who did not yet know God. How did the Gentiles walk?

_____

What does it mean that they walked "in the futility of their minds"?

_____

_____

How did their behaviour follow their thoughts?

_____

_____

> *But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off*[192]*, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:20-24)*

Paul is referring here to the behaviour patterns we learned from our lives in the world, when we lived according to the flesh. He says, "*Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man...*"[193] We are to put off the behaviour of the old man, the behaviour patterns of the flesh. How do we do that? We do this by rethinking. We must renew our minds with truth.

> *Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. (Romans 6:6)*

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[192] "Put off" is an infinitive verb in this translation, meaning "to put off", and is rightly interpreted as an indicative term meaning "you have put off," a completed action, rather than an imperative command. This understanding corresponds with Colossians 3:9,10 "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him…"

[193] Ephesians 4:22

According to Romans 6:6, what happened to the old man? _____

Who is the old man? _____

Look up 2 Corinthians 5:17 in your Bible; **what do we learn about the old man?**

_____

So according to these verses, the old man is already gone and dead. How did the old man die?

_____

So how do we put off what is already off and dead? _____

We must believe the old man is gone. The answer is belief, isn't it? Faith. We are commanded to believe God, to walk by faith and not by sight, not by feeling, not by our best thinking in the flesh. We are to believe that what God has done in Christ, He has actually done. The old us is dead and gone, crucified in Christ. We have been set free from sin which resides in the flesh. Now we are to believe that it is so. It's that simple. As we believe the truth, the programming of our subconscious mind will be renewed by the truth of God's word.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)

Why is it important to present our bodies to God?

_____

We live out what we believe with our bodies, so we present our bodies to God. We yield them to God, laying ourselves before Him, giving Him our bodies to use for righteousness. We speak out the truth with our mouths. Our mouth is a member of our body. We force it to obey God's word. We move our feet in obedience to God's word, whether we *feel* like it or not. If it's true, it's true. We do the word of God. Faith must work. If it doesn't work, it is dead.

God does not create dysfunctional, sinful beings. He created you in purity and holiness. He made you completely righteous in Christ. It's done, believer. The work is complete. Now God is saying to believe Him and walk in what He has done. You are light, so live as a child of light. You are new, so live in the newness of life. You are holy, so be holy in your behaviour. Do you see a pattern? Behaviour follows belief. We do what we believe.

We don't need to focus on our behaviour and try to change it. We focus on the Truth, fully believing Him, and our behaviour will change. We walk according to the Spirit and we will not carry out the lusts of the flesh. As we focus on the truth, God sets us free from old patterns of thinking. As our thinking changes, our behaviour will naturally change. This is the transformation that takes place in the life of a believer. We are transformed in our spirit, totally

and completely, and we are being transformed as we fully believe what God has already done within us.

As we mature in Christ, God will continue to reveal fleshly areas of our thinking that still need renewing when He is ready to renew them. We don't need to focus on the flesh and try to find areas to change. God will shine light on them when He is ready. He will expose them in the light of his word. We will want to hide from the light, but we must allow the light to expose the fleshly thoughts. We want those thoughts exposed. We do not want to have cancerous thoughts remaining in our thinking process. We want our minds to be totally in line with truth; totally in line with who we really are in Christ.

Fleshly Talk of the Soul:

"I must be a financial success to be significant."

"I must not be criticized if I am to be secure. Everyone must approve everything I do."

"Others must recognize my abilities if I am to be significant."

"My security depends upon my spiritual maturity."

"My significance depends upon how successful my ministry is."

FLESH IS LIKE A CANCER: YOU WANT IT EXPOSED!

If you have cancer in your body, the cancer is in your body, but it does not define who you are. You have cancer, but you are not cancer. The cancer is "outside" of the real you. If you have cancer in a part of your body, the doctor will say the cancer must be removed through surgery. When the day of surgery arrives, the doctors lay you on the operating table.

The nurses remove all your clothing. You are naked and laid bare before the eyes of doctors. If you happen to be awake during this process you feel a certain amount of embarrassment or shame at being exposed so crudely. (Fortunately for us, most of the time, we are asleep at this point.)

The doctors then shine bright lights on you and cover those areas that are free from cancer, while exposing only the parts that are sick. Then, in that bright light, the doctor raises his sharp scalpel and he cuts through your skin to remove the cancer.

Think of flesh like a cancer. God is like the doctor. He shines the light of His Word on us, exposing areas of belief where our soul is still relying on false systems and lies. As we submit to His truth, He sets us free. We may feel like resisting the light and His probing touch. We may feel shame or embarrassment at what the light reveals. When we know the flesh is really like a cancer, however, and outside of us, we want it exposed. We want it removed. It's hindering us from the full expression of life in us. We are willing to be opened and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.

THE FLESH DOESN'T LIKE EXPOSURE

The flesh does not like to be exposed. Flesh-deception is easy. Flesh-discovery is painful. It wounds our pride and shakes the good opinion our flesh has of itself. We make statements like, "Could be, but I don't know" or "I'm just confused." Our flesh does not like to admit its independence and seeks to justify it by blaming others or circumstances or seeking pity for why it has to be obeyed.

WE RESIST EXPOSURE OF THE FLESH FOR TWO REASONS:

1. We believe the lie is true.

The belief has remained so long it feels comfortable. Changing to a new, unfamiliar position can be painful. Our flesh accepts the world's false teaching that we are sufficient in ourselves, that we can achieve personal worth and peace without kneeling first at the cross of Christ.

2. We hold on to the lie fiercely because we think our happiness depends on it.

We hold on to wrong beliefs of worth with fierce intensity. We come to believe that we will meet the need for happiness if only we have whatever it is that we so desperately think we need, like, in this example, helping a counselee.

We evaluate events with the conscious mind and we react to an event with the subconscious mind with automatic reactions. Satan, the world or the flesh tries to feed lies to our Conscious Mind in hope that those lies will take root in our subconscious mind. This is why we must renew our minds with the Truth to reprogram the subconscious mind that has been programmed toward independence.

FLESHLY THINKING IN MEN

A man may try to fill this need for significance with a false belief that if he can do something or become something he will be significant. This might be represented by his job, or money, prestige, looks, friends, etc. Losing one or more of these can be a major blow to a man's concept of self worth and can make him feel less significant.

FLESHLY THINKING IN WOMEN

A woman may try to fill her need for security in a variety of ways because her very self worth is at stake. One example may be a woman who finds a man and allows him to become her total security, almost her earthly god.

Another example may be a woman who, instead of committing to one man, goes to many, fearing that if she stays too long with one, they may get to really know her and find her unlovable. This makes long-term relationships almost impossible.

OPEN COMMUNICATION IS CENTRAL TO UNCOVERING THE FLESH

Open communication is important in dealing with the flesh. It helps to be able to talk freely with someone you trust, especially a spiritual person who can help you see fleshly patterns of thinking and replace them with the truth.

Galatians 6:1-2 is a good guide for us:

> *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

Paul says here, "*You who are spiritual.*" A spiritual person is one who walks in the Spirit, not just a person who has a lot of Bible knowledge. Bible knowledge does not guarantee spirituality. A person who walks by faith is a spiritual person. You can tell such a person by the fruit of their lives: Is there peace? Is there love without an agenda? Is there joy? Are people being transformed by being around this person?

A spiritual person will tell you the truth in love. Your flesh will want someone to pity it or justify its behaviour. You want a person who will look beyond the flesh to who you really are and help expose the flesh for the purpose of releasing you to live free in Christ. Notice also, that a spiritual person will be gentle with you for they know that they could just as easily be tempted by the flesh. We need each other in the body of Christ.

God has gifted certain people in the church to be leaders for the purpose of building up the body of Christ for this purpose:

> *for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ – (Ephesians 4:12-15)*

God gifted us and others in the body of Christ to help us grow. Being transparent is important when dealing with fleshly thinking. We do not want to live fleshly lives as believers. We are created to live in the fullness of who we are. We want to grow. If we allow fleshly thinking to dominate and guide us, being driven by our emotions, we will remain babes in Christ, tossed and driven by various winds of doctrine. We will be unstable, and most likely we will blame God or other people for this instability, when, really, the responsibility is ours.

We are commanded to not let sin reign in our bodies. We are commanded to walk in the spirit, so we will not carry out the lusts of the flesh. We don't try to change the flesh, we recognize it for what it is, admitting it is crucified and we are free from its power. We replace lies with the truth, renewing our mind. As we walk in the truth, fully believing it, we will walk more and more in the freedom we have in Christ. The truth sets us free! We aren't trying to be free, we are already free. If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed. Jesus has set us free, but we must believe we are free.

Our work, as a Christian,
is to believe God,
***not* because we *feel* like it's true,**
but because *it is true*.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: TRANSFORM

What you believe reveals itself in how you live. Are you living a life that is full of joy or one that is full of anxiety? Are you living a life free from burden and filled with peace, or do you feel weighted down by life's demands?

Write Key Five

Transform:_____

_____

Take a moment to explain this key in your own words. What is important for you to remember?

_____

_____

_____

Now reflect on your life. What is your life really like? Not what you wish your life was like, but what is it really like right now? Write down your thoughts below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

What have you learned as you read Key 5 *Transform* that will help you rethink how to experience freedom in your life?

_____

_____

_____

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But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

If God calls you chosen ... what are you?

If God has called you royal ... what are you?

If God has called you a priest ... what are you?

If God calls you holy ... what are you?

If God calls you special ... what are you?

If God calls you His own ... what are you?

IDENTITY SINNER: WHO YOU WERE BEFORE KNOWING CHRIST:

Romans 3:9	Under sin
1 Corinthians 15:22	Dead
2 Corinthians 4:4	Blinded mind
Ephesians 2:3	By nature a child of wrath
Ephesians 5:8	Darkness
Colossians 1:21	Alienated and hostile in mind

IDENTITY SAINT: WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST:

Romans 3:24	Justified and redeemed (already)
Romans 6:6	Old "self" was killed (crucified)
Romans 8:1	Not condemned
Romans 8:2	Free from law (of sin and death)
Romans 8:9	In the Spirit
Romans 8:14	Spirit witnesses that we are children of God
Romans 8:17	Heirs of God
Romans 8:26	Spirit prays for us
Romans 8:29-30	Foreknown, predestined, called, justified, glorified
Romans 8:33	God's elect
Romans 8:34	Christ intercedes for us
Romans 8:37	Conquerors through Him
Romans 8:38-39	Nothing can separate us from God's love
Romans 9:16	It all depends on God
Romans 15:7	Accepted
1 Corinthians 1:2	Sanctified (holy, set apart)
1 Corinthians 1:30	Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption
1 Corinthians 15:22	Alive
1 Corinthians 6:11	Washed, sanctified and justified
2 Corinthians 2:14	Always leads us in His triumph
2 Corinthians 3:14	My hardened mind is removed

2 Corinthians 5:17	A new creation
2 Corinthians 5:21	The righteousness of God
Galatians 2:4	Have liberty
Galatians 3:28	All are one (none are inferior)
Galatians 4:7	A son and an heir
Ephesians 1:10-11	Have obtained an inheritance
Ephesians 1:13	Sealed with the Spirit
Ephesians 1:3	Blessed with every spiritual blessing in Heaven
Ephesians 1:4	Chosen, holy and blameless before God
Ephesians 1:7	Redeemed, forgiven
Ephesians 2:10	Created for good performance
Ephesians 2:13	Have been brought near (to God)
Ephesians 2:19	Fellow-citizen with the saints
Ephesians 3:12	Have bold and confident access to God
Ephesians 3:6	A partaker of the promise
Ephesians 5:30	A member of His body
Colossians 2:10	Complete
Colossians 3:1	Raised up with Him
Colossians 3:3	Life is hidden with Christ in God
1 Peter 2:9	Chosen
1 Peter 2:9	Holy
1 Peter 2:9	Priest
1 Peter 2:9	Special people
2 Peter 1:4	Partaker of the divine nature

KEY 6 ABIDE

We abide in Christ, knowing that apart from Him we can do nothing.

In Key 6 *Abide*, we learn the reality of actually abiding in Christ. We also learn of the experience of abiding in Christ. The disciple John wrote, "By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world. Whoever confesses Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."[194]

From the moment you surrendered your life to Jesus by faith, you entered into Christ. You entered into relationship with God and you abide in Him. This is the actual reality of abiding in Christ. You reside in Him, and He is in you. How do you know? Because, according to 1 John 4:13-15, He sent His Spirit into your spirit, to walk with your spirit, guiding you into the ways and mind of God.

Christianity is the only faith where you need more than just the founder's teaching, you need the Founder Himself!

You abide in Christ actually. This is why the Christian life is impossible to fake. You abide in Christ and He in you, or you are not a Christian. You need Jesus. He is your life. He came that you might have life, and life abundantly. *He is this Life*. He lives His life in and through you as you rest the full weight of your trust on Him.

Christianity is the only faith where you need more than just the founder's teaching, you need the Founder Himself! God doesn't hand us a manual, like a car manual, for the Christian life and say, "Once you read this, you will know all you need to know to live life." Instead, He sent Himself to teach you to abide, learning moment by moment and day by day what it means to walk with and love your God.

Because of the grace of God revealed in Christ Jesus when you surrendered your life to Him by faith, you became His child. You entered into Christ and He entered into you through His Spirit who dwells with you and in you. You were born from above and are now seated in the heavenly realm in Christ. You are actually abiding in the Father right now and you have entered into the Sabbath rest of God. This means you have ceased from all your work for your salvation. You have entered into the finished work of Christ and there is nothing more for you to do for your salvation but to believe and walk by faith in God. God is at peace with you and you exist in perfect peace with Him.

In the new heart God gave you at your new birth, there is zero rebellion. You delight in the law of God. You want to obey Him. You love Him! He gave you the mind of Christ so you can think like God as He reveals His thoughts to you through His Spirit inside you. He sent His Spirit to teach you His ways, so you can experience what you are abiding by already. You love the thoughts of God. You desire to follow the will of God.

Your spirit is always abiding, even if you don't realize it. This is the actual reality of abiding. You are in Christ and He is in you. He is your home. You dwell within Him. To help you picture abiding, think about the room you are in right now. Do you have to do anything to be more in the room than you are right now? If you do not believe you are in the room you

[194] 1 John 4:13-15

are already in, you will not enjoy the experience of being in the room. So how do you enjoy the room you are residing in? Just by being in it. Accept that you are already in it, and you cease striving or trying to be in it. You are in it, so you rest and enjoy the room. There is no striving. No trying. No stress.

Being in Christ is like being in the room. All you have to do is BE. You can't try. You are either in Christ or you are not. If you are His you are in Him and He is in you.

Jesus uses another picture to help us understand abiding, the vine and the branch. He is the vine and you are the branch. You are connected into Him and He is connected into you. His life is flowing in and through you right now and always. You are connected. You did not connect yourself. He connected you, and you are permanently connected. You are permanently His child. You exist in Him. There is nothing you can do to lose this gift He has given. He won't take it away. He keeps you. He holds you. Nothing can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Your behaviour won't take the gift away because your behaviour didn't get you saved. You were worthy of hell, but because of God's grace, you are saved through faith in His Son.

God created you, and God created you within the reality He created, so what God says is real is truly real for you. For us as His children, as we abide in His word, He teaches us what is truly real, really true. He re-orients us to live a life of faith, rather than a life governed by sight. The miraculous is true reality for a child of God. We live in the miraculous realm all the time, seated in the heavenly places. Eternity is our home. The impossible becomes possible in Christ. We can walk on water; we can part the sea; we can raise the dead and heal the sick. We can live a victorious Christian life no matter our upbringing, no matter what nation we are born into, no matter what!

He teaches us that the physical limitations of the world are subject to the will of our Father. If He wants the dead to rise, they will rise. If He wants nations to fall, they will fall. If He wants us to walk on water, we will walk on water. We can do all things through Christ who gives us strength. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. God tells us what is really real. He defines reality for us and He reveals reality, so we can understand His thoughts which are higher than our thoughts. His thoughts are profoundly beautiful.

So we sit with Him, listening to Him as He speaks to us through His word, through things we read and shows we watch, through people we meet, through circumstances in life, and through His creation. Truth always comes in line with His word or it's not true. It doesn't matter what the world says, what family says, what any other source says, if what they say contradicts the word of God. What God says in His word is true, about Himself, about eternity, about you, and about how to live in this world. He teaches us how to be in the world, but not of the world.

You were born from above. You are a heavenly being, housed in a body made for planet Earth. You are a spirit being and your identity is sealed by God. You are His creation, His workmanship. Your spirit agrees with the law of God. Your spirit is righteous and holy. There is nothing you need to do to get your spirit to abide. Your spirit knows what God says is true. God says you are a new creation. So you are. God says you reign with Him right now, so you do. God says you are seated in the spiritual realm in Christ, so that's where you are. You don't have to hope it's true, wish it were true, try to make it true, because it is actually true. Your spirit perfectly abides and always dwells in eternity. This is why God says to Walk in the spirit and you will not carry out the lusts of the flesh.[195] God is saying, "Be who you really are in

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Christ."

Believer, you are a righteous being, made by Christ. You are born of the same spiritual DNA as God, yet you are not God. You are a child of God. You do not have the full knowledge of God. You know just what God reveals to you and He reveals to you just what you need to know. You are a spirit being housed in a body and with a soul which both have independence within them that wants to govern your spirit.

Your soul and body do not naturally abide in nor trust God. God tells you to not let sin reign in your mortal body, and to take every thought captive into obedience to Christ. This is the struggle you feel. When you are young in Christ, your spirit has not yet conquered your earth suit. You are immature, meaning your spirit has not come fully under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Your spirit is fully righteous, but this righteousness is not mature. When you are a babe in Christ, you are immature. Your spirit must learn to come under the influence of the Holy Spirit fully. You are learning to walk with God by faith. You are learning to believe God at the soul level. As you do, you will experience the reality of abiding in Christ.

How do you come under the influence of the Holy Spirit? When you were saved, you were given the Holy Spirit as a gift, as a counsellor and a guide. You were sealed with the Holy Spirit by God securing your inheritance as His child. Coming under the influence of the Holy Spirit happens when you immerse yourself in the word of God. The Holy Spirit will speak to your spirit about the ways of God. He will teach you and counsel you. He will watch over you and instruct you in the way you should go. The Spirit reveals the heart of God, bringing glory to the Father and the Son. He takes all that is from the Father and the Son and reveals it to us as we abide in the Word of God.

Your work is to believe what He says, and you will abide in Him, experiencing life with Him. Abiding has to do with your thinking, what you truly believe. If you let the world's thoughts into your mind, believing the information you receive, these thoughts will deposit themselves into the subconscious part of your soul and, once there, it's hard to get free of them. You will feel like you are captive to those thoughts, and walk out Christianity in an unhealthy manner. What you put into your mind is critical. If ungodly or earthly information moves into the subconscious, it will now take on a life of its own, leading you to do what you do not want to do.

As you believe, your soul and body will transform and you will grow in maturity, expressing more and more fully the reality of who you really are. If you do not believe Him, He will take you into experiences to teach you His ways more clearly and to mature you. God will take you through experiences to teach you to listen to His voice. He will walk with you as you walk with Him, and let you work alongside Him as He sets up His Kingdom. God tells your spirit truth, that it is already righteous, and your spirit leaps to things spoken by the Spirit of God. Your spirit longs to fully embrace all it was created to enjoy in knowing your God. Your heart beats with the heartbeat of God. You love what He loves.

This process of the Christian life is called growth or maturity. You cannot fail in it. You can only grow. In the spiritual world, a person grows opposite than in the physical world. In the physical world, we grow from a child into adult. In the spiritual realm, we *grow into childhood*. We move from thinking we can exist and function independently of God to total dependence on God. We realize He alone is our food, our drink, our very life. We learn to enjoy complete abandonment to God. We enjoy loving Him and walking with Him as He sets up His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

The greatest men and women of God become more and more childlike in their faith. Childlikeness is maturity. Childlikeness is responsibility. Childlikeness is where freedom is.

Freedom is when you know you are not in charge. Your world is being worked out by Father God. You are moving wherever He is moving and you go wherever He goes. You have no care in the world because He cares of you. Some people may say it's not very practical to live a childlike faith, but this is how saints live. This is Christianity and this is what it means to abide in Christ.

DISCOVERING KEY 6

Abiding in Christ is where the joy and power is in the Christian life. May God give you understanding as you read and meditate on these verses. He will reveal His word to you if you are willing to learn from Him. Eat His word, think about it, talk about it and as you do, He will reveal Himself and His thoughts to you

As you study, ask yourself these questions. Write down the response of your heart, so you can look, see, and understand what God is revealing to you.

L LIE: What LIE of the world or evil one is being exposed by truth?

I INSIGHT: What INSIGHT is revealed about God and His ways?

F FAITH: What revealed truth strengthens my FAITH?

E EXAMPLE: What faith EXAMPLE is given for me to follow?

- ❒ John 5:16-40
- ❒ John 8:31-35
- ❒ John 10:7-18
- ❒ John 12:42-50
- ❒ John 15:1-26
- ❒ 1 Corinthians. 1:18-31
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 2
- ❒ 2 Corinthians 1:21-22
- ❒ Galatians 3:26-27
- ❒ Ephesians. 6:10-17
- ❒ 1 John 2: 3-29
- ❒ 1 John 3:5-24
- ❒ 1 John 4:13-16

GOING DEEPER KEY 6 ABIDE

We abide in Christ, knowing that apart from Him we can do nothing.

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.
Refrain: It is well, with my soul, It is well, it is well, with my soul.
Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control, That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.
My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live: If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

In 1873, Horatio Spafford wrote this famous song after a series of tragic events rocked his life. His son died at age four in 1871. In 1873, while waiting for a business deal to close, Horatio sent his wife and four daughters on ahead to England. While at sea, the boat collided with a sailing boat and rapidly sank. All four daughters died, and his wife arrived alone in England. Spafford travelled home to comfort his grieving wife and wrote this song.

How, in the midst of such unbearable loss, could a man write a song such as this? It is well with my soul. Horatio Spafford seemed to understand the secret of abiding. "*Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, It is well, it is well, with my soul.*"

What do you think Horatio knew about God that gave Him such calm assurance in the midst of deeply painful circumstances?

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Abiding is the true reality of a Christian. Abiding is not optional. It's essential for living the abundant life in Christ.

The Psalmist wrote:

[1]He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. [2]I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."[3]Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.[4]He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. [5]You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, [6]Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. (Psalm 91:1-6)

God is our refuge, our protection from danger. He shelters us from the storm. Remember the story of Horatio? The storms came and hit Horatio's life, yet he rode through the storm in peace, saying, "It is well with my soul." The Psalmist speaks of a place where we dwell.

What is that place? (v.1) _____

What is the result of dwelling in the secret place of God?

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This is abiding — dwelling in the secret place of God. As we abide, God, like a mother hen with her chicks, covers us with His wings. We are protected by God, in the shadow of His wings, as we abide in Him. Yet, was Horatio protected by God when he walked through such tragedy? Had God forgotten him?

What do you think Horatio and the Psalmist knew about God that kept them in such peace?

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Abiding means "to continue in or remain in place." Abiding is the place where we dwell, where we rest from our work. There is a constancy and unchangeableness in abiding. There is comfort and rest in abiding.

In the biblical sense, we abide when we are putting our full trust in God. "I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.'"[196] He is my refuge. My refuge is God. My refuge, my fortress is a Person. A Being. He is the place where I dwell.

Abiding is passive, yet abiding is also active. Abiding has within it rest and work. Abiding is dwelling in God, yet is also placing full trust and faith in God, knowing that no matter what happens in life, God is sovereign over all events. He alone is trusted. He is working all things together for the good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. He alone is totally in charge and He is totally good and right in all He does.

Many phrases and pictures in the Bible express the reality of abiding. Some of these include: "walking in the Spirit"; "entering the Sabbath Rest of God"; "walking by faith"; "your work is to believe"; "believe with your heart"; "remain in me"; "love God"; "obey God"; "branches and the vine."

To help us understand the powerful reality of abiding, let's take a close look at an Old Testament picture as it is revealed in the New Testament reality of the gospel. Carefully read this passage in Deuteronomy 16. Read it slowly, and though it might seem long, I believe this journey will be worth the effort you put in to understand what abiding means for us as believers in Jesus

[196] Psalm 91:2

Christ. You may want to read this passage a couple of times before you answer the questions below:

> *1Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night.2Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name.3You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.4And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall any of the meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning.*
>
> *5You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you;6but at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt.*
>
> *7And you shall roast and eat it in the place which the LORD your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. 8Six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a sacred assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work on it. (Deuteronomy 16:1-8)*

Take a close look at this passage in Deuteronomy. What do you see that reminds you of the gospel? Look for shadows of the gospel, pictures that are fulfilled in Christ. Write down what you see.

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Deuteronomy 16 introduces a deep, yet beautiful picture of abiding. In Exodus 12:1-28, every household of Israel was commanded to kill a lamb and put the blood of the lamb over their doorposts. That night, the angel of death would enter the city and kill all the first born males, both man and beast. The angel would pass over those homes with blood on the doorposts. This meal was called the Passover and was eaten on the eve before God would set His people free from slavery in Egypt. There was great weeping and torment all through Egypt that night as first born sons were killed by the angel of death, but in the homes of God's people there was solemn peace and safety. God was a refuge for His people and He passed over them because of the blood of the lamb.

In memory of this night, God commanded His people to take bread without yeast which symbolized purity, the absence of sin. Unleavened bread would be eaten for seven days. The lamb must be slain outside the city walls at the place where the LORD chose to make His name abide, in the Most Holy Place. The sacrifice would take place at twilight and all of it must be gone by morning. Six days they could eat no unleavened bread and on the seventh day they would assemble before the Lord and cease from their work. This day would be called the Sabbath and there would be rest for the people of God.

In the New Testament, especially in the book of Hebrews, we see this shadow of the Old Testament fulfilled as we enter the Sabbath rest of God in Christ.

> *1Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. 2For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.3For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. (Hebrews 4:1-3)*

Who did not enter the Sabbath rest of God, according to Hebrews 4:1-2? _____

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Who entered the Sabbath rest? (v.3) _____

The Sabbath rest is entered into by faith. Those who believe the gospel that was preached to them enter the rest of God.

Let's look at Deuteronomy 16 a little closer in light of the reality of this gospel in Mark 14. In the New Testament, the night of His arrest, Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples.

> *12Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?" Mark 14:12*

What was this day called?

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What is significant about unleavened bread?

_____

What animal did they kill for the Passover meal? _____

> *22And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 23Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. 25"Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God." 26And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Mark 14:22-26)*

What did Jesus do to the unleavened bread? _____

What did this bread symbolize? _____

What did the wine symbolize? _____

> *8But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. (Romans 5:8, 9)*

How unfathomable that God walked the people of Israel through the gospel of Jesus Christ, centuries before Christ would come. How precise God is. On the night of the Passover, the night before God would set His people free from sin, Jesus was arrested. He was tried, beaten, and mocked, and at twilight on the following day, He was crucified. Like the unleavened bread Jesus broke the night before, like the bread God told the Israelites to eat, His body was broken for us. His blood was spilled to take away the sin of the world just as the blood on the door posts saved the Israelites from death. Jesus saved us from the wrath of God, by taking the full wrath of the Father on Himself. We have now been justified by the blood of Christ, made right with God through the death of his Son. This sinless man was the sacrificial lamb, giving His life once for all, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life. This life was in the Son. He who has the Son has everlasting life. "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."[197]

> *33Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" 35Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, "Look, He is calling for Elijah!"36Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down."37And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.38Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:33-39)*

God made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us. On the cross, what did Jesus cry out?

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Jesus became sin for us. He became independent from the Father. He took the sin of the world into Himself and He was separated from the Father for the first time ever. Then Jesus cried out in a loud voice and gave up His life. He died the death we deserved, and, in dying, He set us free from the power of sin and death.

The picture from Deuteronomy 16 is repeated over and over in the Old Testament as God's people are called to remember the Passover, the day they were freed from slavery in Egypt. God fulfilled the Old Testament symbols precisely in His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus was the Lamb of God. He was led outside the city, where He was hung on a Roman cross. All the sin of the world was placed in Him and He became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Through His death, we are set free from sin and death, and given new life. This life is in Him. He is eternal life. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me."[198]

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[197] John 3:36

[198] John 14:6

The veil to the Most Holy place in the temple, the place where God chose to make His name abide, was torn when Jesus died. The final sacrifice had come to take away the sin of the world. The system of animal sacrifice for the sins of the people had come to an end. God would now fulfill His promise to make a people who belonged to Him, born from the seed of Abraham, who is the Christ.

> *Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Holy Place, under the wings of the cherubim. (1 Kings 8:6)*

The ark, or tabernacle, of the covenant promise given to Moses, held the stone tablets of the law, the Ten Commandments. These tablets were the symbol of the Old Covenant given to Moses. All the law was summed up in this: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength, and love your neighbour as yourself.[199] The stone tablets were placed in the tabernacle where God chose to make His name abide, in the Most Holy place of the temple.

> *11But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. (Hebrews 9:11-15)*

What was the greater and more perfect tabernacle?

_____

What did Jesus do through His blood?

_____

Who did He do this for?

_____

What do we receive through this sacrifice?

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Jesus became the mediator of the new covenant, fulfilling the promise given centuries ago to Abraham. God ushered in the New Covenant, based not on works of the law, but on the grace of God through faith:

[199] Matthew 22:34-40

> *13For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith….16Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all 17(as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed – God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did… (Romans 4:13, 16-17)*

God has done something so profound in Christ. He has made the dead live and made perfect those who surrender to Him in faith.

> *8Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), 9then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. 10By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. (Hebrews 10:8-11)*

God did not desire sacrifice and burnt offering. God desired faith. Jesus removed the Old Covenant and established the second superior covenant by the will and grace of God.

By God's will, what has happened to us through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ? (v.10)

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> *12But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, 13from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. 14For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. 15But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, 16"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"17then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." 18Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. (Hebrews 10:12-18)*

By one offering, what did Jesus do to us? (v. 14)

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Did you notice the distinction between the spirit and the soul/body process here in these verses that we studied in Key 5 *Transform*? He has sanctified us and perfected us forever. Those He has perfected are being sanctified. Sanctified means that our spirit is set apart to God and made holy. Our soul and body are being set apart and made holy. God made us perfect in Christ and He is making us perfect in the thinking process of our soul and the actions of our bodies.

Our body has become the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore God says we must honour Him with our body. We are now "the place," the temple, where God chooses to make His name abide. He abides in us.

Now take a look at Hebrews 10:19-23.

> *19Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.*

What have we entered into by the new and living way, through Jesus' flesh? (v 19)

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Believer, we have entered into the Most Holy Place, the place where God chose to make His Name abide. Only the priests could come into this place, but they had to be purified by the blood of the lamb before entering or God would strike them dead. The holiness of God commands it. No sin can come into His presence without being destroyed.

We are now without sin, through the blood of Jesus Christ. So we enter with full assurance of faith. We now abide in the Holiest of Holies forever. The sacrifice was complete and our sin is gone. We have been perfected in Christ. We are the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people belonging to God. God has put His law into our cleansed hearts (our spirit). Now it's our responsibility to yield our soul and body to God, having our "hearts" cleansed from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water of the Word of God.

"Heart" in the Bible is used interchangeably with "spirit," "soul," and "mind." The Hebrew language is a poetic language and we have to look at the context to see what it is referring to. In this passage, "hearts" is referring to the soul. How do we know? Because our spirit is perfect and does not have an evil conscience. Our spirit is pure and holy. The heart or mind of the soul is programmed by sin and needs to be transformed and washed. How do we do this? By fully believing God: "By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."[200]

Is the meaning of abiding beginning to sink in? What an amazing plan. What an amazing gospel. Isn't this good news??! God has intimately joined us to Himself. We abide in Him. We move and live and have our being in Him. He is our home. This is an important reality of abiding.

Nothing can separate us from Him. We are secure. We can never be moved from the security of our eternal dwelling place. We live abiding in God and we dwell under the shadow of His wings. Nothing can touch us or come into our presence without His permission. The evil one cannot touch us without permission. In Christ we have overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.[201]

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[200] 1 John 4:13-15

[201] Galatians 5:24; 1 John 5:4,18-20

The *actuality* of abiding in God and He in us is sealed by Him through His Spirit in us. He will deliver us to Himself and present us blameless — spirit, soul, body — to Himself. Nothing can change it. Nothing will separate us. We are saved by His grace through faith. The work is done. It's a gift of God that no man should boast. And what an amazing gift it is. I hope you see the beauty of abiding like you never have before, or that you are renewed in the wonder of God.

We have found rest for our souls. We cease striving and know God, loving Him with the reckless abandon of a small child with a good Father. There is nothing we can do to make ourselves abide more or less in God. We abide.

If we abide in Him like this, why do so many of us struggle to experience this abiding? The experience of abiding in Christ is realized by faith alone. We must believe we abide in Him and He in us, or we will not walk in it. In the next chapter, we'll look more closely at experiencing the abiding presence of God.

Being vs. Doing

Abiding has two realities within it: the being and doing. Being is the foundation of the abundant Christian life. All doing flows from being who you really are in Christ. Being is the actual reality of identity, having been immersed into the death of Christ when the old man was crucified in Christ and you were raised in His resurrection power, being made completely new in Christ.

You can think of being as being in a room. You just are where you are and you are who you are. You don't try to be. Just be who you are. You are one with God in Christ and you are His child. You move and have your being in Him. This is the actual reality for a believer in Christ.

The doing, or experiential, side of abiding expresses itself as we live by faith in God, fully believing and trusting Him, resting in the completed work of Christ on the cross. We always do what we believe. This is why we cannot fake abiding. We cannot try to abide. We must believe that we actually do abide in Christ, are truly new creations, and live out this reality on the planet. So while we actually abide in Christ, we are commanded also to abide.

Case Studies: Who is Abiding?

Scenario One: Going to Work

Sarah dashed to her car. She frantically fitted the key in the lock and scrambled inside. She was late for work. The morning was unbelievable. The children refused to get up for school. She had to drag them out of bed and force them to get dressed. All they did was complain when she fixed their eggs. The eggs were runny or not hard enough, the toast was burnt. What ungrateful kids. Didn't they know how hard she worked? Didn't they realize how important her job was? If she was late she could lose her job. "Oh, God, what will happen if I lose my job? Why are You allowing this to happen? Why did you allow that man to leave me alone like this, God? God, if you really loved me, you wouldn't have allowed this to happen."

Being a single mom was tough, she thought, as angry tears threatened to flow. Her employer had been fairly understanding, but her children had been sick often this season and she had had to stay home to care for them several times. Her job was suffering.

As she sent the children out the door to walk to school, guilt flashed through her mind. What kind of mother was she to let them walk to school on their own? What if they were kidnapped?! Grabbing her bag, she rushed out the door. As she drove to work, traffic

slowed to a crawl. Pounding the steering wheel, she let out a cry of frustration. "I'm going to lose my job! What will I do?! God, why won't you help me? What did I do to deserve this? We'll be out of our house. I won't be able to pay my rent!" Finally she arrived to work, angry, frustrated, and ready to do battle with her boss if he so much as said one thing about her being late!

SCENARIO TWO: GOING TO WORK

Alicia walked to her car, got inside and prayed. "Lord, what a morning. Lord, you know my needs. You know I need this job. Please, Lord, help my boss to understand." Her children did not want to get out of bed this morning. They were moaning and complaining and refusing to budge. "God", she prayed, "how in the world do I get my children out of bed. I know I will be late to work if they don't get moving pretty soon. Lord, what should I do?" The thought came to her mind: make their favourite breakfast, pancakes with smiley faces and sausage. The smell of sausage would certainly arouse her sleeping kids. Maybe I will put some whipped cream on the pancakes, too, she thought to herself. "Lord," she prayed, "please help them wake up. I don't know what the problem is today, Lord, but I know you know. Please help them with whatever they are struggling with. Thank you that you have filled me with patience, Lord. Thank you for filling me with love for my kids. I can be patient with them, Lord. Thank you for giving me strength. It's not easy, Lord, to be a single mom. I know even though I don't have a partner that I am not alone. You are with me and you are my help, God. Thank you for your help today."

As the sausage cooked, the smell began to drift through the house. Slowly a ruffled head appeared. "Mom, are you making sausage? Thanks Mom. Sorry I gave you trouble this morning."

"Is there something wrong today?" she asked.

"I have a test I didn't study for and I'm afraid to go to school."

"Okay, let's pray together about that? Then go get your sister up for me. I really need to be on time for work."

Another ruffled head appeared and the children ate and began to get ready for school. "Lord," she thought, "you know my every need; Thank you that you are working everything together for our good today."

As she drove to work, she thanked God for helping her this morning. She prayed, "God, please protect my children today, help them at school with their friends. Thank you for your love for them. Please help my boss to understand why I am late today." As she arrived at work, the secretary said her morning appointment had cancelled and that she had extra time to settle in and start the day. Her boss would be in later, to check in. An emergency had come up and he was away from the office today. "Oh, God," she cried in her heart, "thank you for working everything out."

The first scenario reveals Sarah who is controlled by the circumstances of the morning, full of worry and frantically trying to piece her life together. She's a believer, but she is angry and distracted by all the trouble she is facing. She blames God for her trouble and cannot seem to find peace. Trouble with her children totally unravelled her day and she fought for control and some semblance of peace.

In the second scenario, Alicia also knows God, but is resting her faith in Him, knowing He is allowing these circumstances and that He would give her the wisdom she needed to deal with the problem of getting her children up and ready for school. She continually prayed prayers of faith, knowing God was in control, not her. Although circumstances came, she walked through them and grew in her faith as she saw God's hand in giving her ideas and in cancelling her morning appointment and arranging for her boss to be away from the office. All these events God knew about. She knew to trust Him and not worry about her life.

SCENARIO THREE: HEART ATTACK

At three in the morning, Sam woke with severe pain in his chest. The pain travelled down his arm and he wondered if he was having a heart attack. He nudged his wife and asked her to call the ambulance. Worriedly, she dialled the number and the ambulance was on the way. As he lay back down, holding his chest, he cried out from his heart, "Oh God, you are my peace. I trust you are in control. God, this really hurts, please protect me and show us what to do."

As the ambulance came and transported him to the hospital, his wife kneeled beside him and prayed, "God, please heal my husband. Give Him your peace, God. God, please remove the pain he is feeling. Please give the doctors wisdom to know what is wrong. Oh God, I'm scared. Thank you that You are in control."

SCENARIO FOUR: HEART ATTACK

Alex woke up from a deep sleep and cried out in pain. His chest hurt. He felt the pain go down his arm. He cried out, frantically calling his wife. "Help! I'm having a heart attack. Oh my God. Oh my God! Hurry," he said. "Dial the phone. Get help. Oh my God." We can't afford hospital bills, he thought to himself. The ambulance will cost a fortune. The medication. Doctors don't know anything anyways. Oh my God. And the children's education. How will my wife pay the bills if I die? I'm not ready to die. I have hardly lived.

As the ambulance took him to the hospital, his wife sat next to him crying, trying to console him, but unable to control her tears. What would she do if he died? The hospital would cost a fortune. Her children were in college. "What will I do?" she cried. The ambulance attendant tried to calm her down, saying they did not know if it was a heart attack. They would have to see the doctor first. Oh my God, she thought to herself, what if he dies?

Do you see yourself in any one of these scenarios? Your situation may differ, but the response you make when in a challenging situation reveals what you really believe, even if you keep your response inside your own head. Your mental response still reveals if you are abiding or not. If you fall apart or if you stand firm in peace, depends upon how you view the event and the maturity of your faith and walk with God. A mature believer stands firm in hopeful trust in God.

ACTUAL ABIDING

Abiding is the actual reality of the believer in Christ. We *actually* abide in Christ and He abides in us. We are not trying to abide, we actually do dwell and exist within Christ. We are in Him and He is in us. We are the branch connected to the Vine, who is Christ.[202] We know this because of the Spirit He has given us.[203] We are children of the living God, having been born again, not by the will of man, but by the will of God.[204] We are His and He placed His seal on our spirit with His Spirit, assuring us that we have an inheritance in heaven that will not fade or be removed.

"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."[205]

We know we abide in Christ because we cry out by the Spirit of God, "Abba Father." This is the cry of endearment, of a child crying out to His daddy. It's the cry that says, "I'm home now." This is the cry of a newborn baby, alive and immature, yet fully God's. The word "Abba" has passion behind it, revealing an intimate connection to the Father.

[202] John 15:5
[203] 1 John 4:12-16
[204] John 1:12-13
[205] Romans 8:15-21

Real Life Transformation

After studying for four years in Seminary I came away believing I knew quite a bit of biblical knowledge, at least more than the average church goer. Yet when asked some basic questions I would stumble and fumble for words not truly understanding what I was saying or what I truly believed.

After spending time working through the 8 keys, and then teaching them to the youth group at my church, God opened my eyes to a deeper understanding of what it means to walk with Christ.

I had never been told about abiding, a very common word found in scripture. I struggled at first to understand the concept of not being a human doing but a human being and resting in my Maker. And then moving that head knowledge to be practically worked out in my life. As I have learned to abide in Christ I have seen God work around me in ways unlike any other time in my Christian walk.

I see God's activity transforming lives around me as I learn to move in the unseen world where I am abiding. I have been set free from personal struggles that have dominated my walk with Christ. When you believe fully in God's Lordship and the truth that you have already been set free from sin, there is freedom to walk in love and joy.

These 8 keys have opened my eyes to the truth in God's word more than four years in Seminary. Now that I fully believe in who I am in Christ and what He can do through me, I rest in His presence as He works around me and I see His kingdom unfold around me.

-- Seminary Graduate and now Youth Minister at Royal Heights.

When you are saved, your spirit immediately abides in Christ and has made its home where it belongs. In abiding, there is great joy, the joy of one who was lost and now found, the joy of one who was dead and is now alive. The experience of a new babe in Christ is a feeling of being made clean and new. This is the reality of abiding. You were conveyed out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of God's love. Your spirit now basks in God. It is refreshed in God and fed by God alone through His word.

Abiding is like a person at the beach sun-tanning. This person does not try to make the sun brighter or warmer. He simply lays down on his towel. He are abiding in the sunlight. As he lays on his back and letting the sun do its work, his body shows the effects of the sun. A tan occurs naturally, not by any work he has done except just lying in the sun. This is much like an abider; an abider becomes more and more like Christ not because he are trying, but because he just stays in the Son.

You abide in Christ. Your spirit is seated in the spiritual realm in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). Your spirit always lives in this realm resting in the finished work of the cross. Your spirit does not work to secure its position before God. Your spirit does not think work. Your spirit has entered into the Sabbath rest of God, abiding in God. The Sabbath rest of God means full rest, full trust, full belief in God. You no longer have to do any work to be accepted by God. You are accepted because of the Son. So your spirit is at perfect peace in Christ. There is no striving or trying in your spirit. Your spirit knows and fully believes that it exists because of the Son, so it experiences joy, peace, hope and love.

As a believer, abiding is your true reality from the moment you first surrendered your life to Christ. You live in a dependent, connected relationship with God, even if you do not know it, because that is where you actually dwell, in Christ. He is your home. As you embrace this reality of abiding in Christ, all you have to do is *be* who you are. God will grow you, teach you, guide you, work through you, as you enjoy and get to know Him.

ABIDING: PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take a moment to let all this sink in. This was a deep study and you might want to look at it several times to grasp the reality of abiding. Take some time to sit with the Lord, meditating on the reality of abiding. Write your thoughts here as the Lord speaks this into your heart.

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In thinking about the reality of abiding in God, what do you think enabled Horatio Spafford to say with such assurance, "It is well with my soul?"

"God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. 7The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah"[206]

PICTURES OF ABIDING

There are many images of abiding in the physical world that give us pictures of a spiritual reality. Think of a baby in a womb. A baby in the womb is totally dependent upon his or her mother for life. All the oxygen and nutrients of the mother flow into the baby.

When the baby kicks, is it the baby kicking or is it the mother? Whose energy is flowing through the baby enabling the baby to move and kick? It's the baby, yet, at the same time, it is both the mother and the baby. The baby cannot exist outside the mother. The mother and baby are two distinct individuals, yet they are connected together and one is dependent upon the other. They are one. The mother's life is flowing through the baby, giving the baby life, giving the baby nourishment, and sustaining the baby as God grows the baby in the mother's womb.

Abiding is like this. We are the baby, connected and dependent upon God for everything. We are not God, but we are one with God. We can do nothing apart from Him. We cannot exist apart from Him. He feeds us spiritual food. He is our life and breath. His life flows in and through us, working from within us to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Jesus uses another picture to describe abiding. He says abiding is like a vine and a branch. "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."[207]

In this illustration, how is Jesus described? _____

Who is the Father? _____

[206] Psalm 46:1-7
[207] John 15:1-5

Who are you? _____

The Bible is very precise. Each word is placed by God for a specific reason, so it's wise to consider why Jesus chose to use a vine for His illustration instead of just any ordinary plant.

Jesus is the Vine and you are the branch. A vine is a climbing plant. A vine grows very tall and spreads rapidly. A vine leans on a support structure which enables the vine to reach out for sunlight while using the least amount of energy.

The vine's growth enables the vine to take over the surrounding area, to colonize. To grow, the vine requires only small patches of fertile soil, even if the adjacent areas have little or no soil and are exposed to sun. The vine will root itself in the fertile soil and spread its leaves into brighter, sunnier areas. Most vines produce fruit. The grapevine must be pollinated between a male and female plant before fruit can be produced. Some specific vines, like original grapevines, typically live next to a water source, like a stream. The grapevine is native to the Mediterranean.

God the Father is the Vinedresser. The vinedresser is the person who cultivates and prunes the vine, making it grow stronger and produce more fruit. The vinedresser touches every branch, and he removes every branch that does not bear fruit.

Based on this description of a vine, why do you think Jesus chose this particular plant for His illustration?

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What comes to mind is that the vine produces life as it takes over systems. Jesus produces life with us and this life takes over and transforms the systems around us. This is the impact of the Kingdom of God. The vine grows rapidly and it reaches toward the light even in places where there is little soil.

A branch is dependent upon the vine and cannot exist apart from the vine. It is the life of the vine that flows into a branch, producing fruit in due season. We are the branch and our life flows from the Vine, who is Jesus. We abide in Him. We rest in confident dependence upon Him.

The concept of abiding is also revealed in Jesus using a child to represent the Kingdom of God: we must become like little children. Why did he use a child? The child's view of life is simple — not knowing where good comes from, or how things are paid. Life just is. In a healthy home, children understand their parents will love them. They play and laugh and enjoy because they trust that someone else is taking care of all the work to make things happen. In the same way, the Father is always working. Our job is to play, to laugh, to enjoy His work, knowing that He will bring us to people He wants us to talk with; He will lead us to places He wants us to go.

So we are to become like children in this area of our lives. Just enjoying the work of God. Not trying to *do* the work of God, develop the work of God, or make the work of God happen. We are like a little child asking the Father questions like: Why would He move me to another neighbourhood? I don't know what He is doing, but I walk through the experience with Him. What's the real purpose? I don't know, but I trust God. I'm excited to see what will happen. I'm not attached to things on earth, so it is easy to give things up. Giving up a glass of water is the same as giving a car for I know nothing is mine, but all belongs to my Fathers and He can do whatever He wants with what is His, including me.

Your work is to believe Him. Believe that you are indeed in Christ and that you are a new creation. Just be who He says you are. In being who you are in Christ, you are not trying to be somebody, you already are somebody. You are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. He made you righteous. It's your very nature. You are not trying to be righteous. He set you free from the power of sin. You are not trying to be free. He has given you peace. You are not trying to have peace. He has poured out His love into your heart. You are not trying to love. You are a being who loves, unconditionally. You are just who you are, God's child, His delight.

Abiding is about *being* who you are and resting in the sovereignty of God. The reality of abiding is that you are the workmanship of God. You are God's creation, having been born again through His Spirit. You are perfect and holy. You are without sin, so there is nothing in you that the evil one has any hold on. You are a holy being set apart to God. You can't try to be a holy being. How can you try to be what you already are?

Trying to abide is like trying to be human.

Trying to abide is like trying to be human. Can a human baby make itself more human by trying to be more human? Ridiculous, isn't it? A human baby is fully human, though immature in its humanness. The baby must now learn, but it is still fully human. There are no degrees in our humanness. A baby cannot be more or less human than it already is. It can only learn how to live out its humanness. There is only growth now as a human. A baby can become a more mature human being, learning and growing each day. If a baby failed to grow, we would say something is wrong with the baby. Healthy things grow. A baby who doesn't grow is not healthy. If a Christian fails to grow, something is wrong. Something is not healthy. Either that person is not really a Christian or that person has not learned to walk by faith, being who they really are.

Abiding is central to the Christian life. The goal of abiding is always the will and glory of God. There is no "my will." Now you say only, "Your will, not mine." Just as Jesus was always about the Father's business, we, too, are about the will of the Father.

God is working out His will in and through you. The Father's will is active, not stagnate. The Father is always working out His righteous will and He is always working all things together for your good and for His glory. He is orchestrating all the events of history together to bring His creation back to Himself, to the praise of His glorious grace.

Abiding is living in total dependent trust in the Father. We trust Him because we know He is good and right; His character is sure. So we let things happen through us, knowing the Father is in control of all things working around us, working all things together for our good.[208] The Father works all things together according to His will. Nothing happens by chance. Nothing is by mistake. All things are designed for the Father's will, for His Name's sake and glory. Not even a butterfly will come into your presence but by the will of God. So, knowing this, you can trust and rest, living with the Sabbath rest of God, ceasing from your work and accepting His work in and through you.

[208] Romans 8:28

EXPERIENCE OF ABIDING: DOING

The Christian life should feel like you are on the ride of your life, but you are not driving. You are not in control. You are along to enjoy the ride, just like a passenger in an airplane. You are not steering the plane. The pilot is charting the course and leading the way. This is the actuality of abiding. You are in Christ, like sitting and moving around in an airplane. You are God's child. The destination is being conformed into the image of the Son, whether you like it or not.

When you are in an airplane, you are going where the plane is going, whether you want to or not. You can choose how to respond to the flight. You can either enjoy the ride or be petrified in your seat. This is the experiential side of abiding. Either way, you are going where the plane is heading. Nothing can change that. You choose which way you will respond, and your response either gives you a wonderful ride full of excitement and joy, or a ride of agony and stress. If you are riding in peace, you are riding without resistance against where the plane is going. If you resist the ride, you are still going to go where you are going. You just will not enjoy the ride.

If you enjoyed the flight so much that you suddenly thought, "I think I can fly on my own. I don't need this plane anymore. I think I can do this without the help of the plane." As your mind accepts that thought as true, you open the door and step out of the plane. What was once an easy ride, full of peace and enjoyment, suddenly becomes a freefall toward earth. You realize, too late, you could only fly because the plane was carrying you. Without the plane you cannot fly, your ease of flight was connected to the plane. It was not from self effort or self success.

Abiding is like flying in that airplane. When you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, you entered into Him. You live within Him and you are going toward a destination fixed by God. This is the actual reality of abiding in Christ. God's goal for your life is to conform you to the image of His Son. He is in charge. He sets the course. You are along for the ride.

You are God's child, and He is now conforming you into the image of His Son, whether you like it or not.

The destination is your maturity and His will, to the praise of His glorious grace. You can either enjoy the ride and totally rest in the flight, or you can grumble, complain, try to get off the plane, or fight with the pilot. God is still in charge and He never loses a fight. He doesn't accept your excuses. He hates grumbling. He will discipline you because He loves you. He will take you to the destination He has set, with or without your permission. He will conform you as close as He can to the image of His Son before He takes you home.

If we are enjoying the ride, understanding abiding, and we suddenly think that we can do something on our own, in the flesh, going for our best idea rather than God's, we move from experiencing abiding and we go into a free fall, like Peter as he took his eyes off Jesus and sunk into the water. Life suddenly becomes hard and stressful. We get agitated and struggle until we realize that God is really in control and we can do nothing apart from Him.

We cannot abide unless we know God. We must be born again to abide in Him. Experiencing this abiding means trusting God, resting within His sovereignty, believing Him, growing in faith, maturing and being at home with God.

Are you at home with God? Do you enjoy His company? Do you desire to know Him?

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He is not a God who can be tamed. You won't control God. He is unpredictable. He scares us because He has us walk by faith and pushes us out of our fleshly comfort zones. We mature as He challenges us through conflict, through suffering, and through pain. God is growing us, teaching us His ways, revealing His heart and His mind. God shows us the true reality of real life, the life of the invisible world in which He lives, where we now live in Christ.

God grows us progressively, just as in the earthly educational system.

He expects us to conform to Him, not the other way around.

Grade one prepares us for grade two. Grade two prepares us for grade three. That's what God does with His children. God keeps advancing the wisdom He wants to give us. Wisdom comes as we apply the knowledge He gives and walk in Him by faith. He calls this wisdom maturity or coming into wholeness. He calls this salvation. We are saved, made whole in the spirit, and we are being made whole, through our soul and our body.

You, believer, always do what you believe. You cannot hide it. Sure, you can hide for a little while, but what you truly believe will be uncovered. What you believe will show through in your behaviour. People will see your works, whether they are done in love or with self in mind. You will hide the lack of faith in your soul only for a little while. If you have fear, if you are anxious, if you worry, you are trying to control or manage your own life, instead of trusting the God who made you to live His life through you.

The solution is to be still and listen to God to know God. Learn who He really is, not who you wish He was or who you understand Him to be. You do not make God; He has made you and He is who He is. He will not change. He expects us to conform to Him, not the other way around. He is in charge. The good news is that He is a loving King. He is holy and righteous in all His ways. He is Almighty and has the full power and ability to carry out all He has said He would do. And all He does is in love. You are secure in Him. Magnify the Lord and listen to the Spirit's promptings.

A person who experientially abides in Christ always must remain a child, living in total dependence upon God. The tendency we have, as we grow as Christians, is to think we are becoming an adult. We think we should carry more and be responsible for more than we are made to carry. We begin to try to live the Christian life, but it's impossible to try. Trying is hard work. Being is easy.

If we let our minds slip away from the truth that we can do nothing apart from God, turning instead to relying on ourselves to do the things of God, we will struggle. We can do nothing apart from God, but we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength. If we move from fully resting in the truth of God's Word and the power of His Spirit to enable us to live this Christian life, we will struggle at the level of our soul and we will walk in the flesh.

Our spirit abides and is perfectly in tune with God, but our soul often wishes God would give us a manual that describes everything we must do to walk with Him and accomplish the task He has for us to accomplish. God is not going to give you a manual, and say you don't need to talk with Him anymore. He gives you enough information right when you need it, as

you abide in Him.

You have entered into a living relationship with your God. He gives words just when you need them. You don't have to worry about what you will say or what to do. God will guide you through His Spirit and reveal just what He desires at just the right time. He will provide for your physical needs or give you strength to go without. He will lead you according to His will and His ways. He is growing you more and more into the image of His Son, who walked with God perfectly, spirit, soul and body, in perfect harmony and unity with His Father. This is the experience of abiding.

This process of walking with the Holy Spirit as the Father reveals truth through His word, moment by moment, is called abiding.

All throughout the Scriptures we see pictures of abiding in God: dwelling in the shadow of the Almighty, waiting on the Lord, abiding in the shadow of His wings; trusting in the Lord with all our heart, entering the Sabbath rest of God. As we fix our mind on the truth of God's word, believing Him, we experience peace in the midst of storms. We experience joy in the midst of pain. We love those who are unlovely. We begin to behave in a supernatural way that is only explainable in relationship with God.

God's Holy Spirit walks with our spirit, teaching us the ways of God. This process of walking with the Holy Spirit as the Father reveals truth through His word, moment by moment, is called abiding. Abiding is God revealing, and you responding to Him in faith and full assurance that His way is right. Your spirit is willing to walk this walk of faith. In fact, this is the only walk your spirit can walk. Your soul, on the other hand, must be brought into submission to your spirit, pressing through the fear it feels and the excuses it makes to fully rest in and fully believe God at His Word.

As you abide, you wait on God, trusting that He will give you whatever you need at just the right time. Our spirit abides perfectly. It is in perfect harmony with God. Our soul struggles to abide and to fully believe. Our soul is the connector between our spirit and our body. If we abide, our soul and body calm down and we experience peace. We experience the reality of abiding in Christ.

Our soul wants to plan, make budgets, and find security. It's doesn't want to trust in the unseen God. It wants to know everything in advance, to prepare and to be in control. We may hear this played out in church business meetings when statements are made like this: "We can't do that ministry because it's not in the budget," or "We don't have the money to do that ministry right now."

Abiding has to do with realigning your thinking to pure forms, to see and recognize the spiritual above the earthly. God gave us a guideline of what we should think about:

> *"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things."*[209]

Abiding means analyzing everything from the eyes of God, not from the eyes of men, taking every thought that is contrary to God's perspective, captive to Christ. To meditate even on things that are not positive, but are true and holy; looking at everything from the eyes of God's perspective, in the mind of Christ, the Kingdom perspective of the spirit and truth. Just looking

[209] Philippians 4:

at positive things can be deceiving; we sometimes must also look at real life trauma and events that God allows us to see or read, and seek Him for His perspective. For instance, if we read about a Christian man who is shot in another country because of his faith, we can meditate on this event, seeing it for what it really is, a positive event because my Father is in charge and He is working even evil events together for His will and the good of His people. The death of God's saints is an incredibly holy event; it's the act of a man who was willing to stand firm in Christ and lay his life down for His Lord. God wants us to look at war sometimes, to look at evil sometimes, to see how He works in those situations to the beauty and glory of Himself.

We look at events and circumstances as Father God brings them before us, and we run them across the word of God. It's critical to have a good grasp of scripture. Looking at horror or slasher movies has no redemptive purpose. But hearing about the holocaust, rapes, or murders is a call by God to pray and perhaps to be involved in some way for redemption. God works in the midst of great tragedy.

Abiding has little to do with what is happening around you and much to do with what is happening in your mind. One of the most difficult jobs is to think, and to think correctly. Many of us just want to do, and not work at thinking. Thinking is hard work. Our work as a child of God is to believe God. We are called to walk by faith in Him, being who we really are. We can't try to be something; we must know we are somebody and be who we truly are as children of the King.

There are times when you need to shut the world off around you. There were times Jesus went to the mountain to pray. Sometimes you will ride in the car with no radio, no Christian music. You will sit, just you and God, meditating on Him and His teaching, His words. He will grow you during these times and you will learn to be content with yourself and your thoughts, focusing your thoughts into truth, and the truth will set you free to truly express the fullness of your God and the fullness of who you really are in Christ.

If you can't be happy in silence there is something wrong in your soul. You have to watch. Be aware. If you are uncomfortable with silence and need distractions to calm your mind, you are not abiding. You are striving and trying to do something, striving to be something. You are not at peace. You must be at peace with yourself and with God and others. This peace comes from the understanding that God is in control, sovereignly working all things together for the good to those who love Him and are called by Him for His purposes. This peace comes from knowing who you are as His workmanship, and being who you truly are, not who others wish you were or who you wish you could be. Abiding comes as you are who we are in Christ, being who you truly are, who God says you are.

God has work for you to do which He prepared in advance for you to walk in.[210] The problem comes when you try to do this work before you are abiding. Jesus made the statement that He has done nothing on His own. "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works."[211] He is saying He could do nothing on His own, but Father God gave Him the energy through the Holy Spirit, and God laid out the work and brought all things into obedience to Himself. Jesus just abided with the Father, moving with the Father that the Father would be glorified.

All ministry takes energy. Think of yourself a little like a battery. As you are doing ministry you are draining. Even Jesus Himself felt energy or power leave Him when a woman

[210] Ephesians 2:10
[211] John 14:10

touched Him in faith. Jesus knew He had just enough energy to do the will of the Father. His energy source was Father God, who only supplied energy and power for His will alone. So you check to make sure what you are doing is the Father's will. If we run ahead or strive and try to do things in our own strength, even seemingly good things, we burn out. If we don't move in the will of the Father we are moving in disobedience. Christians have a tremendous amount of energy in abiding, but very little in disobedience.

If we walk in the independence of the flesh, we drain. Whether you do a little Bible study and little prayer or a lot of Bible study and a lot of prayer, you can be in disobedience if God did not command you to do these things. Both sides can be disobedient to God. You don't do activity beyond what God has commanded you to do. You will know that activity because He will be in that activity. You will sense His pleasure and His heart. You will focus on His glory and His love, seeking what His heart seeks.

You work *with* God, not for God. How can you work with God if you do not know the heart of God or the mind of God or the love of God or the will of God? These are only found by being intimate with Him and listening to Him. Many people want to do the work of God without knowing God. If you do good works without knowing God, you will only do "good works," but they will be flesh works. When God says things are good He means "perfect." He said you were created for good works. This is the same word He used when He created you. "Good" to God means perfect. The works He wants you to do are perfect works, not just good, as we define good.

How Do You Know If You Are Abiding?

You know you are abiding if you love without agenda for self. You will love naturally. You won't try to love. You will love because you are a being who loves. You will love those who mistreat you. You love because you are a being born of Love. It's in your DNA to love.

You know you are abiding when Supernatural is becoming natural. Abiders experience God, and God does supernatural things through His saints. You know you are abiding if transformation begins to happen around you and through you as you love. As you walk by faith and not by sight, you will trust the unseen God to work out your life according to His will and for His glory. There is no more self will, only the will of your Father.

Love is the most powerful system of change within any human and within any community. A loving person will bring transformation. People do not change by policy or rule, but by love. Policy and rule will get behaviour change for a limited time, but eventually fear of breaking the rule will cease and the real person will be exposed.

This is why absolute power in a human corrupts absolutely, outside of Christ. When human beings seek to control other human beings, the result is not love, but lust: seeking after selfish gain and manipulation for advantage of self. Humans are not designed to control others or seek to control their own destiny. They are designed to abide as children of the King, in absolute trust of the One who is absolutely trustworthy and holds all power. Absolute power in humans will force outward change for self-serving purposes. The absolute power of God loves absolutely. All He does is from love and for our good as His children.

God's power works in and through us as we abide in Christ, and His power always moves us into His will for His glory and purposes on earth. His power always works in us to love without any self agenda. God's power works through us for His agenda alone. We know we are abiding if we are walking in love, experiencing His peace, and seeing Him work through our lives in miraculous ways, bringing transformation to the physical world around us.

Through Christ, we can do all things. We can't just do all things on our own, independently of Christ. We are connected in Him and His life flows in and through ours. We are a channel for His power to flow through. As we abide, we move within this flow, within the will of God, and we see Him do great things through our lives. As people see our good works, they will glorify our God because they know it is impossible for a human to love the way we have loved. The light will shine through us, but it is not really our light, but the light of the One who dwells within us. We are a vessel through which He shines, through which He lives. We are alive, but it is His life that flows through us, giving us life. Jesus is our life.

Abiders always rest in the sovereignty of God. Abiders rest, knowing God is working good together out of all things, all events, all situations, no matter what they are. He is fully in control, fully in charge, fully able to bring about all He wants for His glory. We assume only good from God even when He allows us to walk through pain and suffering. We assume that what He allows is good, whether or not it appears good to our physical senses or human reasoning. This is what God is teaching us when He says in His word, "We walk by faith, not by sight." Sight and physical senses can deceive us. So, in abiding, we see an event as just an event, no matter what it is. Everything is in the hand of God and He is allowing events to happen. He may or may not give us permission to be involved in that event. He may allow an event to hurt us or even kill us. He is working out His will on earth as it is in heaven, and His will is right all the time, even if it means we lose our possessions, our valued relationships, our jobs or status, even our own life.

We own nothing in this life. We are only stewards of all that is His, including our children, our stuff, our spouses, our jobs, our significant relationships, our country and towns. He says we must hate our father and mother, sister and brother and even our own life or we cannot be His disciple. All relationships and all resources are brought in subjection to our King for His purposes alone. When we live like this, believing and trusting our God, who always comes through, always works together what is best for us, then we rest in Him, in His sovereign control over all things. We view events as good, even tragedies, because God is working all things together for our good; even things that people meant for evil, God turns around for good.

COMING INTO ALIGNMENT

God has works prepared for you to walk into, but He must grow you up and provide experiences for you along the way to prepare you for these works. He is maturing you, getting you to the level where He wants you to be in faith. The Holy Spirit gets you ready for what God wants to do through you. The Holy Spirit is like a friend who comes alongside of you to teach you the ways of God. Not that you don't know it in the spirit, but you are not mature enough to access that information. To prepare you, He wants to talk to you about areas where your soul is still reigning, areas where your spirit is not mature enough to bring your soul and body in line.

The abider walks in the spirit, giving the soul no rein. We can tell if a person is not abiding by the fruit of their lives. Their behaviour reveals what they really believe.

> *"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God."(Galatians 5:19-21)*

> *"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)*

When a person is abiding in Christ, fruit of godliness will be revealed through them without even trying. There will be "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control."[212] When we are out of alignment with abiding, we see works of flesh. The works tell the truth: the attitudes, the reactions, the way we respond to people and circumstances in our lives. Our responses reveal either immature faith, or mature faith. Mature faith abides and rests in full confidence in God and gives no room for self. Mature faith denies self, picks up its cross and follows Him wherever He leads, knowing that He is right and He is always good.

If we struggle to abide, the problem is faith, not trying harder to abide. We cannot try to abide. We either abide or we do not. We live exactly what we believe, and the fruit of our beliefs will either be fleshly, or it will be with fruit from the spirit based in love. We abide in Christ actually, but we must also abide in Christ experientially. Both. We must believe that we actually do abide in Him and that sovereign God is able to lead us, able to work out His will, able to do all He promised, and that whatever He chooses for our lives is the best choice.

Abiding is being who you are in Christ, and abiding is also doing. The doing flows from the being, but the doing is not *your* doing. It's the Father's doing in and through you. Abiding is being who you are as a righteous being who has been made new by God, and doing all He prepared in advance for you to do, all the while knowing it is impossible for you to do what He asks. He asks you to love enemies, to rejoice in persecution, perhaps even to die for your faith. He calls you to walk above circumstances, to raise the dead, and see the lame walk. He calls you to make disciples of all nations and baptize them in His Name, teaching them to do all He commanded. All that He calls you to do is impossible to do apart from Him. But as you abide in Him, fully believing that you are who He says you are, and that you can do what He says you can do, He will do amazing things in and through you and He will receive glory.

A person who is abiding in Christ moves in the flow of God. The flow of God is complete acceptance that whatever is ... is. You are a vessel for the life of God flowing through you, accomplishing His will on earth as it is in the spiritual realm. So at the end of your life on this planet, you can say, along with Jesus, "I have done nothing." This is the goal of abiding, doing the will of God for His glory.

How do we get into alignment if we struggle with abiding? The key to alignment is recognizing we are out of line. First, watch your emotions to see what is going on in your spirit and your soul. Your emotions are great indicators and warning systems to keep you in tune. If you feel bold and courageous and you want God honoured, you sense power; you know you are weak, yet you sense you are very secure. This is an indication you are abiding.

If you are frustrated and scared, angry and depressed, you are not abiding. You are trying to get something you want, and your goal is being blocked by a circumstance, a person or by God Himself. Check yourself, focus on the glory of God and His will, and determine to die to any desire that is not for His glory. Deny fleshly impulses to rule you. The flesh is crucified and is not your master. You must not let sin reign.

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[212] Galatians 5:22

To help understand abiding, we can look at heroes of the faith, like Daniel. While he was in the lion's den, he had danger all around him, yet he was very confident. He knew he was weak. He knew he was nothing more than lion food. Yet, his confidence was not in himself. Daniel's full confidence was in God alone. Only God could deliver him. Daniel knew abiding.

When you get out of alignment, you want to seek God's face and heart, not His hand, not what He can give you or do for you. You don't seek Him just so He will rescue you, or give you what you think you want; you seek Him and believe Him even if He chooses not to. You seek Him to know Him, to love Him and to live for His will alone.

Think of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego as they were thrown into a fiery furnace. Boldly these men cried out, "Our God is able, O King, but if He does not, let it be known we will not bow down to your idol." These three men knew abiding, placing their full confidence in the sovereignty of God in the face of certain death. Abiders in God do not force God to do. They are happy to just be with God, whatever happens, even if God doesn't produce the outcome they think they want.

Abiding people do not get assurance from the outside world or systems. Their assurance comes from God. They know God. They know who they are. They know their value now in Christ. They are beings with unlimited power and unlimited wisdom which all flows from God, not the other way around. They know they are on the earth to do the Father's will. So they are confident, yet humble. They move with God as He is working, not trying to get God on their agenda to do their bidding, the work they think He should do. God is in control, not man. As we abide, we know our place before Almighty God.

GOD'S UNLIMITED RESOURCE

If God is getting ready to do something, do you think He is concerned about whether it's in our budget or if we have enough money to accomplish what He wants to do? Is God somehow limited by our lack of resources or budget? Questions about money often reveal the immaturity of the person asking the question. What the world views as being financially responsible, God says is lack of faith, lack of reliance on the One who owns all things. These questions often reveal the independence of the soul trying to find a way to be in control and be safe, to not really walk in the will of God.

Our soul wants an excuse to not walk by faith. We must deny our soul its comfort and force it to push through its fear to faith. Walking by faith means we will walk in the spirit and not carry out the desire of the flesh. When Jesus asked Philip how they could feed 5000 people, Jesus already knew what He was going to do, but He was challenging Philip to walk by faith. He was testing to see if His disciples could handle things beyond the budget. Most churches would view responsibility as holding people to budgets and responsibility. God says faith is responsibility even if the process appears irresponsible to non-faith people.

A clear acknowledgement of the acceptance of God's sovereignty is central to experiencing the actuality of abiding. We must agree with the sovereignty of God over our lives. This is His sovereign will, God's reign in our lives. We must believe God is working all events together, whether good or bad, for our good.

Job and his wife give us a good picture of a person who is abiding and one who is not. Job understood God; his wife didn't. How do we know? When pressed with immense suffering and loss, Job's response was to worship God, proclaiming the amazing words, "The Lord gave

and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."[213] Abiders see circumstances as God's will and God working things out for good. There is an assurance and trust in God that is unshakeable even in the midst of pain which God allows in our lives. All events are considered good, whether seemingly good or seemingly bad, because God is in charge, working all things together for our good according to the counsel of His will. That Job could lose his possessions, his children and his health, and still bless the Name of the Lord, reveals where Job's faith is resting

Job's wife, on the other hand, told Job to curse God and die. Non-abiders see events as bad because they do not turn out the way they expect or want. They conclude that God must be bad because He allowed a bad event to happen. Abiders know God is working things out for good. As we abide in Christ, accepting the sovereign will of God, we accept the circumstances around us, knowing they are just events, which we assume are good because God is in control and God is good. He always acts in love. He cannot act outside of His character. It is Who He is.

How we choose to respond to those events is our responsibility. This is the moral will of God. We can fight against God, grumble and complain, or we can be thankful and accept the experience, seeking the greater good for all. Difficult events or conflict do not give us permission to sin or respond without faith. We look to Jesus, listening to the Spirit of God, learning from Him as He teaches us through this experience, training us up in righteousness so we mature and become more and more like Christ in our behaviour.

Within the circumstances of our lives, we will find the personal will of God, what we are designed to do. God brings us through various events and circumstances that shape us into the people He designed us to be for His specific purpose for our lives on this planet, according to His sovereign will. As we walk with God, the Spirit of God speaks to our spirit that we are children of God. Our job as His children is to get our soul to believe as we walk out the moral and personal will of God within His sovereign will.

As you abide, you will realize it just is what it is. You are at peace. You walk by faith in God. The struggle is gone. You live to the will of God alone. You know He will provide for you. You know He will lead you. You know He will work out all events, whether good or bad, for your good. This is who you really are as His creation. Your life is completely abandoned to God. You are no longer your own. The old you is gone, and the new you is now hidden with God in Christ.

You experience peace, because you know God is in charge and you believe He is good. You believe He knows better than you where you are going, and that everything He allows is for your good because He loves you. As events happen, you accept the event in complete trust, knowing God is allowing it for His purposes and His will. What He allows is always best. You must experience the next event, no matter what it is. God is growing you. It may seem "good" or "bad" but it is a necessary event or situation. In fact, you assume that the event is ultimately good because God is working it together for good no matter what it is.

Thankfulness is the sign of an abider. We will also see peace. The absence of worry or anxiousness is also the sign of an abider. Peace and joy are normal emotions. When we accept that our spirit is holy and righteous, full of love, desiring to be expressed in every situation because of the finished work on the cross, there is peace and struggle ceases. When a storm comes, we rest in God who is in charge of all events in the universe, causing nations to rise and fall, and we experience His peace which is beyond our own understanding. As we pray, talking

[213] Job 1:21

to God about our struggles and life, peace flows like a river and we say, along with Horatio, "It is well with my soul."

People see abiders as "different." As we abide, we do not seem "normal" to the others around us because the world does not know how to abide in Christ. The world attempts to work out its own will, the will of its own god. When we abide, people wonder how we can remain calm in difficult situations, like Jesus did when He was standing before Pilate. As you recall, Pilate was the one person who could release Jesus from death on a cross, yet Jesus made no attempt to get free. Instead, He told Pilate he had no power to release Him because God's sovereign will was being carried out. Pilate was on a course chosen by the Father and no matter what he did, he could not change that course. Jesus did not resist His Father's will. He willingly laid down His life, fully trusting, fully abiding because He knew and loved His Father perfectly.

Getting off the Mark in Abiding

As we abide in Christ, we can still get off the mark in the experience of abiding. We get off track when we let thoughts drift. The drift moves us to begin to make our decisions from the unregenerate part of our soul, the flesh. These decisions will be fleshly. They will be decisions to protect the body, or attain something for self like fame, power, money or any other earthly value. These values are an abomination to God. So we continue, in the process of abiding, to be transformed in the soul and body by renewing our minds with truth.

At first, this process takes conscious effort, taking every thought captive into obedience to Christ. As we grow, true thoughts begin to govern our decision and actions, and abiding comes more and more naturally. As we get used to living in the reality of abiding, we learn to catch ourselves more and more quickly when something doesn't feel right to our spirit. We sense or know something is wrong. We can tell we are not abiding because we begin to feel stress or life begins to seem hard. This is an indication that we are beginning to walk according to the flesh. Christianity is starting to seem hard to carry out, like a work to do rather than a relationship with our Father. Our love for God seems to grow cold, and our way seems difficult. Our love for others is challenged and we become irritated easily. The actuality of abiding has never changed, but the experience of abiding is affected by what we choose to believe.

The feeling of abiding will return when we quickly go back to where we stopped trusting the Father. We look at what we were told to do, but feared to go there or resisted the order. The soul's thoughts had reigned. To return to abiding, we confess or admit to the Father that we let the soul reign, and we take up the fellowship again at this starting point, knowing that our behaviour does not separate us from our relationship with God, but the experience of fellowship with God felt disconnected because we walked in the flesh, obeying the soul rather than His Spirit.

Reflection on Abiding

What has the Lord been speaking to you about abiding? _____

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Are you experiencing abiding with Christ? Or is life a struggle for you? (explain) _____

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DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF: ABIDE IN CHRIST AND ABIDE IN LOVE

1 John 4:12-13 shows us two ways we can know we abide in Christ.

> *No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.*

According to this passage, how can we know that we abide in God and He in us?

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Why is love connected to the reality of abiding? _____

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If you had trouble answering that question, reading the verses before and after 1 John 4:12-13 might help to clarify. In John 13, Jesus said, "You will know My disciples by their love for one another."[214] Why? Because we are born from Love. Our Father is God and He is Love. Our very nature is made to love because we are born of God. This is why we were created, and we were given everything we need to love through His Spirit in us. We are created to love with the agape love of God. Evidence of abiding is love, the 1 Corinthians 13 kind of love. So, how do we know we abide? Because of His Spirit which He has put in us. Through His Spirit, He has given us love.

Another indication of the reality of abiding in God is seen in 1 John 4:14-16.

> *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.*

[214] John 13:35

What is another indicator that we abide in God?_____

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"Whoever confesses Jesus is the Son of God...." If we confess the truth of the gospel and believe in Jesus with our whole heart, we are saved. In saving us, God bring us into Christ. We are born again. Jesus is our life. We have entered into eternal Life because we are transferred into Him.[215] He is our home.[216]

We exist in Him — actually, totally, and forever. And He exists in us. We become one with God. He has intimately connected us into Himself, and He connected Himself into us. We are completely dependent upon Him for life and, through His Spirit, He has given us everything we need to live life as the godly, righteous beings we truly are.[217]

ABIDING IN THE WORD OF GOD

Abiders abide in the word of God. Jesus said, "If you abide in My word you are My disciples indeed…" We learn from Him as we abide in His word. We don't just memorize the word of God; we live it, we breathe it, we pray it back to our Father. The word of God forms our reality and, yes, we will commit it to memory, but more than that. More than just knowing words on a page or quoting verses from memory. We believe those words and they become a part of our ethos, our very personality and life. We fully embrace them because they originate from God who uttered the Word, the expression of Himself, who is Jesus. Jesus is the Word of God and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, showing us who God really is and what pleases Him. The word of God is not just quoted; it is fully rested upon, fully believed. There is no trying to get it to "work." It just works because it just is.

Abiders speak the word in love. Truth is spoken in love even when it may not go well for the speaker. It just is what it is, and we speak what we hear from God to speak. We obey Him, but we obey to glorify Him by proclaiming what He wants to say. We don't speak to change people or to control. We just want to please God and do what He says, knowing at times we will not please people with the words we say. We know the mind of God through knowing the Word of God. We ask or answer people with biblical statements often without going through the formality of quoting the Bible; we speak the same way as the Bible. It is natural for us, as abiders, to speak "Christ-like."

As Kingdom disciples, we all begin to sound the same, because we have one mind, the mind of Christ. We have one baptism, one Lord, one faith, one truth. There are not many forms of truth; there is just one truth and we are coming to that truth, as declared by God Himself. God spoke and it came to be. Truth is a Person to know, not just a concept to know. Jesus is the Truth. Truth is not relative to our experience or feeling. Truth originates from God and is what He says it is, no matter how we feel about it and no matter if we disagree.

As we abide in the word, we are looking to see the Father working. We see small things as signs or hints from God to join what He is doing in the lives of others. God is setting people free. He works in and through us to see His Kingdom advance one person at a time as He calls the

[215] 1 John 5:20
[216] John 14:23
[217] 2 Peter 1:3

dead to life, transferring them out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. He wants us to proclaim His message, the gospel of our salvation, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

These 8 Keys to Life-Transforming Discipleship are simply the gospel, laid out so we can look at it more closely. So we can magnify God and see what He has done. There is nothing magical about 8 Keys, but the gospel within them is life transforming if we believe. The Christian life is not hard. The yoke is easy and the burden is light. It's not hard to live as a Christian if you are willing to die to all you were, all you held dear, all you thought you should be, and just be who you really are. You are a new creation in Christ. The old is gone and the new has come. All is forgiven. All sin is taken away. You have been set free.

Live free -- because you *are free*. Love because you are a being who loves. Proclaim because you are a called-out one, and God wants to speak through you to a dying world. Just live life – and the natural expression of the life within you will transform the world around you. You are incredibly powerful, beautiful and dynamic in Christ. You will never rule Him. He will rule you and guide you according to His will, and you will thrive, enjoying the abundant life of being in relationship with our wild and unpredictable God. It will scare you. But it will excite you as you walk with Him, abiding in Him, knowing He must show you the way and resource your life on this planet for His work and His glory.

The lesson God has for us on this planet is simple: He wants us to walk by faith in Him. Just to trust Him and love Him above anything or anyone. To know He is God and we are not. We are His creation and we are created for His pleasure and goodness and we are meant to walk by faith, as He calls all things back into alignment with Himself. He is a good God, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness. What mercy He has shown us. What grace!

A Picture of Abiding at Royal Heights (Alan Braun)

As our church at Royal Heights began to grow, and the people began to discover how to walk with the Lord, a certain man started attending. He was short, bald, very tough, and covered with tattoos. He sat three rows from the pulpit in the centre. He observed the songs and sermon, and left quickly after the meeting. The next week he appeared again with a friend. He quickly left at the end, before anyone could talk with him. The third week he was back again, bringing two others. As I preached the message, I observed what was going on. I sensed in my spirit, the Lord saying to get to know him. Right at the close of my talk, I headed straight to the door. I reached it before they could leave. They were from a recovery house up the road. I got their phone number and during the week I went to the recovery house to see what was happening.

The house was filled with ten rough men, ex-convicts, bikers and former drug addicts. They were broken people. It was a recovery house doing its very best to introduce these men to God. I spoke with the owner and offered our services as a church to begin to help them learn how to disciple these men. More men started to come every week. We saw God working; people were saved. In a few months time, the man running the home had difficulty and it was about to be shut down. The ministry was about to end. He was concerned and spoke to me about it. I said I would talk to the church and get a sense of what God was doing. I thought we could do something.

About six months before this time, God began to move Paul and Nancy Ingold into the church. Paul was working with South Asians and Nancy was a woman who was longing to be in ministry with God. Unknown to me, Nancy had worked with street people and people with addictions in Los Angeles for 8 years. She had led a successful ministry helping people recover

from addictions. Now God was bringing men right into our midst at Royal Heights. As He was doing this, He was also providing the leader.

I spoke with Nancy and realized there must be more teaching on the freedom, joy and power we have in Christ as His disciples. As Nancy poured herself into learning the gospel from the Lord, God brought clarity, deeper passion and freedom. God taught her the amazing reality of being totally alive and free in Christ and gave her a renewed desire to help others find that same freedom. Celebrating Life emerged as a result and this book began to develop.

In January 2010, a local recovery home was struggling, and we decided help that home, moving it away from a recovery home system to a discipleship system focused on life transformation. From this experience, Lazarus House was born. The leader we chose lasted one week. God reminded us again that He will sustain the ministry, move it in the direction He wants, and use whoever He decides for the glory of the Kingdom.

Four months later, Timothy House began, as a second stage in a two to three year process of discipleship. The book you are now reading became the main teaching of this discipleship ministry, and we saw God teach men and set them free by His Truth. God was moving men from being human doings to human beings that do through His power.

Now the Lord has opened up a third house called Alabaster Jar, this time for women. Nancy began to have a desire to see women set free, asking God, "Where are the women?" God had been saving men and bringing men all year, but no women until May 2010 when one woman in a recovery house was saved. Then more women started coming to Christ. The desire to see a women's house grew and as Nancy prayed, in April 2011, God brought Christine Mould back from England where she was caring for her elderly mother. Christine owned a house she wanted God to use as a home for healing. After prayer, Christine allowed us to rent her house to begin Alabaster Jar.

We learned a principle of God: just start when God says it's time to start. Don't wait until you know everything, or everything is perfect. If it's worth doing, it's worth doing poorly, at first. Go for it with God. He will direct your path and teach you what you need to know. As you learn, you will mature. You will form systems and become skilled and the ministry will grow and improve.

The discipleship homes stretched many people in our church. Some were upset. Some left. They would ask questions like: Why do we want this type of people at our church? What about our children's safety? But God continued to bless. The cost of the homes was $7000 more than what was coming in. People were concerned about finances and being financially responsible to not go over budget, but God continued to bless. When it got to the point where we needed at least $300,000 to make our budget, a church phoned us up. They said they were closing their doors and wanted to give us all their resources. The amount they gave was $319,000 and God continued to bless.

We opened the women's house. God gave furniture, a car, a house. All the while men and women continued to come to Christ as the gospel was proclaimed with boldness – men and women who had lived on the street for years, struggled in the grips of addiction, sold themselves for sex, been in mental hospitals and abused. God saved them all and now He is transforming them day by day. We are discipling them, using these 8 Keys, teaching them the gospel and who they really are now in Christ.

We view these homes as an extension of Royal Heights. They are an extension of the church, just a more intense discipleship process because of the level of dysfunction

The greatest fear of abiding is that you will hear the mind of God and then have to move out to where He is. He walks on the water. He does seemingly impossible things! His activity

often scares us. It may seem easier to not do the will of God -- for a little while. You will find eventually it will not remain easy. We are wise to remember Jonah. We will do what God told us to do eventually.

When a church does not obey, it seems easier on the people for a little while, but soon the power of the Spirit seems leave. There will be no salvations and the people will meet and have little power. And if you obey and you see the activity of God one week and it's tremendous, then the next week and it's tremendous, but the third week the power doesn't seem to be there and you made it through anyway, the problem is that God is doing something different now, but you enjoyed the experience the previous weeks so much that you fake the service when His power doesn't seem to be there. If you do that long enough, the meetings become non-relational, boring, and anaemic... but you still call that a worship service.

Christianity is a vibrant living relationship with God, full of power, love, creativity beauty, risk, honour, courage, and character. It's often scary to move with God, fearful, persecuting, violent, and yet passionately alive. It's God at work in and through His people. Our God cannot be tamed. He is wild and unyielding. Our God identifies Himself as a warrior and a King. He is the Lord of host: of armies, not of babies. He is aggressively attacking evil and in His attack comes life. Christianity is not for cowards, but for the brave who will embrace their God and walk with Him in complete child-like dependence and faith.

THE GOAL OF ABIDING

The goal of abiding is to know God, not work for God

The goal of abiding is to know God, not work for God. Statements like: "I'm doing this for God," or "I'm doing this ministry for God," these are statements made as if God is outside of you and you are going to do something for Him, to hand it to Him. Believer, there is nothing you can do that is pure enough for God to want. He wants nothing that originates from us. Our righteousness is filthy rags to God. We cannot work for God, but we can work with God, knowing that it's His doing through us that is acceptable to Him.

Most religious people want to work for God, not know God. Jesus said, "And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."[218] In knowing God, we love God. In loving God, we obey God, knowing His will is the only will that matters.

Someone once said, "Love God and do whatever you want." What do you think this phrase means?

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This question can best be answered by the vantage point of your identity. If you truly love God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, you will want only what He wants. This is

[218] John 17:3

why Jesus says, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."[219] What do you want? The answer depends upon who you are.

Who are you? You are a new creation in Christ, a righteous being. You want what He wants. You have the same desires. You delight in His law. You have His mind, the mind of Christ. You hunger for Him and His righteousness. This is who you are as His workmanship, His creation.

You are made to love Him and abide in Him. You want to listen to Him, spend time with Him, and bring Him pleasure. This is who you really are as His new creation. You will do what He says because you want to know Him, and you know that He always knows what is best for you. So you trust Him and depend upon Him, even when He brings you through difficult times that hurt or challenge you, forcing you to grow. God often uncovers areas within your soul that are clinging to lies, and He challenges those areas, inflicting "pain" on your soul to reveal the lie. As He reveals the lie, He leads you to truth and, as you believe the truth in that situation, you are set free from the lie that held you captive to do its will.

As you turn your mind to His truth, focusing on who He is and what He has done in Christ, you can rest your full confidence in Him, knowing He is in control. He is good, and He is working all the events of your life, both seemingly good and seemingly bad, together for your good and for the ultimate glory and honour for Himself.

Reflecting on Key 6 Abide

Please take time to reflect on what you have been learning about abiding. How is God speaking to you? Write down your thoughts below.

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[219] John 15:7

EMOTIONS AND ABIDING

When we feel anger, it comes from having one of our goals blocked. People who abide are not known as angry people, because they don't have goals that really can be blocked. Their goal is to honour God. This goal cannot be accomplished by the anger of man, but by the love of God through man. The anger of man does not fulfill the righteousness of God.

We see that Jesus knows how to abide with the Father. But we also see him become angry, four times. What if the person who is abiding has a right to anger? Each time we see Jesus' anger, it is when people do not want the Father glorified. They want self-glorification. Jesus exposes that heart and deals with the issues until His Father becomes glorified, as we see when He cleaned out the temple with a whip and when He mended a man's crippled hand.

People who abide accomplish a lot effortlessly. Others see it and wonder, "How do you get so much done?" It's much like wheat falling to the ground. When the wheat dies, with the seed breaking apart in the soil, it produces life, some 30, 60, 100-fold. God decides how effective we will be. As we abide in Him, we are pleased with whatever that is. We are not trying to become rich or famous or powerful, though we may become rich or famous or powerful. The abider's motive is obedience, love, joy, building up the body of Christ with no thought of return.

Abiders are powerful people, but not forceful. They are powerful because they are resting in the finished work of Christ, fully confident that He will perfect the good work in and through them. The power is from God, working through His people according to His perfect will. God sets the agenda and the schedule, and it fluctuates one day to the next. One day it will seem like abiders are not doing very much. The next day they will get a year's work done. Consider the story of the man who had an employee with his feet up on the desk. The other employees came and told the boss that the man was slacking at his work. The boss said, "The last time Joe put his feet on the desk he saved a million and a half dollars. Joe can keep his feet up for as long as he wants." That's an abiding person.

The hardest work of man is thinking, not doing. So abiders think. The Bible says, "Have this mind in you which is in Christ Jesus." Abiders think and meditate on words, thoughts, and ideas — without action. They seek the mind of Christ to show them what reality truly is, from God's vantage point, not the earth's. This is how abiders live. Then an opportunity is presented to them by faith, and the abider is ready. He or she says the right words and does the right things effortlessly and may not even know the impact they are having on others. It is common for people to say, "The Lord has spoken through you." Or "The Lord really helped me through you."

People will talk about the abider, without him or her even knowing the impact they have had, because it's not really about the abider, but about the Lord working through the abider to bring glory to Himself and His Name. Jesus said, "They will see your good works and glorify the Father."[220] God uses the lives of those who wait on the Lord, rest on the Lord, fully abandon any thought but the Lord, those who think the thoughts of God, those who have no agenda but glorification of God. "They will mount up with wings like eagles."[221] They will do things that take a great effort, without seeming to give much effort. They soar. They run and do not get

[220] Matthew 5:16
[221] Isaiah 40:31

weary. They walk on water, for this is where God walks. This is normal Christianity. It's supernatural, not natural.

If Christianity is too hard for you, you are trying to do too much — trying to be a Christian, trying to behave right, trying to do the will of God. Stop. Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light."[222]

The hardest thing to teach people is to abide, for we want to be human *doings* rather than human *beings*. People want to produce with their hands instead of their hearts. They want to see the production instead of knowing the production has been dealt with by God. They want the praise and rewards. Jesus said that if people praise you on earth, you have received your reward. If your Father praises you, even for work unseen by others, you have a reward that remains in heaven, because you allowed the Father to work through you as a vessel of His glory and grace.

If Christianity is too hard for you, you are trying to do too much.

Abiders always work, but never work. Always do, but never do. Jesus said this: "My Father is always working," yet Jesus seemed to have time to talk to sinners and the lost, to feed the poor, and to heal the sick, with little stress and lots of love. At the end of His ministry on earth, Jesus said He did nothing. It was the Father doing through Him. All glory went to the Father and the Father gave glory to the Son. Jesus glorified the Father by walking in perfect faith, perfect trust, perfect obedience and perfect love. He was the perfect Abider, and we are being conformed to His image, to be abiders in God, spiritual beings born from God, who live in a body made for earth, that God might reconcile the world back to Himself through His saints.

Remember, God did not save you for you. He is not transforming you for you. He is not fixing your life for you. He is working out His will on earth and we get to be a part of that. He made you new. Believe Him. Rest in Him. Don't try to do. Just love and you will do greater things than you ever imagined, but you will know it is not your doing, but His in and through you. You will not touch His glory, but you will give Him all praise and all glory, pointing to Him alone as the author of your faith and your salvation.

The experience of abiding is really found when we abide in the word, reading the Scriptures, but not for the sake of being wise or to do something, but really just to enjoy God and know God. Sadly, intimacy with God is too slow for us. We want God to *do* something instead of *be* something. So our prayers become prayers to do. An abider's prayers becomes the prayers of a child to a Father — prayer to enjoy, to honour, to experience life with, to work with, not to give orders to a great God or make God a servant of man.

This is the main difference between mankind and abiders. Mankind wants God to be the servant, while the abiders are happy with God being God and themselves being servants. Matter of fact, abiders can see it no other way. They are repulsed at any other conclusion. They desire the God of love, mercy, and kindness. They desire a counsellor, a teacher, and they don't rise up saying they are those things. They willingly yield all of their life, knowing that God is at the top and they are under Him. And they love it.

[222] Matthew 11:30

ABIDING AND THE ARMOUR OF GOD

Jesus said an amazing thing, actually several amazing things. He said that the evil one had nothing in Him.[223] There was no sin within Him that could give a foothold to the enemy. The evil one had no right to Jesus because there was no sin in Him. He had never acted independently of the Father. He always walked by faith.

The reality of the new creation life in Christ is that in us, in our new spirit, there is no sin. Our new spirit has never and can never be independent of God again. We have been birthed from God and we are His. He dwells within the clean vessel of our spirit. Nothing can change that reality or undo what God has done. No one can snatch us out of His hand.[224] Nothing can separate us from Him.[225] He has sealed us in Himself.[226] To not fully deliver us into His presence would mean we could never say we are saved. If our salvation depended upon our behaviour or something we had to do, we could say we hope we will be saved, we might be saved, but we could not say with confidence we are saved.

Yet, we are saved by the power of God. The covenant God made with Himself while Abraham was sleeping, is being fulfilled and will be fulfilled totally and completely. We are secure in Christ, held in place by the power of God.[227]

We have been made new and righteous in Christ and because there is no sin in our spirit, the evil one has no hold on us either. Sin still dwells in our flesh, but sin does not dwell in us. The flesh is not us. So when we walk according to the spirit, we do not carry out the lusts of the flesh. We walk free of sin's power, free of the evil one having opportunity to use our soul and body against ourselves.

Jesus said to have an intimate relationship with truth, to know the truth, and the truth will set us free.[228] How do we come to know truth? We read the Bible and we listen as God reveals to us the truth of His word, speaking directly into our heart and mind.

Our heart resonates with God's truth because this is how God created our heart. We are God's workmanship. We are circumcised away from the body of sins. Remember, the flesh is merely a remnant or memory of who we were. Our soul, our thinking process, still needs to be renewed with truth. God commands us to walk according to the Spirit, fully resting in the work He accomplished in Christ, believing God's Word as the sole authority of defining reality for us now.

When we think of the armour of God, we are thinking about the reality of walking in the spirit, of abiding in Christ, of walking in the light, of being who we are in Christ. All these

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[223] John 14:30
[224] John 10:29
[225] Romans 8:39
[226] Ephesians 1:13-14
[227] 1 Pet. 1:4
[228] John 8:32

phrases mean the same thing. All are based on faith, fully believing and resting our full weight into what God has done and who He says He is and who He says we are.

Some Christians have been taught to believe that the armour is something they must put on every day or it is not on. They are being taught to pray every day to put the armour on, and if they do not, they will be unprotected. The armour becomes a work of man to put on, rather than the work of the God who keeps us in Himself. They are taught it is somehow their responsibility to get this invisible armour on, which becomes confusing to young believers. Let us take a moment to look at the text where it refers to the armour of God in Ephesians 6.

According to Ephesians 6, there is something we must do, but what we must do is *believe* in what God has already done. This is a big distinction. It's the difference between a man-centred work to accomplish something only God can do, and faith in the God who made us, and who is sufficient to enable us to stand firm in Christ. Let's take a look at Ephesians 6:10-20:

> *10Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.13Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand 14Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,15and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints – 19and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

What does it mean to put on the armour of God? The term "putting on" refers to the action of faith, the work of believing God, fully resting in the finished work of the cross. The battle we fight is not against people, but against forces of darkness under the power of the evil one. Jesus defeated the power of the sin in our lives, by immersing us into His death, killing the old us and raising us in His resurrection life, giving us a new spirit that is sealed and has separated us from sin that still resides in the flesh. We are immersed into and live within Christ. He is the armour. He is our shield. He is the strong tower. He is the Rock. We dwell in safety within Him. It's abiding.

It is with ***faith*** that we quench the fiery darts of the evil one. The darts are lies, accusations, twisted thinking, earth-centred thoughts and anything contrary to sound doctrine. The evil one uses lies in an attempt to break through our shield of faith to try to cause us to doubt the truth of God's Word. If we doubt, we will be unstable in all our ways. Doubting is the same as unbelief. We choose to believe a lie over the truth of God's Word. The key is to know the truth, to understand who we are as righteous beings in Christ, to know the gospel and be ready with it to work with our Father in setting up His Kingdom.

We take up the ***helmet of salvation*** by knowing, fully believing, we are saved, saved, saved because we surrendered our lives once and for all time to Jesus Christ our Lord. Settle that question and know that nothing can now separate you from God. This is the helmet of salvation. You are saved. Don't return to that question again. Believe that what God said He would do when you surrendered to Him, He has actually done, even if you have a bad day, or struggle to

believe Him in certain areas of your life. You are growing.

Growth is the normal process of living things. You are designed to grow more and more into the image of Jesus. The helmet is used in a battle to protect your head or your mind. It must be clear in your mind that your salvation is secure in Christ. He has saved you and will ultimately save you, bringing you to Himself to see Him face to face when your body dies. If you doubt your salvation, your mind will be open to all sorts of lies and you will struggle.

The battle we are in is an invisible war. We cannot see our enemies for they are in the spiritual realm, not the physical realm. No man is truly our enemy, but all men, whether friend or foe, can be used by the evil one against us and the work of God. We do not war against what we see, or against flesh and blood. We war against forces of darkness we do not see, so the battle requires faith in the One who declared, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

The ***evil day***, in verse 13 above, is when you are visited with temptations and attacks to see you fall. Attacks are specifically designed so you will not stand as a mature believer in Christ. So God gives the command, "Stand therefore." He seems to be saying, "I want you to be able to take what the evil one dishes out and be unaffected by it because you know what is really true." So, He says, gird your waist with truth. Base everything you think on truth. The truth is objective, not subjective. The truth is not based on our view of truth. The truth is only God's reality and all the armour rests upon that base, the firm foundation of Christ.

The ***breastplate of righteousness*** over your heart is a picture to say you have the righteousness of God at the core. Believe in it. Trust in His righteousness. Do not guilt yourself. Do not condemn yourself. Do you spend time trying to clean yourself? You are clean. Now believe it and have it worked out from the centre, from your heart.

Shod your feet with preparation of the gospel. You have the message in you. Know this story. Know the gospel, live within the reality of it. This is why this book was written, that we might know the gospel and truly live, knowing how to disciple others so they will truly live and their lives will bring glory and honour to our King. You are learning this book, not just for you, but to share this message with others as the Lord leads you each day.

You have been redeemed by God. You are an ambassador of His, and wherever you walk, tell the great love story of His great love for you and your love for Him. Tell the world that He has made peace between you and the Father. The wrath of the Father has been satisfied in Christ.

Above all, take ***the shield of faith***. This is of utmost important because your faith is the first thing that will be hit in the battle. The shield takes the direct assault. This is going to be where the evil one strikes. There are two words used for Roman shields. The word used in this passage for shield is not a small shield. This is the large shield that the Romans hid their whole body behind, interlocked with others. This is a fully protecting shield, covering all of you. It seems Apostle Paul chose this word to say, "Let your faith be interlocked with others. Work together. Encourage each other in the faith. Stick with sound doctrine, just Christ and Him crucified. Add nothing to Christ. Fully believe that He is sufficient, that the work He did is complete. Take up the shield of faith, believing, from your heart, that no accusation or condemnation can make it into the heart of a believer. There is no condemnation for those who are Christ's. You are saved. You are sealed. You belong. You are new."

The ***helmet of salvation***, as we mentioned above, is over your mind. It's a picture to say you must know you are saved. You must have confidence in the finished work of Christ. Guard you mind. Watch your thoughts that they do not condemn you. Take thoughts captive that are contrary to the truth of God's word. Salvation is already given to you by grace, so work it out with fear and trembling, knowing it is God who works in you to will and do for His good

pleasure.

The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is a weapon that is used in offensive and defensive attack and protection. The sword was a part of Roman armour that was used to attack an enemy and to also protect the one who held it. When Jesus did battle with the evil one, He quoted Scripture. But remember Satan also quoted Scripture. He understood the power of the sword and he sought to wield it against Christ, the living Word of God! See how important Bible study is?

Know the Bible, not to just learn verses, but to know the God of the Bible. He will teach you His Word and make the invisible truth clear to you as you read. He is your Teacher and He knows just what He wants you to know and when you need to know it. Abide in Him. Trust Him to reveal. Don't strive to know. Just soak up the word. Eat it as you would food, eating your daily bread, and God will grow you. You won't try to grow, but you will grow. God will cause growth in you as you eat the word.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. There never comes a time when a believer is not in intimate conversation with the Father and also continuing to ask Him to supply people, resources, and power for the battle. Prayer is like breathing to the abider. We pray without ceasing. We are always in constant communication with God, moving with Him, sitting with Him, listening to Him. Praying becomes less about what God can do for me, than for what God wants to do through me and what God wants to teach me. He is the guide. He is the leader. I am the follower and I delight in that role. I am created to be dependent on my Father. I'm secure in this dependence.

As believers in Jesus Christ, people transformed by the power of God, we have the armour on right now. We don't have to try to put it on daily; we have it on already. The armour is the completed work of God in us through faith in Jesus Christ. Our work now is to believe that this is true and to walk in it. If we don't believe this truth, our soul and body are again open to being deceived by the evil one and will walk in dysfunction. The truth sets us free from the power of the evil one's lie. So we must know the truth, becoming learners of Christ, listening to Him, and obeying His Word.

> *"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"* (*1 John 5:4-5).*

Who has overcome the world, according to this passage? _____

What is the victory that has overcome the world? _____

We do not have to follow the lusts of the flesh. We have been set free from the power of sin. We should be able to hang around with sinners, and be unaffected by their sin. We can love them, without fear of falling into it ourselves. We can stand firm in Christ, being who we are in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. We can choose to hate the world and the things of the world, while loving the people God came to save.

Jesus told us to be in the world, but not of the world.[229] He wants us to remain in the world, engaging the people in the world with spiritual conversations, checking to see where God is working, so we might lead people to Him. We are physically in this world, but we are not at

[229] John 18:36

home in the world any longer. Our Kingdom is not of this world and we are now seated out of this world. We are seated in Christ Jesus and we are at home in Him. He is our dwelling place. He is our shelter and refuge. We abide in Him and He in us.

The message of the gospel becomes really clear as we read 1 John 5:11-13:

> *11And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."*

Where is eternal life found? _____

Who has this life? _____

Who does not have life? _____

Why did John write this letter? _____

John writes these words to us so that we might know that we have life in the Son. So we might believe! He's exhorting us, encouraging us to stand firm in faith. All who believe in Jesus *have* eternal life and this life is in the Son. John writes, knowing humans are all eternal beings; some will live forever in heaven and some in damnation. His emphasis here is on the quality of that existence. With God, quality of existence is life. Without God, the quality of existence is death. He is not talking about length of time. All people have the same length of time, but the quality is His concern. He wants us to have life and to have it more abundantly. This life is found only in Jesus. He is this Life.

We have overcome the world through Christ, but we have also overcome the evil one. "We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."[230]

In our core, as new creations in Christ, there is no sin. No independence at all. There is nothing in us any longer that the evil one can hang onto. No foothold for evil. We have been born of God. The wicked one cannot touch you, believer. Is that sinking in? The wicked one cannot touch you. There is nothing in you for him to hang on to. There is no foothold for him to stand on. You are born of God. And even though the whole world is being swayed by the evil one, you are not.

If you have been born of God, you cannot continue to practice sin; it's against your nature to sin. You hate it. It's uncomfortable to you now. You do not want to sin. There is no sin in your spirit and God is working this salvation out through your soul and body to save you completely, making you completely whole and blameless, spirit, soul and body. The evil one has no hold in us because there is no sin. Sin still resides in the flesh. If you walk according to the

[230] 1 John 5:18-21

flesh, the evil one can sway you. The sway comes from believing lies, and the lies have enough truth in them to make them hard to detect sometimes. The lies are also attractive in some way to your soul. The lies often promise something your soul desires to keep it safe or give it significance or a sense of belonging. The lie promises something you already have in Christ, but may not believe fully. Faith pushes you to rest in God, believing you have all you need in Christ. The lie says you are lacking in some way and have to work to find satisfaction of some kind.

As you abide in Christ, walking in the Spirit, you walk free, because you are indeed free already. You feel light and unburdened because you have ceased from trying to work for something you think you need, and have begun to believe that God has supplied all your need. You rest in the gift and live in thanksgiving to God, for what God has done.

As you abide, you learn to keep yourself free from idols, taking every thought captive into obedience to Christ, not allowing sin to reign in your body or in your mind. Sin is lusting for you, to conquer you, but you will not be conquered by it. You are a conqueror in Christ.

Remember what we are saying here about abiding. Abiders understand some things that are critical to becoming mature believers in Christ. Abiders understand:

- God is sovereign, that He has saved them.
- They are complete in Christ, made holy and righteous.
- They are working with the Father and Son in setting up His Kingdom through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- They are living for His glory and His will, not their own.

All Christians truly abide at the core. There is no excuse to not live this out. For this teaching to be practical, it must come into the soul and the body. Christian, do not strive, but rest in the finished work of Christ. Believe what He said on the final moments on the cross. Trust that He has saved you. Trust that He has made you a new creation, for without trust your mind will remain anxious. Your walk will be sporadic. You will be a victim of good days and bad, and much of what you do and feel will be like the world.

You may fear if you really believe in the concept of abiding that nothing will get done, that you will become apathetic in the ways of God. It's really the opposite. As you rest in Christ your faith begins to work. It begins to live and becomes powerful. You have love without agenda. You have power without force. You have godliness which is great gain. James reminds us of this when he said, "Faith without works is dead." But he wasn't saying to go out and work for God. He was saying all those who fully rest their faith in Christ begin to do the holy work of the Father. Faith and works go together, always. If you believe, you will work the works of God because God will work through your faith. Faith and works is like a coin having both heads and tails. When someone tosses you a coin, he cannot toss you heads without tails, for it is one coin. In the same way, you cannot have faith without works or works without faith. They are the same.

REFLECTION ON KEY 6 ABIDE

Write Key Six Abide: _____

_____

Take a moment to explain this key in your own words. What is important for you to remember?

_____

_____

_____

What did you learn about God in this Key?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How will you know if you are experiencing abiding or not?

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KEY 7 LOVE

We live out the heart command of God to love Him, others and ourselves.

> [28]*Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?"* [29] *Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.*[30] *'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.* [31] *And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*[32] *So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He.* [33] *And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."*[34]*Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."But after that no one dared question Him.* (Mark 12:28-34).

Key 7 *Love* focuses our attention on the heartbeat of a Kingdom disciple: Love. "[7]Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. [8]He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."[231] God's very essence and nature is love. He loves because it is who He is. He cannot deny Himself. You were born of this love because you have been born of God. You are a child whose Father's Name is Love. God has poured out His love into you![232] You are a being created in love, through love, and you are designed to love, without condition, and without agenda for self. You abide in Love and Love abides in you. You abide in God and He abides in you.

The love of God is not passive. It is active. It is always seeking to express itself. God is always actively working out His righteousness in love, His justice in love, His mercy in love, His wrath in love. Everything He does is from love for He is love. God's love works within us, and we walk in love. As we abide in Christ, the evidence revealing we are His is our love for one another. Abiders walk in love. Actions performed or words spoken without love are not of God, for God is love.

Love constantly expresses itself in its desire to bring glory and honour to the Father. It is like light in a room. When light comes in, all the room is illuminated. When love comes in, all the room is affected by the quality of the character of love.

Love is active and penetrating, reaching into the human heart and calling us to life. Love is not trying to love self, yet it loves self, the true self created by God. True lovers of themselves do not focus on themselves. They ignore themselves and become servants because it's their very nature. Love's main focus is not inward. Love radiates itself and is outward focused. Yet it's there. It loves itself.

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[231] 1 John 4:7-8

[232] Romans 5:5

Like a sun or a star, whose sole purpose is to give light and glorify their Creator, you were also made to shine and glorify God. A sun or star does not focus on itself, yet there is light within it. Its focus is outward, giving light and glorifying God. When you love yourself you are not really focusing on yourself, you are shining brighter and brighter and living to your true purpose. If the sun ever focused on itself, we would call that a black hole, where light does not escape. It implodes on itself, destroying everything in its path. Christian you were made to be a light, not a black hole. You are not designed to focus on yourself. You are designed to focus on God and to bring honour and glory to Him. You do this as you express the reality of what He has done; the goodness of God in making you new and saving you from death. You do this by being who you really are.

Love always expresses the heart of God as He is revealed, or it is not love. Love loves those who are ungrateful and ungodly. Love loves those who spitefully use us or say all kinds of mean things about us. Love loves because it expresses what it is. It cannot be anything other than what it is. And we are born of God, born of love. We love because He first loved us and gave Himself up for us. He loved us while we were still sinners and enemies, and He calls us, as His children, to love in the same way. He has given us no excuse not to love. He has poured out His love into our hearts through His Spirit. We love because we are beings who love. It is who we are and created to be. It is our identity.

The love God speaks of is agape love, meaning unconditional love. Within this love there is no agenda, no ulterior motive, no self-seeking, no cruelty, and no revenge. It's an impossible love, impossible apart from God. In abiding, you love with agape love. Apart from Him you can do nothing, but with Him you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength.[233]

The power of love is manifest when it comes from our heart or our core, not our mind. The love of God comes from who we are as a new creation in Christ. We cannot fake this love. We love because it is who we are, not what we are trying to do. The love of God is an expression of our being. Acts and words of love are the natural expression of us, as beings who are born from love. Love is the very nature of the new creation, the unconditional, agape love of God. We are beings who love. We love God. We love others and we love ourselves.

People with love express love without condition or agenda. I don't love you to change you or because you behave well. Loving someone to change them is really manipulation, not love. I don't love you to fill my perceived need for love. I love because I am completely loved by God.

As we walk in love, we are not controlled by others' responses, by others' agendas, by our environment or events. External events do not change the love we are going to express. As we grow in love, we learn to speak the truth in love for the purpose of building up and encouraging our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. We speak from no other motive.

In the flesh, there is self-seeking, self-gratification, a lust and agenda disguised as love. In the flesh, we speak our understanding of truth but with self as the motive. The flesh speaks to get someone to stop doing something that bothers us, or to get them to be something we think they should be so that we are benefitted in some way. Flesh is more concerned with self-worth, self-satisfaction, self-esteem, self-improvement than loving other people above self.

If we walk according to the Spirit, we will not carry out the lusts of the flesh. We will speak truth in love with the agenda to bring honour and glory to God. Period. We speak because He wants us to speak. We speak because He wants to speak through us for His purposes. As we speak truth in love, we will see God impact the lives around us. Transformation will occur and

[233] Philippians 4:13

we will know it is not us, but God, who is doing the work. God will be glorified and others will become all God created them to be as they surrender their lives to Him.

Truth is always connected to love. Jesus is the Truth and God is Love. The two are inseparable. They are one. So, in loving others, we speak the truth in love, as God gives us words to say. The truth sets them free and love will transform them. Truth without love is too harsh. Love without truth is too weak. One cannot exist without the other.

When we know we are loved by others, we can accept counsel from others around some weakness in our lives, an area where our soul has not yet believed the truth. We are pleased to hear so we can improve and grow in our expression of love. We want fleshly ways to be revealed, so that we can more fully express who we truly are as beings who love with the love of God.

Love reveals itself in the way we speak to a little child, to a waitress, to a boss, to a spouse, to the elderly, to a friend or even a small animal. Love comes from the expression of the heart. When we are in love with Christ, we are not trying to look good, or to hide. We just are being who we are. We are confident that we are complete in Christ, completely loved, completely secure, and completely significant. We rest in the finished work of Christ, walking in truth and love. As we walk in love, God is glorified in and through us.

DISCOVERING KEY 7

Loving God, others, and ourselves is central to abiding in Christ and being who we truly are. We are beings who love. That's the way we were created by God. God gives us everything we need to love others from our hearts, without manipulation or an agenda for self. May God reveal His love for you as you read His Word. You are deeply loved, believer. May He reveal more and more deeply the beauty of who you really are in Him, and the beauty of His gospel.

As you study these passages, ask yourself these questions. Write down the response of your heart, so you can look, see, and understand what God is revealing to you. Take time to sit with God. Remember not to rush through. You are on a journey to know and love God, not just finish a book.

L LIE: What LIE of the world or the evil one is being exposed by truth?

I INSIGHT: What INSIGHT is revealed about God and His ways?

F FAITH: What revealed truth strengthens my FAITH?

E EXAMPLE: What faith EXAMPLE is given for me to follow?

- ❒ Matthew 5:38-48
- ❒ Luke 6:27-36
- ❒ John 3:16-20
- ❒ John 13:31-35
- ❒ John 14:15-24
- ❒ John 15:9 -17
- ❒ John 17:20-26
- ❒ Romans 8:28-39
- ❒ Romans 12:9 -21
- ❒ Romans 13:8-14
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 13
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 16:13-14
- ❒ Galatians 5:13-16
- ❒ Ephesians. 2:1-10
- ❒ Ephesians 5:8-9
- ❒ Ephesians 5:15-33
- ❒ Ephesians 6:1-9
- ❒ Colossians 3
- ❒ Titus 2
- ❒ 1 Peter 1:13-25
- ❒ 1 Peter 4:7-19
- ❒ 1 John 2:3-10
- ❒ 1 John 2:15-17
- ❒ 1 John 3:1-3
- ❒ 1 John 3:10-13
- ❒ 1 John 4:7-21

GOING DEEPER: KEY 7 LOVE

We live out the heart command of God to love Him, others and ourselves.

A STORY OF LOVE

I remember when I found you. You were just a baby. In the field near my house, I heard a faint cry. As I moved toward the cry, I looked down, shocked at what I saw. There you were, lying in afterbirth, struggling in your own blood. You were not beautiful and my stomach revolted, but my heart ached with such compassion. Someone had abandoned you. You were desperate and unloved. The cord on your navel was not even cut. No one had cared to wash you, or rub salt on you to protect you from infection. No one pitied you even to wrap you in a cloth, but just abandoned you to die in an open field. I stood there appalled. From the day you were born, you were hated by the one who birthed you, but I was moved in love.

I watched after you and spoke life into you. I said, "Live." You flourished. I watched as you grew, becoming healthy and beautiful. As you came to the age of love, I swore an oath with you and made you my wife. I made an everlasting covenant with you, giving you myself without reserve. I thoroughly washed the blood from your body until you were clean. I clothed you with a beautiful silk gown covered in jewels. I put pearls in your hair and gold bracelets on your wrist. I put sandals on your feet and crowned you with a jewelled crown. I gave you the best food, all the delicacies of the land. I loved you. You were beautiful beyond compare because of the beauty I adorned you with. I gave you my splendour and your reputation went throughout all the country like royalty of a queen. You did not know, but I was the King. I had compassion on you and made you mine, giving you all of me.

But you loved your beauty more than me. Your fame grew and you loved the fame. You loved the beautiful garments and the silver and gold I adorned you with. You loved the recognition of being a queen and all those who came to see your beauty. You became unfaithful to me, giving your body to admiring men. You prostituted yourself, glorying in their praise, and you gloried in your wealth. You bowed down to images of gold and silver. You gave our children to these idols to be devoured by them. You sacrificed our children on the altar of your affections, destroying our family. You did not remember where you came from; that you were lost and naked and struggling in your blood with no one to love you.

You built altars in the city and prostituted yourself on them. You gave yourself to everyone who came by. You sold your body and could not get enough. Your lust and thirst were never satisfied. Your beauty faded and you looked like a used-up rag. My anger burned against you for so I loved you. I sent you out from my house and you fought to survive. As your body was used up by the lust of those who bought you, you were unattractive and broken and eventually had to pay these same men to take you.

You were the daughter of your mother who left you for dead. You spurned my love for you and you spat on the gift of life I gave you. You gave up your own children for dead. How I cried for you, but you would not listen, so I gave you up to the life you chose and your lust devoured you. You thought this was love, this hunger of others who craved for you, but you were wrong. They lusted for you and sought to have you, but they never loved you with a husband's love. They beheld your beauty and took what was not theirs to have.

I gave you all I had, all that I am, and crowned you with my love. I gave you everything, when you had nothing to give, when you were struggling in the field in your own blood, cast away and unloved at birth. I loved you with an everlasting love. I married you and gave you my name. But you loved the gifts more than the giver, and in the end, you were destroyed by your lust. Oh, that you would have loved me with the love with which I have loved you. (Adapted from the Story of Israel in Ezekiel 16)

WHAT IS LOVE?

We say we love, don't we? We love many things. We love our cars. We love chocolate. We love the weather. We love the beach. We love the smell of the sea air. We love the feel of bubbles in the bathtub. We love people. We love God. We use the word love in many ways. The problem is we seem to define the word "love" however we like. We seem to take the word love very casually. We miss the full impact of the word "love."

When we define love, we often define it in our own understanding. We define love and call it a feeling. Sometimes we have that feeling and sometimes we do not. We say we fall in and out of love. The love we define is a love that is fleeting and something that we can lose, something that comes and goes, is fickle and changing. When we define love, we end up creating an idol called love, a god of our own understanding and not God at all. Christian, if we do not understand love the way God understands it and know it the way God knows it, then it's impossible for you to express the way God would have it be expressed.

Consider this encounter in a counsellor's office: a man enters. He is struggling with his wife. His marriage is on the verge of divorce. I ask him, "Do you love your wife?" He says, "Of course I do." "Listen to this," I tell him. "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."[234] Then I ask him, "Do you love your wife?" He says, "Yes, I do." I read the passage again. As I read, the Holy Spirit begins to bring conviction on this man. I see his face fall. His eyes begin to tear up. As I finish reading, I ask him again: "Do you love your wife?" He hangs his head down and cries. "No," he admits, "I do not love my wife, not according to what you read. I have not been patient. I have not been kind. I have not sought out her best interest, but have only been trying to fulfill my needs. I now realize, what I thought was love was really not love at all."

The love of the world is better labelled "lust." The lust of the world has self at the centre. This lust craves and leaves us desperate to get our needs met. This lust calls itself love, but it is changing and not solid. It is fickle. One day there is a feeling of "love," the next day, we lose this feeling of "love" and are filing for divorce.

The love of God looks very different than this. Love as defined by God reveals something very different from all we thought love was. The definition of love, according to God, is not up for debate. Love just is what it is. Love is God and God does not change. Love cannot be faked. Love comes from the abiding presence of God in our lives and flows through us as we abide in Christ, fully resting in Him, knowing it's impossible to love agape love apart from Him. He has poured His love into our hearts through His Spirit, but we must now abide in this love. What is love? 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 gives us God's definition of love:

[234] 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

[1]Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. [2]And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. [3]And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. [4]Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;[5]does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; [6]does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;[7]bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.[8]Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

This is love according to God. Anything less is not love. Love has no sense of self in it. Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not keep a record of wrongs. Love is not jealous. Love does not delight in evil. This is God's definition of love. We often say we love someone, but we are impatient with them, or we are unkind, or we keep a record of the wrongs they have done, or we are jealous of something they have or something they have done. If we are honest with ourselves, what we are doing is not love. It is something other than love.

Love looks for the best for the other person, always. Love might hurt someone, but only with the intent to help them grow and set them free to love. Think of a doctor who is about to do heart surgery on you. The doctor knows He must cut into you and open up your chest and remove your heart. All this creates pain, but the pain is to fulfill something beautiful. It gives you a new heart and life, and an opportunity for longer life. When love hurts another it's because it speaks the truth, and the person's flesh is reacting against it, but it is still the best for them.

Love never envies another person. Love never delights when people get hurt or fall into sin. Love weeps with those who are weeping and rejoices

Real Life Transformation

Knowing the truth has brought me from a disparaging existence, to one in line with His will and plan for my life. John 8:32 says, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." I am now free from a life that involved drinking and drugs that started at the age of nine. A life of blaming everyone for everything bad that happened to me. A life full of pain and a life of causing pain to others.

Through the keys, I have learned how to forgive others and especially myself, because Christ first forgave me. I have learned how to love, because Christ first loved me. These are all important, but the most important thing that I have learned is that Christ is the one who has accomplished all this when He died on the cross for me, for all of us! I do not have to "do" anything. He has done it already! As Philippians 1:6 says… "but He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ"

God is faithful, and His word is true, and that truth is Jesus Christ. He is the author and finisher of my faith, (Heb. 12:2) and He prepares the way and establishes my steps. (Psa. 40:2) It is because of Christ that I am now entering the second year of college to get my Bachelors in Christian Ministry at the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary in Cochrane Alberta. It is with the utmost gratitude to the eight keys and RHBC that I am on the path that Jesus has laid plans before the foundation of the world!

-- A Graduate of Timothy House

with those who rejoice. Love is love. It is unchanging and it never fails.

Love is not just a feeling. Love is a Person. It is God's expression of Himself through us. Love will always win. Love is not weak. It joins itself with Truth. As we speak the truth in love, God grows us and others around us. We all mature and we grow deeper in love.

If we speak in different languages or are able to teach, if we have lots of knowledge or if we have great faith, but do not love, we are just making a lot of clanging noise which amounts to nothing. If we memorize hundreds of Bible verses, know great doctrine and theology, but do not have love, God says we are nothing. He is not interested in what we have to say or in what we think we know. He is interested in love. If we do not love, we have nothing to say, no matter how right we think we are. God is not impressed. To Him, it's all filthiness without love. Actions without love are flesh, and evil in God's sight.

"But Lord," we might say, "we cast out demons in Your Name. We led all sorts of Bible studies in Your Name. We fed the poor in Your Name."

He responds, "Yes, you did these things, but you did not do them in love. They are not of Me. I am not impressed." Jesus goes even further to say, "I never knew you: depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."[235] Jesus is saying "If you knew Me, you would love because My Father is Love."

When you came to Christ, what were you taught first? Often we lead people in a "sinner's prayer" and say it's by grace you have been saved. It's a gift of God. Then we set about to tell them how to live. Were you taught to memorize Bible verses or to love? To go to church or to abandon yourself to God? Were you taught to do the works of Christianity, but have you missed the heart of Christianity? If you have, then the works have become hard and the burden has been heavy. You have been living a religion, rather than a vital relationship of abiding in God.

One of the reasons we know this is because many of us have been there too. Trying to live Christianity is an impossible task if we do it by rule. Trying to work for God is hard work. It burns us out. It is discouraging and completely unfruitful, lacking joy, peace, and love. If we are a Christian, a walk without love is a fleshly walk. We have become religious, and if we continue, we will become discouraged and believe that Christianity does not work. We will become angry at God. The problem is that much of what we label Christianity is nothing more than an empty religion made by man, something God never designed.

The difference between religion and Christianity is love. God hates religion, but He loves Christianity. Religion holds to law at the centre and tries to force people to conform to the law. It encourages people to show their love to God so they can be accepted by Him. It desires to see good works, but its end goal is to obligate God into saving the individual because of the effort done. Love is not obligated. Love is never obligated.

Christianity holds love at the centre and follows the spirit of the law, not the letter. The love of God expresses itself without obligating another to express itself back. It is not loving to love in order to be loved. Christians love because it's an expression of who they are, as God's children and lovers of God. Love does not obligate a person, even if the person feels obligated. The feeling they have is not true. Christians understand that salvation is a gift. There is no obligation in a true gift. We did not deserve this gift; it was given because of the love of God. He was expressing His Nature of Love. Saving us was a natural expression of Himself.

The natural expression of being loved by God is to love the One who gave the gift, not out of obligation, but out of a desire to express our love for God and gratitude toward the One who saved us. When we know we have been forgiven, and we have been forgiven every single

[235] Matthew 7:23

thing, we will love. We will overflow with love. This is why we must know what we have been saved from and how worthless we were apart from Christ. This is why Key 2 *Admit* is crucial to understand. When we realize what God has done, we love Him. Our hearts overflow with gratitude. If we think we are pretty good and have lots of good knowledge and skills to contribute in some way to God, we do not love correctly. We love a lot less because we think we are somewhat worthy of the gift He has given.

Jesus said that we will know His disciples by their love for one another.[236] John wrote saying that love is of God and everyone who loves knows God for God is love.[237]

Why is love the distinguishing mark of a disciple?

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Now read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 again slowly and describe what love looks like according to this passage. You might be tempted to rush through this familiar passage, so please slow yourself down and think through how God defines love.

> *[1]Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. [2]And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. [3]And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. [4]Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; [5]does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; [6]does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; [7]bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.[8]Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.*

What are the qualities of true love, according to these verses? _____

_____

Bringing this question into closer view, let's take a more personal look. Do you truly love? Are you loving your spouse? Are you loving your children? Are you loving your friends and neighbours, your employer or employees? Are you loving your enemies?

Write out your response, taking your time. Let God's Word soak in. Remember your spirit joyfully concurs with the law of God and His law is to love with agape love. Your spirit loves like this. Your soul struggles. So, if you are feeling resistance, the resistance is not coming from

[236] John 13:35
[237] 1 John 4:7-11

you, but from the sin that resides in your flesh. You long to express love, with no agenda for self. Think about what love really is and not what you thought it was or feel like it is. Using God's definition of love, ask yourself this question: **Are you loving? Why or why not?**

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If this exercise was difficult for you, you are not alone. Many struggle to love correctly. Many try to love, but only end up putting up with people. Love is not fully expressed. Love is held back as the soul seeks to protect itself from harm or disappointment or truly abandoning itself in love. If we have been hurt, we are often challenged in love. As we embrace hurt, embrace forgiveness, we will learn to love correctly.

We may find certain people harder to love than others. We prejudge people based on their appearance, their occupation, their ethnicity, their size, their personality. We make excuses why we do not have to love, saying surely someone else will love that person. But if God has brought someone into your life, whoever He brings, you are to love, without agenda and without holding back.

The love of God is agape love. It's love with no unhealthy agenda. The love of God is without condition. The love of God pours through a vessel yielded to and abiding in God. How will people know you are a disciple of Christ? By your love for one another. The love you display emanates from within you, from who you really are in Christ.

Love is powerful when it comes from the heart and not the mind. **Do you know God loves you? What evidence has God shown that He loves you with a passionate, never failing love?**

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God has expressed His love to us through sacrificing His one and only Son. God desires all people be saved and be transformed through the death and resurrection of His Son, but only those who come through Christ will be saved. Jesus is the Way.[238] Whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life and this life is in His Son.[239] Jesus is the Life.

When we know, I mean really know, we are loved by God, even when we were enemies of His and worthy of death, we will love. When we know, I mean really know, that all of our sins are forgiven, we will love. The attitude of someone who knows they are loved by God is thankfulness. They cry out, "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you, God! For saving me and setting me free. Thank you for filling me with all you are and giving me Yourself as a gift!" He did all of this not because we deserved it or because we did any good deeds, but because we came to understand we were bankrupt without Him and we needed to be saved or we would be lost forever.

[238] John 14:6

[239] John 11:26

God has forgiven all your sin, all your guilt, believer, and pulled your life from the pit and crowned you with His loving-kindness. He has made you beautiful in His sight, making you completely new. You are His child and He delights in you, not because of your behaviour, but because of who you are.

You are loved by God and you abide in His love. You are secure and held within His love. His love does not change. It is steady and everlasting. All He does and all He allows is from His heart of love. We know that whatever events or circumstances occur, that God is in control of it all and He loves us and is working all things together for good.[240]

Because we know we are loved completely by God, we can love others. We love from abiding in God's love and He pours His agape love through our hearts to touch the lives of others. We can love those who love us, but more importantly, we can love those who don't. We can love our enemies because when we were enemies of God, Christ died for us.

From the love of God, we love ourselves. When we know who we are as new creations in Christ, what is there not to love about ourselves? We have been made perfect. We are new. We are holy beings made by God and we are beautiful in Christ. There is no flaw or sin in us, in our spirit. The old is completely gone. Sure, we were no good before we were saved. Whether we did horrendous things or not, we were completely bankrupt. But because of God, who is rich in mercy, we are completely forgiven. All our sin is gone forever. All we did, all we ever would do is gone. Now we are walking out life by faith in our King, learning to trust Him, learning to love, learning to live in truth and, as we believe, the truth is transforming our soul and our body bringing our whole selves into oneness with God.

When we know we are loved, we are not controlled by what others think of us, by people's agendas, or by our environment. We are controlled by love. We are constrained by the love of Christ, held firm by Him as He frees us to express His love, not walk according to the flesh.

When we abide in Christ, we do not really need external controls because, inwardly, we are controlled by God. We hunger and thirst for righteousness by the nature of who we now are. This is a central difference between a religious system of trying to change people and Christianity. A religious system goes mainly to ritual and external control, rather than the inner transformation of the spirit. Religious people try to get people to change using outer systems like going to church, doing Bible study, and going to prayer meetings, as if those activities will bring the transformation, when, really, the transformation comes from within through the transformation of God.

WALKING IN LOVE

When God's love works in us, we walk in love. The love of God within us constantly expresses itself. Love expresses itself in how we relate to others, in what we say and in what we do. When we love Christ, we are not trying to look good, or hide, or be anything that we are not. We are just being who we are. We love because we were first loved by God. We have been forgiven all so we forgive all. We received mercy, so we are merciful. We place all our confidence in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

If others find out about some weakness in our lives, we are pleased to hear so we can mature and grow in our expression of love. As disciples, we are open to rebuke and count it a privilege when someone strengthens our behaviours. We desire to have no fleshly way in us, that is, in our soul and body. We want to express the fullness of who we really are and bring

[240] Romans 8:28

glory to God. So we consider the rebuke of a friend wholesome and encouraging because the words are out of love; even though a rebuke can hurt at the moment, it wounds to life and not to death.

When we correct others in love, we are always conscious about pain that it will cause. "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."[241] Notice it says "you who are spiritual." A truly spiritual person, one walking in the Spirit, will speak the truth in love. It's not enough to just speak the truth. The truth by itself can damage; love and truth together bring restoration. The spiritual person is to speak with gentleness. Gentleness is a fruit of the spirit. As you walk in the Spirit, you will not be harsh and demanding. You will be compassionate and you will look to yourself as well, knowing that you also could walk in a fleshly way.

Counselling or discipling others is very much like a surgeon giving a person a new heart. The surgeon is aware that the cut will hurt and the removal of the old heart will kill the person. The surgeon makes a way for that person to survive the change; he gives him oxygen and keeps the blood pumping through his body. He does what he can to help the person endure the pain of the surgery. As we love others, we do so with gentleness, speaking the truth in love in obedience to God and in His timing. Our goal is not to change a person, but to love them and let love do its transforming work.

As we love, we always want to be conscious of how much transformation the person can make without discouraging them. As we look at the life of Jesus, we see a man totally yielded to the will of God, doing and saying only what God told Him to do and say. Jesus walked with sinners but was not constantly exposing all their sin to them. He was careful to know when He needed to rebuke and when He should just overlook sin. The miracle of Christ was not just that He walked on the planet among us, but that He walked among us and did not destroy us with His absolute holiness. He loved us, walking with us, displaying the glory of God. He took us where we were, but He called us to follow Him and become who we were meant to be.

He was the Word which became flesh and dwelt among us, and willingly He gave His own life so that we could live. Christ's absolute holiness was contained within a human form so we could behold the majesty of God. Only in this form could sinners come into His presence and not be destroyed.

Jesus takes us where we are but He doesn't leave us there. He encounters us when we are spiritually dead and He gives us life. When we first cried out to Him He took us and made us clean, washing us with His blood. He made us His bride and crowns us with the crown of our royalty as the children of God and the bride of Christ. He married us, and causes us to truly live, giving of all that He is, ever-flowing His life through us, ever filling us, as we put our full trust in Him.

Love is the natural characteristic of the life of God within us. Love is the natural outpouring of a believer who is abiding in God. The expression of love is not hard when we abide in Christ. It's natural. We are simply being who we really are. We love because we have been so loved by God. People who are disciples of Jesus love one another. Love is not self-focused. It is focused on the will of God.

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[241] Galatians 6:1

A TRANSPARENT LOOK AT LOVE

- ❒ **Love suffers long:** Are you patient with people?
- ❒ **And is kind:** Are your words kind or are they barbed?
- ❒ **Love does not envy:** Are you comparing yourself to others, not happy at other people's success or abilities?
- ❒ **Love does not parade itself:** Do you want to be seen by others to feel good about yourself?
- ❒ **Is not puffed up:** Do you think more highly of yourself than you ought, placing yourself above others?
- ❒ **Does not behave rudely:** How do you talk to people? Do you justify being rude to people because they don't do things how you would like them done?
- ❒ **Does not seek its own:** When you do a good deed, why do you do it? What is the motive?
- ❒ **Is not provoked:** Do you get mad easily?
- ❒ **Thinks no evil:** Where do you let your thoughts go?
- ❒ **Does not rejoice in iniquity:** Are you happy when people do wrong?
- ❒ **But rejoices in the truth:** Does your heart find joy in truth?
- ❒ **Bears all things:** Do you bear with your brothers and sisters in their weaknesses or do you quickly expose them to ridicule?
- ❒ **Believes all things:** Do you believe the best of people?
- ❒ **Hopes all things:** Do you live with hope because you know God is working all things together for your good?
- ❒ **Endures all things:** Do you grumble and complain when things go wrong, or do you assume that God is in control and will bring beauty out of even the hard things?
- ❒ **Love never fails:** Love will always win. We often try to control or manipulate situations or people when conflict arises or circumstances seem to overwhelm us. Love is always the answer. Love will win, no matter what the situation, no matter the person.

After looking at the check list, is God speaking anything else to you about love? Please write your response below.

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If you struggle to love, don't be discouraged. Remember what we learned in Key 5? When we are not loving in the way God described, the problem is what we believe, not trying harder to love.

Love is a choice, it is not a feeling. We might be tempted to blame other people, the weather, or the circumstances of life. We choose to walk in love, just as we choose to abide in Christ. We *do abide* because we are His, but we must choose to walk in this abiding. We do abide in love because He is love and we abide in Him and He has poured out His love into our hearts. We have everything we need within us right now to love correctly. Do you believe this? As

you rest in this truth, God's love will express itself through you. You will love, because you will begin to express who you really are. You are a being who loves.

When we are not loving in the way God described, the problem is what we believe, not trying harder to love.

Paul writes the solution plainly: "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."[242] Walking in the Spirit is the key. Walking in the Spirit is the same as abiding in Christ, believing, walking by faith, and walking in love. All these phrases mean the same thing. We must fully rest in the finished work of Christ on the cross, knowing the truth about who God is, what He did in Jesus and who we are in Him. He is in us, and we are in Him. We exist in love. We were birthed from love. He has filled us with love through His Spirit who He gave to us the moment we believed.

How do we love? We rest in God, loving Him, enjoying Him, and His love will pour through our hearts to those He has placed us around to love. We cannot try to love. We just love because it is who we are. We cannot try to abide, we just do, like being inside a room. We cannot try to be in the room or do anything to be more in the room. We will live according to our level of faith, that's all.

Do not guilt yourself about your lack of love. If you struggle to love correctly, simply admit it and press deeper into God, magnifying Him, loving Him, believing Him. Be who you truly are. There is no excuse to not love, because love is a gift we have received. If we do not believe God loves us, we will struggle. If we believe we cannot love someone else because they are too bad, or have hurt us too much, we will struggle. We will walk according to the level of our faith.

What do you really believe? Do you know that you know that you know God loves you? Do you know you are loved unconditionally by the Lord of the Universe, Almighty God? Do you know you are forgiven completely? That all your sin is gone, as far as the east is from the west? Do you know you have the power within you in Christ to love anyone, no matter who they are?

Believe the truth of God's word and you will walk free. You will abide and you will walk in love. And, as you walk in love, you will transform. You won't try to transform, but you will transform and your soul and body will come in alignment with the work God did in your spirit. Your thinking and your actions will become more and more like Christ's thinking and actions. You will begin to sound and look a lot like Him!

You, as the new creation in Christ, love. You were designed for love and designed to love. And you were designed to love those who do not love you. How do we know? Because God loved you when you were His enemy, when you were lost and covered in blood and ready to be thrown away. He loved you with an everlasting love and He filled you with Himself. There is no excuse to not love. None.

In the flesh, we come up with lots of excuses to not love. We have been hurt too much. We are too tired. We had a bad day. The other person doesn't deserve our love because of what they did. It's too hard to love. If the person would do what I want them to do, or had a different personality, or looked different, or treated me better, or.... Do any of these excuses ring true to you? God has given us no excuse not to love, yet we, in the flesh, have endless arguments against loving correctly.

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[242] Galatians 6:1

A CLOSER LOOK AT LOVE

Let's take a closer look at what God asks of us in terms of love:

❒ *But I say to you, LOVE your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, … For if you LOVE those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (Matthew 5:44, 46)*[243]

Who are you to love, according to these verses?

_____

How is love expressed to enemies?

_____

❒ *"But LOVE your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil." (Luke 6:35)*[244]

In what other ways should love be expressed to enemies?

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Why are we to love our enemies, according to Luke 6:35?

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We are commanded to love, not only those who love us, but those who hate us. This is the mark of a disciple of Christ. Why? Because while we were enemies of God, He loved us and gave as a ransom for our souls the life of His beloved Son. The love of God is a radical, sacrificial love and it is this same love that He has poured into our hearts through His Spirit. We love like He does. This is our identity. We have no excuse not to love.

❒ *Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31)*

What do you think Jesus meant by loving God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength?

_____

[243] Capitalization added.
[244] Capitalization added.

What do you think He meant by loving your neighbour as yourself?

_____

_____

Think about your identity as you ask yourself this next question. Think about who you really are in Christ. Not who you were, or who you *feel* like you are, but who you truly are as God's workmanship.

How do you love yourself?

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If you had a difficult time with answering that question, think carefully about this next question: Who do you believe you are? Be transparent. God already knows what you really believe. It will help *you* to know what you really believe. Not what you think you *should* believe, but what you really believe.

Who do you believe you are?

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How you answered that question may have something to do with what others have said to you about who they think you are. There may be pain attached to what they have said, because their words hurt you. Let the words of God soak into your heart. You are loved and you are the child of the King. You are wanted. Your Father made you. He uniquely crafted you, forming you. You are His masterpiece and He does not make mistakes. You were made on purpose. He formed your earthly body and when you surrendered to Him, He made you new and holy and righteous.

What it means to be new is this: You are not broken. You do not need fixing. You are clean. All the filth of your life before Christ is gone. You were without hope in the world and unclean, but that old person was crucified in Christ and replaced with a new, righteous and clean person who is deeply loved by God. You are His workmanship, His design. You are beautiful and your Father delights in you. There is nothing in you not to love. You were chosen by Him and you belong to Him as His bride. You are adorned in white without spot or blemish. You are holy and dearly loved.

Why are there no other commands greater than the commands to love?

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Jesus said that the whole of the law and the prophets was summed up by these two commands: loving God and loving others as ourselves. All the teaching of Moses and all the words given to the prophets were fulfilled in these two commands (Matthew 5:17-48). Love is the most powerful force in the entire universe, in all eternity. Love conquers all, and it always wins. When we love God, abiding in Him, we walk in love and His love brings transformation. We do not love in order to transform others. We love because it expresses who we are, and in loving, others are transformed.

Someone once said, "Love God and do whatever you want." If you love God, what do you want to do? You want to love. Loving God means we completely abandon ourselves to God. We deny the flesh and we fully embrace who we really are as slaves of righteousness, beings whose only will is the will of God. There is no other will worth following, for our spirit only seeks the mind of the Father. We have surrendered to our King and we now yield our soul and body to God, actively fixing our minds on the truth of God's word and resting totally in Him.

❒ *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:34)*

❒ *Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me." (John 14:23-24)*

What command did Jesus give to us? (John 13:34) _____

If we refuse to keep Jesus' word, do we really love Jesus? _____

Why do you think Jesus connects love to obedience?

_____

Our new heart beats with the heartbeat of God. The cry of our heart is "Not *my* will, O God, but *your* will be done." As we abide in Christ, we die to any will that does not line up with the heartbeat of God. The will of our spirit is in perfect unity with God. Our soul and body still desire to reign, but we must master them and bring them into submission to the truth of God's word. As we do this, we grow and become more and more Christ-like in our thinking and behaviour. This is maturity in Christ. We hunger for righteousness. We hunger for God. We long to do His will alone.

Let's take a look at some promises from our Father to us:

❒ *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)*

What will God work together for those who love Him? _____

What do you think "all things" means? _____

_____

All things. Think about how astounding those two words really are. All things. God is talking about evil things and good things. All things. God will work all things together for our good as His children. So we can assume that everything is meant for good, knowing that God is in control and bringing good out of all events and circumstances of our lives as we love Him. When we abide in this truth, we experience peace that is beyond all comprehension in the midst of truly challenging experiences.

❒ *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39*

What will separate us from the love of God which He expressed to us in Christ?

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❒ *16By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. 19And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. (1 John 3:16-19)*

According to this passage, is it enough to just tell people we love them? _____

What else must we do to express love? _____

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_____

Okay, let's look at two more passages on love.

❒ *And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. (1 John 3:23)*

What two commands are we given in 1 John 3:23? _____

_____

The answer to loving others does not come from trying to love. The answer to loving others flows from knowing God, loving Him, enjoying Him, worshipping Him, fully trusting in Him. As we walk in truth and love, abiding in Christ, resting in Him by faith, we will grow in our expression of love. We will grow in our love for ourselves also. We will become more and more Christ-like in our behaviours and thoughts. We will live out who we really are in Christ, radiating the glory of God within us. We are light. As we walk in truth and love, we will live as children of light, being who we really are.

MAKING LOVE PRACTICAL

If our theology is not practical it is not true theology. "Theo" means God and "ology" means "the study of." So theology is the study of God. Any study of God must lead to love. Any love must lead to action. Any action taken must be by faith. And any faith understood must be from abiding in Christ. All those who abide in Christ will be transformed. Can you see how this all links together?

We do not go out and try to love without understanding that all 8 of these keys or principles are working all the time. So for this lesson to be practical it must be applied immediately. Look around you. Is there a person who needs your love, needs the love of God through you to touch them?

Write that person's name here: _____

Go up to that person and speak words of love to them. For example, if the first person you see is your spouse, put the book down and tell your spouse how special he or she is to you. You are thankful they are a part of your life that God brought them into your world. Tell them you love them. Ask your wife if there is some way you can help her or assist her in caring for your home or the children. Ask your husband if there is something you would like to do or a place to go so you both could enjoy some time together.

If you encounter a young child or your own child, then speak life into them. Tell them you are pleased they are a part of your life. Tell them you are proud of them and you have been encouraged by them. Ask them if they would like to go out with you to have an ice cream cone or just to go for a walk with you. As you are out with them attempt to see where their needs are and where you can speak life into them.

At the start, this practice of love will seem rigid and almost self imposed because you may not be used to it. But this truly is what your spirit desires to do. Your spirit desires to love someone. You were created for this. The less you see this as a task, the more you see this as life. It becomes more and more natural to you. This is why Jesus said, you will know my disciples because they love one another.

If you wonder why your love seems to be shallow or weak when it comes to expressing this toward another, take some time to reflect on all that you have been forgiven by Christ. Remind yourself again how far you had fallen, how deep in sin you had gone, how dark your past was without God. The Lord said, "Those who have been forgiven much love much."

What are some practical ways you can express love to those around you?

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Although it is not good to go through sins in your mind, in condemnation and continuous guilt, it is good not to forget where you came from. Without guilt or shame, remember and thank the Lord for the freedom you now have in Christ. You know clearly this position you have in Christ is totally by grace, the undeserved kindness of God.

If you became a Christian when you were a child, you may not have many deep sins or experiences that have overly shamed you. Remember it takes only one sin to put Christ on a cross so that He must die and make you right; just like it took just one sin to remove Adam and Eve from the life of God. So instead of reflecting on your life, reflect on His life, and His death on the cross for you. Remind yourself of the great price that was paid. Paul said, "We preach Christ and Him crucified." The more you understand this principle, looking at your sin and the cross together, the more you will have freedom to express love and thankfulness.

Love's power of expression is when you understand that you have been humbled, that you stand before the Lord, not in your own merit, but totally because He first expressed this love towards you. This part of the lesson must be practical. You must force your mind and body to love. The words you say may be difficult at the start. To say "I love you" to your wife or your husband may challenge your soul. You may have not said to them for many years. But the truth is, your spirit loves. When you say I love you to them, you may feel like a hypocrite. This is your flesh trying to stop this process. You are not a hypocrite, because your spirit does love, and does desire to express love. It is your flesh that is wrapped up in itself. Your flesh knows that when you begin to express love, you must become vulnerable and open to receive love. The flesh does not want to love like this, but the flesh is crucified and does not rule you. You are ruled by love.

This lesson is difficult for some because the last time they were vulnerable someone hurt them or took advantage of them. The soul now seeks to protect itself so this does not happen again. So it does not want to be vulnerable again, but without vulnerability you will not yield or desire to express love. You can go through many years of counselling, and seek to find ways to not be vulnerable, to not be open to love someone who has hurt you, to not have to forgive because of the pain that was caused to you, but after you have done your years of counselling you will eventually arrive at this conclusion, that to be free and to love again, you must forgive.

If the Lord is bringing someone's name to your mind, someone you have not yet forgiven, write that name(s) down here:

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Forgiveness is an accounting term used by banks. If you have a debt with the bank that you are not able to pay, they can forgive your debt and not force you to pay. The bank was hurt by you, and it could force you to pay back every cent. But when they forgive the debt, they take the loss themselves, showing you mercy. When God forgave you all your sin, He did not treat you as your sin deserved. He took the penalty on Himself, allowing Himself to be hurt deeply to save you as He crucified His only Son, pouring out His entire wrath on the One He most loved. God took the hit for us and did not force us to pay when we surrendered to Him in faith.

When you forgive someone, you write down the experience you had that hurt you. Be open and honest with God about how you feel. Experience the pain of that hurt and embrace it, knowing that God, in His sovereignty, allowed this experience, and is now working it out for your good and the good of all those who are called according to His purpose. Give your list over to God for Him to take on that debt for you. He is the bill collector. He knows how to collect His debts. You are not designed to collect debts. "Vengeance is Mine," says the Lord. You are designed to love. You are designed to forgive because you have been forgiven much.

You must become vulnerable. You must become open to be used by the Lord and say to yourself, "Even though I may be hurt again, I choose to love. I choose to walk in the freedom

He gave me, in the power He has given me to love all people, to love myself and to love Him. I choose to love. I choose to forgive."

PERSONAL REFLECTION: LOVE

Write Key 7 Love:

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_____

Take a moment to explain this key in your own words. What is important for you to remember?

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What did you learn about God in this key?

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How will you know if you are expressing love correctly?

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What is challenging your soul? No one needs to see what you write here unless you choose to show them, so feel free to be transparent with God. He loves you and He already knows you.

Revealing areas of weakness in our lives is meant to free us to truly love. We don't try to dig up weakness. God will reveal what He wants to reveal. There is no guilt or condemnation over us in Christ, just the opportunity to more fully express who we really are in Him as we grow and learn.

Write your thoughts here as you sit with God and His Word:

KEY 8 REIGN

We reign with Christ, declaring the gospel, as he advances the Kingdom of God in the entire world until His Father is fully glorified.

Jesus said, "But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."[245] The Christian life is all about His Kingdom, His will being carried out on earth as it is in Heaven. The Kingdom of God is the reign of God in the lives of His people for the glorification of His Name.

Christianity is not about us and our comfort, our healing, or our satisfaction, though we receive comfort, healing, and satisfaction. We are not really saved for ourselves. We are saved for His honour and glory, because He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords and He reigns over all, in all, and through all. He is taking over the physical reality we see with our eyes with the unseen reality of His Kingdom.

We don't give God permission to reign in us or in the lives of people around us. He does reign in us and He is working out His will, with or without our permission. He is God and we are not. We are His servants, slaves to His righteousness. He is sovereign over all events, over all circumstances, over all people, over every created thing, and He is reconciling all things back to Himself. We are in His control, not the other way around. Once we abide in that reality we live free and we enjoy Him, and we get to work with Him as He works in and through us.

We are ambassadors for the King of kings. The message is His, the glory is His, the design of our mission is His. God alone is our Saviour and He saved us and will save us completely that He may be glorified. We are not saved by our behaviours. We have been saved by His grace. Our behaviours reveal this salvation, the new heart, and our core identity as a saint.

In obedience to the command of Christ in Matthew 28:16-20, we go, proclaiming His message and making disciples along the way. We are messengers of this grace, the good news of His gospel. We do not water down the gospel to not offend someone. We do not change it because we do not like something God has said. We humbly accept His gospel as He revealed it. We grapple with it, we sit within it, and live within it. Through His gospel, God guides our lives. God reveals reality through this gospel, and this is the true reality for us as believers in Jesus Christ.

What is the gospel? People always say the gospel is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they are right to say that. But the gospel is more than this. The gospel message is the reign of God in and through people He redeems, *and*, because of what God did in and through the man Jesus Christ, human beings can be saved. This is the gospel of the Kingdom: God reigns through His chosen King. This King is Jesus.

The good news is that it's a righteous Kingdom. God's Kingdom is not oppressive, but freeing; it's not enslaving to death, but freeing to life. We can't come into this Kingdom without being completely righteous. In His grace, He makes people righteous in Christ the moment they surrender to the King.

The way to be made righteous is through the gospel. When the world does battle it wields a weapon against a person, shooting him or her, a living being, with a bullet and killing them.

[245] Matthew 6:33

When God does battle, He takes a spiritually dead being, and shoots them with the gospel message, and when they believe, He brings them from death to life. God conquers people, one by one, making them new and righteous, and transferring them into His Kingdom.

God reigns on this planet, in and through the hearts of people He has conquered through the love of the Son in His death and resurrection. He calls them to life, not based on works they have done, but based on the work of the Son. All those who repent and accept and believe in the Son can enter the Kingdom of God, and God will reign in their life and heart, impacting the world through them.

The Kingdom of God is a spiritual Kingdom. It's unseen. If you are in the Kingdom of God, everything is spiritual for you. There is no secular for you. There is no division between secular and spiritual in the Kingdom of God. You are a spiritual being, housed in a suit made for the earth. You are spirit. You live on the earth for a short time to accomplish the will of God, to the praise of His glory.

Everything you do is spiritual. Understanding this helps you know that everything which happens to you is spiritual. It's from this base we think and grow as Kingdom disciples. When you make money, it's spiritual. When you make a friend, it's spiritual. When you are on vacation, it's spiritual. When you are at home or on the street, it's spiritual. God is doing something wherever you are. Ask yourself the question, "Why did I choose this place?" and "What is God really doing here in this place or situation?"

Think of Jesus as He was getting water. He had a human physical need of thirst, but His thirst led to a spiritual encounter with the woman at the well. Again, as He was going on His way, He met a blind man on the road, and a physical walk turned into a spiritual encounter. Jesus' whole life was spiritual, wherever He went, whatever He did. He was being who He really was, a spiritual being housed in a suit made for earth. He never once let sin reign in His body, so there was no independence in Him, body, soul or spirit. He was perfect in all His ways. He never went independent of the Father. He walked in total faith, fulfilling the whole law and all that was spoken of Him through the prophets. Jesus perfectly fulfilled the will of His Father, speaking and doing only what the Father said to say and do.

Christianity is not about attending church. It's not about attending a building, or a group or gathering, but rather to say we have entered into something spiritual. Our whole life is spiritual in Christ. We are the church of the Living God. The church is not a building, but people who have been redeemed by God. So God calls us to be who we are. His children. We walk in the Spirit, being who we truly are as spiritual beings. Through His church God is reconciling all creation back into Himself. He is restoring all things and He lives in and through us to accomplish His will on this planet. He has given us, as His church, the keys to His Kingdom. We have the power to invite people to a fully functioning spiritual life with God. We also have the power to declare to those who do not receive the message of the gospel that eternal destruction waits for them on the other side of this earthly life.

We do not offer to anyone anything other than Christ. The answer for all human beings is Christ. The answer is not Christ plus attending a meeting, Christ plus Bible reading, Christ plus fellowship, Christ plus Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, Christ plus counselling. The answer is just Christ. Not Christ *plus* anything for our salvation or our life in Him. He is sufficient and He heals completely. He alone transforms us. He alone is Lord.

Are meetings helpful for us to grow? Of course they are. Is Bible reading helpful for us? Of course it is. It's vital for our growth. It's our food, and we grow in faith as we hear the word of God. Is fellowship helpful? Yes it is. We are told to continue to meet together, breaking bread and enjoying each other in the body of Christ, working together with the various gifts God has

given for His purposes on earth. Are AA meetings helpful? Yes, sometimes they are. Sometimes they prepare someone to know God and really hear the gospel. Is counselling helpful? Yes, it can be. What we are saying here is *not* that all these things are bad, but that they are not a requirement for our salvation or for an abundant walk with God.

What if God sent you to prison in China where you had no meetings, no Bibles, no fellowship, no AA meetings, and no counselling? Could you bring glory and honour to Him from prison? Yes, you could, along with many believers and pastors who already have, because you have Christ just as they do. You have the Holy Spirit inside and through you to instruct you and to teach you the ways of your God. You don't *need* the other things, though they are encouraging at times.

If God sent you to a deserted island like He did with the Apostle John, would you be able to bring glory and honour to God? John received revelation from God to speak to the early church from an island experience he had with God.

What if God asked you to stay in a marriage that was really challenging in every way possible? You knew that God was asking you to love accurately and not selfishly. Could you bring honour and glory to God in a marriage like that?

What if God asked you to love children who are rebelling against God and harming themselves and others? Would your life fall apart around you or could you stand firm and bring glory to God in the midst of these circumstances? Of course you could, because you have everything you need *right now* for life and godliness.

What if God allowed someone you loved dearly to suffer with a disease or to die, or to have a learning disability or be permanently disabled? Could you bring glory to God in the midst of these events also? Of course you could. You can do all things through Christ who gives you strength. You may not want to, at a soul level, but your spirit wants to live to God's glory no matter what the circumstances are because your spirit knows God is in control. You know in the core of who you are that God is good and He is working all things, whether seemingly good or bad, together for your good.

You are a spirit being. Do not let sin reign in your soul or your body. Be who you truly are. Walk in the Spirit and you will walk in the freedom you have in Christ. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

We need Christ. We do not need each other like we need Christ. Yet, we need each other also at times. We need the variety of gifts God gives to us as His church, and He works through the various gifts He gives. The emphasis is not on the gifts, but on the Giver of the gifts. We need Jesus. We need God. We can do nothing without Him.

THE SYMPHONY CALLED LIFE

What is the Kingdom of God like? Think of an orchestra where God is the composer and conductor. The song is His. Each instrument is essential. Each sound is vital to the whole symphony created by God. The conductor guides and trains each instrument, conducting the rising and falling of the sounds. Each part practices and grows to form a perfect union with the whole.

He is forming the perfect melody that rises into a symphony of praise to His Name. Even the rocks join the symphony. The stars sing His praises. His people reveal His splendour as they abide in Him. As we each play our part, watching and listening to the conductor, we mature and grow. Unity forms and beauty emerges to the praise and the glory of God.

All things are orchestrated by God in this great symphony of Life expressed in and through God's people, the church. The church of God is a beautiful expression of the greatness and majesty of God. The church is outward focused, not inward or self-focused. The church is outward focused because the internal work is done in Christ. Our work now is to believe Him and walk in His finished work.

The church is on mission with God, to see His Kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We usher in the Kingdom with every step we take, light taking over darkness. Truth spoken in love. God setting captives free. The church of God is an unstoppable force, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. We are people on mission with Almighty God, agents of His love and mercy to a lost and dying world.

The church seeks to influence and transform every system on earth, from the government and education systems to the business and financial systems. Each of these earth systems once touched by the church of the living Cod will be more just, compassionate, seeking the good of all. This may sound idealistic, but this mandate comes from God, so this mission is ever before the church to take dominion over all the earth.

DISCOVERING KEY 8 – REIGN

As you read, we hope you will discover the reality of the Kingdom of God and see what it means to live in the unseen realm, to live a life of faith, moving with God as He sets up His Kingdom. Sit a while in these verses. Don't rush through. Fully expect God to speak to you. He will reveal the mystery of His Kingdom to you.

As you study, thoughtfully ask yourself these questions. Write down the response of your heart, journaling your responses, so you can look, see, and understand what God is revealing to you.

L LIE: What LIE of the world or the evil one is being exposed by truth?

I INSIGHT: What INSIGHT is revealed about God and His ways?

F FAITH: What revealed truth strengthens my FAITH?

E EXAMPLE: What faith EXAMPLE is given for me to follow?

- ❒ Genesis 12 & 15
- ❒ Deuteronomy 10:12-22
- ❒ Psalms 2
- ❒ Isaiah 9:2-7
- ❒ Isaiah 11:1-10
- ❒ Ezekiel 33, 34 & 36
- ❒ Daniel 7
- ❒ Matthew 12:12-25
- ❒ Matthew 5 & 6
- ❒ Matthew 7:13-29
- ❒ Matthew 10
- ❒ Matthew 11
- ❒ Matthew 13
- ❒ Matthew 16:13-20
- ❒ Matthew 18:1-13
- ❒ Matthew 19: 13-15;23-30
- ❒ Matthew 20:1-16
- ❒ Matthew 23 & 24
- ❒ Matthew 28:16-20
- ❒ Luke 9:57-62
- ❒ Luke 11:14-23
- ❒ Luke 13
- ❒ Luke 21:5-38
- ❒ Romans 10
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 3:5-23
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 4
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 9:16-27
- ❒ 1 Corinthians 12
- ❒ 2 Corinthians 5:9-21
- ❒ Ephesians 4:1-16
- ❒ Philippians 2:5-11
- ❒ Revelation 1
- ❒ Revelation 19:11-16

GOING DEEPER: KEY 8 REIGN

We reign with Christ, declaring the gospel, as He advances the Kingdom of God in the entire world until His Father is fully glorified.

> *4"Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:4-6)*

Key 8 *Reign* centres on the reign of God in the lives of His people. God perfected a plan to redeem mankind from the hands of the enemy. God worked all the events of history together according to the council of His will for the fulfillment of this plan in Jesus Christ. God ushered in His Kingdom into the heart of His people. And we, as believers in Jesus Christ, are His people, living in the fulfillment to this plan.

God accomplished something astoundingly beautiful in Christ. He accomplished a mystery, which He revealed in the gospel, hidden throughout the ages and revealed in the fullness of time in Christ Jesus. Every stroke of the law and prophets was perfectly and precisely fulfilled in the life of Jesus, the God-Man who walked into the darkness of earth as the Light of the World. He ushered in the Kingdom of God.

When you think of the Kingdom of God, what do you think of? What is the Kingdom of God?

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The Kingdom of God is unseen. It is the spiritual reality in which we live as believers. We are seated in the heavenlies in Christ, in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is eternal; it is everlasting. The Kingdom of God is like a treasure we know we must sell everything to obtain. It will never diminish and it reigns over all. Christ is the King and He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He reigns over all and in all and through all. He sustains all things with His power.

Let's take a close look at the impassioned appeal Apostle Paul made to the believers of Corinth. His appeal gives us a close look at the reality of the Kingdom of God. As you read, ask yourself what is kingdom life like, according to what Paul has written here. What is the purpose of Kingdom disciples? Underline any parts that stand out to you. (2 Corinthians 2:14 to 2 Corinthians 6:10):

> *14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. 15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for*

these things? 17 For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? 2 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

7 But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. 10 For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. 11 For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. 12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech-- 13 unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. 14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. 15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. 16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-- 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you. 13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things

which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

12 For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. 13 For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. 14 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. 16 Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. 3 We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. 4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; 6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Paul is pleading with the Corinthian church to be who they truly are. The believers were behaving fleshly, like mere men. They were questioning Paul's right to correct them and speak to them as an apostle of Christ. Paul acknowledges a believers confident victory in Christ and the purpose as the church of the living God: being ministers of God who live to please Him, through whom He diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place, the gospel of our salvation, by which those who believe might be saved to the honour and glory of God. We are

ministers of reconciliation, not because of some merit on our own, but because of His grace alone. We were dead and now we are alive and He calls us to proclaim His mercy to the praise of His glory.

Paul declares this purpose, holding fast to it as an ambassador of Christ, through hardships, persecutions, beatings, imprisonments, and a whole list of challenging experiences. Because of all the challenges, Paul expresses he would rather be absent from his body, this earthly tent, and be present with the Lord, yet he knows that he must remain in his body for the sake of others and God's purposes on earth.

Paul's message, and the message of all the believers, was Christ. They did not preach themselves, or try to puff themselves up as if anything good originated from themselves. They knew that all things came from God and they were bondservants for the sake of Jesus Christ. The message was simply Christ and Him crucified.

In another part in Corinthians, Paul says he did not come with wise and persuasive words, but with the power of the gospel. He fully expected God to speak through Him with such powerful force that lives would be forever changed. He expected God to do what only God could do. Paul didn't receive this gospel through the revelation of men, but from the revelation of Jesus Christ. He took no credit for devising this message, but was a servant to the One who lived out this message, bringing all things together in Himself in the fullness of time.

Take a moment to reflect on this question: How does Paul's description compare with the common way "church" is played out in your area of the world? Is the activity of your local church comparable or very different than this description of the Kingdom life Paul describes to the Corinthian church?

Write out your thoughts here:

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We walk by faith and not by sight. Paul knows the Lord is with him even as he is present in his body, walking out life on this planet. He knows this walk requires faith alone. Sight cannot be relied on. Sight is deceiving. This walk is by faith, fully trusting in the unseen God to reveal His plan and purposes and to direct the steps of His disciples. But he also knew that someday he would be face to face with the Lord, actually present with Him, not absent like he was as he wrote this letter, and, in that day, faith will no longer be necessary, for he will see the Lord before him. Paul is in that place right now, in the great cloud of witnesses who surround us as believers.

Paul encouraged believers to not look at the things they see, but to look at the things they cannot see, because the things they see are passing away, but the unseen is eternal, lasting forever.

He exhorted the believers to live in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord, renouncing the shameful things of the flesh, but proclaiming the truth of the gospel to all in the sight of God. He challenged them to realize that they will stand before the Lord and have to explain, give an account, for the deeds they have done in their body, whether good or bad; whether deeds done by faith, walking in the spirit, or without faith, walking in the flesh.

GLORIOUS AND MORE GLORIOUS – SHADOWS AND TYPES

Paul compares the ministry of Moses to the ministry of Christ. The first is glorious, but the second is more glorious. From the first ministry, the ministry of Moses, a veil remains which covers the hearts of people, so they cannot see the Kingdom of God. From the second, the ministry of Christ, the veil is forever removed when a person surrenders their life to Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament is a shadow of the New Testament. Just as a shadow is the reflection of the real object, the Old Testament reflects Christ and the new creation. Moses was a shadow of what God would do in Christ. The Old Testament helps you see if your doctrine is right. If your New Testament doctrine doesn't match the shadow of the old, then you know your doctrine is off. The shadow must match the real thing.

> *1 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. 4 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."*
>
> *6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. 8 Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 9 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. 10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 11 "None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD, for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. 12 "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." 13 In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (Hebrews 8:1-13)*

What is Moses' ministry a shadow and type of? (v. 5)

_____

_____

Why is Jesus ministry "more excellent?" v.6 _____

_____

Why was a new covenant needed? v. 7 _____

_____

What is the covenant God will make with the house if Israel "in those days"? vv 8-12

_____

_____

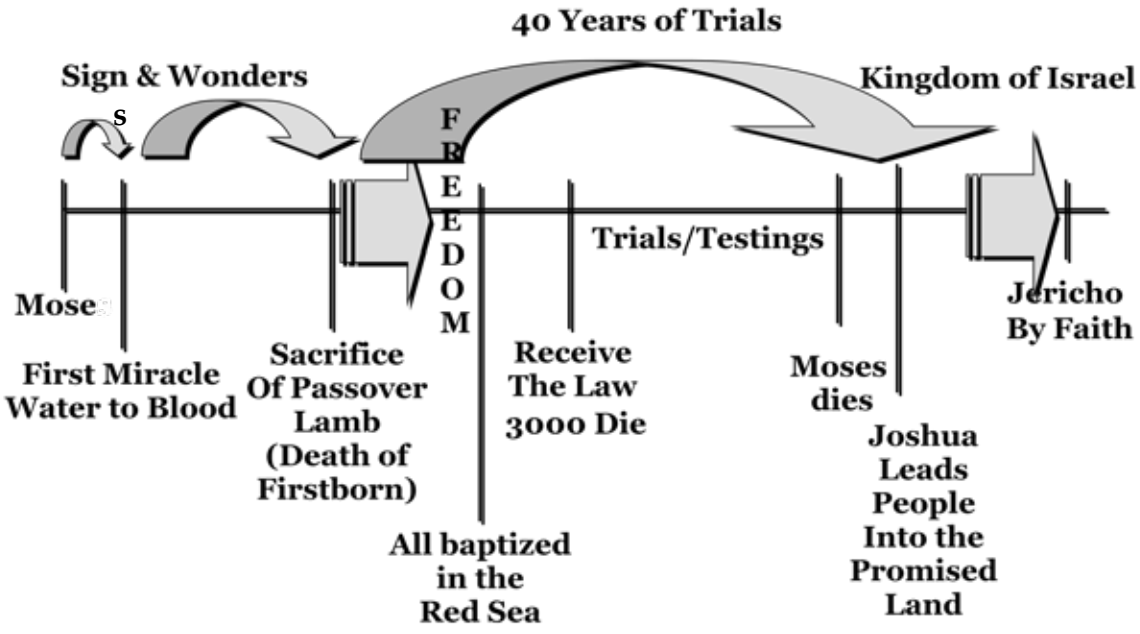
What will happen to the old covenant when the new covenant is in place? v. 13 _____

_____

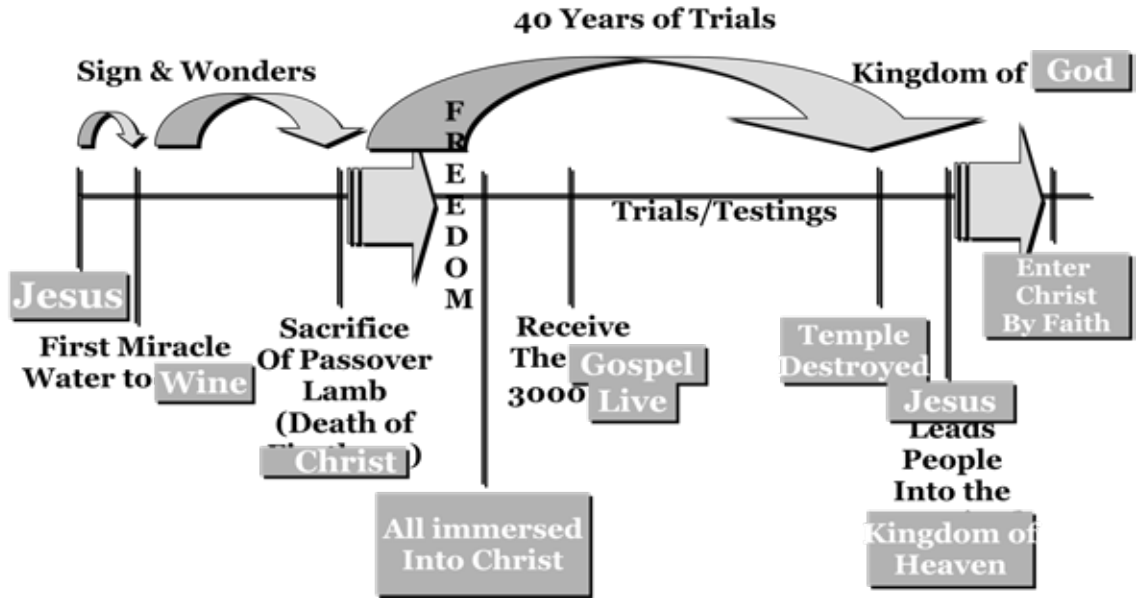
Let's take a moment here to look at a comparison of Moses' ministry to Christ's ministry in the charts below:

MOSES' MINISTRY AS AN OT SHADOW AND TYPE OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

God's people: Slaves of Pharaoh



God's people: Slaves of Satan



To understand when the Kingdom of God began, we must contrast these two ministries. The ministry of Moses was a shadow of the more glorious ministry of Christ. Let's take a closer look at this comparison in the following chart:

Ministry of Moses	Ministry of Christ
Slavery to Pharoah. The Israelites were slaves of Pharoah. Moses was sent to set God's people free. Moses had to walk in perfect obedience to God, doing only what God commanded.	**Slavery to the evil one.** The elect are slaves of the evil one. Jesus came to set them free to be in relationship with God as His holy nation.
Water to Blood. God does many signs and wonders as He sets people free. The first miracle He performed through Moses was turning water to blood. Blood was a symbol of death showing the justice of God and His wrath against Pharaoh for enslaving His people.	**Water to Wine.** The Sign of the Messiah was miracles, the dead raised, lame walking. The first miracle of Jesus was turning water to wine, a symbol of joy and life.
Saved by the Blood of Animals. The last miracle was the death of the first born of Egypt**.** Death came to all people, but because of the Passover Lamb, and the blood on the door frames of God's people's homes, death passed over His people and struck only the Egyptians.	**Saved by the Blood of Jesus.** Jesus was the "first born" of God, the sinless One, without stain or blemish. Jesus became the Passover Lamb, willingly sacrificing Himself, and through His blood, we are saved from the wrath of God, once for all. He is the final sacrifice. The Passover is a picture, or shadow, of the whole world, the unsaved and the saved. Death is coming to both, but those who are under the blood of Christ are saved.
Baptized into Red Sea. To enter this freedom, they must walk through the Red Sea. God is commanding the people to trust Him and to know Him.	**Baptized into Christ.** The Red Sea is a shadow of what the New Testament describes as being "baptised into Christ." When we are saved from slavery to sin, we are immersed into the death of Christ. The Old Man is crucified with Christ, and God makes us new.

Pharoah defeated. God saves the people from slavery to Pharaoh, the evil king, and destroys Pharaoh so that Pharaoh no longer has any active role in the lives of God's people through all the 40 years of trials and testing that follow**.**	**Evil One Defeated.** Pharaoh defeated is a picture of the evil one. He can no longer hurt a believer ever again. Throughout their history others oppressed them. So there are other systems the evil one uses, but he has lost his major power.
Leaving Egypt, Entering the Promised Land.	**Leaving Kingdom of the World, entering Kingdom of Heaven**. Living with God, walking in a holy relationship with God.
Given the Law. Broke the Law. The first experience Moses and the people have is receiving the law of God. On the 50th day, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. But Moses cannot even get off the mountain without breaking the law. He threw down the tablets in anger at the sight of the idol the people, including Moses' brother Aaron, made. 3000 people die in rebellion against Moses and God.	**Given grace because Christ fulfilled the law.** Peter preaches the gospel of grace instead of the law and 3000 people come to life. The 50th year in the OT was the year of Jubilee when all debts were cancelled in Israel. On the 50th day at Pentecost all debts are cancelled. God had paid the bill through the death of His Son
Moses Could Not Enter the Promised Land. Moses is representative of the law. So Moses, although he was still physically strong and had good eye sight at 120 years old, God told him to prepare himself to die. God let him see the promised land, but he would not enter. This is a picture that the law must remain behind. The person God used to lead His people into the promised land was Joshua. Joshua's Greek name is Jesus.	**No One Can Enter the Kingdom of God by the law**. The law cannot bring a person into the Kingdom of God. The law was a tutor to bring you to Christ. Only through Christ, can we enter into the Kingdom of God. We must enter into Christ. Christ is the Israel of God, the Seed of Abraham. In Him, we become the children of God, having been born again with an imperishable Seed.
40 Years of Trials and Testing. God leads the people to Kadesh Barnea where they would enter the promised land. They check out the land for 40 days and come back with the assessment that it's great, but too dangerous. Eight of the ten surveyors speak fear and unbelief into God's people. They refuse to go with God. God wasn't asking their opinion; He was showing them the land He was giving them as in inheritance. Two people spoke well of the land, and God	40 Years of Persecution. For 40 years, after Christ ascended, the church faced severe trials and testing, with persecution and death as they proclaimed the gospel. The Jewish system of law co-existed with the new creation until Rome invaded Jerusalem. The Christians were warned by God to leave Jerusalem when the city was surrounded by armies and to flee. The Jews remained and the final result was the fall of the temple, and the destruction of

honours them with life through the trials and testing for 40 years. All the rest of that generation die in the wilderness.	all Jewish documents in a fire that melted the gold of the temple right in among the stones. The Romans overturned all the stones to get the gold and fulfilled the word of Jesus. Matthew 24:2. With the temple destroyed by the Romans, the Old Covenant was made obsolete. God would no longer receive animal sacrifice to cover over sin. Now God would only accept those who come to His Son, the final sacrifice for sin. At the Name of Jesus every knee will bow. He is the King and His Kingdom is now reigning on the earth to the glory of God the Father.
Enter Promised Land by Faith. The priests step into the water and God pushes the Jordan River back to the city of Adam. They leave memorial stones to remember where they came from.	**Enter Into Christ by faith.** Jesus is Israel and the people must enter into Him. They enter by faith in the Son. All our sins are pushed back to the original intent of the garden of Eden before Adam sinned.
Physical Circumcision. All the men and boys to be circumcised on the hill of foreskins.	**Spiritual Circumcision.** Then God circumcises us with a circumcision made without hands, the circumcision of the heart, cutting away our new heart and spirit from the flesh. Just as the foreskins were thrown away on the hill of foreskins, the flesh was crucified through the death of Christ, and all sin is removed as far as the east is from the west. God made for Himself a new people whom He made holy and righteous and sealed in Himself. Now His people know Him and He knows them; He has an intimate relationship with each one of His children.
The Battle is the Lord's. Jericho falls by faith in God alone.	**The Battle is the Lord's.** The just, those God made righteous in Christ, shall live by faith, just as Joshua was called to conquer great walled cities by faith alone, not by the might of man.

In the sovereignty and forethought of God, He led the children of Israel in a precise journey which was a shadow of what God would do in Christ. God's precision was amazing. Through Christ, God ushered in the new covenant, as He destroyed the temple in Jerusalem through His chosen instrument, the Roman army. God was fulfilling the promise He made to Abraham while Abraham was sleeping.

In the New Covenant, we don't need to teach you to accept Christ; either you know Him or you do not. When you enter into Christ, being buried in baptism and raised to new life, you come into an intimate, knowing relationship with God. He knows you and you know Him. You are now His child. This relationship is sealed by Him and He will complete what He started inside of you.

In new Israel everyone will know God. They will be intimate with the Lord or they are not in the new Israel. God's children love Him, if they are truly His. A person cannot fake a relationship with God. Christianity is the only "religion" where you must have an encounter with the Founder, with Christ Himself. Without that encounter, you are not His. You must be born again to enter the Kingdom of God. You receive a new identity.

Jesus said to those who come doing religious activity, even miracles in His Name, that He doesn't know them. Jesus is saying something like this: "I'm not intimate with you. I don't know you. I have not joined Myself to you. I am not in those works which are independent of Me, so these works are lawless deeds, filthiness to Me." Deeds done from self or flesh are outside of the law of Christ, which is the law of love.

God's people know Him. Knowing means they are intimately joined with Him. As we saw in an earlier chapter, knowing, in the Bible, comes from the same word used for "Adam knew His wife and they conceived." It's a joining together, uniting together. With God, it is not a "sexual" or physical joining but a spiritual joining where we are One with our Creator, never to be disconnected again. It is very much like a baby inside a womb. We abide in Him and He in us; apart from Him we can do nothing of eternal significance.

As the New Covenant was ushered in, the Old Covenant became obsolete. In the Old Covenant God was going to have a relationship with a people group called Israel based on the way He had structured it in the OT which was based on works of faith by the sign of circumcision, and on a lamb being slain.

In the New Testament, we still have works, circumcision and a Lamb being slain, but all these are found in God's Son, Jesus Christ. The work for our salvation was His. The Circumcision He performs gives us a new heart and spirit. The death of the Lamb is His death. He is the Lamb of God. He is also our Sabbath rest of God because through Him and in Him all the work for our salvation is finished. He is the Promised Land. We enter into Him. He is Israel, and we have entered into Israel. We are the true Israelites, the New Israel.[246]

We enter into the Land by faith. God's principles have never changed. If you want to enter into the Promised Land, you enter by faith. All those who do not believe in Jesus cannot enter Israel, the chosen one of God. In the time of Moses, the Israelites spent 40 years wandering around, going to funerals, with really no purpose to their life. God was waiting for them to all die off so He could bring their children to the Promised Land.

This can happen today in the church where people refuse to walk by faith and, yes, they may be children of God, having entered into Christ through faith, but they refuse to walk through this life with the same faith. The just shall live by faith: from faith to faith to faith. Some believers become comfortable, seeking their own security in physical things and their life becomes very much a waste of time waiting to die. They have never learned to walk by faith in a deep and powerful way. There are very few Joshuas and Calebs in the spiritual realm of God, people who walk by faith in God and experience the excitement of conquering and reigning with Him. It's important you become one.

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[246] Romans 9:6,7

Are you willing to walk by faith in God? _____

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Is there anything that hinders you from fully walking by faith? Describe any hindrances you sense in your life.

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What do you think Jesus meant when He said: "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" (Luke 9:24)?

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Our soul does not want to take the step of faith. It wants safety and comfort. As we press through our comfort zone we experience fear. As we press through that fear, we enter into faith. Joshua had fear when he stood beside the Jordan River that morning long ago. God spoke to Him, saying, "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."[247] God wanted Joshua to trust in Him. He was with him. He would conquer the enemies that lay ahead. He would fight the battles and lead the way. He did not leave Joshua alone, and He does not leave us alone. We can never be separate from Him again. We have entered into Him. We know Him and He knows us. The God of the universe has joined Himself into us permanently. We exist in Him. In Christ, we have entered into the Sabbath rest of God.

> *"For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His." (Hebrews 4:8-10)*

According to this passage, why did God speak of another day to enter the rest of God?

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_____

Though Joshua was leading the people into the Promised Land, God still spoke of another day because this was still not the Sabbath that the Lord was talking about (v.9). In the true Sabbath, we would enter into our Sabbath and cease from all our works, as God also did in the creation of the world. "Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to

[247] Joshua 1:9

them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: 'So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,' although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. " [248]

Who enters the rest of God? _____

Why should we fear? _____

How can we come short of entering the Sabbath Rest of God? _____

_____

Those who believe the gospel enter the Sabbath rest of God and they cease from their labour of trying do something to be saved. We cannot fake this salvation. If you are not sure that you belong to God, then settle that issue once for all. Re-read Keys 2 and 3. Make sure you are His, that you are known by God. Once you are saved, you are saved. Nothing will undo this salvation. It is not based on your behaviour. It's a gift of God, based on His grace alone. When we are saved, we enter into the completed work of Christ. The work for our salvation is finished and God will now deliver us to Himself having sealed us with His Spirit guaranteeing our inheritance as His saints.

THE DIVIDING WALL FELL

There is now no distinction between people on the earth. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."[249] God is restoring what He broke apart in Genesis 11:1-7. The people of the earth built a tower to try to make it to heaven in their own efforts and work of unity. God comes down to confuse the language and they stop building the tower. In the book of Acts, God brought all the nations to Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost to see the outpouring of His Spirit, fulfilling the prophecy God spoke through the prophet Joel:

> *14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. 15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 "'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. 21 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." (Acts 2:14-21)*

[248] *Hebrews 4:1-3*
[249] Romans 10:11-13

With the outpouring of His Spirit, God takes all the languages, which were separated at Babel, bringing all the dialects together in Christ. The people are amazed because they heard the disciples speak in the languages of the people in the crowd, knowing the disciples were uneducated men. The Greek word used for "tongues" in Acts 2 is the word "dialect." The people all heard the disciples speak to them in the many dialects represented in the crowd.

The tower of Babel was a shadow of Christ. Christ is the Tower we need to make it into heaven. We cannot make it in by our effort. We make it in because of His effort. His work. We enter into the finished work of Christ, resting fully from any work to improve ourselves or prepare ourselves for God.

In Christ, God is fulfilling the promise to Abraham that he would become the father of all nations, to the Jew and the Gentile, the circumcised and the uncircumcised, breaking down the dividing wall and forming a new nation from the two: The new Israel as people said, we are a holy nation unto God.[250] As Peter preached the gospel, 3000 people came to life.

> *11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands — 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.*

Jesus abolished, in His flesh, the enmity, the dividing wall of ordinances, the order of the covenant people. The Jews were covenant people. The Gentiles were non-covenant people. Abraham was the father of both the Jews, the circumcised, and the Gentiles, the uncircumcised, because he believed God while still uncircumcised. In Christ, it is not circumcision or uncircumcision that mattered. What mattered was obedience to God.[251] Humans were unable to perfectly obey God, to fulfill the law. So Christ fulfilled the law and we, by the grace of God, enter into the fulfillment. The law is fulfilled in us, His chosen people, and circumcision is now that of the heart, not of the body.[252] God made us righteous and gave us everything we need to live a godly life on this planet. The work within us is done, so He commands us to go and make disciples – to be on mission with God as He conquers the dark kingdom and sets captives free to the praise of His glory.

Like Joshua, we walk by faith with God who sees and who reveals to us, so we know which way to go. God told Joshua to conquer Jericho, but the *how* was left to God. Joshua just needed to obey and trust that God was who He said He was. Joshua had to walk by faith to see this victory take place. We also have to walk by faith, not by sight. The battle and the victory belong to the Lord.

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[250] Ephesians 2:11-18

[251] 1 Corinthians 7:19

[252] Romans 2:28,29; 8:4

As people surrender and receive the grace of God, thanksgiving abounds to the glory of God. God is glorified in and through each life He transforms. He will be glorified through it all, working all things together for His purposes. He will glorify Himself no matter what we do, yet He wants us to walk righteously and be His witnesses on the earth, living out a Kingdom life. He will glorify Himself even if we resist Him, even if we disobey Him. Pharaoh glorified God, even in his demise. All things work together for His glory. But God is pleased by our faith. He wants to work with us. He enjoys us.

Apostle Paul wanted to live in such a manner to please God. He went all out in faith, walking with His King into great trials and persecutions. He walked by faith, believing God and proclaiming the gospel, not claiming he knew anything except Christ and Him crucified. He stuck to the simplicity of the doctrine and encouraged others to do the same. He said to the Galatian church that anyone who changed the message should be cursed. He challenged Timothy, his disciple, to hold fast to the teaching, guarding the doctrine of the church.

We have endless messages in the Scripture warning to beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, beware of teaching that counters the truth of God's word. Our role as ambassadors in Christ is not to come up with something new, but to spread the message that originates from God, not to change it, not to come up with something better, but to know that there is nothing better than what God laid out for us to say. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, no matter who they are. God is jealous about His message; it cost the life of His beloved Son.

God is fulfilling the promise He made to His servant Abraham while Abraham was sleeping, the covenant God made with Himself, as He passed through the blood of the carcass Abraham cut in half. He promised that through Abraham's Seed, who is Christ, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. We are living within the fulfillment of that promise.

The whole Bible unveils this plan from beginning to end. It points to the reign of the Son and the fulfillment of all things. From the promise given to Abraham, to the law given to Moses, to the declarations given through the prophets, God prepared the way for the coming of His Son. In the fullness of time, God sent His Son, born of a virgin, living a sinless life on earth, perfectly fulfilling the law of Moses and all the prophets, paying the price of ransom with His own blood to redeem the captives and set them free from the power of sin and death.

God is creating for Himself a new humanity, a holy people who belong to Him, who surrendered to Him from the heart, and whom He made new and righteous. His Name will be hallowed from within us, the new creation in Christ. He fulfilled His promise within us and nothing can remove what He has done. His salvation is received by faith alone.

Now He reigns in our hearts through His Spirit and is working out His will in the world. We get to walk with Him proclaiming the goodness and the mercy and grace of the God who saved us. We are living epistles, letters, written on by God Himself.

REVISITING TWO KINGDOMS

The kingdom of the world and the Kingdom of God co-exist together, the physical, visible world with the spiritual, invisible world. One is taking over the other, the invisible impacting and transforming the visible world. God is actively working out His righteous will in the unseen realm, impacting the world that we see one life at a time. He conveys people out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of His Son. Life by life He transforms. He tells us to fix our eyes on the unseen things because the seen will not last. The seen is temporary, but the unseen is eternal and will last forever.

He says, "Seek first My Kingdom and My righteousness." Don't seek the things of this world which will perish with the using. Seek God and accumulate treasure in heaven by abiding in Him and working with Him as He sets up His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. God's Kingdom is advancing across the planet through His called out ones, His saints, as we proclaim His message in love. God stores up treasure of His work through His saints, and He says "Well done, good and faithful servant. You did the will of God by faith."

We were born through our physical birth into the kingdom of the world where we were held captive by the evil one to do his will. He blinded our eyes so we could not see true Reality, the reality of the Kingdom of God. The evil one, through deception, kept us in a prison we could not see, a prison made for our mind. As children of Adam's seed, we believed reality was only what we could see and physically experience. We sought meaning and pleasure, but found only emptiness and futility. We were unaware that God was working in the unseen realm around us, shaping our destinies, moving governments and events by His power, that nothing could halt His advance.

God reached into the darkness, sought us out, and called us by name. As we surrendered to Jesus, God gave us life through His Son and conveyed us into His Kingdom. God placed His Spirit within us and now works in us to will and do for His good pleasure. He is King over our lives and He reigns in and through us. We are His possession, yet He is a good and righteous King. He always leads us in love.

He gave us a new heart that beats only for Him. He made our blind eyes see, and enabled our deaf ears to hear. Now, through His Spirit, we can comprehend the unseen reality of the Kingdom of God as He reveals Himself to us through His word.

We are no longer citizens of earth, though our bodies still dwell on earth for a time. Our true citizenship is in the unseen realm of heaven. Heaven is not a place we go to, it's the spiritual realm in which we live, and it is where we are right now. Heaven is the eternal reality of the Kingdom of God. Heaven is within you, and all around you. It is the invisible reality of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said, "And this is eternal life, that they may know you and the Son whom you sent."[253] Eternal life is knowing God through His Son Jesus Christ. We exist in eternal life right now as believers; our spirit is seated in the spiritual realm in Christ Jesus. Our job is to fix our minds on the unseen things of God. To perceive the unseen, we walk by faith in the invisible God in Whom we dwell and Who dwells within us. We listen to Him as He teaches us and counsels us, directing us in His path as He works out His will. While we walk on this planet, we walk by faith and not by sight. When we leave our bodies behind, the journey of faith will end, for the unseen will then be seen. We will see Him face to face.

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Believer, you are seated in the spiritual realm in Christ Jesus. This is the true reality of your existence. The things you see no longer should define reality for you as a child of God. The real reality is the unseen realm where you are seated in Christ. God is working in the unseen realm, working every event together for the good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. You no longer know how to interpret physical events in your life through your sight and senses; you now must look to God who reveals all that you need to know.

EVIDENCE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

> *4Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: 5"The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me." (Matthew 11:4-6)*

When John the Baptist was in prison, he sent his disciples to question Jesus to confirm if He was indeed the One sent by God. **What evidence did Jesus give that the Kingdom was advancing, according to Matthew 11:4-6?**

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The Kingdom of God is evident when the invisible reality of God impacts the physical world we see. The Kingdom of God is a powerful force that transcends the laws of physical nature: the lame walk, the blind see, the dead are raised. Impossible things begin to happen. Miraculous things begin to happen. The miraculous becomes the norm of life, reliance on God to bring us through and to do His will, when there is no other possible way. Kingdom people rely on God above and beyond any world system or any person.

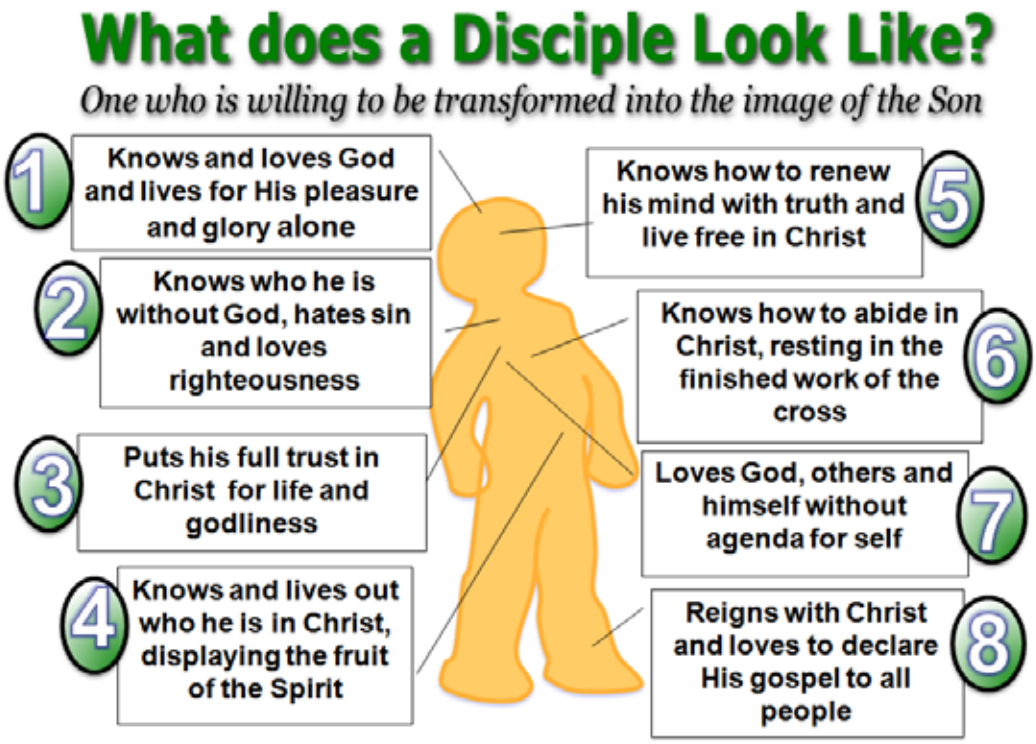
"Then Jesus cried out to the crowd: "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."[254] The Kingdom of heaven is forcefully advancing, from the time John began his ministry, calling people to repent for the Kingdom of heaven is near. With the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, the Kingdom of God reigned in and through the lives of God's people. The sacrificial system of the law was destroyed when the Jewish temple fell. Now every knee must bow before the throne of Jesus, acknowledging that He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is Master and we are His bondservant, alive to do His will alone. He is our King and we are His subjects. We have no will but His will.

When the Word of God became flesh, the King of God's Kingdom was revealed to the physical realm of this world. Jesus, God's Son, was ushering in the Kingdom, revealing who the Father really was. The violent take it by force, or another way to say this would be: those who have been powerfully impacted by the King, now bring the Kingdom with impact in the physical world. These are Kingdom disciples.

[254] Matthew 11:12

WHAT DOES A KINGDOM DISCIPLE LOOK LIKE?

Kingdom disciples have surrendered to the King and have no more agenda than to take over the physical world with love, to bring all things into subjection to Father God. We see Kingdom disciples live this out throughout scripture. The Apostle Peter leaves his nets. Zaccheus pays back all he owes. Paul gives up everything he was, his status as a Pharisee, and lives only to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, no matter the cost, no matter the pain, no matter the sacrifice. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. The force of the gospel is love, God's love pouring through His redeemed ones, His holy, chosen people, transformed by the power of God.

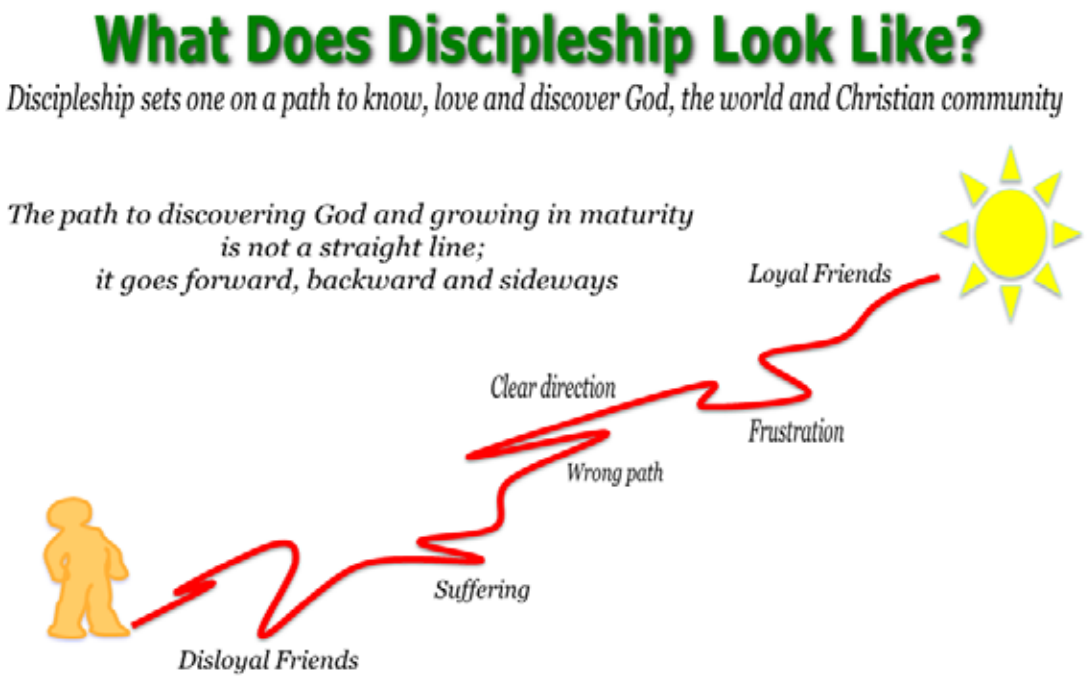


Kingdom disciples are willing to be transformed into the image of the Son. They desire to look like Jesus, in behaviour, attitude, and heart. They know and love God. They understand who they were apart from God and develop a healthy fear of God and a hatred for sin. They love righteousness. They will be quick to say they have put their full trust in Christ and believe He has given them all things for life and godliness. They know who they are in Christ and display the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. They know how to take thoughts captive into obedience to Christ and how to abide in Him. They love God, others and themselves without an agenda for self. They love the scriptures and talking with the Lord. The Kingdom disciple is one who desires to declare the gospel to all who are lost, so they too can have a love relationship with God.

Kingdom disciples do not attach themselves to the world's goods in an unhealthy way. They love to give resources away to see the spiritual Kingdom come on the earth. They know

they are merely stewards of God's resources and His resources are unlimited and poured out on His people who abide in Him, moving according to His will alone. God's people are known for their generous hearts.

They are people who work together with other believers, not thinking of denomination, male or female, black or white. They look to hear and see if a person loves Christ and calls Him Lord. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one truth and one Mind, the Mind of Christ. Kingdom disciples begin to sound alike in the words they say. Denomination doesn't matter. There are no denominations to God, just His will and His glory carried out on earth. There are not thousands of human categories, either. Fundamentally, there are only two categories of people, the spiritually dead and the spiritually alive. He brings those to life who respond to His call and enables them to grow as disciples and to see the reign of Father God in and through their lives.



Kingdom disciples are people who submit themselves to the scriptures, the Holy Spirit and to the spiritual children of God. There is no law over them for they are compelled from within. Kingdom disciples have a passion for God, intensity, a calling, a joy, a love, a peace, and a message that transforms.

Although the former paragraph is the ideal of a disciple, to actually become one in purpose with God that all can see is not simply a straight line forward. A disciple is set on a path to know, love and discover God, and to work with Him. A disciple also discovers the world and the Christian community, and how each one brings him into alignment on the path to know God. So the discovery of God is going forward, backwards and sideways and is not just a linear line to maturity, as we see in the chart above.

Along this path a Christian will be met by suffering, disloyal friends, unclear and clear direction, wrong paths, errors, sins and mistakes, frustration, good times and bad times. But in

the end he or she will be delivered to the Father as close to the image of God that the Spirit chooses to deliver him or her. So God commands us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith. We fix our eyes on Him, not on the events and circumstances of our lives. We seek to know Him. Love Him. Obey Him. Walk with Him. Believe Him. He works the rest together for His glory. He directs our path. He counsels us and watches over us. He gives us understanding. He gives us words to speak. He arranges encounters so we can speak His gospel and see Him transform a human life. He is in charge, and we are not. He will not compromise. He will not pity us. He expects us to follow Him. As we follow, we believe, we transform, we abide, we love, and we reign, and we learn and grow into the image of the One who called us from darkness into His marvellous light. We are His disciples and He is our Teacher, our Guide, our Lover, our Friend and our Master. Don't be weary in well-doing for in due time you will reap what you sow.

Kingdom disciples think differently as they reign with Christ. Their agenda is to be loyal to Christ. The goal is not to grow a church. The goal is to influence or be a light to the whole earth. The people, who are the church, now reign and are children of light. They bring light to the earth just by being who they really are. They are not hidden under a bushel. They bring glory to God. Each one is a preacher, a herald of the good news. Each one is blessed, as the scripture says, blessed are the feet of him who bring good news, whose feet are shod with the gospel of preparation.

Kingdom disciples focus on God's Kingdom and His mission. They reject the systems of the world if they speak contrary to the word of their Father. To them, they love God and His will, and people will always be secondary to God, even their father and mother, sister and brother and even their own life. They become people who are radical, passionate, faith driven because this is normal for a person who is in love with God. Others may see them as peculiar, strange, or even insane sometimes. But this is what faith looks like, laying themselves totally on the altar of God's will. Why do others see a Christian as insane? Is it because they may give all their money away, quit their high paying jobs to go as missionaries and other decision the world may not understand.

As we walk with our King, we realize that people do not always have the will of God in mind. So we are careful who we listen to and check to see if their words line up with the words of God. We check for love, the primary indication of Kingdom activity. God never acts outside of love. He also never speaks contrary to the truth He revealed in His word.

Kingdom disciples begin to see supernatural activity happen around them. Transformation becomes normal. Evidence of Kingdom activity may be lame men walking, the blind seeing, the dead being raised, and the gospel being preached to the poor. It may be the lost being saved, ministries being formed which influence whole communities, angry people becoming people who love, or enemies becoming friends.

In a Kingdom disciple's mind, anything less than world transformation is unacceptable. If they are in their community, they want to see God's glory come. If they are in the church setting, they want to see God's glory come. If they are on vacation, they want to see God's glory come. Wherever they are, they learn to be who they truly are. They don't change based on their locale. They rest and live in close communion with their God, embracing all He allows into their lives as His will, knowing He is working things together that they could never fully comprehend. He is a good God, full of mercy and abounding in lovingkindness. They seek to know Him, magnify Him, and walk by faith in Him alone.

They are moved by God to begin ministries and do activities that they see as God honouring, in the same way they are open to shut down ministries that they see have served

their purpose and are no longer being moved by God. They do not fall in love with the ministry. They fall in love with the God who is using them to do the ministry. They are open to change quickly because they have a desire to stay in step with their Lord.

They see the church body as a living, breathing organism that transforms all she touches. They know this makes people uncomfortable, but they do it anyway. These Kingdom people are called faith walkers for without faith it is impossible to please God. This is why they become comfortable with being uncomfortable because their faith is stretched and must grow so they can continue to walk with Him. They know the faith they had last year will not be enough to walk with God this year. They understand the power of the scripture, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Kingdom disciples walk with God, eating His word, learning from Him and growing through experiences He brings.

Kingdom disciples are not scared or frightened to make errors, to fail or experience losses, for these are not sinful. These experiences are called learning, and they desire to learn and grow. Where others are playing it safe, Kingdom disciples seem to be on the edge. They perceive things differently than the rest of the world. An event is just an event to a disciple of Christ because they trust the sovereignty of God, who is all powerful, all knowing and ever present. Even when tragedy comes, they see it as just an event, because they know God loves them and is working out His will for the good to all those who are called according to His purpose. They assume that good will come out of it, in it and through it. So, they say, like Job, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be His Name." [255]

The spiritual leaders in the Kingdom do not need to know everything that has happened or how to make things work. They do not always have the answers, but they are open to say, "I do not know". They know God knows, so they walk with Him wherever He leads, saying, "Lord, we will follow". This type of faith scares people who have little faith, but a great church must be led by people of faith. It is impossible to have a great church with spare time and pocket change, and a half-hearted commitment. The church is God's change-agent in the world, a powerful force, ushering in His Kingdom with every step we take!

Understanding solid doctrine is central to being a Kingdom disciple. If we do not really know or believe God as He has revealed Himself in scripture, and we do not know what He did in Jesus Christ to set us free from sin, if we do not know who we really are in Christ with the power of God Himself flowing in and through us, we will live like an ordinary humans oblivious of our true identity as children of the King of kings.

For the Kingdom disciple, the supernatural becomes normal and expected. Kingdom disciples are used to working in the impossible because they are used to having a need for God. All through history, God moved His people into impossible situations, and then reveals Himself in new and fresh ways. Abraham is told he will have a child, but God waits until Sarah's womb is dried up. Moses is told to lead God's people out of Egypt, and when he finally does, God leads him and all His people to a dead end at the Red Sea. Joshua is told to take Jericho, a city whose walls reach the heavens, and to do it by walking around the walls for seven days. God is pleased when His saints believe Him and look for His deliverance, so God allows situations that force us to believe, forcing us to walk by faith.

We know this can cause conflict. Sarah didn't believe God would come through and found her own solution to the problem of an heir, even though it meant her husband must sleep with the maid. The people in Israel grumbled and complained against Moses, doubted his leadership ability, and wished they had remained in Egypt. They attacked Moses' leadership

[255] Job 1:21

and God defended Moses, His chosen leader, through whom God would set His people free. Joshua walked by faith and saw Jericho fall to the glory of God, and then got the brilliant idea to go and try to conquer the next nation by himself. Many people died that day. Joshua learned a powerful, and very painful, lesson that he could do all things with God's strength, but nothing apart from God.

A Kingdom disciple understands that if someone is not angry with them they are probably playing it safe, for history shows that whenever God is at work, the world hates His servants. Kingdom disciples have learned to love problems and challenges for they know that all miracles start with them. They know they must live the Kingdom dream first before it can be preached to another. They know they will be rejected by the world and other believers who want to stay comfortable in their disobedience to follow Christ by faith.

Kingdom Disciples

...Seek to be fully alive with God

...Walk by faith, looking to the unseen

...Speak the truth in love

...Expect God to resource His work

...Take their orders from God

...Expect Persecution

...Love

...Deny the flesh

...Pick up their cross and follow God

MAKING IT PERSONAL

If you desire to be a spiritually passionate follower of Jesus Christ or desire to have a spiritually passionate church, we have one saying, "Stick a thermometer in your own mouth." Check your temperature for God, because you are a member of His church.

THERMOMETER CHECK:

Do you love God with your whole heart? Where are you at in your relationship with God? Are you hot or are you lukewarm? Are you seeing transformation happen through your life that is explainable only by God working in and through you? How are you doing? Be transparent. Take an honest look at where you are at and where you want to be, who you want to be.

How are you doing? Write your thoughts here:

_____

_____

We are assuming you want to grow, especially since you have read this far in the book. If you don't want to grow and be pushed out of your comfort zone to really walk with God, then close this book right now and just continue as you have been. You can have comfort and a non-impacting life if you want. Your soul wants this type of life. Faith scares your soul. But faith does not scare *you*! If you want to grow, read on!

If you want to truly live in the abundant life with God, in a faith-filled, challenging adventure with your awesome and Holy God, deny the soul its reign and begin to do things with God even if they scare you. Seek to truly live as a Kingdom disciple.

Kingdom disciples seek to be fully alive with God, for they know that anything that isn't growing is called dead. They want to grow. They are designed to grow.

They walk by faith, expecting God to fully resource His work. They begin to do things even though they are not fully organized, or fully ready, or fully funded, or have all the people to help, for they know that anything worthwhile doing is worth doing poorly, at first. They expect that God will train them, send the funds, and bring the people from the harvest, and the wisdom to do the tasks, but they must first step out in faith.

Kingdom disciples speak truth in love to set others free. They distinguish between flesh and spirit. They assume when a Christian is speaking to them their core heart speaks the same as Christ. Anything contrary to this is flesh speaking. If a person says they love God, they must love their brother also. If what a Christian says lines up with self and not truth, flesh is speaking and the person may not even be aware. Understanding the truth will set them free to truly live. This is the role of a Kingdom disciple.

Kingdom disciples take their orders from God and His word, walking with Him by faith, even if close friends, church members or others do not agree or are afraid to follow. They expect persecution from others, yet they will love God more than any person or system on earth.

Such people are quick to take their assignments seriously, no matter if it is to lead or to follow. They refuse to stand in the way of either. They are not frightened to not know the "how" in ministry. They desire to know the "what", the mission, and they desire to know the "why", which is the motive. When the mission and motive come in line they begin. God works out the "how."

If they get a desire in their heart to start a ministry to drug addicts, for instance, they check their motive and ask themselves why they want to start it. If the answer lines up with God's glory being the reason and goal, they begin, trusting that God will reveal the how. They trust they desire this ministry because God is causing the desire and moving them to work with Him in this way. The "how" they expect to be revealed as the Father reveals things to His children.

Kingdom disciples understand they cannot see with their physical eyes or hear with their physical ears from the physical reality in front of them, and get the right perspective. They live in an unseen world where true reality dwells. They look to God who sees all things and is working all things together, and they rest their full confidence in Him alone to guide and work out His work on the earth. They plan, but they expect God will reign and re-direct their plans into His plan.

Kingdom disciples will love you. If you come around them, you will be loved whether you want to or not, for they love all people, including their enemies and those who speak evil of them for righteousness sake. They are not controlled by man, they are controlled by their King, Jesus Christ, and He says they must love with the love He provides.

They are willing to die for their God, willing to deny themselves, their families, and everything that comes against the glory of God. They pick up their cross and follow Him, into suffering, into conflict, and possibly into death. Why? Because they have been transformed by the living God. They know that they know that they know the gospel is true. They see the evidence of the unseen God breaking through their lives, their families, their workplace, and the streets on which they walk. They see God transforming people through them as they love and proclaim His gospel. They are not trying to bring about change but love, but wherever love reigns change happens. They know the Kingdom of God has come and with each step and each

word, they walk with God, working with Him in proclaiming His message and loving the people He is speaking to.

As people surrender to Christ, the Kingdom disciples walk with them, saying, "Just love God with abandon. Know Him. Enjoy Him. Eat His word, for it is your food, and go with Him into the world and set it free. Say what He says for you to say, go where He compels you to go. Make disciples. Love people with the love He pours through you. It won't be hard. If it feels hard, you are thinking it depends on you and your abilities. It does not. It depends on God, not you. It's His work, so rest in Him and enjoy Him. Walk with your King. He loves you. He is working all events together for your good. You are safe in Him. He delights in you." This is discipleship.

When God impacts people's lives, they will never be the same again. Like a rubber band that has been stretched, they will never go back to their original form. Now their thinking focuses on eternity, to God's will, to His Kingdom, and their lives are filled with passion and meaning as they live out the life they were created to live.

The evidence of this encounter with God is transformed lives. What Jesus did in the physical He also does in the spiritual realm. The spiritually blind see. The spiritually lame walk. The spiritual lepers are cleansed. The spiritually deaf hear. The spiritually dead are raised, and the gospel is preached to the spiritually poor. God is conquering the kingdom of darkness, one person at a time across the planet. He does it in the physical and in the spiritual world.

THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

God has given us the keys to His Kingdom in the gospel.

> *15He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"16Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."17Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.18"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.19"And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:15-19)*

What is the rock on which God will build His church? _____

What will the church prevail against? _____

What does Jesus give to the church? _____

For what purpose does He give the keys of the Kingdom of heaven to the church?

_____

_____

> *I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forever more. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. (Revelation 1:18)*

How long will Jesus be alive? _____

What does He have the keys to? _____

Before we talk about these verses, take a look at one more:

> *16Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them.17When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.18And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.19Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,20teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen." (Matthew 28:16-20)*

What did the eleven disciples do when they saw Jesus after His resurrection? _____

_____

What was given to Jesus? (v. 18) _____

_____

Because this authority was given to Jesus, what did He tell the disciples to do? _____

_____

_____

How did He know they would succeed? (v. 20)_____

Jesus reigns over all. He has been given authority over heaven and earth. God has given us, as His church, the keys to the Kingdom of God. We have the power to say who will go to heaven and who will go to hell, according to the word of God. God works in and through His redeemed ones to proclaim His good news to those still captive in darkness. We are His ambassadors. As we walk by faith, we learn to speak. We are no longer our own. We have no will now but the will of God and we go, confidently, because we reign in Him and He reigns through us. The rock Jesus spoke of is the message of the Son. He is the answer.

He is building His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. His church is unstoppable.

What do you think of when you think of "the church?" What is the church?

_____

_____

His church is not a building with walls, but a Kingdom of people transformed by the living God. The church is a living system. God calls the church His bride and the body of Christ. The

church has one faith, one baptism, and one truth. The church of the living God is one, yet meets in smaller gatherings of local churches, all guided by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the Head and the King. He calls us kings and priests, His called out ones, the new creation through whom He reigns and speaks to redeem others from the Kingdom of darkness, transferring them into the Kingdom of the Son.

God is fulfilling His promise to Abraham's Seed and the Seed is Christ.[256] God was not talking about Jewish people or Israelites. He was talking about His Son. Israel means prince of God. Jesus was the Prince of God. God's Israel is not some people living on a certain plot of land on earth. God's Israel is His Son.[257] His church has entered into Israel, into the Christ, and is being saved by Him.

We have the keys that unlock the Kingdom of God for the lost. The keys are in the gospel as we declare the message to those who would hear. God is seeking out the lost. He is seeking those who will hear. He is working all events according to the purpose of His will to bring all things back into line with Himself and the reason all things were created. He redeems us and He creates beauty from our lives as we move with Him into the world to proclaim His gospel in love. As He sets people free when they believe in His Son and surrender their lives to Him, we disciple them, speaking the truth in love, and moving with God as He desires to use our lives for His glory.

The amazing thing, dear brother or sister in Christ, is that we get to work with God as He redeems the world and brings all things back to Himself. We get to proclaim His Word and see Him speak into the heart of a person, birthing a new person right before our eyes. We get to see someone changed for all eternity. The effect lasts forever for those who call upon Him in faith. We get to see the transformation God brings within us and within others through us as we walk with Him.

What an exciting journey we are on. What a joy to walk with our King. This journey is not a burden as we abide in Christ. Don't let anyone rob you of the joy of seeing someone else coming to Christ in front of you. Many will say, "I do not have the gift of evangelism so I do not have to evangelise". This is a lie. Evangelism means "herald" or "call out". The Scriptures say, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so". If you have been redeemed, there is an expectation you will do evangelism, you will do discipleship, you will do stewardship, you will do worship, and you will fellowship. Evangelism must be done by every Kingdom disciple. There is no excuse. The church is to equip you to do this task. This is the great commission of God given to all believers.

If you have not seen a person come to Christ, then find someone with the gift of evangelism to train you. You are expected to be a person who brings lost people back to the fold. There are no exceptions, no matter if you are 8 or 80. This is your assignment. This is the will of God. You have been commanded to makes disciples, baptise them, and teach them how to walk out the commands of Christ. The Lord goes with you for it is His mission.

> *16"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. 17When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. 18And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the*

[256] Galatians 3:16

[257] Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:13-15

Holy Spirit, [20]teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20)

PERSONAL REFLECTION: REIGN

Write Key 8 Reign:

_____

_____

Take a moment to explain this key in your own words. What is important for you to remember?

_____

_____

_____

What did you learn about God in this key?

_____

_____

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What is the significance of God reigning in and through you?

_____

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_____

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

18"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (John 15:18-19)

Kingdom disciples are insane. Insane people do not fit in with the world's standards of safety and control. Kingdom disciples remain in this world but not of this world. They have a different standard based on the invisible reality of faith. This standard is invisible to the physical world. As disciples live and carry out the ways of God they appear insane compared to the unsaved people of earth and those who only seek religion and not a true experience with God. Our church has adopted the following view of the insanity of true Discipleship:

Anything amazing and supernatural that ever happened positive in the Kingdom was when an Insane-to-the World person did it!

Insane people are passionate!(also sometimes a pain)Insanity is never boring.

Insane people can't be controlled by the sane.

We need Insane people…Especially in these insane times!

A critical mass of Insane-to-the-World people in the room automatically makes the whole room go more insane. (This produces more Insane people and scares the sane).

Insane people please God – their names are spoken of throughout the ages.

Insanity keeps us from falling into ruts (if we listen). We seldom listen. This is why many churches are in ruts of having zero baptisms and no community impact.

Our hope is the one reading this is an Insane-to-the World person!

We are assuming, since you have completed this book, that the Lord has been speaking to you and teaching you something about His heart and about who you are. We are assuming you have experienced some change in your life.

What are at least two things God taught you on this journey of understanding the gospel through the 8 Keys?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

God transforms people. One life at a time. Person by person. Life by life. The process of the keys is simply the gospel As we see who God is, admit our condition before Him and surrender to Him, He makes us righteous and new, transforming us as we believe His Word: He leads us as we abide in Him and old behaviours begin to drop off. We learn what love really is as we walk with Him and work with Him in His Kingdom.

You are left on the planet to do this sole task. Any gift He has given you in the Spirit is to see this task accomplished. You have not received any gifts for vain glory, but so the Father would be glorified. The Father is glorified in the salvation of people.

Do you realize that when you proclaim the gospel to another person and they surrender to Jesus with their whole heart, you impact that person forever? Think about that for a minute. The impact of God speaking through you, changes the destiny of a person's life from destruction and eternal death to wholeness and eternal life in just a moment's time. This is a miracle!

When did you last explain the gospel to someone? _____

Describe that experience: _____

_____

_____

When did you last lead someone to Christ? _____

If you have not yet led anyone to Christ, we invite you to experience this joy. It's fun to lead people to Christ and walk with them as God transforms them. Do you know how to explain the gospel? There are many ways to explain the gospel to people. What is important is to know at least one way well. In the box to the right, we offer a couple resources we have

ONLINE RESOURCES for learning to explain the gospel clearly:
One resource that we have found helpful is learning to explain the gospel on a napkin. You can see Alan walk someone through this gospel presentation online at:
http://www.e-quip.net/presentations/show/354

You can also learn how to help someone understand the purpose of their life:
http://www.e-quip.net/presentations/show/396

found very helpful.

The message is His. We have no right to adjust that message. It is what it is. To adjust the message or weaken it to make it more comfortable for people is just the same as lying to people about God. God is who He is and He has revealed who He is. We are simply a mouthpiece, an ambassador for Him, working with God in the work He is doing.

As we walk in the Spirit, we move in the flow of God, watching for where He is working and moving alongside those He is working with. God leads, directs, teaches, and gives us the understanding, wisdom, and knowledge to do His will. We listen to His Spirit, loving Him, enjoying Him, and moving with Him as He builds His church.

What do you think of when you think of a church? Do you picture a building with a steeple or a cross, or do you picture people, transformed by the living God? A true church can gather in buildings made by men, but the church is never the building or the place of the gathering. The church is people called out and set apart for God. We are the church, the bride of Christ, bought with His blood and transformed through His death and resurrection. We are God's people. We are the new Israel, God's children. We gather together to build up each other, helping each other to walk humbly with our King as we go into the world making Kingdom disciples of all people of the earth.

Remember, there are only two types of people. There are people who are dead, meaning disconnected from the living God, focused on self, and people who are alive, connected to God by His grace through faith in the death and resurrection of His Son. We view people as being either lost or found. If they are lost, they need to know the gospel. If they are found, and not producing fruit of their salvation, they are still young in the Lord and need to know the truth of who they really are and the reality of the gospel. They must be taught and instructed in the ways of God. Expectation must be placed upon them that they have been saved to love God and serve Him with all their heart.

As Paul says, he knows nothing except Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). We stick to the simplicity of the gospel, listening to the Lord as He shows us where to go and what to say. We abide in Him.

The reality of the gospel has a beauty we can hardly fathom. Do you stand in awe as you search the scripture and God reveals something new from His gospel?

God calls you to join Him as He ushers in His Kingdom on earth. He is taking over the systems of earth, transforming them by transforming human lives one by one.

How will you know if you really understood this book or if you just went through teaching and gained some knowledge? You will know you really understood this book when people say they can tell you have been with Jesus. They may say words like "What has happened to you?" "You are different," "Are you in a cult?" "Are they brainwashing you?" and things like that. The world will see the beauty of God within you and not know what to think.

The opposite happens when other Spirit-filled believers see you, for they begin to move you into places of influence and authority. You will still run into many people that call themselves faith walkers, yet they do not know faith; they call themselves Christian but barely represent Christ. Be aware, because they will often work in the same world system and be jealous of your new found godliness, power and authority.

Pray for all. Forgive all. Love all. Be controlled by none but God Himself. You are a Kingdom disciple, ready to live out your faith and see His Kingdom come. Live in such a manner that people speak more about the God in you, and glorify Him, than speak about you.

APPENDIX

WHAT IS COUNSELLING? [258]

Counselling is not a discipline like dentistry or medicine that depends on rigid technical knowledge. Counselling is the gathering of knowledge so wisdom can be walked out in our daily lives. Counselling is Discipleship, helping people grow to maturity in Christ when they get stuck along the way.

Biblical counselling begins with identity, then moves on to performance and behaviour. (John 11:1-44 – The Death of Lazarus)

Four things you need to counsel yourself and a fifth thing to counsel others:

1. A source of Truth
2. A vulnerability to stand before the Truth
3. A willingness to obey the revealed Truth
4. A basic understanding of human functioning
5. With others, you must add the ability to connect truth clearly

All Christians Counsel:

Every Christian is called to a ministry of encouraging and helping others, especially those in the household of faith. (Galatians 6:9-10)

All Christians counsel by their words and their deeds. Let's be good counsellors, equipping the body of Christ.

Our Source of Truth is the Bible:

A Christian counsellor's source of Truth is the Bible.

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

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *16All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Counsellee's Rights:

The right to hear the Truth.
The right to confidentiality.
The right to ask questions and participate.
The right to open communication and respect.

[258] (We are indebted to Larry Crabb for help in our understanding of counselling. Many of the thoughts about counseling have been adapted from various books written by Larry Crabb.)

The right to professionalism and punctuality.
The right to decide whether or not to follow the counsel.

THE GOAL OF COUNSELLING IS MATURITY

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son....

Maturity is being conformed to the image of Jesus. What Does "To be conformed to the Image of His Son" look like?

Ephesians 4:11-16 *11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF BEING CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF JESUS:

1. Our spirit is alive to God.

2. Our attitude is humble before God.

3. Our walk is obedient to God.

MATURITY IS HAVING ALL THREE CHARACTERISTICS FUNCTIONING:

1. Our spirit is alive to God.

All people have a spirit.

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Psalm 32:2 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.

A person's spirit is either DEAD (separated from LIFE) or ALIVE (connected to LIFE).

Genesis 2:16-17 *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

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

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

2. Our attitude is humble before God.

We live our lives out in love. Love is the base for all we do.

Ephesians 4:1-3 *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

3. Our walk is obedient to God.

The good works we do end up glorifying our Father in Heaven.

1 John 5:2-3 *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*

Matthew 5:16 *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

HOW TO COUNSEL

1. **Know your goal:**
   The goal of true Biblical counselling is to free people so they will be open and alive to worship and serve their Creator; that they will be able to display before the world "the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."[259]
   As we assist other believers, we must have in our minds the purpose of becoming Christ-like; entering into a deeper relationship with God and becoming mature.

   Maturity involves two things: immediate obedience to God's word and long-range character growth.

2. **Listen for their goal.**
   What are they wanting you to do? Are they just wanting to be happy and just change their circumstances? Are they wanting true joy in the midst of whatever they face in life?

3. **Listen for the presenting problem.**
   Example: Blocked goal resulting in anger, frustration, depression.

4. **Listen for IDENTITY:** whether they are dead or alive.

[259] 1 Peter 2:9

We must know to whom we are speaking. We speak to who the person really is in the core. If a person is dead, their core identity is a sinner (Romans 5:8). If a person is alive in Christ, their core identity is the new creation created by God for His glory (2 Corinthians 5:17). Focus in on justification by faith and the gospel.

Christians who are maturing understand what the Christian life is about. They also fall and stumble, but they quickly repent, get back up and are on track again.

Christians must know who they are and who they are NOT.

a. If the person is spiritually DEAD explain:

Purpose of life
Proclaim the gospel.

b. If the person is spiritually ALIVE (believer in Jesus):

1) **Listen to their testimony**. Do they really know Christ or do they just think they do? Don't assume that when a person says they are a Christian that they are really a Christian. Check the fruit of their lives. Believe the fruit.

2) **Proclaim the gospel to be sure.** They would not be in dysfunction if they fully believed the gospel. Teach the foundation of the gospel as described in this book.

3) **Unwrap them with the truth, from lies and false doctrine.**

In the story of Lazarus, after Jesus raised him from the dead, he was fully alive. He could be no more alive. But he was still wrapped up in grave clothes, cloths that covered his whole body including his head and face. Jesus told the people to unwrap Lazarus and loose him from his grave clothes. Counselling is like this. As we counsel, teaching the truth of the gospel, God speaks to the person. The Holy Spirit within them reveals the truth and as the person believes the truth, the grave clothes (the lies they believed) fall off. As the grave clothes are removed, the person can live the life they were created to live. Removing the grave clothes doesn't increase the life, but it improves the quality of that life on the earth, fully expressing who they really are in being brought to life from death.

5. **Give hope in the process of counselling.**

God heals everyone who comes to Him in faith; God forgives everyone. He saves everyone who comes to Him by faith.

6. **Set up the Bible as the standard.**

The Bible is our authority of truth that God has revealed to us. When Scriptural teaching conflicts with any other idea presented, the Scripture will be accepted as truth and the other idea will be viewed as unacceptable. Ie: homosexuality as alternate lifestyle or sin; alcoholism as disease or sin. The Bible is the infallible, inspired, inerrant revelation of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:11-12). The Bible is our guide, so we will study it, remain fresh in it, have a working knowledge of doctrines, and be in regular fellowship.

7. **Understanding identity before performance.**

We live what we believe. If we know who we are and understand what God has done in us, we will behave differently. An immature believer has not grasped the Lordship of Christ. Their lifestyle is not much different from an unbeliever. They are walking in the flesh and may not know that the flesh is not them. Teach the doctrine of justification by faith so they will know who they are in Christ. If no change toward maturity happens be sure that the "believer" is not a believer. Present the gospel until life is evident.

KEY TERMS

BODY, SOUL, SPIRIT — These three parts are interrelated, but are definitely separate.

BODY –- The dimension of a human which deals with the physical realm. The Bible refers to our bodies as an "earthly tent." This text has referred to it as our "earth suit." We understand we dwell within our bodies, but our body is not the real us. When our body dies, we will live on in eternity.

CHRISTIAN — A Christian is not simply a person who gets forgiveness, who gets to go to heaven, who gets the Holy Spirit, who gets a new nature. A Christian is a person who has become someone he was not before. A Christian, in terms of his deepest identity, is a saint, a child born of God, a divine masterpiece, a child of the light, a citizen of heaven. Becoming a Christian is not just getting something, no matter how wonderful that something may be. It is becoming someone new! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

FLESH — If we walk according to the Spirit, we will not carry out the lusts of the flesh. The flesh is the programming that remains within our subconscious mind; it's how we used to deal with life independently of God. Within the flesh is independence, sin. Paul says, "If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, **it is no longer I who do it**, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (**that is, in my flesh**) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find." (Romans 7:16-18, our emphasis)

Paul is making an important distinction here. He is saying that he is a transformed person who cannot sin at the core. The problem is the flesh wants to be independent still. But the flesh is not the real you. The Bible says the flesh lusts against the spirit. The flesh does not want to submit to the reality of the new creation that you are in Christ. But the flesh is crucified and does not have power over you anymore. You are to consider it dead, or separated from you, and not obey its demands (Romans 6:5, 6; Galatians 5:24).

HOLINESS — In Christ, we have been made holy at the core of who we are. We are set apart for God in the truest sense by faith in Jesus. We are holy and pure and completely righteous in Him. God completed this work within us and made us a new creation. Now God works in us to do and to will for His good pleasure. His Life within us works itself out into our performance. We can no longer do the things we used to do before we knew God. Our performance begins to be impacted by the Life of God within us. We are not who we were, and now that reality is coming out in our everyday behaviour. We are holy and we are being made holy. Our body and soul comes in line with the core of who we now are in the spirit.

HYPOCRITE — (ACTOR) Satan's definition "One who acts differently than he feels." God's definition: "Pretending to be what one is not."

JUSTIFIED —
OLD TESTMANT MEANING: In the Old Testament, justified meant the sin of the people was

covered over by the blood of the animal sacrifice. God did not count their sin against them and he declared them to be righteous in His sight, while he waited for the death and resurrection of His Son because the blood of animals cannot make a person righteous.

NEW TESTEMANT MEANING: In the New Testament, justified takes on a newer, fuller meaning in Christ. Christ was the final sacrifice. He was the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world (John 1:29). In Christ, we are made righteous in the core of who we are (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our sin is not "covered over" by the blood of Christ, it is completely gone. We are no longer sinners (Romans 5:19), but saints. Jesus took our sin away and dealt with sin once for all. By God's grace, we are justified, made completely righteous, by faith in Christ, not by our works (Romans 3:21-26).

MEDITATE – Means to ponder, turn over, to think upon until the meaning comes from what you have focused on. Christian meditation does not empty oneself, but fills oneself up with the word of God. We meditate on the word of God and His truth. Our focus is to know God and glorify Him, not empty ourselves and allow anything to fill us. We seek to bring our minds into alignment with His truth.

OLD MAN and NEW MAN — The old man is who we were before we were born again. The Bible says the old man is gone. It has been crucified with Christ. When we were born again by the Spirit of God, we became the new man, which was created by God in true righteousness and holiness (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:23-24).

PURPOSE OF LIFE — The true purpose of human beings is to glorify our Creator and enjoy Him forever. Any purpose short of this will bring defeat, anger, frustration, and eventually depression. So if you are experiencing defeat or any of these symptoms, think again what your goal is, the purpose you are living for. Your life will reflect what you believe.

RIGHTEOUS — Being righteous means we are in right standing with God, free from sin and guilt. When God makes us righteous, He changes the core of who we are. He is not covering us in the blood of Jesus so we appear righteous to Him. He transforms us through the death and resurrection of Jesus. The old us died with Christ. And we are raised to life totally new and righteous. We are made righteous.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says that God made Jesus, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ. We are righteous in Christ. We have had an identity change. Total. Complete. We are no longer sinners who are independent from God; we are saints, connected forever. We are sealed in Him by the Holy Spirit and He will present us to Himself without spot or blemish. In the core of who we are, there is no sin. Christ took care of sin once for all.

SAINT — A saint is a person set apart by God to do His will. This person was born again by the Spirit of God and is made completely new. God has given us a new identity through faith in Jesus Christ. Our old selves and our identity as a sinner was killed on the cross. We are transferred into His Kingdom. And we were given a new identity as a saint: A new creation in Christ.

SIN — Sin is independence from God. Sin is not just about behaviour. Sin is mankind's struggle to find meaning and purpose apart from God. This shows up in certain sinful behaviours that are recognizable but it also shows up when people are behaving "good" for it still is being done independent of God's grace and love flowing though the individual. We were created to have a meaningful, dependent life in connection with our Creator. But when the first man stepped away from dependence upon God and chose to do what he thought best, he entered into sin, a life separate from God. All who came after this first man were born into sin. The opposite of sin is not good behaviour. The opposite of sin is faith, living in dependence upon God.

SINNER — A sinner is a person who is attempting to put their life together without coming into relationship with God the Father. When we live independently of God, we are sinners. The term "sinner" is not talking about behaviour. It's talking about the identity of someone who is independent from God.

SINS — Sins are independent acts. If a person sins, they are acting independent of God. The Bible says "there is no one righteous … no one who does good" (Romans 3:10-12). Anything we do, whether it is seemingly good or seemingly bad, is sin when it is done independently of God. No one can be perfect enough to be accepted by God. We would have to be perfect in every thought, word, and deed our entire lives in order to work our way to God. It's impossible. God knows this and He made a way for us to come to Him. The Way is found in Jesus, by faith.

SOUL — The dimension of a human which deals with the mental realm, our intellect. The soul is made up of our mind, will, and emotions. The soul is affected by the independence of the flesh, and the battle for the mind takes place here. Renewing the mind is the central activity of freedom that occurs in bringing the mind of the soul in line with the core of who we really are in our spirit.

SPIRIT — The dimension of a human which deals with the spiritual realm. This is our deepest, truest self. When we were living independently from God our spirit was dead. We were enemies of God in our core identity. Through faith in Jesus, our old, sinful self was crucified with Him and died. Then God gave us a new spirit, which is holy, righteous, and blameless before God. We are now connected with God and are His children. Our new identity is as a saint. God places a seal on us through the Holy Spirit who indwells us and He will present us to Himself.

FOUNDATIONAL VERSES

Here's a selection of verses for you to study and commit to memory. As you read through the Bible, you'll come across many more. This list is just a beginning.

KEY 1 — REALIZE

Genesis 1:1-3 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*

Deuteronomy 32:3-4 *For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.*

Isaiah 40:4-8 *Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; 5 The glory of the LORD shall be revealed,*
And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." The voice said, "Cry out!"
And he said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

Isaiah 45:2-7,9 *'I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things. Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'?*

Ezekiel 36:22-28 *"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. "And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that Iam the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. "For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. "Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.*

Romans 8:28 - 30 *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

1 Corinthians 10:31 *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God,*

KEY 2 — ADMIT

Ps 1:1-6 *Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

Mark 2:16-17 *And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

John 3:17-21 *"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."*
John 8:34-36 *Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*
Romans 1:18-20 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.*
Romans 2:5-6 *But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds."*
Romans 2:12-13 *For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.*
Romans 3:10-12 *As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."*
Romans 3:21-23 *But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*
Romans 5:18-19 *Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.*
Romans 6:19-21 *I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.*

KEY 3 — SURRENDER

John 1:1-4 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*
John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*
John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."*
John 3:5-6 *Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*
John 8:12 *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*
Acts 2:22-24 *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know – Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.*
Romans 5:6-9 *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*
Romans 5:10-11 *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*
Romans 5:19 *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.*
1 Corinthians 1:26-29 *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak*

things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.
2 Corinthians 5:21 *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*
Colossians 1:16-18 *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.*
Colossians 1:19 *For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.*
Hebrews 1:1-4 *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*
Hebrews 2:14 *Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*
1 Peter 1:23-25 *Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.*

KEY 4 — BELIEVE

Ezekiel 36:26-27 *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*
Romans 6:6-7 *Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.*
Romans 6:11 *Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
Romans 6:18 *And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*
Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*
Romans 8:37 *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*
2 Corinthians 5:21 *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*
Galatians 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law*
Ephesians 1:13-14 *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*
Ephesians 1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,*
Ephesians 1:5-6 *Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.*
Ephesians 2:1-7 *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*
Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*
Ephesians 2:19 *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,*
Ephesians 5:8 *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light*
Philippians 3:8-9 *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.*
Philippians 3:20-21 *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*
Colossians 1:13-14 *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*
Colossians 1:21-22 *And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight*
Colossians 2:11-12 *In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*
Colossians 2:13 *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,*
2 Timothy 1:7 *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*
1 Peter 1:23-25 *Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.*
1 John 5:11-12 *And this is the testimony: that 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.*

KEY 5 — TRANSFORM

Romans 6:1-2 *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*
Romans 6:10-14 *For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*
Romans 6:15-16 *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?*
Romans 6:17-18 *But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*
Romans 6:19-23 *I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
Romans 7:5-6 *For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*
Romans 7:17-18 *But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*
Galatians 5:16-17 *I say then: Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*
Colossians 3:1-7 *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are*

on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.
Romans 7:22-23 *For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members*
Romans 8:1-2 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*
Romans 8:3-4 *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*
Ezekiel 36:26-27 *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*
Romans 8:5-7 *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*
Romans 8:9-10 *But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness*
Romans 8:12 *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*
Galatians 6:7-9 *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*
Galatians 5:24 *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*
Ephesians 4:17-19 *This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*
Ephesians 4:20-24 *But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*
James 4:1-5 *Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*
1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world.*
James 2:14-18 *What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*
1 John 2:3-6 *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*
Philippians 3:18-19 *For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.*
Philippians 3:3 *For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*
Philippians 2:12-13 *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*
1 Corinthians 2:10-12 *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*
Romans 12:1,2 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*
Romans 8:5,6 *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*
Colossians 3:9-10 *Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*
Philippians 4:8-9 *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*
James 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him*
Colossians 3:15-17 *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalm and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*
Romans 8:26-27 *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*
Colossians 2:20-23 *Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations — "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.*
1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.*

KEY 6 — ABIDE

1 John 4:15 *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*
1 John 3:24 *Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.*
Ephesians 6:14-20 *Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints — and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*
Ephesians 6:10-13 *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*
1 John 2:17 *And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*
John 15:5-7 *I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*
1 John 2:24-25 *Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us — eternal life.*
1 John 3:6 *Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.*
1 John 3:14-15 *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*
1 John 4:12 *No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.*

Deuteronomy 12:10-11 *But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide.*
Psalm 125:1 *Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, Which cannot be moved, but abides forever.*
Micah 5:4 *And He shall stand and feed His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; And they shall abide, For now He shall be great To the ends of the earth;*
John 8:35 *And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.*
John 12:46 *I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.*
John 15:4 *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*
John 15:9-10 *As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.*
1 John 2:6 *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*
1 John 2:10 *He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.*
1 John 2:27 *But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.*

KEY 7 — LOVE

1 John 4:7 *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*
1 John 4:8-10 *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God as manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
Romans 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*
Romans 8:37-39 *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
1 John 3:1 *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*
1 John 4:18-19 *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.*
1 John 5:2 *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.*
1 John 4:20-21 *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*
Ephesians 5:1-2 *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*
Romans 12:20 *Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."*
Luke 6:35 *"But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.*
Romans 13:10 *Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*
1 Corinthians 13:1-2 *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*
1 Corinthians 16:13-14 *Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.*
Galatians 5:13-15 *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!*
Ephesians 4:1 *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*
Ephesians 4: 31 *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.*
1 Peter 1:22 *Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,*

1 John 2:9 *He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*
1 John 2:15 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*
1 John 3:23 *And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.*
1 John 3:10 *In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.*

KEY 8 — REIGN

Colossians 1:13-14 *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*
Matthew 6:31-34 *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."*
John 15:16 *"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*
Hebrews 2:16-18 *For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*
Romans 8:14-20 *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*
2 Corinthians 5:20 *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.*
Ephesians 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*
Philippians 2:14-16 *Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or laboured in vain.*
1 John 3:2 *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*
Ephesians 1:11-12 *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.*
Ephesians 3:6-7 *That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.*
Ephesians 3:20,21 *Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*
Philippians 1:3-6 *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ*
Philippians 2:12-13 *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*
Philippians 4:13 *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*
Colossians 1:27-29 *To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labour, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.*
1 Timothy 4:15 *Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*
1 Timothy 4:6,7 *If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.*

Galatians 1:8 *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*
1 Thessalonians 2:2 *But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.*
John 15:18-19 *If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*
Galatians 6:14 *But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*
Philippians 1:15-18 *Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.*
2 Corinthians 6:1-3 *We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.*
Titus 2:1-5 *But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.*
Titus 2:6-10 *Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

ALAN BRAUN'S DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I. Doctrine of the Scriptures

I believe that the word of God has been fully delivered to mankind in the form of sixty-six books known as the Old and New Testaments. These are without error in their original writings because their Author is God. God used men who He inspired, to record His revelation of Himself and His deeds. It is, therefore, the sole authority for faith and practice and is not to be added to nor taken from. Because of the multitude of Greek New Testament texts available, I have chosen to compare all versions of text to the Majority Text, known as the Textus Receptus. My preferred Bible at this time, because it has been translated from the Textus Receptus, is the New King James Version.

II. Doctrine of God

I believe that there is only one, living and true God. He is an infinite, eternal, wise, self-existing, perfect Spirit; He is a personal Being. He is the Creator, Sustainer and upholder of all things. God has eternally revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each is divine and equal in nature, and essence, revealing Themselves through distinct personal attributes.

III. Doctrine of God the Father

1. I believe Father God is all powerful, all loving and all wise.
2. I believe that it is only through the mercy and love of God the Father and according to the good pleasure of His will that He chose me for the display of His glory.
3. His choosing is based solely on Himself and not according to any action on my part, past or future, good or evil.
4. I believe that the Father has a Sovereign will that He alone knows and carries out into reality. Nothing in His Sovereign will is ever thwarted, postponed or cancelled.
5. I believe that the Father also gave mankind His moral will, the commandments of God. Every person, except Christ, has violated this moral will.
6. I believe God the Father also has a particular will for each person on earth. We walk in this will by making choices of wisdom. Each person, except Christ, has violated this will in their lives at some time.

III. Doctrine of God the Son

1. I believe in the absolute deity of the Son, Jesus the LORD and the Christ. I believe that Jesus Christ was uniquely given by the Holy Spirit to the earth by being born of a virgin. Although He existed for all eternality as God the Son, He came to earth and took on the likeness of man while being very God, co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

2. I believe Jesus carried out the will of the Father in perfect obedience. He alone, as man, lived a sinless life. His death on the cross was a substitutionary sacrifice for man--the just for the unjust--taking upon Himself the sins of the whole world, and thereby becoming the Saviour of the lost by satisfying the righteous demands of God. He took upon Himself the holy wrath of the Father against all who transgress His ways. He makes righteous all who personally receive Him, as Lord and Saviour.

3. I believe that the crucified body of our Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead as the firstfruits of the dead. He ascended into Heaven where he prepares a place for His disciples. Christ came again according to His promises, in that first century generation while some of His original disciples were still alive, to judge Israel for its deeds. This occurred in 70AD. He will come again in His final coming to consummate His redemptive mission. I believe Christ reigns now as King of His Kingdom of which I am a part. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord.

IV. Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

1. I believe that the Holy Spirit is God, the third Person of the tri-unity. He inspired holy men to write the scriptures. The deity of the Holy Spirit is revealed through His names, attributes, and works.

2. I believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He exalts Christ and His teachings. When a believer is filled with the Holy Spirit I see the fruit of the Spirit being lived out by him in the world.

3. I believe that at the moment of conversion, the Holy Spirit regenerates and permanently indwells the believer; this is called the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He gifts each believer with a spiritual gift so God the Father can be glorified and His people strengthened.

4. The Holy Spirit's ministry includes filling, teaching, and leading as He adds people to the body of Christ.

VI. Doctrine of Man

1. I believe that creation was completely created in a literal six day time period. Man was created on the sixth day of this creation week by a direct act of God. I believe that Adam was the first man, and that he was created by God from the dust of the ground, being fashioned in the image and likeness of God. Eve, his wife, was the first woman created by God out of a rib taken from the side of Adam.
2. I believe Adam was a free moral agent as yet untested in holiness, but capable of choosing between right and wrong, and in Adam constituted the entire human race. He was innocent before God.
3. I believe Adam and Eve were influenced by Satan and failed a moral test, thus committing the original sin of man. Eve was deceived by Satan while Adam wilfully and knowingly chose to disobey God. Both sinned against their Creator.
4. I believe that, as a result of the sin of Adam, he lost his relationship and fellowship with God and became "dead in trespasses and sins." This death, because of the unity of the human race, has been passed upon all men since all men were in the loins of Adam, and thus are actively a part of the first sin. Therefore, I believe that all men are born totally depraved in their entire being, totally unable to meet God's requirements (without Christ), as well as being guilty before a righteous and Holy God. There is a type of goodness in man but it isn't spiritual goodness or self saving goodness.
5. I further believe that when man comes to Christ, he comes by an enlightened will, his depraved will being enlightened by God. He does not respond out of free will, because his will is always contrary to God and His ways. He is chosen by God alone.

VII. Doctrine of Salvation

1. I believe that because of His mercy and love, God provided a way of salvation for mankind. This salvation was made available only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, having died for man's sin. I believe that if one truly repents of his sin, under conviction, and puts his complete trust in Christ alone as his Lord and Saviour, apart from any human merit, he is saved, and eternally secure, and can never lose his salvation. The sinner must come to accept and admit he is a sinner, to be saved, this means he is willing to turn from his sin and give his life to God, as his Lord and Master.
2. I believe man must be drawn by God to salvation, realizing he cannot be saved without the drawing conviction of God. The person will know that a transformation has taken place, and his life has been transformed. This does not mean that he will fully understand and do everything that shows spiritual maturity, at once.
3. I believe all who will be saved will choose to come to Christ to receive that salvation. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit, that anyone responds to God. There is no such thing as free will, for the will of man is born sinful which makes it impossible to decide and make decisions to the glory of God.
4. The fact of salvation of The Old Testament saints: I believe that the Old Testament saints were saved by putting their faith and commitment in a coming Messiah, as their Lord and Saviour. This act of faith was represented in many shadows and types throughout the Old Testament, one being the Passover lamb. Because the Old Testament believer only had his sin covered and not removed until the death and resurrection of the Lord, they were kept in Paradise awaiting the day when their sin would be removed as far as the east is from the west.
5. I believe that at the moment of salvation a sinner is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, made and declared righteous upon the merit of Christ's substitutionary death, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and made holy unto God. Under the New Covenant, man is not just declared righteous but is made righteous through the act of the Son. Regenerated man is no longer a sinner but a saint.
6. I believe when an unregenerate person exercises repentance and saving faith in Christ, that immediately he passes out of spiritual death into life, from the old creation into the new, from rejection before the Father and known as a child of wrath, into adoption through Christ and known as a child of God, producing eternal union with God, from lack of any spiritual blessing, into possession of all spiritual blessings, and completeness in Jesus Christ.
7. I believe when a man dies and encounters God the Father without the unmerited grace of Jesus' death and resurrection, He will be judged for all eternity. He will be found guilty before a Holy God. He will experience the uttermost wrath of God's holiness. He will forever be cast into Hell, which will be cast into the Lake of Fire, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

VIII. The Doctrine of the Church

1. I believe the local church is the current practical manifestation of the bride of Christ. The family of God (universal church) is being made up of all believers. I believe that the universal church is assembling today in the heavenlies. The local, true church, visible and organized, is the major emphasis of the New Testament. I believe that all races can worship together in the local church.
2. The church defined - "Ekklesia" – "called out assembly". A working church definition: *A regular gathering of devoted followers of Jesus Christ in covenant with each other to fulfill the purposes of spiritual community.*

The church is God's spiritual children, not a building.

3. I believe that the local church is God's only divinely-revealed institution for this age, being an indigenous entity (self-governing, self-supporting, and self propagating). The local church is the highest tribunal of appeal on earth. Also, the local church must be interdependent with other like-minded spiritual communities and guided only by the Word of God in its government and structure in order to be classified as a true church of Jesus Christ and therefore, a church constituted by God.
4. I believe God gifts His church with leadership. These spiritual leaders are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. These leaders are given authority to lead; however, the church is a theocratic republic, meaning Christ is the Head and has the full rule and authority.
5. I believe that God has always had a true New Testament church in doctrine, as well as practice. I believe that there has never been a perfectly mature church, for man since the fall has always been doing deeds of sin. I do believe, however, that there always have been churches that follow the Bible according to God, and not according to man and his traditions.
6. I believe that there are only two ordinances in a New Testament church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is only by immersion for a saved believer, in the water once. This pictures his identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The Lord's Supper is the commemoration of the Lord's death, and of our continual fellowship with Him.
7. I believe that the community of Christ is best expressed first by the use of personal homes and then in larger facilities, if need be. The church experience was to be mainly a fellowship of love, not an institutional setting.

IX. The Doctrine of Eschatology

1. I believe that everything Jesus said would happen at the time of the end, the end of the Old Covenant, happened exactly when He said it would—within the lifetime of His contemporaries.
2. I believe that the early church with the fall of Jerusalem in 70A.D. experienced a clear coming of Christ in His Kingly power. History shows that the first century believers understood Christ's prophecies of Matthew 24 to be fulfilled in this great tribulation against Israel.
3. I do believe that there will be a final consummation of all things. These things will include the final judgment of mankind, angels and the elements.
4. I believe that the Kingdom of God is now and ever present. The church holds the keys to the Kingdom. It is through the church alone that Christ receives man into the Father's presence.
5. I believe the kingdom of God was the central teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, is a present but greatly under-realized reality, and must again become the central teaching of His Church.

X. Doctrine of Marriage

1. I believe that marriage is not a human institution devised in the dim past of human history as a convenient way to sort out social responsibilities. If marriage were a human invention, then different types of marriage could have equal value. In His revelation contained in the pages of the Bible, God has revealed His will regarding the nature and function of marriage. Marriage is ordained by God for the lifelong union of a man and a woman.
2. I believe the very first description of the nature of marriage in the Bible, as consisting of leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh of a man and a woman, reveals the Biblical understanding of marriage as a covenant relationship.
3. I believe the conviction that it is God who has united our lives in holy matrimony and who will help us to stay together, will motivate us to persevere in preserving the unity of the marriage covenant.
4. I believe the purpose of marriage is oneness. Intimacy of and with another person of the opposite sex is the only true expression of this oneness. Procreation of the human race is the result of this intimacy.

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